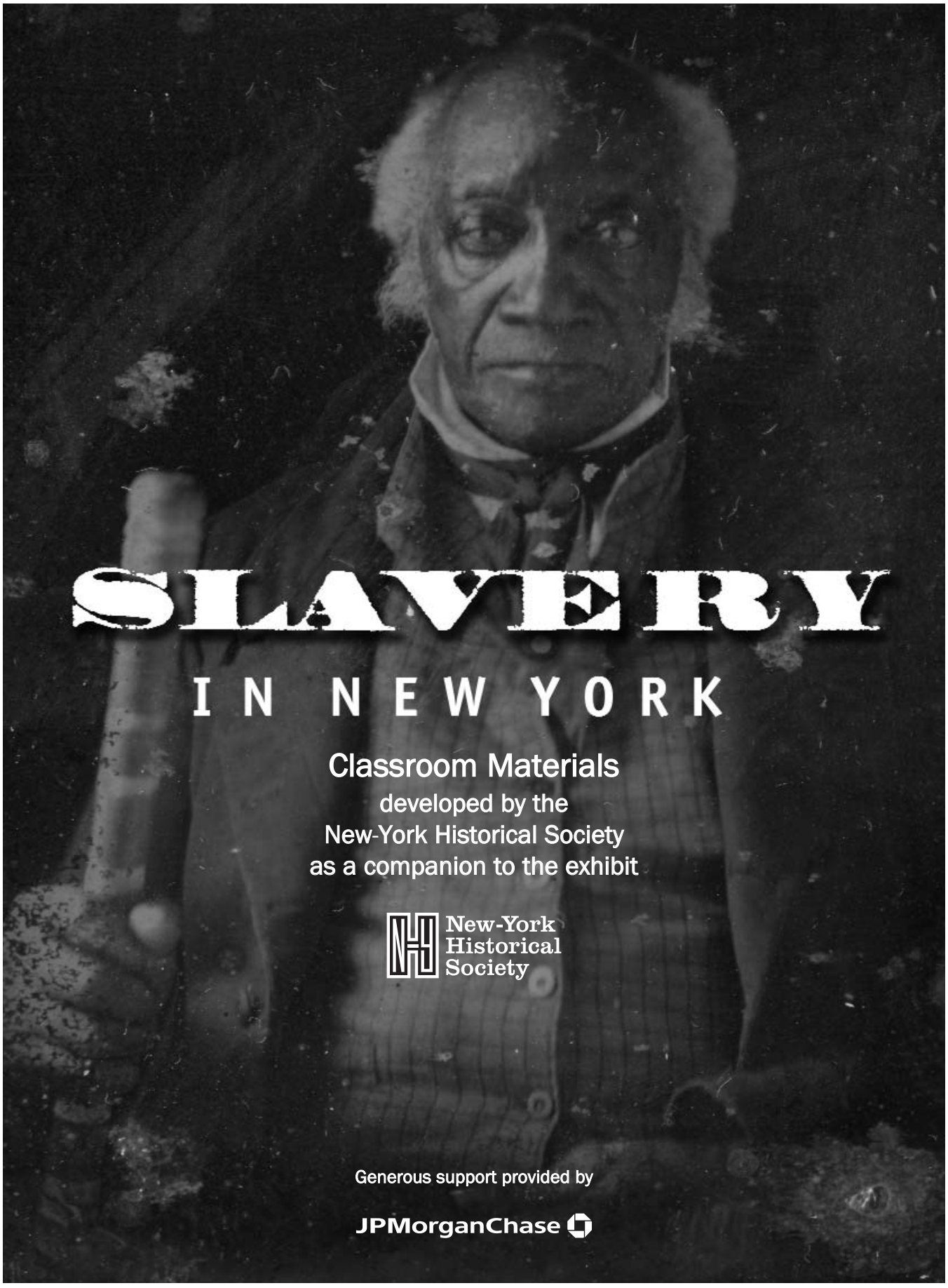

SLAVERY

IN NEW YORK

Classroom Materials
developed by the
New-York Historical Society
as a companion to the exhibit

New-York Historical Society

Generous support provided by

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THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Since its founding in 1804, the New-York Historical Society (N-YHS) has been a mainstay of cultural life in New York City and a center of historical scholarship and education. For generations, students and teachers have been able to benefit directly from the N-YHS's mission to collect, preserve and interpret materials relevant to the history of our city, state and nation. N-YHS consistently creates opportunities to experience the nation's history through the prism of New York. Our uniquely integrated collection of documents and objects are particularly well-suited for educational purposes, not only for scholars but also for school children, teachers and the larger public.

SLAVERY IN NEW YORK

The story of New York's rootedness in the enslavement of Africans is largely unknown to the general public. Over the next two years, the New-York Historical Society, together with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, will stage two major exhibitions, with walking tours, educational materials and programs for learners of all ages. The first of these exhibits, entitled "Slavery in New York," explores the vital roles enslaved labor and the slave trade played in making New York one of the wealthiest cities in the world. In bringing this compelling and dramatic story to the forefront of historical inquiry, "Slavery in New York" will transform collective understanding of this great city's past, present and future. The enclosed resources have been developed to facilitate pre- and post-visit lessons in the classroom and provide learning experiences beyond the duration of the exhibit.

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Slavery in New York: Classroom Materials

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Cover
Caesar
Daguerreotype, 1851
New-York Historical Society Collection
Born in 1737, Caesar spent all his long life on the Rensselaer Nicoll estate near Albany, where he served several generations of masters. Enslaved until the age of 80, he was then allowed to retire. He remained with the Nicoll family until his death in 1852 at the age of 115 years. He was never informed that slavery was abolished in New York in 1827. Caesar was persuaded by the family to sit for this daguerreotype shortly before his death. It is one of the first photographic images of a black American.

Teacher's Guide

Contents

Slavery in New York: The Exhibit

Slavery in New York will be open at the New-York Historical Society from October 2005 through March of 2006. It will examine the history of slavery in this city from the 1620s through July 4, 1827, the date when New York slaves were finally freed.

The exhibit and the classroom materials provide you and your students with an unprecedented opportunity to study a major, and mostly unfamiliar, story. This Teacher's Guide will help you plan and follow up on a visit to the exhibit, and it will also continue to serve as a stand-alone classroom resource well after the exhibit closes.

For an overview of the content, see "The History of Slavery in New York City" in this Guide, and the *Fact Sheet* included with the student materials.

Pre-Visit Activities in the Classroom

There are a number of different ways you might prepare your students to come to the New-York Historical Society to see *Slavery in New York.*

Introduce Africa, or build on what students already know. Use maps to orient them to the continent and to the coastal areas of Central and West Africa, the homeland of many enslaved New Yorkers. Use a KWL chart to help them organize what they know about Africa, and what they would like to know. This will prepare them for their first stop at the exhibit, which explores African culture, landscape, and language.

Introduce one of the hardest and most troubling ideas for children to grasp: that during slavery people believed it was possible to own another human being. Use the profile of McLennan's Female Slave, based on a slave ad, to look at what the seller mentioned and what he omitted. This should help children think about what it meant to be an owner, or to be owned.

Help high school students understand something of the experience of Africans who were kidnapped. Ask them to think about what is most important about home. What intangibles, like feelings of comfort or safety, matter most? What are their most precious possessions, and why are they important? What if they had to leave it all behind? What did slaves leave behind when they left Africa? What were they able to bring with them (memories, language, and culture)?

A Guide to the Classroom Materials for Students

The student materials for *Slavery in New York* are:

Buried Stories: *Lessons from the African Burial Ground*
White New Yorkers in Slave Times
Laws Affecting Blacks in Manhattan
Fact Sheet
Looking at Slavery in New York
Glossary
Photo Cards
Life Stories: Profiles of Black New Yorkers During Slavery and Emancipation
Facsimile of *The New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy,* December 13, 1764
Story Maps for 1664, 1741, 1783, and 1827

These materials were developed to meet the needs of many different classrooms and to give teachers flexibility. They were written with middle-school children in mind, but students vary enormously by age, reading ability, emotional readiness for a difficult topic, and previous knowledge. The following guide to the student materials includes descriptions that will help you know which pieces are most appropriate for your class or individual students, whether they are in elementary, middle, or high school.

Seven lesson plans follow this section. In each, students use a number of classroom materials to explore a major theme. However, you can use these materials individually as well; suggestions are provided in the following descriptions.

Buried Stories: Lessons from the African Burial Ground

This short piece describes the discovery of the African Burial Ground in 1991, and the research that was done on the site and the uncovered remains to learn about the lives of New York City's enslaved people. Some students may be squeamish about the discussion of the bones, but the more difficult material is the actual findings of the scientists: black people lived in pain, were overworked and underfed, and many died young. It is not easy material, but it tells the truth about Slavery in New York City as historians and scientists understand it today.

Suggestions for classroom use

Take a field trip to the Trinity Church cemetery and the African Burial Ground site. What can you learn about the lives of blacks and whites in colonial New York?

Ask students to write a story or poem about Burial 335. What might this mother's life have been like? What is a plausible scenario for how she and her baby died?

Direct students to www.africanburialground.com to read more about the scientific and historic discoveries. Ask them what evidence of African culture has been found at the site. What ways did enslaved people have to maintain ties to Africa?

White New Yorkers in Slave Times

This focuses on why whites acted as they did, on how people's attitudes can govern their actions, and how slavery became such an important aspect of life in this city. The whites who are profiled are drawn from *Life Stories*, and represent a range of people, reactions, and behaviors. This piece will give students an opportunity to think about questions that may seem incomprehensible and hard to talk about. It will also challenge simplistic ideas the students might have about white people, just as *Life Stories* challenges simplistic ideas about blacks.

Suggestions for classroom use

Lead a class discussion about white actions during slavery. Use the profiles of Deborah Squash, Peter Van Wagener, and Sojourner Truth, and consider their different owners. Discuss the ways that people can be a mix of what students may see as good and bad behavior, and how individuals can create entrenched institutions.

Raise the issue of injustice. How do students see people dealing with injustice in the world? Are there examples in students' own lives where they know about but tolerate injustice? What about homeless people? Or children who are bullied? How do students think people today explain their own actions and attitudes in the face of injustice? Do students think something similar might have happened during slavery?

Laws Affecting Blacks in Manhattan

This summarizes some important laws that governed slaves and free blacks from the mid-1600s to the 1820s.

Fact Sheet

Intended as a quick reference guide, this sheet provides important facts about the Dutch, British, and United States periods of New York City history.

Looking at Slavery in New York

This collection of charts and tables provides a statistical look at slavery.

Glossary

These definitions explain terms related to slavery during the colonial period and into the 1800s.

Photo Cards

These are photographs of objects from the New-York Historical Society collection that were exhibited in *Slavery in New York*. Each of these objects tells a small story that contributes to the larger story of slavery in New York. The items include: "Cutting the Sugar-Cane," and "Shipping Sugar," both paintings of sugar plantations in Antigua in 1823; a silver tea caddy with a key; a commode chair that looks like a piece of furniture; a wooden baby walker; and a tobacco box.

The captions provide historical background and context for viewing the item, and some questions for analyzing the images are given below:

- Who created the object or painting?
- What kind of work went into creating it?
- When viewing the objects, consider who used these objects and who maintained or cared for these items.
- Carefully look at the details of each image. What are some things we can learn about slaves' daily life and work by viewing these images?

Some questions are specific to the two paintings:

- Is there any evidence in them of what the artist thought about the plantations?
- Do the slaves look overworked or at risk?
- What would the plantation owner think of these paintings?
- What would the enslaved workers think?

Life Stories: Profiles of Black New Yorkers During Slavery and Emancipation

The centerpiece of the student materials, *Life Stories* is a collection of profiles drawn from historic sources. Almost all the sources come from the perspective of white people. The profiles were rewritten to put real, historic black figures at the center of their own stories. Each is one page long. Many students will be able to read them on their own; others may do better working in groups or with the teacher. The profiles that are easiest to read and understand are noted with an asterisk (*).

To use the profiles independently of the other student materials, give each student one profile to read and summarize. If locations are mentioned in the profile, students can look for them on one of the story maps, or on a map of contemporary New York. With the whole class, identify some of the common threads in the profiles, such as people who lived in the Land of the Blacks (an area of farms given to freed blacks by the Dutch), indentured servants, runaways, rebels, free blacks, etc. Let students form small groups around these issues to compare and contrast the stories.

For summaries of each profile, see page 5. Teachers should review these before introducing *Life Stories* to their students.

Facsimile of *The New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy*

This reprint presents a snapshot of New York on December 13, 1764. Slavery was still entrenched, the merchants had many imported goods, and New Yorkers were angry about the first British tax on the colonies. For guidance on using this facsimile, see Lesson 7.

Story Maps

Four bird's-eye views show New York City in 1664, 1741, 1783, and 1827. Streets and important locations from the history of slavery in New York are identified and described. These drawings are valuable in combination with other materials, but they can also be used alone. It will be helpful if you have a current New York City street map in the classroom, so students can compare the New York they know to the city of the past. Ask students to look at each story map carefully. Do they see familiar place names? What do the buildings look like? Then compare the maps over time: what changed and what remained constant in New York?

Summaries of Life Stories

The Dutch Period

Groot Manuel de Gerrit

One of first male slaves brought to Manhattan, Groot Manuel was nearly hanged for murder, and later became a half-free landowner. The concept of half-freedom may be difficult for some students to understand at first. This is a relatively positive story about a man who survived an execution attempt, gained a measure of freedom, and owned a large plot in a recognizable area of today's New York. (Groot Manuel was sometimes known as Manuel de Gerrit de Reus.)

Dorothy Creole

One of the first female slaves in Manhattan, Dorothy Creole adopted the orphaned Antonio, became a half-free landowner, and served as the executor of a child's estate. Like the story of Groot Manuel, hers deals with the unfamiliar idea of limited freedom, and it contains the brief story of an infant who lost both parents. Dorothy Creole's adoption of the boy, however, shows how one individual stepped forward to care for a child in need. This profile also describes how the lives of blacks and whites intersected during the Dutch period.

The British Period

*Solomon Peters

Peters and his wife were born in New York and were free blacks during the early British period. Peters wrote a will in 1694 that provides a glimpse into the properties he had accumulated over time. The story ends with his widow selling the farm in the Land of the Blacks to a white man, one transaction in the slow disappearance of this black community.

Hooglandt's Robin

Robin was enrolled in a church class, but his owner refused him permission to be baptized. Robin was later convicted of murder in the 1712 slave uprising, and he was hanged in chains to die slowly. This story focuses on a question that long puzzled Europeans in the new world: whether white Christians had an obligation to free a baptized slave. Robin's execution makes this one of the grimmest stories in the collection, but Robin refused to lie in order to save his life.

Regnier's Mars

Mars was tried three separate times in connection with the 1712 uprising. He had become a pawn in a feud between two white men and was only saved when the Royal Governor reprieved him. The story ends with Mars alive, but returning to slavery.

*Richard Gerret

Gerret was a free black child indentured to a woman named Agnes May. To really understand this profile, students need to know that indenture was different from slavery, and that the adult Gerret was in competition with enslaved blacks for work. (Use the profiles of John Fortune and Charles Roberts for different views of indenture.) It may be easier for students to consider the possibility that Gerret was descended from Groot Manuel de Gerrit, and to think about the stories enslaved blacks might have heard about their ancestors.

***The profiles that are easiest to read and understand are noted with an asterisk.**

John Fortune
This free black man earned money to buy his own wife and son, and probably his daughter. This was extraordinary, given the restrictions on free blacks at the time. Later the Fortunes arranged for their daughter to be indentured.

*McLennan's Female Slave
This 20-year-old woman was a skilled domestic servant, as described in her owner's sale ad. The profile introduces the many tasks slave women performed, and it captures some of what it meant to be owned and to work for a "master." Students can also consider whether the ad can be believed, and if so, why the woman might have tried so hard to do good work.

Burk's Sarah (a story of 1741)
Sarah was the only black woman charged in the 1741 slave plot. During her trial, she tried to both protect other blacks and save herself. Ultimately she was deported to Hispaniola, not executed. (NOTE: The 1741 stories of Burk's Sarah, Ward's Will, and Wyncoop's London begin and end with the same text describing the uprising.)

Ward's Will (a story of 1741)
Will came to New York from the Caribbean, where he had taken part in two uprisings. He was charged in the 1741 revolt but refused to confess because he believed other black people would kill him for it. He also thought New York City blacks were cowards. Most of the slaves found guilty of the 1741 revolt were hanged, but Will was burned at the stake.

Wyncoop's London (a story of 1741)
London was said to have stolen a spoon from his owner so it could be hammered down to raise money for the 1741 revolt. Because he testified against the white tavern owner and other enslaved blacks, he was deported rather than executed.

Livingston's African Runaway
This man escaped soon after arriving in New York City. He spoke no English or Dutch, did not know whom he could trust or how he could get away. His owner, a future signer of the Declaration of Independence, thought the runaway was hiding in the Harlem woods. Because there is no evidence of what happened, students can consider whether he might have gotten away, or, if he was captured, how long he might have waited before he ran off again.

*Charles Roberts
This is a rousing story of an indentured servant who is essential to his employer's print shop. He followed the rules of indenture, but his owner did not, and Roberts ran off and disappeared. This story explores the life of the indentured servant, the level of skill among many black people, and the sometimes confusing line between slavery and indenture.

*Morehouse's Pegg
Pegg was a 40-year-old female runaway in New York City at a time when most runaways were young men who lived outside the city. She lived near the docks and may have tried to escape by signing on as a ship's cook.

Colonel Tye

Originally called Titus, this man ran away from his New Jersey owner and joined the British forces during the Revolution, a fairly common occurrence. Colonel Tye became one of the best known soldiers of his day, respected on both sides. He died from battle wounds, but not until after he returned to New Jersey and took revenge for a life of slavery. No matter for which side they fought, black people struggled for freedom just as whites did.

Peggy Gwynn

One of the thousands of black people who escaped to New York City during the Revolution, Peggy Gwynn later petitioned the British for permission to go with her husband to Nova Scotia. It is not clear why her petition was denied, but she may not have been in the city by the cut-off date. It is a sad story of an escape that fails at the last minute, and of two people probably separated forever.

*Deborah Squash

One of George Washington's slaves, Deborah Squash ran away from his Virginia estate, made her way to New York, and helped the British work to defeat her old master. She and her husband were on their way to Nova Scotia when Washington came to New York to reclaim all the slaves who had joined the British.

Boston King

King was a slave in South Carolina when the Revolution began. He ran away to join the British, and ultimately arrived in New York City. Later in his well-known memoir, he described the fear the runaways felt after the war ended and owners came to reclaim their "property." King did escape to Nova Scotia, where life was hard. He later sailed for Sierra Leone, became a teacher, and wrote his book.

The United States Period

John Jea

As an adult, Jea was a free black man and a minister who traveled and preached in America and Europe. When he wrote an account of his life, he included a description of his kidnapping from Africa, and details of his life as a slave in New York – what he ate and wore, and the work he did. The details are quite bleak, but without them students will not have a clear picture of what slavery really meant on a daily basis.

Jupiter Hammon

Hammon was well-educated, religious, a published poet, and a slave who did not want to be free. He felt old and unprepared, and he had had a better life than most slaves. In a famous address to young blacks as emancipation neared, he celebrated their coming freedom, but he warned them about the dangers of sin, which he viewed as a kind of slavery in itself.

*Mary

This 8-year-old was kidnapped in Poughkeepsie and taken aboard a ship with other blacks, probably to be sold to the South. She was rescued by the New York Manumission Society and her kidnappers punished. The story does not say this, but many other kidnapped children were not as fortunate as Mary.

*Catherine Ferguson

Ferguson, like Dorothy Creole, is a powerful mother figure. She worked as a baker – her cakes were famous – but her main interests were children and religion. She started a Sunday school where she taught religion, and she took care of many children, black and white, who needed help.

Rose Butler
Butler's was a famous criminal case of her time. She was arrested for arson, tried, and hanged in public. She became the focus of white fears that black people would be lawless when slavery ended. This story raises contemporary parallels about the treatment of blacks by the legal system.

*Jack DeVoo
When emancipation came to New York State, Jack chose a life of dancing at the Catherine Market over remaining with his master, who had promised to take care of him if he stayed on to work. It sounds like a romantic choice, but the life of the dancers could be humiliating, and they made little money.

*Serena Baldwin
This 14-year-old graduate of the African Free School is writing a letter to her teacher from Haiti, where she has gone to make a new life and work as a teacher. It is a hopeful, enthusiastic story.

William Hewlett
Hewlett was a well-known stage performer of his day. He had a successful career at the African Grove Theater, but white animosity and the growing popularity of minstrel shows ended his career.

*William Hamilton
Hamilton was one of several educated free blacks who became prominent as the end of slavery approached. He helped start the New York African Society for Mutual Relief, and argued for a subdued celebration to mark the end of slavery. This profile focuses on some of the political decisions black people were grappling with in the last years of slavery.

John Russwurm
The son of a black mother, Russwurm was raised and educated by his white father. He later took on the cause of black people, co-founded *Freedom's Journal*, and resettled in Liberia after he lost confidence in America as a place where blacks could ever be really free.

Peter Williams, Jr.
Educated at the African Free School, Williams was a minister who spoke eloquently on the occasion of America's withdrawal from the international slave trade. He thanked whites for helping to bring this about, and encouraged blacks to behave honorably and respect the law.

*Belinda Lucas
In her own words, Lucas recounts her kidnapping from Africa, her long life, her work, her house, and her purchase of her own freedom and her husband's. She is an appealing, energetic, and independent woman who faced many difficult times. She tells her story in an uplifting way, though the language may sound dated to students.

Peter Van Wagener
Sojourner Truth's son, Van Wagener was kidnapped as a five-year-old and brutally abused in Alabama. He was rescued through his mother's efforts and returned to her, but later he had trouble with the law and could not hold a job. He eventually went to sea, lost contact with his mother, and vanished.

*Sojourner Truth
She began life as a slave named Isabella, but Sojourner Truth became a free woman, a preacher, an abolitionist, and a powerful speaker. The story of her son, Peter Van Wagener, is told briefly in this profile, but without the most difficult details.

Lesson Plans

The first four lesson plans explore cultural memories, work and daily life, slave resistance, and freedom. A fifth lesson plan looks at language, names, and power. Lesson Six covers fiction and non-fiction writing assignments. Lesson Seven provides discussion questions for the facsimile of the December 13, 1764 issue of *The New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy*. These lessons were designed to be adapted by teachers as needed.

1

Lesson One

Memories of Africa

Teacher Background

When Africans arrived in New York, they had been pulled away from their homes, families, friends, and the lives they had known. Their loss was monumental, but it was not complete because they brought with them languages, memories, and customs. Throughout the period of slavery in New York, many of the city's slaves were imported directly from Africa, so the pain of missing home played out again and again. This is one reason that African culture was kept alive in the city.

Aim

Students will be able to analyze and discuss the cultural memories slaves brought to New York from Africa.

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

Elementary: 1.1.a; 1.2.b; 1.4.b; 1.4.c; 2.1.c; 2.2.a; 2.4.b; 2.4.c
Intermediate: 1.2.b; 1.3.d; 1.4.a; 1.4.d; 2.1.c; 2.2.c; 2.4.a; 3.1.d
Commencement: 1.2.b; 1.3.a; 1.4.a; 2.1.b; 2.2.c; 2.2.e; 2.3.a; 2.3.b; 2.4.a; 3.1.f; 3.1.g
(See text of relevant New York State Learning Standards, p. 27.)

Materials

- *Buried Stories: Lessons from the African Burial Ground.*
- For kidnapping stories, use the profiles of John Jea and Belinda Lucas from Life Stories.

In the Classroom

Begin by asking students about their experiences with moving. What do they remember about places where they once lived, or places they have visited? When African people were in New York, what memories would they have had of home? How would the memories stay alive in New York?

Use *Buried Stories* to introduce the evidence that has been found in the African Burial Ground. What African customs were evident in New York? What other customs did students learn about at the exhibit? What African customs and influences do children know about today?

2

Lesson Two

Work and Everyday Life

Teacher Background

The institution of slavery was fundamentally about work, and specifically about the decision of many whites to make money by forcing enslaved blacks to work without pay. What work did slaves actually do? In both the North and the South, much of it was hauling and lifting heavy loads. There were important regional differences, though. In the South, large numbers of enslaved men and women lived together in separate quarters and did mostly agricultural work in cotton, tobacco, rice, and sugar fields. Some also worked as domestic servants in the house of an owner who was probably rich. In New York City, slave owners were sometimes wealthy, but they were more likely to be ordinary tradesmen and shopkeepers who owned one or two slaves. Enslaved women worked as domestic servants in these owners' households. The men often were trained to do skilled work, and sometimes they were taught to read and write.

Aim

Students will be able to identify and explain the different kinds of work performed by enslaved people in New York City.

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

Elementary: 1.4.c; 2.2.a; 2.2.b; 2.4.c; 3.1.a; 3.1.c; 3.1.e; 3.2.c; 4.1.c; 4.1.e; 4.2.b; 4.2.c
Intermediate: 1.3.b; 1.4.a; 2.1.c; 2.2.c; 2.3.c; 2.4.a; 2.4.d; 3.1.d; 4.1.a; 4.1.c; 4.2.a; 4.2.c; 4.2.d
Commencement: 1.2.b; 1.3.a; 2.2.c; 2.2.e; 2.3.a; 2.4.a; 3.1.g; 3.2.b; 4.1.g; 4.2.a
(See text of relevant New York State Learning Standards, p. 27.)

Materials

- Story maps for 1664 and 1741.
- *Buried Stories*, for evidence of how hard people worked.
- *Life Stories* profiles of Groot Manuel de Gerrit, Richard Gerret, John Fortune, McLennan's Female Slave, Charles Roberts, Morehouse's Pegg, Boston King, John Jea, and Belinda Lucas.
- *Looking at Slavery in New York*. Use especially charts 2, 3, and 4.
- Facsimile of *The New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy*.

In the Classroom

Begin in the present, and ask students what work they see going on around them. What kinds of jobs are being done? Introduce the period of the 1620s, when Europeans first arrived and Manhattan was still dense forest. What work needed to be done to make a town here? Move forward to the 1700s, when there was a small city here. What work was needed then?

Use the materials listed for this lesson to help students test their ideas about work in colonial New York. Ask them to make a list of the kinds of work done by blacks, enslaved and free, in *Life Stories*. Use the facsimile of *The New-York Gazette* to consider the kinds of work being done in New York City in December of 1764, and the kinds of skills the city required. Students should understand that slaves' work changed over time, as the city became established.

Ask students to use the story maps for 1664 and 1741 to find locations in New York that were built with slave labor. What other locations might have been built by slaves?

In a wrap-up discussion, help students understand that the labor of slaves helped build the city of New York, just as the city's role in the trading of slaves and the products of slave plantations helped establish it as a major world port. Without those two centuries of slavery, New York would probably not be the city it is.

3

Lesson Three

Resistance

Teacher Background

Enslaved people sometimes resisted slavery in dramatic ways. They might run away, pick up arms, or in some rare instances take their case to court. There were other, less risky ways to resist, what historians call "everyday resistance." A slave could refuse to smile, "accidentally" drop a plate, do a task slowly or poorly, or hide the master's favorite tobacco. Owners might never know if these were done on purpose or not. Other things enslaved people did may not look like resistance at first, but they were. Doing a job extremely well, stepping in to care for a child, refusing to lie, fighting for black rights – these were all ways to maintain a sense of dignity and fight against degrading circumstances.

Aim

Students will be able to explain the many ways in which African Americans resisted the oppression of slavery.

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

Elementary: 1.4.c; 3.1.a; 3.1.e; 4.1.c
Intermediate: 1.3.b; 1.4.d
Commencement: 1.2.b; 1.3.a; 1.4.a; 2.4.a
(See text of relevant New York State Learning Standards, p. 27.)

Materials

- Profiles of Dorothy Creole, Hooglandt's Robin, Burk's Sarah, Livingston's African Runaway, Morehouse's Pegg, Colonel Tye, Deborah Squash, Rose Butler, John Russwurm, Belinda Lucas, and Sojourner Truth. Most of the other profiles will also give students material about how people resisted. John Jea's memories, for example, provide a vivid picture of the life slaves were resisting.
- *Buried Stories*, for material about ongoing African rituals throughout slave times.
- *Laws Affecting Blacks in Manhattan*
- Story maps for 1664, 1741, 1783, and 1827.

In the Classroom

Draw on students' experience with authority. How are young people's lives controlled by adults? What do adults hope to accomplish? How does it feel to a child? How do children resist when they feel over-controlled? What happens as children grow up? Move the discussion to the issue of slavery. How were slaves' lives controlled and by whom? What were the people in control hoping to accomplish? What features of slavery – such as its permanence, the loss of family life, overwork – made it an extreme form of control? The goal is to use students' experience to inform their understanding of slavery, not to equate slavery and childhood.

Use the profiles to consider different ways slaves could resist. Organize these strategies into categories such as everyday resistance, escape, good works, relying on faith, drawing on African traditions, and fighting back. In what circumstances would an enslaved person choose one form over another? Help students understand that the same person might use all of these forms of resistance in different times or circumstances.

Focus on the option of running away, which happened frequently. Use the profiles of Livingston's African Runaway and Morehouse's Pegg, and the ads in the facsimile of *The New-York Gazette.* What evidence is there about why these people ran away? How much planning had they done? Why would running away be an appealing option for a slave?

Focus on the option of fighting back. Use the profiles of Hooglandt's Robin, Burk's Sarah, Colonel Tye, Deborah Squash, Rose Butler, and Sojourner Truth. What different ways did each of these people fight back? Was it a choice people made or a spur-of-the-moment decision? What was the outcome of their resistance? How did reactions to slaves' resistance vary, depending on what side people were on? For example, Hooglandt's Robin was accused of "crimes" and "murder." Are those the right words? What about the question of justice? In general, if an authority is unjust, is any form of resistance justified? If not, what are the limits?

4

Lesson Four

Freedom

Teacher Background

Throughout slavery times, there were black people who managed to become free, but freedom was often limited in one way or another, often to make things easier for whites. Under the Dutch, "freed" slaves were neither entirely free nor entirely enslaved. Later, the British made freedom rare. After the American Revolution, more slaves were freed, though at a painfully slow pace. Finally, freedom came on July 4, 1827, and it represented a real breakthrough.

Aim

Students will be able to describe the end of slavery in New York and explore some of the meanings of freedom.

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

Elementary: 1.1.a
Intermediate: 1.2.a; 1.2.b; 1.3.b; 1.3.c
Commencement: 1.1.a; 1.2.b; 1.3.a; 1.4.a; 2.4.a
(See text of relevant New York State Learning Standards, p. 27.)

Materials

- Profiles of Groot Manuel de Gerrit, Solomon Peters, John Fortune, Richard Gerret, Jupiter Hammon, Jack DeVoo, Serena Baldwin, William Hamilton, Belinda Lucas, Sojourner Truth.
- Story Maps of 1664, 1741, 1787, and 1827.
- *Looking at Slavery in Manhattan*, especially Chart 5.

In the Classroom

Ask students what it means to be free. What's the best definition of the term? What are the barriers to freedom in their lives?

Use *Life Stories* to focus on black people who lived during the Dutch and British colonial periods. When enslaved people became free, what were they free to do? For example, they were free to keep their own wages. What were they free not to do? For example, they did not have to do whatever a slave owner told them to do. How was their freedom limited?

Ask students to focus on the stories of black people who lived in the early 1800s, when more and more slaves were being freed. Did these former slaves face different issues from earlier free blacks? What would it mean for a family if some members were free and others were still legally enslaved?

5

Lesson Five

Naming Rights

Teacher Background

Language reflects power relationships in a culture. In general, the powerful assign names and descriptive terms to the less powerful. Slave owners often picked the names given to slaves, and these names reflected the attitudes of the enslaving culture. In the Dutch period, enslaved Africans had first names and last names that indicated something of their personal history before they were enslaved. For example, Groot Manuel de Gerrit kept his Spanish or Portuguese name; he was given a nickname as well as a Dutch surname common among the Dutch. Dorothy Creole's name suggests that she came from a world in which African and European cultures were mixed. The name "Creole" may have begun as a descriptive term used by Europeans, and later developed into a surname.

In the particularly repressive British period, slaves had only a first name, with the owner's surname appearing before it as a possessive, a reminder of ownership: Regnier's Mars, Burk's Sarah. Sometimes these first names were actually African in origin. Quash, Quack, Quamino, and Cuff were Akan names based on the days of the week; "quash," for example, means Sunday. A slave like Walter's Quack, a real person who was charged in the 1741 uprising, was able to keep his name as an important connection to his culture.

During the United States period, first and last names became common again, though they were English names, like William Hamilton or Belinda Lucas. (The only African-based surname in *Life Stories* is Deborah Squash's; Squash was a variant of "quash.") At the time of emancipation, many former slaves proudly gave themselves new surnames: "Freeman" was a popular choice. Sojourner Truth named herself as well, but she decided to reflect her uniqueness, and she picked a name unlike any other.

Names applied to groups of people have also changed over time. Some once-common pejoratives for people of African descent are now reviled. Other terms, like "negro" and "colored" were considered polite at one time, but now seem out of date, inaccurate, or condescending. Some terms can be used by an African American that would sound insulting from someone else. In general, acceptable terms tend to change as people gain power and decide for themselves how they want to be known.

Aim

Students will be able to describe how slaves' names, and terms applied to African Americans, changed and reflected the time and circumstances they lived in.

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

Elementary: 1.1.a; 1.2.a; 1.2.b; 1.2.c; 1.4.b
Intermediate: 1.2.a
Commencement: 1.2.b; 1.3.a; 2.3.b
(See text of relevant New York State Learning Standards, p. 27.)

Materials

- Profiles of Groot Manuel de Gerritt, Regnier's Mars, Richard Gerret, Livingston's African Runaway, McLennan's Female Slave, Deborah Squash, Peter Williams, Jr., and Sojourner Truth.
- *Buried Stories.*

In the Classroom

Working in small groups, ask students to tell the history of their own first name. Were they named for someone? Did their mother like the sound of it? Do they have a unique name? Do they like it? Did they ever have a nickname? Have they ever picked a new name for themselves? Next lead a class discussion about how names are given today, and how students feel about their names. You might also look at a few popular rap performers' names. What do the names have in common? What makes a good name for a rapper? Why do they decide not to use their real names?

Individually or in groups, students can use a graphic organizer to list the names of individual black people from *Life Stories* according to when they lived (Dutch colonial period, British colonial period, or United States period). They can use the contents page of *Life Stories* for help with this. What differences do students see in the three periods? If they need guidance, suggest that they look specifically at first names and last names, at how and where white owners' names are included in slaves' names, and at the names of free blacks.

In small groups, or in a whole-class discussion, students can talk about how black peoples' names changed over the period of slavery, and how the names reflected the realities of the times they lived in. What does "Groot Manuel de Gerrit" say about slavery during the Dutch colonial period? What does "Burk's Sarah" say about the British period? What does "Peter Williams, Jr." say about the early 1800s? Students might also want to think about people whose names are not recorded, like Livingston's African Runaway, McLennan's Female Slave, and the men and women in the African Burial Ground. What have we lost by not knowing these names?

Another question is how enslaved people might have subverted the effort to name them. In the South, slaves sometimes had private names within the black community that owners knew nothing about. Could this have happened in the North? Do students have private names that are not used by adults? What value and meaning do private names have? What would private names have meant to the community of enslaved people in New York? Could they be a form of resistance, or a way to maintain ties to Africa or family members? (It is known that some slaves in the South named babies after family members who had been sold, as a way to hold on to a lost relative.)

A final discussion can center on broader issues about language and terms used to describe people, beginning with students' own experience. What terms do they use to describe groups they belong to? Is it okay if outsiders use these words to describe them? Are there terms that were acceptable once, but are now rejected? Then you can raise the issue of how people of African descent have been referred to over time. For example, in old maps the big cemetery at Chambers Street was labeled the "Negros Burial Ground." It is now called the African Burial Ground. Why do students think that change was made?

What about the use of the word "slave"? Is it an insensitive or negative term? Does it rob people again of their humanity, or is it an honest way to describe a historic reality? Are "enslaved black" or "enslaved person" or "enslaved African" better terms? In their writings, Sojourner Truth, John Jea, Boston King, and Frederick Douglass all used the word "slave." Should historic terms be changed to reflect modern sensibilities, or to honor people in ways that they were not honored in life?

6

Lesson Six

Writing Lives

Teacher Background

Almost nothing is known about how slaves thought or felt, but students can use the historic record and their imaginations to delve further into the lives of enslaved blacks in New York City.

Aim

Students will be able to imagine the lives of enslaved blacks, and to empathize with them, by writing fiction or non-fiction based on history.

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

Elementary: 1.4.c; 2.4.c
Intermediate: 1.3.b; 1.4.a; 1.4.b; 1.4.d; 2.4.a
Commencement: 1.2.b; 1.3.a; 2.2.c; 3.2.b; 4.1.g
(See text of relevant New York State Learning Standards, p. 27.)

Materials

- All classroom materials for students, as needed.

In the Classroom

Ask students to write a fictional story about a child born in Africa in 1760 and brought into slavery in New York around 1770. Students can write the story of the person's whole life, or they can focus on a particular period of time. If they follow the story until their character is about 50, they will cover the important events around the American Revolution and the passage of the Gradual Emancipation laws. Students should draw details from the other student materials so their fictions are based in historical accuracy.

Students can also write a non-fiction profile like those in *Life Stories*. For a source, they can use the runaway ad for a "Negro Man named Jasper" on page 3 of *The New-York Gazette* facsimile. The original runaway ad for Morehouse's Pegg appears just below the ad for Jasper. Students can compare it to Pegg's profile in *Life Stories* for some guidance. The most important thing is to read the runaway ad carefully and look at each detail. In this case, the dates are important. The newspaper is dated December 13, 1764, but the notice is dated November 4 and says that Jasper ran away "the twelfth of last month." He has been gone for two months; is he safe somewhere? Students should use a map to find Middletown, New Jersey. How far is it from New York City? The notice says that he "understands farming business." What work could he do in the city? Does he have enough clothing for winter in New York? How could he have gotten more? (What about the notice of clothes stolen from a house, on page 3 of the *Gazette*?) Is the owner's description of Jasper detailed enough for someone to recognize him? (For a collection of runaway ads, see *Pretends to be Free: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey,* edited by Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown.)

7

Lesson Seven

Reading *The Gazette*

Teacher Background

This issue of *The New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy* was published a few months after the British passed the Sugar Act, which taxed imports from non-British territories, including coffee, wine, indigo, sugar, and textiles. It was the first law Parliament passed specifically to raise revenue from the colonies. When this issue appeared, slavery was still a critical part of New York City's life and economy, but relatively few items in the paper refer specifically to slavery. However, the effects of slavery can be seen in the many merchant ads for imported items tied to slave labor or the slave trade.

Some notable items appearing in the facsimile:

Page 1: *Prices Current in New York,* which students can use to understand what different items cost, and how the costs related; *A Proposal to the Publick* about the opening of a new school, specifying that boys and girls will be taught separately; an ad for the Queen's Head Tavern, placed by black tavern keeper Samuel Francis (Fraunces).

Page 2: Articles about relationships with local Indians appear on this page, as well as two very important notices about colonial relations with Britain. Under the heading, *Boston, December 3*, is a report of the French distilling their own molasses in the West Indies, to improve their "African Trade." This article addresses the importance of sugar to the slave trade, the rivalries between England and France, and the complex ties between sugar, the West Indies, Africa, England, France, and New York. The background is that the British have been trying for years, unsuccessfully, to prevent the colonists from trading with the French. In 1760 they passed higher taxes on foreign items being imported to the colonies. This article is about the French response: they will distill their own molasses and trade their products to buy slaves in Africa. This will bypass the New York and New England distilleries that have been distilling French molasses, a costly development for the economy that the article blames on the British duties on foreign molasses. Under the heading, *Providence, December 3*, there is another complaint about British taxes. The Rhode Island General Assembly is drafting a message for the King, asking that "stamp duties and internal taxes be not laid on the people here, without their own consents."

Page 3: A list of ships arriving in Jamaica from Liverpool, Philadelphia, Africa; debtors' notices mentioning Judge Daniel Horsmanden; *Whereas Claudine,* about a runaway, probably white, wife; *Rum and Muscovado Sugar,* available cheap for cash (compare to the list of prices on page 1, and to the two Antigua paintings in the Photo Cards); two runaway slave ads, including one for Morehouse's Pegg and another for a man named Jasper; *Stolen out of the House,* several items of clothing – perhaps stolen by a runaway?

Page 4: *The Public are hereby informed*, an ad for a new school that can be compared to a similar ad on page 1; another debtor's notice mentioning Judge Daniel Horsmanden; *If any Person in the Eastern Governments*, requesting a contractor for cutting up to 6,000 cords of firewood, and for laborers to do the work; a notice, printed along the bottom edge, of a new newspaper printed by John Holt. (For more about Holt, see the profile of Charles Roberts.)

Aim

Students will be able to use a primary source to explore a specific moment in New York's history, and to see how slavery connected to many aspects of the city's life.

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

Elementary: 1.4.c; 2.3.b; 2.4.b; 2.4.c; 3.1.a; 3.1.c; 3.1.e; 4.1.c; 4.1.e; 4.2.b; 4.2.c
Intermediate: 1.2.b; 1.3.c; 1.4.a; 1.4.b; 1.4.d; 2.1.c; 2.2.c; 2.4.a; 3.1.d; 4.1.a; 4.1.c; 4.2.a
Commencement: 1.2.b; 1.3.a; 2.2.c; 2.2.e; 2.4.a; 3.1.f; 3.1.g; 3.2.b; 4.1.g; 4.2.a
(See text of relevant New York State Learning Standards, p. 27.)

Materials

- Facsimile of December 13, 1764 edition of *The New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy*.

In the Classroom

Give students time to examine the paper, which is very different from modern newspapers. What do they notice? Can they find news? Advertisements? What can they tell about New York City in December of 1764?

Find the runaway ad placed by Rebeccah Morehouse and compare it to the profile of Morehouse's Pegg in *Life Stories*. What context was added to the profile? Was anything left out? Compare the two runaway ads that appear on page 3. In what ways are they similar or different?

Make a list of items available from merchants, and note how many of the items are imported, and how many are luxuries as opposed to necessities. Who would have bought these items? How did slavery help provide white families with the resources to buy imported goods? What role did slaves have in growing or producing these items?

How much attention did items about slavery receive in this edition of the newspaper? Look for all the specific references to slavery, such as ships arriving, fears about the French molasses distilleries, and runaway ads. How many can students find? What topics receive more direct attention? Then look for items that do not mention slavery but imply it, such as ads for molasses, sugar, rum, and other imported items, and the notice about the theft of clothing from a house. What picture of slavery in New York emerges when all the references are combined?

What signs of discontent with the British appear in this issue of the newspaper? Students should look especially at page 2, under the headings *Boston, December 3* and *Providence, December 8.* What connection do these items show between the slave trade and the rumblings of colonial discontent?

The History of Slavery in New York City

The following overview of the history of slavery in this city is a reprint of the entry for "slavery" in* The Encyclopedia of New York City, *edited by Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). The entry was written by Thomas J. Davis, Professor of History, Arizona State University, and edited by Marjorie Waters for the New-York Historical Society. Reprinted by permission.

Slavery was introduced in Manhattan by the Dutch, who settled eleven African men there in 1626 and three women in 1628, all of whom had been captured in war. The Dutch West India Company was among the foremost slave traders in the world but provided only a few Africans to New Netherland, where slaves commanded lower prices than in the Caribbean. Most slaves taken before the 1650s were captured by Dutch or Portuguese ships. Initially the company, the main employer in the colony, used slaves for projects such as building the fort of New Amsterdam, laying roads, carrying merchandise, and providing officers with domestic services like cooking and laundering. During these years slaves were married in church and their children were registered with the company. As the settlement became established and public works slackened, the need for slaves diminished and the eleven men of the first cargo petitioned for their freedom. On 25 February 1644 they and their wives received their conditional release in return for services on demand and lifelong payments due annually in cash or kind. The company surrendered none of its claims to service, shifted living costs to the petitioners, and bound to service their children, born and unborn; it later freed some of the nearly two dozen persons affected by this arrangement, and a comparable number were freed privately by 1664 when the English took control of the colony. At this time at least 9 percent of the eight thousand settlers [in New Netherland] were Africans, and there were communities of slaves and free blacks.

The Articles of Capitulation formalizing the surrender of the Dutch preserved all the property rights that they recognized, and the ownership of slaves was transferred to the English, who soon institutionalized slavery by endorsing it as a system of property rights in the Laws of 1665, the first legal code in the colony. Slaves were classified as chattel bound to serve involuntary, indefinite, and heritable tenure, and their marriages were no longer recognized as legal. American Indians and Africans were enslaved, but the laws made "slaves" synonymous with "Negroes," and the Iroquois Confederacy, the Hurons, and the Delawares made pacts with the English to return runaways. To help keep peace the colonial governor Edmund Andros prohibited the enslavement of Indians from local tribes in 1679; others continued to be enslaved until the 1740s.

White working men protested the increasing use of slaves in shops, along the docks, and in skilled and unskilled trades, and eventually municipal licensing ordinances banned blacks from driving wagons and selling goods in public markets. The restrictions mostly affected free blacks, since slaves continued to be employed in these ways by their masters. Restrictions on slavery were proposed as early as the 1680s. Many people resented the power of the Royal African Company (chartered in 1672), which had a monopoly in the slave trade: a tax was levied on the importing of slaves, though smuggling made this ineffective. By the beginning of the eighteenth century about 14.2 percent of the population was black. The number of slaves entering the port was 225 between 1701 and 1704, and 185 between 1710 and 1712; all were from Africa, and unlike those who had entered on earlier shipments from the West Indies they had no experience with slavery. Between 1700 and 1774 the city legally admitted about 6800 slaves, 2800 of whom were from Africa. Slave markets at the foot of Wall Street were named after prominent families involved in slave trading, including the Crommelins, Schuylers, Van Zandts, and Waltons. Other families that made high profits legally and illegally in the slave trade were the Beekmans, Crugers, Livingstons, Philips, Van Hornes, and Van Cortlandts.

Slaves did have a very few rights: those who willfully killed or maimed them were punished under a law passed in 1686. But the purpose of most laws was to control rather than to protect slaves. A set of laws passed in 1702 prohibited slaves from escaping, taking part in conspiracies or insurrections, trafficking in stolen goods, assembling in groups larger than three, bearing arms, and traveling without permission. In 1705 the state assembly declared baptism ineffective for slaves and from the following year endorsed conversion. Local ordinances barred slaves from various activities.

Despite the laws slaves often stole, gambled, drank, evaded curfew, and disturbed the peace; less frequently they committed serious crimes such as assault, battery, murder (usually of whites), and arson. After a time in which the number of slaves increased dramatically, recently arrived Africans led an uprising on the night of 6 April 1712, in which eight whites were killed and more than twenty others seriously injured. In addition fires were set in the east ward, although only a few out-buildings were burned and property damage was light. Twenty-five blacks paid for the incident with their lives; six were hunted down and nineteen were later executed. During the same year and again in 1730 more laws were passed to tighten the control of slaves.

The division of families was a principal cause of hardship for slaves. Like those in many other cities, slave families in New York City seldom shared one household. Mothers and young children lived together but men were housed separately. Visiting privileges were granted for Sundays, but husbands and wives frequently negotiated weeknight meetings, usually at the woman's quarters. Often men were denied visits and violence resulted; in 1741 Roosevelt Quack was kept from seeing his wife, the governor's cook, and burned the governor's house. The separation of mothers and children at sale, especially beyond visiting distance, was also a source of great distress.

Slaves recognized and respected their own family unions regardless of law, and networks of kin developed early. The proximity of houses to each other also encouraged networks for friendship and recreation. Some slaves organized theft rings such as the Geneva Club of the 1730s; members conspired with whites and caroused with them in notorious taverns where they held private celebrations. Some celebrations were public, but carnivals such as Pinkster and Election Day that were held by rural blacks were restrained in Manhattan, perhaps because officials feared that they could not assure public safety.

Between 1730 and 1740 at least 1429 slaves were brought to the city. By 1741 the ratio of men to women had become imbalanced: because of the growing use of slaves in business the number of men for every hundred women rose from ninety-nine in 1731 to 120 in 1741. On 18 March 1741 an uprising began that lasted more than six months and resulted in massive property damage. The seat of royal government was destroyed by fire, including the governor's residence and the rest of Fort George on the southwestern tip of Manhattan; other houses and businesses burned during the following three weeks. The only death was that of a soldier at the fort. An investigation led by Justice Daniel Horsmanden of the supreme court blamed a conspiracy of slaves aided by white accomplices for the fires, and trials on various charges resulted in the execution of thirty black men, two white men, and two white women, as well as the deportation of seventy-two blacks. Misgivings arose almost immediately that the punishments had exceeded the crimes, and the episode remained controversial. In the 1740s the proportion of slaves in the population peaked at 20.9 percent.

Just before the American Revolution New York City was second only to Charleston, South Carolina, among urban centers of slavery. There were 3137 blacks in Manhattan, about 14.3 percent of the population, and the number grew during the war as thousands of runaways and Loyalists' slaves flooded Manhattan, hopeful for freedom that had been promised by the British. Many bore arms against patriots who owned slaves. The local

Black Brigade was housed at several sites, including 18 Broadway and 10 Church Street, and distinguished itself variously as the Royal African Regiment and the Ethiopian Regiment in battles in New York State and New Jersey. Many slaves won their freedom from one side or the other during the war. Nearly five thousand blacks sailed with the British in the evacuation of the city in November 1783.

In the decades after the revolution the effects of national liberty eventually eroded slavery in New York City. Large numbers of white workers who moved to the city forced gradual emancipation but like many others refused to extend civil rights to blacks, which were omitted from legislation passed by the state in 1785. There were 2369 slaves in the city in 1790.

The first step toward ending slavery in the city was an act of 1799, which declared free the children of slaves born on or after 4 July, [but required that these children remain servants to their mother's owner until they reached the age of 25 for women, and 28 for men. The law also called for] the registration of children indentured to their masters until the age of manumission. A law passed in 1809 recognized the legality of marriages between slaves and prohibited for the first time the forced separation of slave families. In 1817 the state legislature and Governor Daniel D. Tompkins agreed to abolish slavery in New York on 4 July 1827, a date followed by two days of singing, parades, and fireworks. Complete abolition was not achieved until 1841, when the state rescinded provisions allowing nonresidents to hold slaves for as long as nine months. Slavery nonetheless remained a part of the economy in New York City until the Civil War. The slave states had strong economic ties to the city, which the *New York Times* described as "the spot most tainted by Southern poison." Blacks lived in fear of the notorious "blackbirders," who until the war seized victims from the streets for sale in the South. Other hardships also persisted for former slaves, who had to eke out a living amid racial hostility that flared into such violent incidents as the draft riots of 1863.

Edgar J. McManus: *Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1966). Thomas J. Davis: "Slavery in Colonial New York City" (diss., Columbia University, 1974). Vivienne L. Kruger: "Born to Run: The Slave Family in Early New York, 1626 to 1827" (diss., Columbia University, 1985)

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Classroom Resources

For a list of useful books for teachers, see the Select Bibliography.

Books for Children

Building a New Land, by James Haskins and Kathleen Benson. A well-illustrated and well-researched non-fiction book for elementary and middle school students, covering slavery in New York and other colonies.

If You Lived in Colonial Times, by Ann McGovern. This book for Grades 3-5 is not at all about slavery; in fact, all the illustrated people are white. You might use it to help students think about why the history of northern slavery was often ignored. The book also answers the kinds of questions children ask about colonial times.

Jump Ship to Freedom, by James Collier and Christopher Collier. A novel for middle school children, this book follows 14-year-old Daniel, an enslaved boy from Connecticut, as he tries to escape a cruel master and jump ship in New York.

The Kidnapped Prince: The Life of Olaudah Equiano, by Olaudah Equiano, adapted by Ann Cameron. A children's version of one of the classics of slavery literature. Olaudah Equiano was an l1- year-old African boy who was kidnapped into slavery in the 1750s. He purchased his freedom ten years later and moved to England. Though he did not live in New York, much of Equiano's story applies to the experience of kidnapped African children.

Once on This River, by Sharon Dennis Wyeth. This novel for middle school children follows an 11-year-old girl who leaves Madagascar with her mother and travels to New York to try to free her uncle.

A Slave Family, by Bobbie Kalman and Amanda Bishop. A handsomely illustrated non-fiction work for Grades 3-5, this book follows a slave family in Virginia during the colonial period. You might use this book to help children think about the differences between northern and southern slavery. In New York, for example, slave families rarely lived together as this Virginia family does.

War Comes to Willie Freeman, by James Collier and Christopher Collier. In this novel, a young black girl disguises herself as a boy during the Revolution and begins a search for her mother. She is helped in New York by Sam Fraunces, a black man, owner of the Fraunces Tavern.

Websites

http://www.africanburialground.com. The website for the African Burial Ground contains a great deal of information about the history of the site, the research findings, the reinterment ceremony, and some concerns in the black community over treatment of the remains.

http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery. A thousand images are presented on this website about the Atlantic Slave Trade and slave life in the Americas.

http://www.hudsonvalley.org/web/phil-main.html. This website for Philipsburg Manor in Sleepy Hollow, New York, provides some fascinating material on how one living history museum has rethought the role slaves played in its history. Philipsburg Manor is a good field trip destination to learn how slaves worked and lived near New York City in 1750.

http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/Alan_J_Singer/slaverycurriculum.html. This valuable website includes slavery-related documents from throughout the New York region, with special emphasis on Long Island.

http://academicinfo.net/africanamslavery.html. This offers a comprehensive set of links to other websites on the subject of slavery and African Americans.

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/africa/africasbook.html. This website provides many links related to African culture and history.

http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html. The website of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a research library of the New York Public Library, has many searchable collections.

New York State Learning Standards fo Social Studies

The following tables illustrate how each lesson in this Teacher's Guide meets key components of the New York State Performance Standards for Social Studies. For more information on the standards, visit the New York State Education Department's website at www.emsc.nysed.gov.

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Elementary							
1. The study of New York State and United States history requires an analysis of the development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context, and the ways people are unified by many values, practices, and traditions. Students:							
a. Know the roots of American culture, its development from many different traditions, and the ways many people from a variety of groups and backgrounds played a role in creating it.	X			X	X		
2. Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives. Students:							
a. Gather and organize information about the traditions transmitted by various groups living in their neighborhood and community.					X		
b. Recognize how traditions and practices were passed from one generation to the next.	X				X		
c. Distinguish between near and distant past and interpret simple timelines.					X		
4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to: explain the significance of historical evidence; weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence; understand the concept of multiple causation; understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments. Students:							
b. Explore different experiences, beliefs, motives, and traditions of people living in their neighborhoods, communities, and State.	X				X		
c. View historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music and artifacts.	X	X	X			X	X
Intermediate							
2. Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives. Students:							
a. Describe the reasons for periodizing history in different ways.				X	X		
b. Investigate key turning points in New York State and United States history and explain why these events or developments are significant.	X			X			X
3. Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural, and religious developments in New York State and United States history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups. Students:							
b. Gather and organize information about the important achievements and contributions of individuals and groups living in New York State and the United States.		X	X	X		X	
d. Classify major developments into categories such as social, political, economic, geographic, technological, scientific, cultural or religious.	X						
4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to: explain the significance of historical evidence; weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence; understand the concept of multiple causation; understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments. Students:							
a. Consider the sources of historic documents, narratives, or artifacts and evaluate their reliability.	X	X				X	X
b. Understand how different experiences, beliefs, values, traditions, and motives cause individuals and groups to interpret historic events and issues from different perspectives.						X	X
d. Describe historic events through the eyes and experiences of those who were there.	X		X			X	X
Commencement							
1. The study of New York State and United States history requires an analysis of the development of American culture, its diversity, and multicultural context, and the ways people are unified by many values, practices, and traditions. Students:							
a. Analyze the development of American culture, explaining how ideas, values, beliefs, and traditions have changed over time and how they unite all Americans.				X			
2. Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives. Students:							
b. Develop and test hypotheses about important events, eras, or issues in New York State and United States history, setting clear and valid criteria for judging the importance and significance of these events, eras, or issues.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural, and religious developments in New York State and United States history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups. Students:							
a. Compare and contrast the experiences of different ethnic, national, and religious groups, including Native American Indians, in the United States, explaining their contributions to American society and culture.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to: explain the significance of historical evidence; weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence; understand the concept of multiple causation; understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments. Students:							
a. Analyze historical narratives about key events in New York State and United States history to identify the facts and evaluate the authors' perspectives.	X		X	X			

Standard 2: World History	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Elementary							
1. The study of world history requires an understanding of world cultures and civilizations, including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. This study also examines the human condition and the connections and interactions of people across time and space and the ways different people view the same event or issue from a variety of perspectives. Students:							
c. Study about different world cultures and civilizations focusing on their accomplishments, contributions, values, beliefs, and traditions.	X						
2. Establishing timeframes, exploring different periodizations, examining themes across time, and within cultures and focusing on important turning points in world history help organize the study of world cultures and civilizations. Students:							
a. Distinguish between past, present, and future time periods.	X	X					
d. Compare important events and accomplishments from different time periods in history.		X					
3. Study of the major social, political, cultural, and religious developments in world history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups. Students:							
b. Gather and present information about important developments from world history.							X
4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to investigate differing and competing interpretations of the theories of history, hypothesize about why interpretations change over time, explain the importance of historical evidence, and understand the concepts of change and continuity over time.							
b. Explore the lifestyles, beliefs, traditions, rules and laws, social/cultural needs and wants of people during different periods in history and in different parts of the world.	X						X
c. View historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music, and artifacts.	X	X				X	X
Intermediate							
1. The study of world history requires an understanding of world cultures and civilizations, including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. This study also examines the human condition and the connections and interactions of people across time and space and the ways different people view the same event or issue from a variety of perspectives. Students:							
c. Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.	X	X					X
2. Establishing timeframes, exploring different periodizations, examining themes across time and within cultures and focusing on important turning points in world history help organize the study of world cultures and civilizations. Students:							
c. Study about major turning points in world history by investigating the causes and other factors that brought about change and the results of these changes.	X	X					X
3. Study of the major social, political, cultural, and religious developments in world history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups. Students:							
c. Classify historic information according to the type of activity or practice: social/cultural, political, economic, geographic, scientific, technological, and historic.		X					
4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to: explain the significance of historical evidence; weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence; understand the concept of multiple causation; understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments. Students:							
a. Explain the literal meaning of a historical passage or primary source document, identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led up to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.	X	X				X	X
d. Investigate important events and developments in world history by posing analytical questions, selecting relevant data, distinguishing fact from opinion, hypothesizing cause-and-effect relationships, testing these hypotheses and forming conclusions.		X					
Commencement							
1. The study of world history requires an understanding of world cultures and civilizations, including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. This study also examines the human condition and the connections and interactions of people across time and space and the ways different people view the same event or issue from a variety of perspectives. Students:							
b. Understand the development and connectedness of Western civilization and other civilizations and cultures in many areas of the world over time.	X						
2. Establishing timeframes, exploring different periodizations, examining themes across time and within cultures and focusing on important turning points in world history help organize the study of world cultures and civilizations. Students:							
c. Analyze evidence critically and demonstrate an understanding of how circumstances of time and place influence perspective.	X	X				X	X
e. Investigate key events and developments and major turning points in world history to identify the factors that brought about change and the long-term effects of these changes.	X	X					X
3. Study of the major social, political, cultural, and religious developments in world history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups. Students:							
a. Analyze the roles and contributions of individuals and groups to social, political, economic, cultural, and religious practices and activities.	X	X					
b. Explain the dynamics of cultural change and how interactions between and among cultures have affected various cultural groups throughout the world.	X				X		
4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to: explain the significance of historical evidence; weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence; understand the concept of multiple causation; understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments. Students:							
a. Identify historical problems, pose analytical questions or hypotheses, research analytical questions or test hypotheses, formulate conclusions or generalizations.	X	X	X	X			X

	Lesson						
Standard 3: Geography	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Elementary							
1. Geography can be divided into six essential elements which can be used to analyze important historic, geographic, economic, and environmental questions and issues. These six elements include: the world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical settings (including natural resources), human systems, environment and society, and the use of geography. Students:							
a. Study about how people live, work and utilize natural resources.		X	X				X
c. Locate places within the local community, State, and nation; locate the Earth's continents in relation to each other and to principal parallels and meridians.		X					X
e. Investigate how people depend on and modify the physical environment.		X	X				X
2. Geography requires the development and application of the skills of asking and answering geographic questions; analyzing theories of geography; and acquiring, organizing, and analyzing geographic information. Students:							
c. Analyze geographic information by making relationships, interpreting trends and relationships, and analyzing geographic data.		X					
Intermediate							
1. Geography can be divided into six essential elements which can be used to analyze important historic, geographic, economic, and environmental questions and issues. These six elements include: the world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical settings (including natural resources), human systems, environment and society, and the use of geography. Students:							
d. Describe the relationships between people and environments and the connections between people and places.	X	X					X
Commencement							
1. Geography can be divided into six essential elements which can be used to analyze important historic, geographic, economic, and environmental questions and issues. These six elements include: the world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical settings (including natural resources), human systems, environment and society, and the use of geography. Students:							
f. Analyze how the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of the Earth's surface.	X						X
g. Explain how technological change affects people, places, and regions.	X	X					X
2. Geography requires the development and application of the skills of asking and answering geographic questions; analyzing theories of geography; and acquiring, organizing, and analyzing geographic information. Students:							
b. Locate and gather geographic information from a variety of primary and secondary sources.		X				X	X

Standard 4: Economics	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Elementary							
1. The study of economics requires an understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making, and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world. Students:							
c. Know that scarcity requires individuals to make choices and that these choices involve costs.		X	X				X
e. Understand how societies organize their economies to answer three fundamental economic questions: What goods and services shall be produced and in what quantities? How shall goods and services be produced? For who shall goods and services be produced?		X					X
2. Economics requires the development and application of the skills needed to make informed and well-reasoned economic decisions in daily and national life. Students:							
b. Collect economic information from textbooks, standard references, newspapers, periodicals and other primary and secondary resources.		X					X
c. Make hypotheses about economic issues and problems, testing, refining and eliminating hypotheses, and developing new ones when necessary.		X					X
Intermediate							
1. The study of economics requires an understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making, and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world. Students:							
a. Explain how societies and nations attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce capital, natural, and human resources.		X					X
c. Understand how scarcity requires people and nations to make choices which involve costs and future considerations.		X					X
2. Economics requires the development and application of the skills needed to make informed and well-reasoned economic decisions in daily and national life. Students:							
a. Identify and collect economic information from standard reference works, newspapers, periodicals, computer databases, textbooks, and other primary and secondary sources.		X					X
c. Evaluate economic data by differentiating fact from opinion and identifying frames of reference.		X					
d. Develop conclusions about economic issues and problems by creating broad statements which summarize findings and solutions.		X					
Commencement							
1. The study of economics requires an understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making, and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world. Students:							
g. Understand the roles in the economic system of consumers, producers, workers, investors, and voters.		X				X	X
2. Economics requires the development and application of the skills needed to make informed and well-reasoned economic decisions in daily and national life. Students:							
a. Identify and collect economic information from standard reference works, newspapers, periodicals, computer databases, monographs, textbooks, government publications, and other primary and secondary sources.		X					X

Buried Stories
Lessons from the African Burial Ground

In 1991, part of a very old cemetery was found at a building site in Manhattan. A few historians knew what it was: the African Burial Ground, where enslaved and free blacks were buried during the colonial period. Many people were very surprised, however. Some thought slavery did not exist here at all. Others thought there might have been a few slaves who worked on farms and were treated well. Most could not imagine huge numbers of slaves in New York City, living lives as hard as the enslaved people in the South. Most had no idea that New York City was a major slave-holding area for two centuries. They thought of New York as the place enslaved Africans escaped to for freedom and opportunity.

By law, when artifacts and remains are unearthed at a construction site, work has to stop so the area can be examined and important findings studied by historians and scientists. Some bones from the African Burial Ground were removed before construction work stopped, but over time, the remains of 419 people were found. There are many other graves under nearby buildings in lower Manhattan, perhaps 20,000 graves in all. No one had found the bones before because decades earlier nearby hills had been leveled and the soil deposited on top of the low-lying cemetery. The bones were only discovered in 1991 because the building under construction was a skyscraper, and the digging for the foundation had to go very deep.

The excavation was done by archeologists who numbered and photographed each grave. Then the remains were carefully lifted from the ground and sent to the W. Montague Cobb Anthropology Laboratory at Howard University. The research team was directed by Michael Blakey, an African American anthropologist. It included many different kinds of experts, as well as their top students. Most members of the team were African American.

The graves were at least 200 years old, so all that remained of the bodies was bones and teeth. Sometimes there were other items in the grave, and usually parts of a coffin were found. There were no headstones, so there was no way to know the person's name or date of death. The remains themselves had a story to tell, though, after they were studied and analyzed.

A Man [Burial 6]

He was 25 or 30 years old. Five buttons were found in his coffin. Two of the buttons are decorated with anchors, but the anchors do not match. Archeologists are not sure what the buttons mean. This man may have been in the British navy and been buried in a uniform. Or he may have found the buttons and sewn them on an ordinary jacket to dress it up or keep it closed against the weather.

He was laid in his grave with his head to the west, which was the custom in parts of Africa. One of his teeth had been filed on purpose, another African custom. A chemical study of his teeth showed he may have been born in Africa, and that he may have belonged to the Fulbe people of what is now Benin. Most of the 419 people whose remains were studied were born in West Africa.

He had arthritis in his arms, legs, and back, which would have made his joints swell and hurt. It came from lifting and carrying heavy loads, over and over. He may have carried some of those loads on his head, since the bones in his neck showed many small fractures. There were signs of infection and disease in his remains. He probably had rickets, a vitamin deficiency that makes bones soft and weak. He was also anemic from too little iron in his diet, which would have made him feel tired all the time. This man's ailments and injuries were common among the enslaved Africans in New York, and so was his early death.

A Woman and a Baby [Burial 335]

This woman, around 30 years old, was buried with a newborn baby cradled in her right arm. They may both have died in childbirth. The woman showed signs of infections and disease. Like most slaves, male and female, she had arthritis in her joints and spine from heavy lifting and hard work. Her teeth indicated that she was malnourished as a child, but it is not clear where she was raised. She was either born in West Africa, or descended from people who were.

Babies' bones are soft, so nothing much remained of the child's body, and nothing much could be learned. Scientists know, however, that many children were buried in the African Burial Ground. Children under two had the highest death rate among the enslaved people. The first six months of life were the most dangerous of all. Many, like this baby, did not survive. White children died young as well, but the extreme harshness of slave life put these mothers and babies at extra risk. This is one reason why New York's slave population did not increase naturally, and why the importing of slaves from Africa or the Caribbean continued throughout most of the period of slavery.

More Stories from the African Burial Ground

This man, woman, and baby represent some of the most common stories in the African Burial Ground. Other graves were more unusual. One woman [#340] was buried with a strand of 112 glass beads around her waist. Most were blue, but a few were yellow or gold, and one was black. There were some larger, more intricate beads, too. A few cowrie shells were threaded onto the strand with the beads. These shells were used as money in many parts in Africa, and were still valuable to this woman or her loved ones. Her age makes her special, too. Few enslaved women lived to middle age, but scientists believe this woman was between 39 and 64 when she died. This would have made her an old and perhaps respected member of New York's African community.

For most of the people in the African Burial Ground, there is no way to determine the cause of death. For one woman [#25] in her early 20s, the reason is all too clear. There is evidence of a blunt-force blow to her head. Her right arm was twisted and pulled until the bone broke. A musket ball, about half an inch round, was found beneath her ribs. She was probably shot in the back. The murder of slaves was not common, but this woman's remains provide vivid evidence that it happened.

One man [#101] around the age of 30 had filed teeth, following an African custom. His coffin was decorated with iron tacks in a heart-shaped pattern that may have been a Sankofa, a West African symbol. A chemical study of his teeth indicated he may have grown up in New York. Most of the people in the Burial Ground had been born in Africa, but Africa was important to all New York blacks, even if they had never seen it.

The Long History of the African Burial Ground

The first black New Yorkers were probably buried in the African Burial Ground around 1650, some 25 years after the first slaves arrived. At that time, New Amsterdam was still very small and concentrated at the tip of Manhattan. The blacks were given a spot for their cemetery that was far outside of town, in a low-lying area unsuited for farming. Over the next century and a half, the African Burial Ground grew to cover six acres of lower Manhattan. It stretched from Broadway to Centre Street, and from above Duane to below Chambers. During this time, the city of New York grew up around it. In 1794, the African Burial Ground ran out of space and was closed. Houses were built on the site almost immediately, then landfill was added from nearby hills, and more buildings went up. People forgot who was buried in the ground below until construction began on a sky-scraper almost 200 years after the last funeral was held.

Returning the Bones

After the scientists at Howard University finished their work, the remains began their trip back to New York City, in new coffins. Only small DNA samples were kept for later research.

The ceremonial journey stopped in five cities along the way, so that people in Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Baltimore, Wilmington, and Newark could pay their respects. Then the remains arrived by boat in New York City, at the same spot where slave ships had docked two centuries earlier. After days of rituals that included horse-drawn hearses, drummers in African kente cloth, singing, dancing, and prayers, the remains were returned to the earth in lower Manhattan.

It was a long and solemn occasion, but many people were joyful as well as sad. As Bernard L. Richardson, dean of the chapel at Howard University, had said earlier, “Even though we can’t call their names, we know them. We give thanks for the opportunity to connect with our past and our future. Oh God, you have made these bones live again.”

White New Yorkers in Slave Times

Slavery Comes to New York

One day in the 1620s, a Dutch ship captured a Portuguese or Spanish vessel that carried a number of African crew members. This was not as unusual as it may sound. Africans sometimes worked on European ships, and Europeans sometimes seized each other's vessels. The crews of captured ships were usually killed, abandoned, or sold to plantations in the West Indies or South America. The Dutch brought the Africans on this particular ship to New Amsterdam instead, to serve as slaves to the Dutch West India Company. Groot Manuel de Gerrit and Dorothy Creole's husband, Paulo Angola, were among them.

What made the Dutch do this? Their main reason was practical. New Amsterdam was still a wilderness outpost, and the Dutch West India Company wanted a thriving port. There were not enough colonists to do the work of clearing the land, constructing houses, and planting crops. The Company tried to persuade more Dutch people to come to the colony, but few were interested. It tried to make nearby Indians work in New Amsterdam, but these local people could and often did run off and return to their villages. Bringing the captured African seamen to New Amsterdam seemed to solve these problems. The Africans could be forced to work, and they could not escape and go home.

This idea did not come out of the blue. Cultures had been enslaving their enemies since ancient times. The word *slavery* comes from the Slavic people of eastern Europe, who were often conquered and enslaved during the Middle Ages. The use of African slaves began in the 1400s, when Europeans began buying prisoners of war from African kings. By the time Groot Manuel was kidnapped two centuries later, Europeans were used to the idea of African slaves.

Another factor made slavery seem acceptable, almost normal. The world in the 1600s was not sharply divided between people who were free and people who were not. There were many people in Europe and the colonies who were not really free: indentured servants under contract for several years; apprentices who were bound to a tradesman while they learned a skill; tenants farming land owned by a landlord. Slavery was certainly seen as an extreme form of un-freedom, but the contrast between slave and free did not seem as stark then as it does to us today.

New Yorkers Who Owned Slaves

For much of the Dutch colonial period, the slaves were owned directly by the Dutch West India Company, and they worked for the colony itself. They were the city's first public works department. They built Fort Amsterdam, where Battery Park is now. They cut the road that became Broadway. They built the wall for which Wall Street is named. Without their work, the colony of New Amsterdam might not have survived.

But soon, individual Dutch families started to own slaves, and this pattern continued into the British colonial period. Sometimes these owners were wealthy. Philip Livingston, owner of the African runaway in *Life Stories*, belonged to one of New York's richest families. He owned a townhouse on Duke Street, a country house in Brooklyn, and property in Albany. He was a graduate of Yale College, a merchant, a politician, a highly respect-

ed member of white New York society, and a future signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was also the son of one of the major slave traders in the colony, a slave owner himself, and involved in the sugar trade that helped to both fuel and feed the demand for slaves.

New York became the major slave-holding city in the northern colonies because so many whites owned slaves. Some were wealthy, like Livingston. Most, though, were more like Rebeccah Morehouse, the owner of the runaway, Pegg. Morehouse was not as rich as Livingston, but she was not poor either. She lived near the ship yards, a busy neighborhood of hard-working people. Chances are, she was a cook, seamstress, or laundress, or she may have run a shop that was connected to the shipping traffic. She may have needed Pegg to help her with her work and her house. Morehouse was probably single or widowed, and since the runaway notice makes no mention of Pegg's abilities with children, it seems possible that Pegg and Rebeccah Morehouse lived in the house alone. In New York City, there were many, many people like Morehouse who owned one or two slaves. This broad spread through the population is why New York became a major slaveholding city.

During the 1700s, 40% of all the households in New York owned slaves. That is a very high number, but it also means that over half of the city's households did *not* own slaves. Even they were involved in the slave economy, though. Almost anything that people bought in New York – cheese, tobacco, cloth, rum, sugar, butter – was grown or made by enslaved labor, and often it was brought to the city on ships owned by slave traders. The entire economy was built on a large, unpaid labor force that kept stores well-stocked and prices fairly low. Slavery was an inescapable fact of life in New York, whether you owned slaves or not.

Slavery Becomes "Essential"

Slavery was an institution in New York City, much more so than in other northern cities. It was widespread, deeply entrenched, and supported by a network of laws, customs, and attitudes. It fit in with the way white Europeans generally thought about the world during the 17th and 18th centuries. They believed people were born to a certain role and place in life, whether they were white or black, male or female, rich or poor. They saw this as the natural order of things, as God's plan. They believed that white Christians, especially white Christian men, were meant to be in control and lead the world toward greater progress. In New York, a city always focused on business and trade, this view of the world combined with another: the conviction that slave labor was essential to the prosperity of individuals, families, and the city as a whole.

In slavery, as in any institution, people showed a range of behavior. At one extreme were slave owners who beat their slaves mercilessly. At the other were owners who, maybe for their own benefit, educated their slaves or used punishment sparingly. Far more typically, white people who owned slaves worked them hard, used physical punishment, separated family members from each other, and denied them rights that whites could take for granted. For many people, this was the definition of a good master because it reinforced the natural order of the world. Slavery dehumanized blacks and dehumanized whites, though in very different ways.

Institutions take on a life of their own, and they do not change easily or quickly. Something big has to happen to cause people to think and feel differently, and then start to act differently. In the case of slavery, "something big" was the earthshaking new idea that people were born equal, that they all had a natural right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Slavery Ends in New York

The ideas behind the American Revolution were fundamentally at odds with slavery. It was hard for colonists to accuse King George of treating them as slaves without thinking of the rights of the real slaves all around them. It was hard for them to claim that all men were created equal, and overlook the extreme inequality of slaves. It was hard for black people to hear whites demanding freedom, and not demand it for themselves. Slowly, more slowly than in other northern colonies, white New Yorkers started to think slavery was wrong and should be ended. Protestant Churches in the city began to oppose slavery for the first time. Quakers and Methodists voted to exclude slave owners from their New York congregations.

Anti-slavery feelings entered public life, too. In 1785, the New York Manumission Society was formed by some of the city's most prominent men, including Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. The Society wanted the new state legislature to pass an abolition law, and they wanted individual slave owners to manumit, or free, their slaves voluntarily. While they waited for these major changes to happen, the Society provided legal help to black people who had been kidnapped, like Mary and her companions on the *Creole*. They also began the African Free School, hired white teachers like Serena Baldwin's, and paid the expenses of every child who attended. They did this even while many of them continued to own slaves.

The Revolution did not change everyone's mind. In the South, the plantation economy was so dependent on slaves that whites were not ready to end slavery. In northern cities, poor European immigrants were starting to arrive, and they were willing to work for low wages. During the 1780s and 1790s, however, slave labor still played a role in New York City's economy. As a result, there were many white New Yorkers who wanted to maintain slavery, while others argued for abolition. The legislation that brought slavery to a close in New York State was a compromise between these two. Slavery would end, but it would end very, very slowly. New York passed two laws, in 1799 and 1817, that together delayed the end of slavery in the state until July 4, 1827. Some other northern states adopted a system of Gradual Emancipation as well.

The laws set the legal timetable for abolition in the state, but in practice the power started to shift in the early 1800s. With the end of slavery in sight, enslaved blacks began to agitate and bargain for immediate freedom. Owners began to grant it, sometimes because they were afraid the slaves might turn on them, sometimes out of a sense of justice, and sometimes out of a mix of the two. When Jubilation Day arrived on July 4, 1827, most New York slaves had already been freed.

Laws Affecting Blacks in Manhattan

The Dutch Period

1640: Only Europeans were allowed to become skilled tradesmen, like carpenters or bricklayers. (The Dutch passed very few laws to control black people. Custom and unwritten rules mostly determined what blacks could and could not do.)

The British Period

1664: When the British took control of New York, the Duke of York proclaimed that no Christian could be held in slavery. This rule, and the principle behind it, became an issue later, when enslaved blacks wanted to convert to Christianity.

1681-3: In a series of laws, slaves were forbidden to leave their master's house without permission. They could not own weapons. They could not gather in groups larger than four. Whites and free blacks could not entertain slaves in their homes, sell them liquor, or take goods or money from them.

1692: Slaves who made noise in the streets on Sundays could be whipped.

1702: Slaves could not gather in groups larger than three; 40 lashes on the naked back of offenders. Masters were free to punish their slaves for any misdeed however they chose, short of killing them or cutting off their limbs.

1706: To encourage owners to let their slaves become Christians, and to prevent the loss of slaves who had converted, a law ruled that owners did not need to free a baptized slave. The same law ruled that any child born to an enslaved mother was a slave for life.

1707: Newly freed blacks could not own or inherit land.

1708: Any slave who murdered his or her master, or conspired to do so, would face a horrible death.

1712: After the 1712 revolt, the British organized and restated earlier laws to form what was called the Black Code. Among the rules it reaffirmed: Any slave convicted of conspiring to revolt against whites would suffer a horrible death. No slave could ever own a gun or pistol. No black who became free after 1712 could own a house or pass belongings on to children. No slave could be freed without a £200 bond being paid, in case the former slave became a public charge.

1713: No slaves over the age of 14 could be out at night without a lantern by which they could be plainly seen.

1722: Black funerals had to be held during daylight.

1731: Slaves were not permitted to gamble for money. Slaves who rode a horse recklessly or fast within the city could be whipped.

1731: No more than 12 slaves could assemble for a funeral. They would be chosen by the dead slave's master.

1742: Blacks were prohibited from fetching water on Sundays, unless the well was next to their master's home. Every household was required to keep watch for suspicious night-time behavior of slaves.

1773: White residents were required to take any slave found in the streets after dark to be whipped.

The United States Period

1788: In one of the first actions of the new State of New York, the sale of slaves imported from outside the state was outlawed. This ended the legal slave trade into New York, but did not free slaves already in the state, and the illegal slave trade continued. It was also ruled illegal to buy a slave for the purpose of selling him or her out of state.

1799: New York State's first Gradual Emancipation law ruled that any child born to a slave mother *after* July 4, 1799 was considered free. Boys born to enslaved mothers, however, had to remain servants to their mother's owner until they were 28 and girls until they were 25.

1817: New York State's second Gradual Emancipation law ruled that all slaves born *before* July 4, 1799 would be freed on July 4, 1827. Enslaved children born between 1817 and July 4, 1827 would remain servants until they were 21. Anyone who tried to export a New York slave or servant to another state would be guilty of a public offence and fined $500.

1821: The second New York State constitution set a $250 property requirement for black men wishing to vote. There was no property requirement for white men if they had served in the militia or paid taxes, as most white men had.

Sources: Thelma Wills Foote, *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
http://www.raims.com/education/abolition.html; accessed 4/25/05.
http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/Alan_J_Singer/slaverycurriculum/colonialny/documents.html; accessed 6/8/05.
http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/Alan_J_Singer/slaverycurriculum/newnation/documents.html; accessed 6/8/05.

Fact Sheet

The Dutch Period

- New Netherland was the territory granted to the Dutch West India Company in 1621 by the government of Holland. It stretched from Manhattan to Albany along both sides of the Hudson, then called the North River. New Amsterdam was the main settlement in the colony and was located at the tip of Manhattan Island. In 1655, New Netherland gained territory along the Delaware River.

- The first slaves arrived in New Amsterdam around 1627. Some sources say that they came as a distinct group of 11 men, but recent scholarship suggests a less precise beginning. By comparison, the first "20 and odd" blacks arrived in Jamestown Colony in Virginia in 1619 and were then sold into slavery.

- Many of the early slaves had Spanish or Portuguese names and may have been Christians. Later slaves came from areas of Africa where many people were Muslim.

- By the late 1630s, there were 100 enslaved men and women in New Amsterdam, amounting to one-third of the population. Other northern colonies held slaves, too, but there were many more in New Amsterdam.

- In the early years of New Amsterdam, the enslaved worked for the Dutch West India Company, not for individual residents of the colony.

- Without slave labor, New Amsterdam might not have survived. Slaves sawed down trees, turned the soil so it could be farmed, built roads, and constructed important buildings. Wall Street today runs along what was once the wall of the fort, built by slaves.

- Africans in New Netherland and New Amsterdam wore Dutch clothing, learned the Dutch language, and adopted the Dutch Pentecost holiday of Pinkster as their own.

- The Dutch West India Company began to grant partial freedom, referred to by historians as half-freedom, in the 1640s. These former slaves owed a tax to the Company; white colonists did not. They also had to work for the colony whenever they were needed, and their children were automatically slaves. However, these blacks no longer lived the life of the enslaved. They were able to farm their own lands, sell their produce, and keep the profits beyond what they owed in tax. They also created the first black community in Manhattan, on farms granted them in the Land of the Blacks, located where Washington Square is now.

The British Period

- Dutch and English were both spoken by New Yorkers, black and white, through most of the 18th century. African languages were also spoken, and they were probably not understood by most whites.

- The colonies used the British currency system, in which 12 pence (d.) = 1 shilling (s.) and 20 shillings = 1 pound (£). The value was not consistent, however, from England to the colonies or from one colony to another.

- Spanish and Portuguese coins were in wide circulation as well, thanks to the extensive trade between Europe and the new world. The Spanish *dollar*, or *peso*, was a silver coin also known as a piece-of-eight. Through the mid-1700s in New York, a dollar was worth about 8s.

- In 1762, a white man hired to repair the dock charged 8s and 6d for his own labor, and 6s and 6d for his slave's. *The New-York Gazette* for December 13, 1764 noted that a bushel of wheat cost 5s, a barrel of West India rum was 4s, and a barrel of pork was 70s, or £3 10s.

- For most of the 1700s, the price of slaves did not change much. A healthy young male cost around £50 and a female around £45. Those over 40 or in poor health cost less. Owners sometimes "freed" – abandoned – old slaves who were no longer useful.

- Slavery expanded under the British, and there were more slaves in New York than in any American city other than Charleston, South Carolina. Both cities were major slave-trading ports, but Charleston was surrounded by rice plantations with large populations of enslaved laborers. There were only a few large plantations in New York, situated along the Hudson River north of New York City.

- Throughout the period of slavery in New York, and for many years after, the city included only the island of Manhattan. The five boroughs were added to New York City in 1898.

- The British were far harsher toward slaves than the Dutch had been. They eliminated most of the pathways to freedom and passed laws that greatly limited what enslaved people could do, whom they could gather with, and when and how they could be out on the streets. Many of these laws were rewritten often, suggesting that they did not work well.

- Despite the rules, the city offered opportunities to enslaved people that rural areas did not. They found ways to mingle with other slaves, free blacks, and working class whites.

- Unlike slaves in the South and in rural parts of the North, New York City slaves did not live in quarters with large numbers of other black people, but in the kitchens or back rooms of their owners' houses. Many white people owned just one or two slaves, so sometimes a slave was the only black person in the house.

- In the South, slaves most often worked either as servants in the house, or in the fields. In New York City, enslaved men often learned a skill, and worked as silversmiths, carpenters, coopers, or other tradesmen. A few were taught to read and write. Most enslaved women worked as domestic servants and were illiterate.

- New York's first slave uprising took place in New York City in 1712. The British response was to write even hasher rules.

- In 1741, many enslaved people, and some white people as well, were charged with planning an uprising, and executed or deported. It was not clear then if there really had been a large, organized plot, and it is not clear today.

- During the American Revolution, New York City remained in British hands. After the British promised freedom to any black person who fought for the King, the city became a refuge for thousands of escaped slaves. The British lost the war, but they kept their promise and helped more than 3,000 former slaves leave for Nova Scotia.

The United States Period

- The attitudes of whites began to change. Even white people who did not believe that blacks were their equals began to feel that the core principles of the American Revolution – freedom, equality, individual rights – were at odds with slavery. The change in thinking came very gradually. White people did not necessarily see a contradiction when the New York Manumission Society worked to protect the legal rights of black people, even as many of its members continued to own slaves.

- During the Constitutional Convention, southern states wanted the number of congressional representatives of each state to be based on the state's entire population, including slaves. A compromise, offered by an anti-slavery northerner, was that three-fifths of the slaves would be counted. New York State had so many slaves that it nearly qualified for an additional congressman under this rule.

- Several states passed Gradual Emancipation laws, which were designed to bring about the end of slavery at a slow pace acceptable to whites. New York State's first Gradual Emancipation law passed in 1799. It granted freedom to children born after July 4, 1799, but required them to be servants to their mother's owners until they were 28 years old if they were male, and 25 if they were female.

- By 1800, slavery had all but disappeared in Boston and Philadelphia. In New York City, it was still strong, but eroding. Increasingly, free blacks and poor European immigrants did the work formerly done by slaves.

- A second Gradual Emancipation law was passed by New York State in 1817. It restated the delayed freedom clauses in the 1799 law and set July 4, 1827 as the date when any slave born before 1799 would be free. In one last effort to retain the labor of vigorous young black people, this law required children born to enslaved mothers between 1817 and July 4, 1827 to remain servants until they were 21. This clause could have extended the period of black unfreedom to 1848, but the great majority of slaves were freed by 1827.

- Slavery ended more rapidly in New York City than in the surrounding area. By 1820, 95% of black people in New York City were free, but in Kings County, half the black population remained enslaved. In the city, blacks became more assertive, and more willing to challenge white authority, as the end of slavery approached. Many whites freed their slaves voluntarily during these years, out of a combination of fear and principle.

Looking at Slavery in New York

These charts provide snapshots of slavery in New York, based largely on historical statistics. Chart 1 traces the importance of slave labor during the Dutch colonial period. Charts 2 and 3 compare New York under British rule to other northern cities and colonies. Chart 4 is a list of the skills some slaves had learned; it is not based on statistics, but on ads placed by owners whose slaves had run away. Chart 5 traces white families' increasing reliance on the labor of free blacks as the end of slavery neared.

Chart 1: Blacks in New Amsterdam

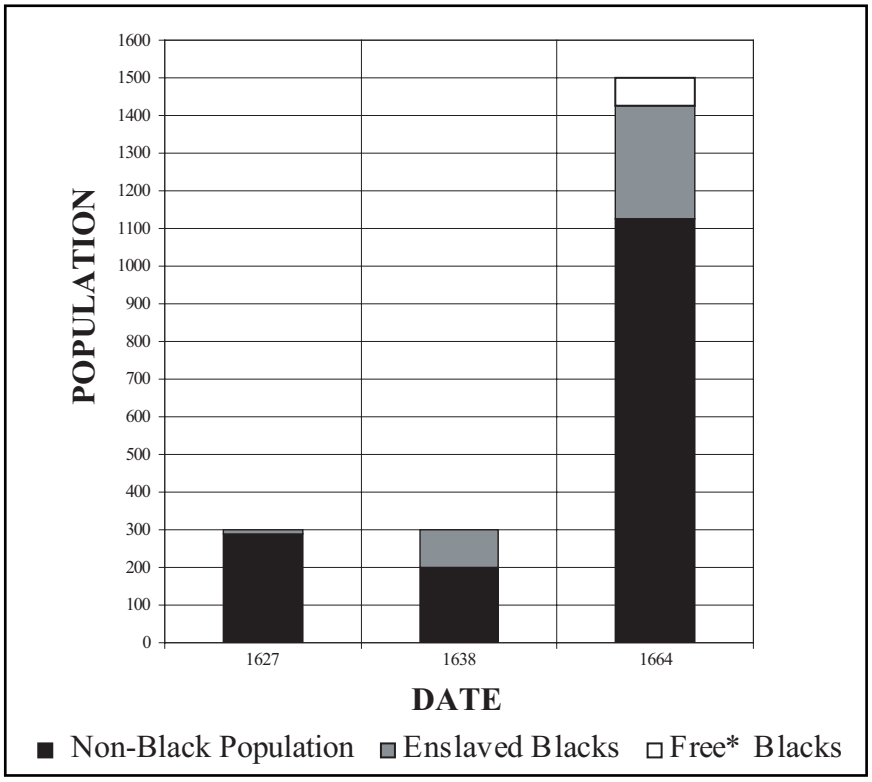


Table 1: Blacks in New Amsterdam

Date	Total Population	Free* Blacks	Enslaved Blacks	Percentage of Population Enslaved
1627	300	0	11	4%
1638	300	0	100	33%
1664	1,500	75	300	20%

Sources: Graham Russell Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 9. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1998), p. 51.

***It is more accurate to say they were half-free.**

Chart 2: Slaveholding in Northern Cities, 1703

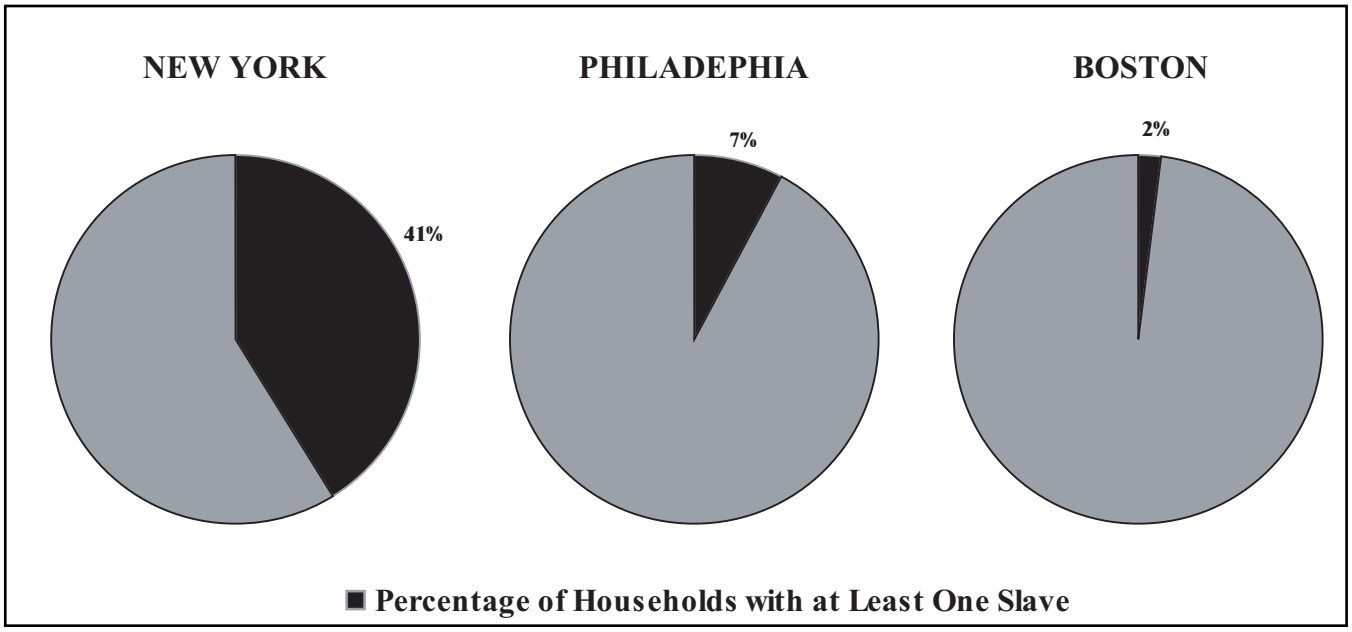


Table 2: Slaveholding in Northern Cities, 1703

City	Percentage of Households With At Least One Slave
New York	41%
Philadelphia	7%
Boston	2%

Source: Thelma Wills Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*: *The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.12-13.

Chart 3: Black Population of the Thirteen Colonies, 1720

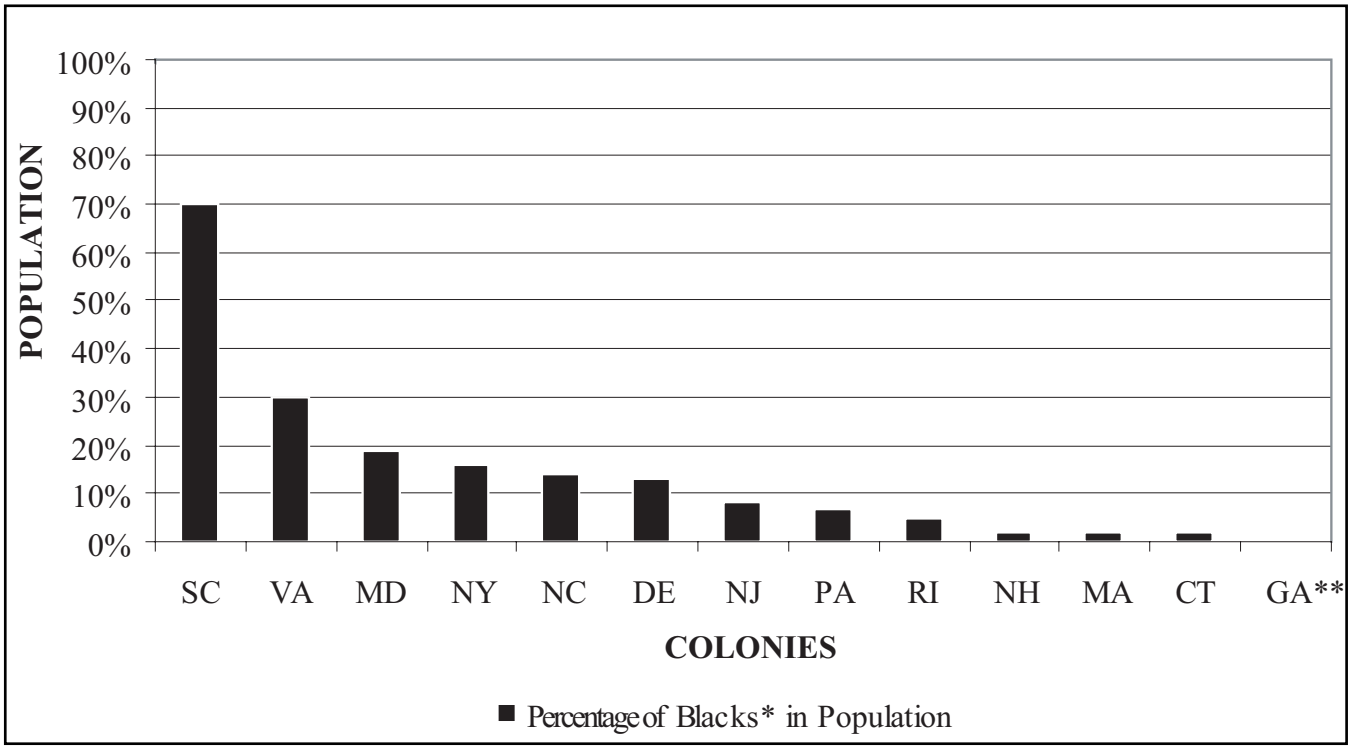


Table 3: Black Population of the Thirteen Colonies, 1720

Colony	Percentage of Blacks* in Population
South Carolina	70
Virginia	30
Maryland	19
New York	16
North Carolina	14
Delaware	13
New Jersey	8
Pennsylvania	7
Rhode Island	5
New Hampshire	2
Massachusetts	2
Connecticut	2
Georgia	**

Source: Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 240. Kolchin cites *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, 1960).

*** This chart is based on historical statistics that did not identify whether the blacks were enslaved or free.**
**** The Georgia Colony was not founded until 1733**

Chart 4: Skills of Runaway Slaves in the New York City Area

1733 - 1775

Men

Carpenter & cooper
Baker
Chimney sweep
Butcher & tailor
Teamster
Goldsmith
Silversmith
Cook, violinist, barber, wig dresser
Caulker & ship carpenter
Cook
Chimney sweep
Sailor
Waiter & cook

Women

Domestic Servant

1776 - 1783

Men

Butcher
Barber & hairdresser
Farmer
Baker & waiter
Chimney sweep
Carpenter & caulker
Bread vendor
Ship carpenter & caulker
Preacher
Mariner
Waiter

Women

Biscuit vendor
Prostitute

Source: Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland, 1994).

Chart 5: White New York City Households Using Black Labor, 1790 - 1810

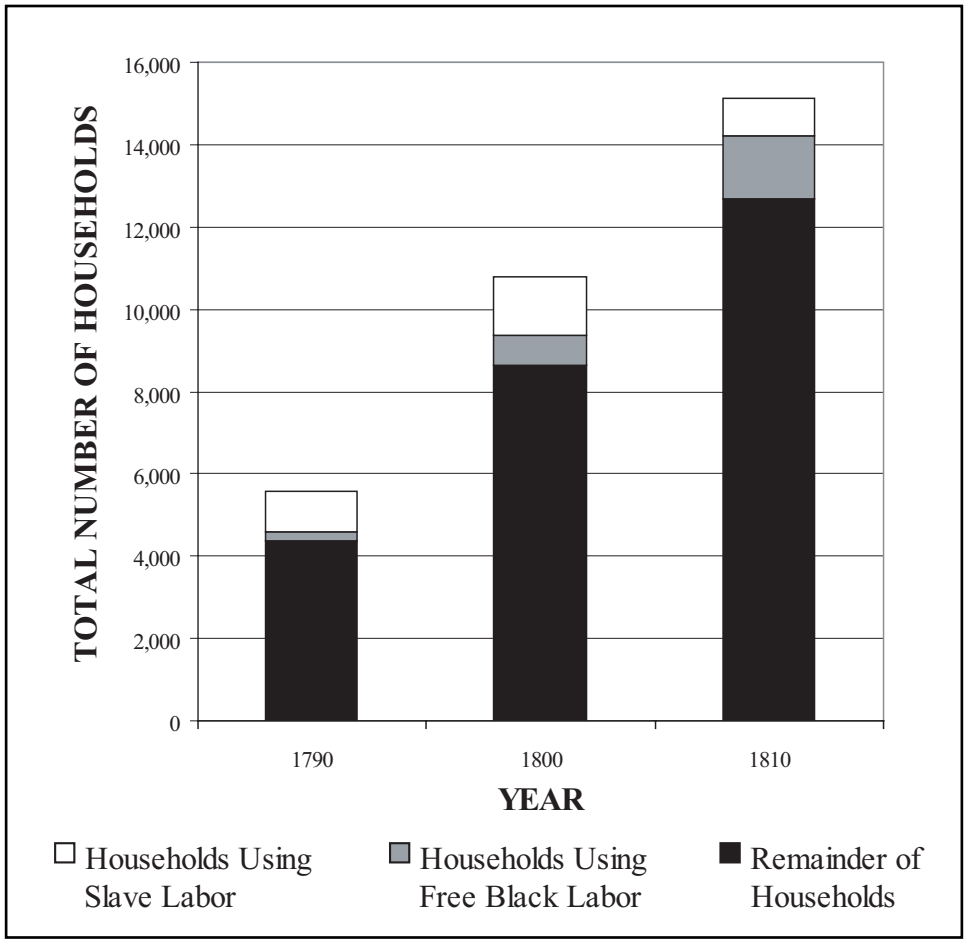


Table 5: White New York City Households Using Black Labor, 1790 - 1810

Year	Total Number of White Households	Percent Using Slave Labor	Percent Using Free Black Labor
1790	5,590	18%	4%
1800	10,778	13%	7%
1810	15,111	6%	10%

Source: Adapted from Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), p. 51.

Glossary

Apprentice
Originally, a person learning a trade or skill. In an indenture contract, the word signals that a child is being indentured. It did not imply that the child would be learning a trade, like carpentry.

Colonization
The process of creating a colony. The American Colonization Society was an organization founded by whites in 1817 to send free blacks to Africa. In 1822, the Society established a colony on the west coast of Africa that later became the independent nation of Liberia.

Creole
An African who had extensive experience with the European world as a result of contact with European traders and goods. Creoles had strong attachments to their African languages, customs, and attitudes, but they might also learn Spanish or Portuguese, give their children European names, or practice Christianity.

Enslave
To put into slavery.

Half-Freedom
A limited form of freedom offered by the Dutch to some of the early enslaved people. Half-free slaves enjoyed new liberties, but they were required to remain in Manhattan, to pay a yearly tax, and to return to service when needed. The children of half-freed people remained enslaved.

Indenture
A contract in which one person agrees to be a servant for another for a specific period of time, often in return for food, clothing, a place to live, and training in a skill. The work performed by indentured servants was often similar to the work done by slaves, but the servants were free when their contracted time was over. Adults of any age might sign an indenture contract. If a child was signing, he or she was referred to as an apprentice.

Journeyman
A competent tradesman who has finished the training period of apprenticeship.

Land of the Blacks
New York City's first black neighborhood, located near where Washington Square is today. Beginning in 1643 and continuing for more than 20 years, the Dutch West India Company gave newly freed blacks (see "half freedom") a land grant in this area, partly to protect New Amsterdam from attack. The total area was more than 130 acres, or about 100 city blocks. The sizes of the individual land grants varied, but most were from two to eight acres. During the British colonial period, blacks were forced by financial circumstance to sell this property. By the late 1720s, all the former land grants were owned by whites.

Manumit
To free or emancipate a slave.

Meal Market
A site on the East River, at the foot of Wall Street. It was designated by the Common Council in 1711 as the place where slaves should be bought, sold, or hired out for day work.

Osnaburg
A rough, inexpensive fabric used in slaves' clothing, named for the north German city where it was made. There are many misspellings of the word, including ozenbrig and ozenburg.

Patriot
Any person who loves and supports his or her country. A Patriot, with the first letter capitalized, is a person who fought or argued against British control of the American colonies. People who supported the British were called Loyalists or Tories.

Slave
A person owned by another as property. In American slavery in the North and South, slaves were owned for their entire lives, and their children were born to slavery. The use of slaves dates back centuries and covers many parts of the world. The origin of the word is in the use of captured Slavs, a people of Central Europe, during the Middle Ages.

CUTTING THE SUGAR-CANE,
on Delaps Estate Antigua

Cutting the Sugar-Cane

On Delap's Estate, Antigua

William Clark, 1823
Collection of the New-York Historical Society

Sugar was the first major plantation crop in the new world. The work was hazardous and grueling, and death rates for the enslaved workers were extremely high. Many New York slaves had worked on Caribbean sugar plantations, and dreaded being sent back.

SHIPPING SUGAR.
Willoughby Bay, Antigua?

Shipping Sugar

Willoughby Bay, Antigua

William Clark, 1723
Collection of the New-York Historical Society

Slaves boiled sugar cane until it produced granular sugar and molasses, and then made rum from the molasses. These products were shipped by sea in barrels. In Europe, demand for sugar products was high, and this created great fortunes for some.

Tea Caddy

Daniel Van Voorhis
Silver, ca. 1790
Collection of the New-York Historical Society

Tea was treated with respect in New York, even after the British were defeated. This silver caddy held loose tea, imported from the east. The key was not an unusual feature in household items from the slavery period, when white suspicion of slaves ran high.

Tobacco Box

Brass and copper, ca. 1770-1790
Collection of the New-York Historical Society

Tobacco was grown on slave plantations in the West Indies, Virginia, and Rhode Island. In New York, white tradesmen and skilled slaves sold tobacco, made clay pipes, and produced silver boxes like this one, embossed with symbols of Kings George II and III.

Commode Chair

Mahogany and textile, ca. 1760-1790
Collection of the New-York Historical Society

In the days before indoor toilets, wealthy New Yorkers relieved themselves in comfort and style, without a trip to an outhouse. It was the slaves' job to collect pans of human waste every morning and carry them down to the river.

Baby Walker

Wood, ca. 17-18th centuries
Collection of the New-York Historical Society

The design of the baby walker has not changed much over the centuries. The task of tending to young children scooting around in a walker like this was often given to slave girls who were still children themselves.

Life Stories

Profiles of Black New Yorkers During Slavery and Emancipation

THE DUTCH COLONIAL PERIOD (1627-1664)

Groot Manuel de Gerrit
Dorothy Creole

THE BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD (1664-1783)

Solomon Peters
Hooglandt's Robin
Regnier's Mars
Richard Gerret
John Fortune
McLennan's Female Slave
Burk's Sarah (a story of 1741)
Ward's Will (a story of 1741)
Wyncoop's London (a story of 1741)
Livingston's African Runaway
Charles Roberts
Morehouse's Pegg
Colonel Tye
Peggy Gwynn
Deborah Squash
Boston King

THE UNITED STATES PERIOD (1783-1840)

John Jea
Jupiter Hammon
Mary
Catherine Ferguson
Rose Butler
Jack DeVoo
Serena Baldwin
William Hewlett
William Hamilton
John Russwurm
Peter Williams, Jr.
Belinda Lucas
Peter Van Wagener
Sojourner Truth

About *Life Stories*

All the subjects of these profiles were real people who appeared at least once in the public record — in documents like runaway notices, advertisements for slave sales, or legal papers. All through the period of slavery in New York, from the 1620s to the 1820s, these records were nearly always written from the perspective of the white men and women who owned, traded, and made regulations for enslaved people. Only in the 1790s do the first documents and the first memoirs of life in slavery authored by black New Yorkers appear.

For *Life Stories*, the records were reconsidered from the perspective of the black person being written about. They are not fictions, since no details were invented. They are not biographies, since they so often focus on a single moment in a life. Instead, they use historical information to help us re-imagine enslaved and free blacks at the center of their own stories.

Life Stories aims to portray slavery not as an abstract system but as an interaction of human beings. It tries to put a human face on the enslaved and on the enslavers. Of course, the actual faces of most of these people were never recorded. There are photographs of Sojourner Truth, and historic images of John Jea, Catherine Ferguson, John Russwurm, and Peter Williams, Jr., but we do not know what the others looked like. +If historic portraits did not exist, the drawings that appear with the profiles were based on some of the earliest available photographs of black people in the middle of the 19th century. They should further help readers, especially children, understand that slavery and emancipation happened to real people not fundamentally different from us.

Groot Manuel de Gerrit

Manuel was a sailor on a Spanish or Portuguese ship in the 1620s. West Africans sometimes worked on European ships, and they sometimes had European names like Manuel. One day, Manuel's ship was captured by the Dutch. These captures were a hazard of life at sea. Crew members were killed, abandoned, or forced to work on the new ship. Sometimes they were sold as slaves to plantations in the Caribbean or Brazil. Manuel and the other crew men on his ship had a different fate. They were brought to Manhattan Island as slaves.

The colony of New Amsterdam was only two or three years old then, just a small struggling settlement at the tip of Manhattan. It was *too* small and struggling to please the Dutch West India Company, which wanted a busy and profitable trading site here. Before this could happen, Manhattan had to be cleared of trees. Buildings had to be constructed, and roads cut. There were not enough white colonists to do all this work, so Manuel and other Africans were brought to New Amsterdam. Manuel was given the common Dutch name de Gerrit and he was called *groot*, which means big.

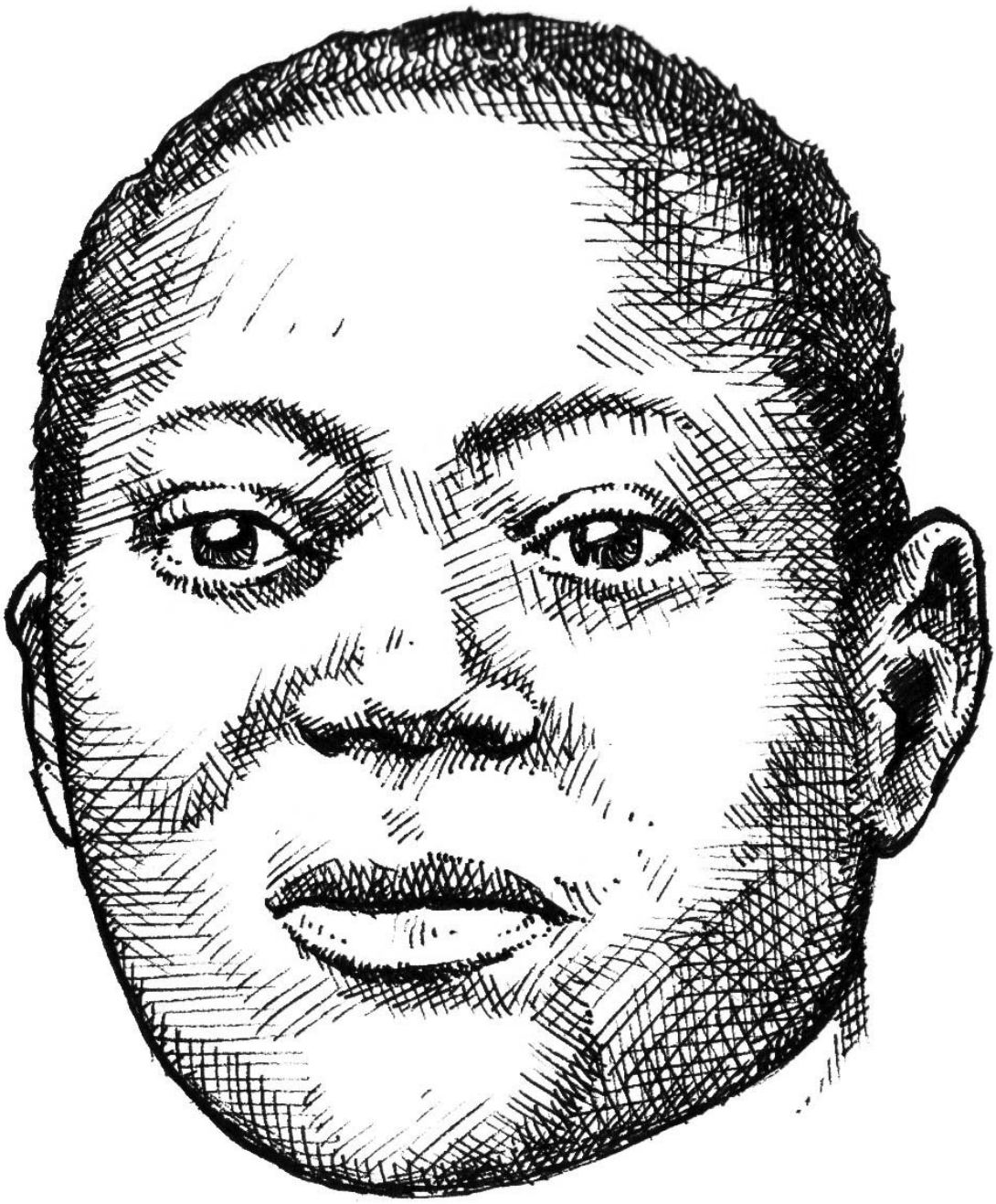
Groot Manuel and the other slaves were not allowed to leave the colony. They did backbreaking work, often chained together: sawing, hauling, plowing, carrying, and building. One wall they helped build is gone now, but the location is remembered as Wall Street. The slaves were responsible for getting New Amsterdam on its feet. They helped defend the settlement against Indian raids, too. Without them, it is hard to imagine how the colony would have survived.

As hard as the slaves worked, they were sometimes given time off. One day in 1641, Groot Manuel and some of the others went to a tavern. A fight broke out and a slave named Jan Premero was killed. The colony's leaders decided to punish one person, rather than lose several slaves. They picked Groot Manuel and sentenced him to hang, but the noose around his neck broke, maybe because he was so *groot*. The leaders tried another rope. That one broke, too. They gave up and let Groot Manuel live.

The Company knew how valuable the slaves were, and so did the slaves themselves. In 1644, Groot Manuel and several other long-time slaves petitioned the Dutch West India Company's director, Willem Kieft, for their freedom. He granted it, saying that they had been promised freedom for a long time, and could not take care of their families if they remained slaves. He freed the men's wives as well. He gave the families plots of land north of town in an area that became known as the Land of the Blacks. Kieft did this partly to create a buffer zone to protect New Amsterdam from an English or Indian attack.

The blacks were called free, but they were not as free as the white people who lived in New Amsterdam. They had to pay a tax every year, or donate some of their crops at the market, and be ready to serve the colony again if they were needed. Maybe worst of all, their children remained slaves. Historians later called this "half freedom." However, the blacks were no longer enslaved. Nearly 20 years after he was stolen from his ship, Groot Manuel was a man who owned property and had some say over his life. He could keep the small amount of money he earned, beyond what he owed to the colony. He could live in a community with other black people, away from white families. His farm covered much of what is now Washington Square Park.

Sources: Richard Dickenson, "Abstracts of Early Black Manhattanites," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record 116* (April, June 1985): 100-104, 168-173.



Groot Manuel de Gerrit

Dorothy Creole

Dorothy Creole was one of the first black women in New Amsterdam. She was African, but she came from a world where West Africans and Europeans had been trading for two centuries and their cultures had mixed. She may have spoken Spanish or Portuguese, in addition to her African language. The word "creole" was often applied to people from this mixed world.

Dorothy and other African women were brought to the colony because male slaves needed wives, and Dutch women needed help keeping house. In those days, keeping house meant more than what we call housework today. Family survival depended on the work of women: cooking, growing a garden, preserving food, watching children, making warm clothes for winter, keeping the house and laundry clean, and taking care of people who were injured or sick. White women and black women may all have worked at these tasks, but female slaves almost surely did the hardest, riskiest, and dirtiest jobs.

Dorothy married Paulo Angola, one of the first male slaves brought to New Amsterdam. Paulo's last name was the most common surname among the slaves. It signaled that he had come from Angola, on the southwestern African coast. One day in 1643, after she had been in the colony for several years, Dorothy went to the Dutch Reformed Church to serve as godmother for a black baby named Antonio. When the boy's parents died a short time later, Dorothy and Paulo adopted him. Later, after Paulo died, Dorothy continued raising Antonio with her new husband. This is one of the first times when the public records show New Amsterdam's black people stepping in to take care of each other, though it was common.

When Antonio was still a baby, a Dutch sea captain named Jan de Fries came to New Amsterdam to help fight the Indians. Visiting sea captains were often given special treatment, and this may be why Dorothy and Paulo became the Captain's slaves for a time. They were still owned by the Dutch West India Company, as they had been for more than 15 years. For Paulo and a group of other slaves, this was long enough. They decided to petition the Company for their freedom. Surprising as it may seem today, they won. The Company's director, Willem Kieft, freed the men and their wives. Blacks were not given complete liberty, however. Former slaves had to pay a yearly tax, and their children remained slaves; historians now call this "half freedom."

Kieft also gave the former slaves farms in an area north of town that became known as the Land of the Blacks. He may have wished to acknowledge their years of work, but he also wanted a buffer zone of blacks between New Amsterdam and any attackers from the north. The freed slaves were not being treated as if they were white. However, they were no longer slaves either, and they were land owners living in a black community. Blacks who were still slaves could look at Dorothy and Paulo and take hope. There was a way out of slavery.

From New Amsterdam's earliest years, enslaved people were black and free people were white, but the lines between the two were not as sharply drawn as they became later. There were cases of Dutch and African people marrying each other in the Dutch Reformed Church. Captain de Fries had a son, named John, with a black or mixed-race woman. After the captain died, Dorothy and Paulo, two former slaves, were put in charge of young John de Fries's money and property. Dorothy may have helped to raise him as well, as she raised Antonio.

Sources: Richard Dickenson, "Abstracts of Early Black Manhattanites," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record 116* (April, June 1985): 100-104, 168-173. David Steven Cohen, *The Ramapo Mountain People* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 26-31.

Dorothy Creole

Solomon Peters

Solomon Peters and his wife Maria belonged to the first generation of blacks born in Manhattan. Their fathers were both brought to New Amsterdam by the Dutch. They probably grew up speaking Dutch and maybe Portuguese, Spanish, or African languages they learned at home. Their fathers were given the limited freedom, called half-freedom, offered by the Dutch, but Solomon and Maria spent their childhoods as slaves, because that was the Dutch rule. When they were grown, some of these enslaved children sued the Dutch West India Company for their freedom, and won. This may be how Solomon and Maria came to be free blacks during the British colonial period.

They lived on a farm in the Land of the Blacks, a tract where the Dutch had given property to freed slaves. This free black settlement, the first in New York, was located where Washington Square is today. At the time it was considered well north of town, because New York City was still small and concentrated around the tip of Manhattan. The black residents farmed, sold their produce, and managed to get by, but they were not rich. It is not clear if somehow Solomon and Maria Peters had more money than their neighbors, but on November 30, 1694, Solomon did something unusual: he wrote a will. He was probably middle-aged by then, but he noted that he was "in perfect health."

Solomon Peters gave directions for what would happen to his property when he died. His house and farm buildings, his lands, and his household goods would go to Maria. If she died, these belongings would go to the couple's four daughters. He left his iron tools, his farming equipment, and his guns, swords, and pistols to his four sons. In addition, he left £4 to his oldest son, and 18 shillings each to the remaining three boys. (£ is the symbol for a British pound. Twenty shillings equals £1.) This will, and the items mentioned, provides a glimpse into Solomon and Maria's life and family, and into what properties they had accumulated after many years of hard work.

The date of Solomon Peters' death is not known. By 1716, Maria was a widow, and she was living in very difficult times for free blacks. After the slaves revolted in 1712, the British passed harsh new laws to restrain free blacks. It was hard for them to find work, and to make ends meet. Maria was probably quite old by then, and she decided to sell her farm. Free blacks did not have the money to purchase property, so the buyer was a white man named Horne. All around her, other free black landowners were facing similar problems and selling their land to whites. By the late 1720s, there were no black families in the Land of the Blacks, and the place faded into history.

Sources: Peters' will is in the *Abstracts of Wills*… in Collections of N-YHS, 2:293. "The Freedmen of New Amsterdam," *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society 4* (Fall 1983), 148-9.

Solomon Peters

Hooglandt's Robin

When New York was a British colony, there were many things that enslaved blacks could not do. They could not leave their masters' houses without a pass. They could not get together with more than three or four other blacks. However, they could become Christians. In fact, there was a law that encouraged this.

In the early 1700s, Robin became one of many slaves who spent Wednesday and Friday afternoons in Elias Neau's house to learn about Christianity. They sat on benches in an attic room, listened to Neau's sermons, prayed, and sang hymns. Many of the slaves had just arrived from West Africa, and Neau was French. No one spoke English well, but somehow they made it work.

The slaves probably had several reasons for going. They may have found Christianity appealing. They may have trusted Neau, who treated them warmly even though he was a slave owner himself. They may have used the catechism books to learn how to read. Many slaves hoped that being baptized would bring them freedom. Europeans argued about whether it should or should not, and never completely agreed, so slaves kept hoping.

Robin asked his owner, Adrian Hooglandt, for permission to be baptized. Hooglandt said no. Robin asked again after a new law said that a slave did not become free by converting to Christianity. He was willing to accept that becoming Christian would not bring him freedom. Hooglandt still said no.

On an April night in 1712, Adrian Hooglandt was killed, along with several other whites. A group of slaves had torched a building and then attacked the whites who came to put out the fire. It was a carefully planned attack, and the British response was quick. Seventy suspected rebels were jailed, and some 40 were charged. Robin was the only one accused of killing his own master. Because Robin had studied Christianity, some whites blamed Neau for encouraging the blacks to rebel. Neau's school almost had to close.

Most of the 18 slaves who were convicted were hanged or burned at the stake. Robin's fate was more gruesome. He was hanged in chains to die slowly. A minister visited him before he died and urged him to confess. Robin refused. He admitted he knew about the conspiracy, but said he was innocent of his owner's death. The minister seemed to believe him.

Sources: "Rev. John Sharpe's Proposals, Etc., 1713," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1880* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1881), 339-363; Kenneth Scott, "The Slave Insurrection in New York in 1712," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly 45* (1962): 43-74; "Slaves and Free Blacks Named in the 1712 Revolt," in Berlin and Harris, eds., *Slavery in New York.*

Hooglandt's Robin

New-York Historical Society

Regnier's Mars

On a spring night in 1712, after the moon set, two slaves set fire to a building on the property of baker Peter Vantilborough. They then ran to a nearby orchard and joined other slaves who were waiting quietly in the darkness. There were more than 20 of them, and they were all holding guns, knives, or hatchets. When neighbors noticed the fire and came running to put it out, the slaves attacked and killed nine white people. The governor sent troops to capture blacks thought to be involved. Six slaves committed suicide rather than be taken. Thirty-nine others were charged with the crimes. Mars was one of several blacks charged with killing Adrian Beekman.

This was the first big uprising of slaves in New York. Most of the blacks belonged to the Coromantee or Pawpaw people of West Africa. Most had only been in New York City for a year or two. They were just beginning to understand what it meant to be a slave here. In West Africa, a slave could eventually become absorbed into the owner's family. When these Africans learned that in New York they would always be slaves, they started planning their rebellion.

The trials began within days, and most were quick. Some people were tried, found guilty, and executed in a single day. Mars's owner, Jacob Regnier, testified at his trial. He may have spoken in Mars's favor, because Mars was found not guilty. The Attorney General had an old feud with Regnier, and decided to try Mars again for killing Beekman. Mars was found not guilty at the second trial, too, but the Attorney General was not finished. He ordered a third trial of Mars, and charged him with a different murder. This time, Mars was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. It was June 7, 1712.

Then Royal Governor Hunter stepped in. He thought the Attorney General was using Mars just to get back at his old enemy, Regnier. The governor issued a reprieve for Mars, and wrote to England for an official pardon. Mars had to wait in jail until the pardon arrived in October, but then his case was finally settled. He was not hanged, and he was returned to Regnier as his slave.

Sources: "Rev. John Sharpe's Proposals, Etc., 1713," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1880* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1881), 339-363; Kenneth Scott, "The Slave Insurrection in New York in 1712," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly 45* (1962).

Regnier's Mars

Richard Gerret

On January 24, 1720, a boy named Richard Gerret became an indentured servant to the widow Agnes May. Richard signed the indenture contract while his mother, a free black woman named Frances Gerret, served as one of the witnesses.

In those days, both in America and in Europe, children did not spend their time learning how to read and write. Unless they were rich, they spent it working, whether they were white or free blacks. Very often, they worked as indentured servants, starting as young as seven years old. This was not the same as being a slave. The work itself was not much different, but slavery was permanent. Servants were indentured to their employer for a fixed period of time, and then they were free. Richard's term was 14 years. In exchange, employers provided food, clothing, and a place to live and learn some skills the servants could use later to find work. It could be a good bargain that worked for both sides, but sometimes servants remained very poor long after their contracts ended.

His employer may have been poor herself, maybe too poor to buy a slave. Agnes May's husband, William, had died without writing a will. She may have needed Richard to help with the house, or with whatever work she did to earn money. Without a man in the house, Richard had no way to learn a man's trade that he could practice when he was free. His mother would have recognized this, but if she did not have the resources to raise Richard herself, she had no choice.

Gerret was an old Dutch name and very common in the colony, though the spelling of it could vary. Some of the earliest blacks in Manhattan had been given the name when they arrived as slaves. If Richard was their descendent, he may have grown up hearing stories about his ancestors. He may have heard that the Dutch had given long-time slaves their freedom and farms in the Land of the Blacks, north of the village. The stories would have sounded strange and wonderful to Richard, because his New York was bigger, busier, and it was British. The Land of the Blacks was mostly owned by white people now, and the lives of free black people had become much harder.

After the 1712 revolt, just eight years earlier, the British colonial authorities were worried that slaves would rebel again. They wanted a world in which all free people were white and all blacks were enslaved. They did not trust free blacks because they could not easily control them. Among the strict new laws that were passed after the revolt, one made it very expensive for slaves to become free. This had the effect the British wanted: by the time Richard finished his period of service in 1734, there were very few free blacks in New York. There were, however, many, many slaves, and a good number of them had learned skills and trades. New York slave holders leased these well-trained slaves by the day or longer at the Meal Market on the east side. Skilled slaves were so numerous that white people had little reason to hire a free black like Richard, even if he had somehow learned a trade. If they did hire him, they had no reason to pay him well.

Sources: *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1893* (New York, 1909), 227. *Indentures of Apprentices, October 21, 1718 to August 7, 1727,* in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

Richard Gerret

John Fortune

On the early 1720s, a free black man named John Fortune bought a slave woman named Marya and her son, Robin. Later, John and Marya were married, but John already thought of Marya as his wife, and Robin was probably his son. He and Marya also had a daughter named Elizabeth, and John may have purchased her as well.

A free black man buying slaves would have been surprising at any time, but it was especially so after the slave revolt of 1712. The British had passed new laws that made it much harder for free blacks to earn a living in New York. Many jobs were closed to them. Most could never earn the money to buy their enslaved families or friends.

John Fortune was a cooper, a man who made wooden barrels. Just about everything was stored in wooden barrels then—cider, flour, grain, salted meat and fish. Coopers made washtubs, too, and buckets, and butter churns. The work took practice and skill. The wooden pieces had to be heated and bent, scooped out with a special knife, and then fitted together tightly so there were no leaks. A good cooper could stay busy and make good money. Somehow, even with the strict new laws controlling free blacks, John Fortune was able to save the £40 he needed to buy Marya and Robin.

And even more surprising, he found a way to secure Marya's freedom. He did this even though the British did not want free blacks in New York. They had passed a new law that made it very expensive to free a slave. An owner needed to pay £200 when a slave was freed, and then pay £20 a year, every year, for each slave. Despite this, Marya Fortune was listed as a free black on September 2, 1723, when she and John signed an indenture contract for Elizabeth. The girl had turned nine on the first of March, and would serve a term of nine years.

John and Maria made a good contract for their child. The employer was a single woman named Elizabeth Sharpas, the well-off daughter of the Town Clerk of New York. Sharpas agreed to the usual requirements of employers in indenture contracts: she would provide Elizabeth Fortune with food, clothing, and housing, and teach her the "art and skill of housewifery." But she would also make sure that Elizabeth learned to read English. At the end of the contract, she would give her one good new suit, made of wool and linen, over and above her usual clothes. For her part, Elizabeth Fortune promised to serve well and faithfully, and not to marry before her term was complete. She moved in to Elizabeth Sharpas's house the same day the contract was signed.

Sources: Harry Beller Yoshpe, "Record of Slave Manumissions in New York during the Colonial and Early National Period," *Journal of Negro History 26* (1941), 82. *Indentures of Apprentices, October 21, 1718 to August 7, 1727*, in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

John Fortune

McLennan's Female Slave

On September 30, 1734, a man named John McLennan placed an ad in a New York City newspaper, offering "a young negro woman" for sale. McLennan and the slave lived at the upper end of Beaver Street, near the Royal Bowling Green. He did not give the slave's name. He said she was about 20 years old, and could do all sorts of household work. McLennan may have been exaggerating, because he wanted a good price for the slave.

In some households, slave women did not cook, but the ad said this woman could cook roasted or boiled food "pretty well." That probably included most of the dishes the family ate — potatoes and vegetables, roast chicken or pork, stews made of beef or lamb. She was also called a good dairy-woman. This meant she milked the cows and churned the butter and made the cheese. Bread making was her job as well. She made the dough, kneaded it, and shaped the loaves. She kept the fire at the right temperature so the bread would bake but not burn.

In those days cloth was made at home, and it took a long time. McLennan said this young woman was very good at carding and spinning. That meant she could comb the tangled raw wool or linen until all the strands were going in the same direction. Then she could take the fibers to the spinning wheel and spin them together into long threads. Later, a weaver would make the threads into cloth.

This unnamed slave knew how to make soap from wood ashes and fat. She was good at washing the family's sheets, tablecloths, handkerchiefs, shirts, and underwear. If there was a baby in the family, she washed the diapers, too. She did this all by hand, in big tubs of sudsy hot water. Some items she starched so they would be stiff and stay cleaner. She ironed almost everything.

She had other good qualities, according to McLennan's ad. She did not drink rum or smoke tobacco. She was strong and healthy. She had already had smallpox, so she would not come down with this dangerous disease again. McLennan wanted buyers to know that this was a mild and quiet person, someone who did many jobs well and without complaint. Of course, he had no way to know what this quiet woman was thinking.

Sources: Ad in *The New York Weekly Journal*, 30 September 1734; Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Jane C. Nylander, *Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home, 1760-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993).

McLennan's Female Slave

Burk's Sarah (a story of 1741)

On March 18, 1741, the fort at the tip of Manhattan caught fire in high winds and burned down. Without the rain that came later, nearby buildings would have burned as well. In succeeding weeks, a house and a warehouse caught fire. New York was a town of wooden buildings, and people were used to fire. They could not help but wonder, though: why so many all of a sudden? Was someone setting the fires on purpose? Then someone found hot coals under a haystack, just waiting to catch. A woman heard two slaves talking and laughing about setting fires. Someone saw a black man racing away from a burning building. The slaves are setting the fires! There had been slave revolts in other colonies recently, and white people had been murdered there. The New York authorities held an investigation and a servant-girl named Mary Burton began to tell stories of a great slave conspiracy to burn down the town and kill all the white men. Seventy blacks and 20 whites were arrested and charged. They were pressed to confess and blame others. After the first few were hanged, more people confessed, possibly hoping to escape punishment. For three months, it seemed that every black person in New York might be called to testify. The trials went on and on.

Sarah was the only black woman charged in the 1741 plot. She was owned by a widow named Mrs. Burk. Early in the trials, a witness said he saw Sarah at the big meeting at Hughson's Tavern, where the plot was said to have been planned. He said she was the only woman there, and that she and another slave were given the job of burning down the Meal Market, the waterfront building where slaves were hired out by their owners for daily work.

When her time came to testify, Sarah said she knew nothing about a plot. The judge said there was evidence against her, and the only way she could save her life was to tell what had happened. By then, two slaves had been executed, along with the white tavern-keeper John Hughson and his wife. Sarah knew the judge was serious, and she began to talk. She said she had been at the meeting at Hughson's. She named other slaves who had been there, too. She said big knives were sharpened during the meeting.

Then she changed some of her testimony. She said some of the blacks she named had left the meeting before the plot was discussed and were not guilty. Later, Daniel Horsmanden, one of the judges, wrote a book about the case. He said Sarah was more trouble than any of the other witnesses. He said when she began to testify she "threw herself into most violent agitations [and] foamed at the mouth." He called her "one of the oddest animals amongst the black confederates… a creature of an outrageous spirit."

After her testimony, Sarah went back to jail. Fourteen more people were executed while she waited a month to learn if she would live or die. Then she was brought to court again. Because she had helped build the case against people thought to be involved in the plot, the judge said she was one of 43 blacks who would be pardoned and sent into slavery in Hispaniola, the island where the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic are today. No one knows what happened to her after that.

Historians still are not sure if the big slave plot was real, or if the authorities were panicked by the fires and over-reacted. Some things are certain, though: buildings did burn down; New York's slaves were enraged and vengeful; whites were nervous and suspicious; and punishment was quick and bloody. All in all, 30 black people and four whites were executed. More than 70 other people were deported to labor in the West Indies, where the work was much harder and death rates were high. Slaves dreaded being sent there.

Sources: Daniel Horsmanden, *Journal of the Proceedings … [1744]*, reprinted as *The New York Conspiracy*, ed. Thomas J. Davis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); Thomas J. Davis, *A Rumor of Revolt: The "Great Negro Plot" in Colonial New York* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

Burk's Sarah

Ward's Will (a story of 1741)

On March 18, 1741, the fort at the tip of Manhattan caught fire in high winds and burned down. Without the rain that came later, nearby buildings would have burned as well. In succeeding weeks, a house and a warehouse caught fire. New York was a town of wooden buildings, and people were used to fire. They could not help but wonder, though: why so many all of a sudden? Was someone setting the fires on purpose? Then someone found hot coals under a haystack, just waiting to catch. A woman heard two slaves talking and laughing about setting fires. Someone saw a black man racing away from a burning building. The slaves are setting the fires! There had been slave revolts in other colonies recently, and white people had been murdered there. The New York authorities held an investigation and a servant-girl named Mary Burton began to tell stories of a great slave conspiracy to burn down the town and kill all the white men. Seventy blacks and 20 whites were arrested and charged. They were pressed to confess and blame others. After the first few were hanged, more people confessed, possibly hoping to escape punishment. For three months, it seemed that every black person in New York might be called to testify. The trials went on and on.

Many witnesses testified against Ward's Will. Some said he was present in the taverns when the talk turned to burning down the town and sharpening knives. One said that Will had tried to pull him into the conspiracy. Another said Will refused to help put out one of the fires. A slave named Jack said he heard Will complain because Mr. Van Horne, Will's wife's owner, would not allow him to visit her. Jack said Will kept getting angrier as he talked, and said he would show Van Horne a trick or two. According to Jack, Will said the blacks in New York were all cowards and had no hearts. He said that the slaves in Antigua, the Caribbean island where he had come from, had more courage to stand up to whites.

A white witness named John Williams said he had been suspicious of Will. Williams was a baker who lived on Duke Street next to Will's owner, the clock-maker Anthony Ward. During one of the fires, Williams held a loaded gun and made Will sit on the stoop where he could see him.

Many slaves confessed to taking part in the conspiracy, but not Will. He knew that confession might save his life. He had confessed in Antigua after an uprising there, and escaped execution, but he thought other blacks would kill him if he confessed now. He did not say anything until he was taken to the stake to be burned. Then he tried to save his life. He talked all about the plot. He said a British soldier at the fort had helped slaves sell stolen goods. He named others he said were involved. He prayed for mercy.

The judge considered Will one of the leaders of the revolt. He knew about Will's role in the two uprisings in Antigua and St. John's. He wanted to make an example of Will, and stop him from "further mischief." Will was burned at the stake on July 4, 1741.

Historians still are not sure if the big slave plot was real, or if the authorities were panicked by the fires and over-reacted. Some things are certain, though: buildings did burn down; New York's slaves were enraged and vengeful; whites were nervous and suspicious; and punishment was quick and bloody. All in all, 30 black people and four whites were executed. More than 70 other people were deported to labor in the West Indies, where the work was much harder and death rates were high. Slaves dreaded being sent there.

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Ward's Will

Wyncoop's London (a story of 1741)

On March 18, 1741, the fort at the tip of Manhattan caught fire in high winds and burned down. Without the rain that came later, nearby buildings would have burned as well. In succeeding weeks, a house and a warehouse caught fire. New York was a town of wooden buildings, and people were used to fire. They could not help but wonder, though: why so many all of a sudden? Was someone setting the fires on purpose? Then someone found hot coals under a haystack, just waiting to catch. A woman heard two slaves talking and laughing about setting fires. Someone saw a black man racing away from a burning building. The slaves are setting the fires! There had been slave revolts in other colonies recently, and white people had been murdered there. The New York authorities held an investigation and a servant-girl named Mary Burton began to tell stories of a great slave conspiracy to burn down the town and kill all the white men. Seventy blacks and 20 whites were arrested and charged. They were pressed to confess and blame others. After the first few were hanged, more people confessed, possibly hoping to escape punishment. For three months, it seemed that every black person in New York might be called to testify. The trials went on and on.

London was the slave of a rich silversmith named Benjamin Wyncoop. Several witnesses said London was part of the plot. A slave named Warwick said he once heard London swear he would kill his master and mistress. He said London asked him to steal money so they could buy weapons. A white witness said that he had seen London bring a silver spoon to Hughson's Tavern to be hammered down. It sounded as if London had stolen the spoon from Wyncoop and was selling it to raise money for the revolt. Two other slaves said London was at a big meeting at Hughson's Tavern when blacks and whites planned together to burn the town.

By the time London testified, many slaves had been executed. Some were hanged, and some were burned at the stake. The judges said that the only way slaves could save themselves was to confess, and London did. He said that the tavern-owner, John Hughson, had been the leader of the plot. He said slaves planned to set fire to their owners' houses, and then kill them as they tried to escape the flames. His testimony was used against two other slaves.

After he testified, London waited in jail, wondering if he would be executed. Three weeks after his testimony, and about three months after the burning of the fort, London was brought to the court again. He found out that he was one of many slaves who would be pardoned and sent away from New York. London and several others were transported as slaves to the island of Hispaniola, where the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic are today. No one knows what happened to him next.

Historians still are not sure if the big slave plot was real, or if the authorities were panicked by the fires and over-reacted. Some things are certain, though: buildings did burn down; New York's slaves were enraged and vengeful; whites were nervous and suspicious; and punishment was quick and bloody. All in all, 30 black people and four whites were executed. More than 70 other people were deported to labor in the West Indies, where the work was much harder and death rates were high. Slaves dreaded being sent there.

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Wyncoop's London

Livingston's African Runaway

On November 6, 1752, Philip Livingston placed a notice in *The New-York Gazette.* He wanted readers to know that his new slave had run away. Many owners placed newspaper ads like this because many slaves ran away, but this black man was unusual. He had just arrived from Africa, and did not yet have a slave name. Livingston said that the runaway's hair was curled in "a very remarkable manner." Maybe this was an African hairstyle, and maybe he came from a different part of Africa from most slaves. Livingston thought his unusual hair would help people identify the man.

In the decade since the 1741 revolt, New York slave owners had tried to buy most of their slaves directly from Africa. They believed newly arrived Africans would be easier to handle, more frightened and isolated, and less likely to rebel, than slaves who had been in the colonies for awhile. Livingston's runaway had just arrived in New York, and had not yet learned English or Dutch. He spoke only his own African language. There were many African-born slaves in New York and they spoke many different languages, depending on where they had been born. If this runaway tried to ask other blacks for help, he might not have been understood, though his meaning would certainly have been clear.

The African had been gone for a week when the notice appeared. Livingston thought he was hiding in the woods in Harlem, which was still dense forest then. The runaway could have found streams to drink from and animals to trap. If he was looking for a way off Manhattan Island, there was a small bridge at Spuyten Duyvil. He could have tried to steal a boat and cross the river at night under cover of darkness. It was November, and much too cold to swim to the Bronx.

No one knows what happened to this runaway. He was brave and independent, and the notice said he was strong, but Livingston set a high reward for his return. Because of this, many people were probably in the Harlem woods, trying to catch a black man with remarkable curls. That is what Livingston hoped for, and it is why he placed the notice.

Philip Livingston, the runaway's owner, was a rich merchant and ship owner. His father was involved in the slave trade, and Philip owned many slaves himself. Over the next 25 years, though, this slave owner would become involved in the American Revolution. He was one of the people who signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Many white people at the time lived with contradictions like this.

Sources: Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland, 1994), 44 (# 101).

Livingston's African Runaway

New-York Historical Society

Charles Roberts

Charles Roberts was a man of many skills. He could read and write. He played the fiddle. He knew arithmetic and could keep account books. Maybe most importantly, he knew how to operate the printing presses that belonged to John Holt. He was Holt's indentured servant, and he had three years left on his contract. Roberts wanted his freedom sooner. He played his fiddle to make money so he could pay Holt for his remaining time.

Some people said that Holt was not an honest man. They said he lied, drank, and refused to pay his debts. When Holt blamed Charles Roberts and a slave named George for a robbery, not everyone believed him. Charles Roberts and George were put in jail anyway. They ran away, but they were caught and brought back to stand trial. Roberts was found guilty. He was beaten, and his length of service was changed from three years to 40. He was about 30 then. He would be John Holt's servant until he was an old man, if he lived that long. It was like being a slave.

On April 12, 1762, Charles Roberts ran away again. It was about the time his original contract would have ended. Holt was furious. He placed a very long notice in *Parker's New-York Gazette.* He described Roberts in great detail. He said Roberts was a Mulatto, meaning a light-skinned black. He listed his height, his age, the fact that he had had smallpox, and that he played the fiddle. He described all the clothes Roberts had with him. There was a chocolate-colored cloth coat, a light blue-grey summer coat, a straw-colored waistcoat edged with silver cord, and many other items. Holt said he liked to "dress very neat and genteel, and generally wears a wig."

Holt's notice called Roberts cunning and said he was not to be trusted. It said he was a criminal, maybe involved in recent robberies. Holt offered a very big reward, £5, and said people should be careful of Roberts, whom he called an artful villain. John Holt was desperate to get Roberts back. People said he could not run his printing business without him.

The notice did not work. Roberts was never heard from again. He may have used his many skills to make a new life somewhere else.

Source: David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004). Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland, 1994), 91 (# 201).

Charles Roberts

Morehouse's Pegg

Pegg and her owner, Rebeccah Morehouse, lived close to the shipyards on the East River, near where the Brooklyn Bridge is today. This waterfront area was full of shops and tradesmen. Morehouse may have made money sewing, cooking, or washing for ships' crews, and Pegg may have helped her.

Pegg was born in Oyster Bay, Long Island, so she spoke English well. She had been living in New York City for many years when she ran away on December 12, 1764. At that time, there were more female slaves in Manhattan than male. Enslaved women did not run away as often as men, maybe because they had fewer chances. Typical runaways were young men from farms and small towns. If they were lucky, they made it to New York, pretended to be free, and disappeared into the busy life of the city. Pegg was an unusual runaway: a 40-year-old woman who lived in Manhattan. The notice gives no clue why Pegg ran, but the typical reason was to join family members who had been sold to a distant owner.

New York City slaves who decided to run had a special problem: they could not stay in the city because they might be recognized and turned in for the reward. Leaving the city without being caught was not easy, but Pegg lived at the waterfront, where she had watched many ships come and go. She may have been waiting for just the right moment to climb aboard and offer to cook in exchange for passage to another place. She had to be careful which ship she picked, and where it was going. Otherwise, there was a chance she would be sold again at the end of her trip. It might be worth the gamble, though, because sometimes ship captains said yes.

Rebeccah Morehouse worried about this. When she placed the runaway ad the day after Pegg vanished, she added the common warning: "All masters of vessels and others are forwarn'd not to entertain or carry her away as they will answer it at their peril." She also worried that Pegg might escape to the countryside, so she offered a reward of one dollar if Pegg was captured in the city and three dollars if she was taken out of town. To make the runaway easier to identify, Morehouse noted that Pegg had a crooked middle finger on her left hand, and that she had run off wearing a short red cloak, a white cap, and men's shoes. Pegg also had a calico dress and other clothes with her, a sign that she had planned her escape. She knew she would need a change of clothes because people would be looking for the red cloak and white cap.

Rebeccah Morehouse wanted Pegg back, and the notice in *The New-York Gazette* shows why. Pegg was tall, slim, and straight, so she probably did not have arthritis, which can make people crippled and unable to work hard. She had already had smallpox, so she would not come down with this disease again. The notice said that Pegg was sensible, cunning, and artful, which probably meant she was smart and had good common sense. She could wash, iron, and cook.

Pegg may have escaped. Even if she was caught and beaten, she had the satisfaction of knowing she caused her owner some trouble. She also cost her some money, because slaves who had run away were worth less the next time they were sold.

Source: Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland, 1994), 127 (# 274).

Morehouse's Pegg

Colonel Tye

When he was a slave in New Jersey, he was called Titus. He was 22 when the American Revolution began in the spring of 1775. A few months later, the British promised freedom in Virginia to any black person who fought on their side. Titus ran away the next day, one of hundreds of blacks from many places who went to fight for the British. His owner placed an ad in a Pennsylvania paper, offering a reward to anyone who returned Titus to him. No one caught this runaway, though. He joined the British army and called himself Colonel Tye. With this name, he became famous.

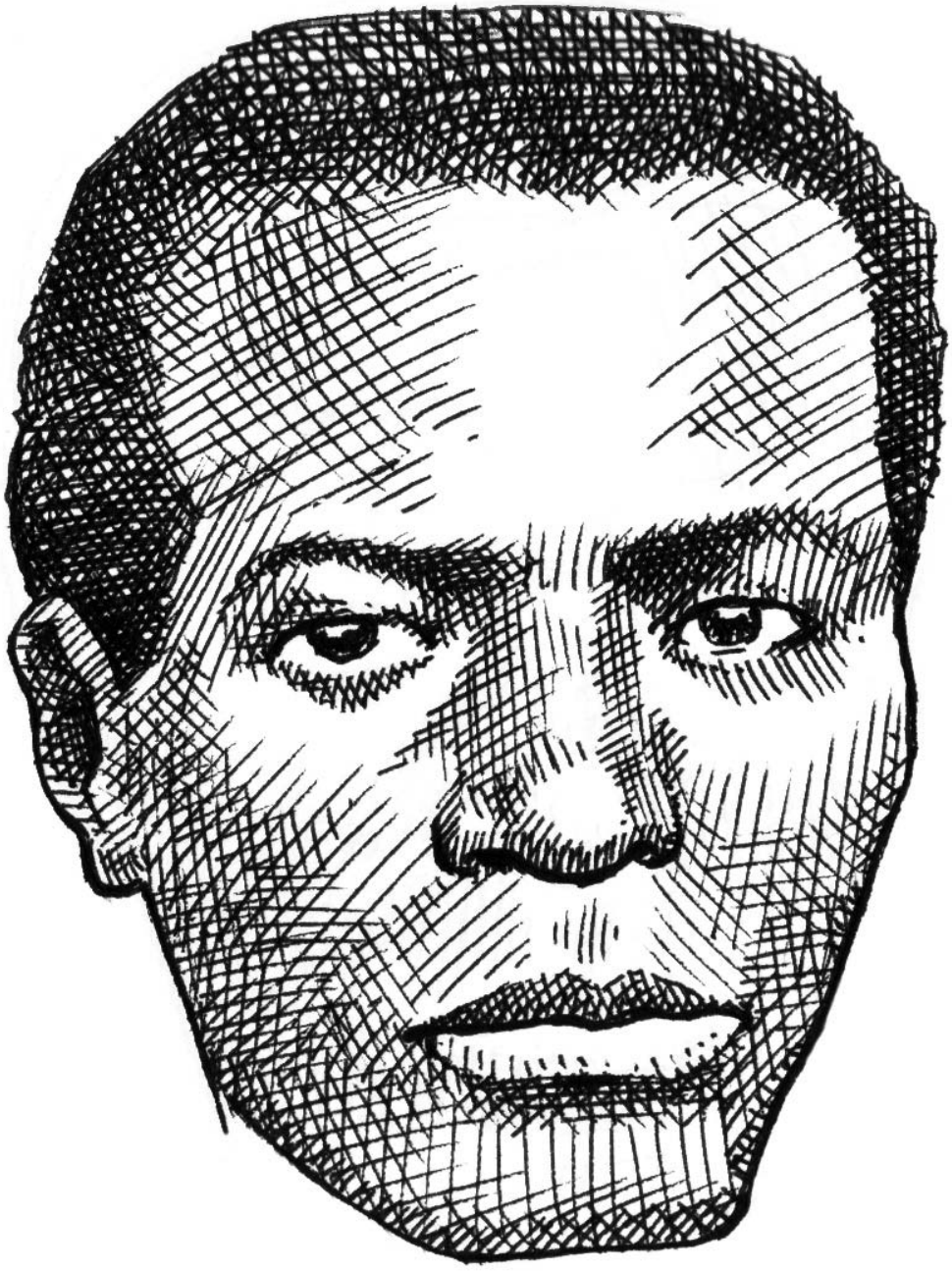
Some black people fought with the Patriots, but others thought that a British victory would be better for blacks. After the British promised freedom to runaway slaves who joined the British side, many blacks escaped and arrived in New York City, the British headquarters. Twenty-four of the best black soldiers belonged to the Black Brigade. Colonel Tye was their commander.

Colonel Tye led his men on raids in New Jersey where he had been a slave. They captured Patriot soldiers and destroyed houses and barns. Because Tye knew the area well, the men could hide in swamps and riverbanks and strike suddenly. These raids terrified the local Patriots, but slaves heard about Colonel Tye's attacks and felt encouraged. Many more fled to the British. By 1779 there were 3,000 black people in New York City, maybe more. They had come from all over the country. Some black men became soldiers and lived in one of the city's Negro Barracks. Others, along with women and children, lived in tents in a partly burned out neighborhood called Canvas Town.

New York suffered a hard, cold winter in 1779. Food and fuel were scarce. Colonel Tye's Black Brigade joined with the Queen's Rangers, a small unit of white soldiers, and together they raided the Patriot areas of New Jersey. They brought fuel, livestock, and other supplies back to New York City. They also guarded the ferry landings along the North River, later called the Hudson. The ferries regularly brought more escaped slaves across from New Jersey.

Colonel Tye continued fighting until September of 1780, when he was shot in the wrist during a surprise attack. The injury was not serious, but a fatal infection set in and he died. He was considered a fine and brave soldier by the British, and even by some of his Patriot enemies.

Sources: Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland, 1994), 185 (# 394); http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p52.html, accessed 5/4/05.



Colonel Tye

Peggy Gwynn

During the American Revolution, the British were in control of New York City. When they offered freedom to any slave who would fight against the Patriots, many black people ran away from their owners and came to New York City to fight for the King. The men became soldiers or laborers in the British army. Women like Peggy Gwynn were cooks or laundresses. There were slaves and freed blacks on the Patriot side, too.

Life was not easy. New York City was often under attack. There was not always enough food. Many of the blacks lived in makeshift tents in a burned-out neighborhood, but they were freer than they had ever been. They were paid for their work. They could go to a tavern with friends, dance, and listen to fiddle music. If they met someone and fell in love, they could even be married in Trinity Church. This may be where Peggy Gwynn married her husband, who was fighting for the British.

After the British lost the war, their commander, Sir Guy Carleton, was determined to honor the British promise of freedom to the blacks. He would give them papers that granted their freedom, and he would transport them away from America for good. Slave owners around the country were furious. They were on the winning side, after all, and they were about to lose what they saw as their property. George Washington himself came to argue with Carleton about the slaves. Carleton compromised, and said he would only free blacks who could prove they had been in New York City before the first peace treaty on November 30, 1782. This may have been a very important date for Peggy Gwynn.

The freed blacks began leaving in the spring of 1783, most bound for Nova Scotia. At some point during the next weeks, Peggy Gwynn sent a request to General Carleton. She asked for permission to go with her husband when he sailed. She said he was in the artillery. She said she had come to New York with the King's Troops, but she did not say when. Peggy Gwynn also pointed out a problem. A certain Mr. Crammon wanted to detain her and deprive her of the liberty she had enjoyed. Peggy and her husband begged Carleton for help.

Crammon may have believed he rightly owned Peggy Gwynn, and he may have come to New York to argue his case. Many slave owners did this. He may have petitioned Carleton, and claimed that Peggy had come to New York *after* the critical date, November 30, 1782. Whatever arguments Carleton heard, he did not grant Peggy's wish. She was turned over to Crammon and a life in slavery. Her husband sailed without her.

Source: British Headquarters Papers, Manuscript and Archives Division, New York Public Library, item no. 9656.

Peggy Gwynn

Deborah Squash

When Deborah was a girl, she was a slave on a big plantation in Virginia. Her owner was none other than General George Washington. She may have worked in the house or in the fields, but either way, she worked hard. The General thought everyone, male and female, slave and free, should work as hard and as long as his or her strength would allow.

Slaves often ran away from Washington's plantations. Some were caught in a few days. Deborah was one of the ones who managed to escape. She was 16 when she ran away. It was 1779, and the General was leading the Patriot army in the Revolutionary War. When she ran, Deborah probably looked for the General's enemies to protect her. The British had offered freedom to black people who would help them. Many slaves ran away from their owners to fight for the King.

Four years later, Deborah was among the more than 3,000 blacks in New York City, headquarters of the British army. She was married by then. She and her husband, Harvey Squash, were both about 20 years old. They were both strong and healthy, and they were both still caught in slavery. Deborah remained the legal property of George Washington, and her husband was still a slave. He belonged to a man named Lynch, who had bought him from a British officer.

Deborah and her husband prayed for a British victory, and freedom. The British lost, though. General Washington and other slaveholders were on the winning side, and they wanted their "property" back. The British said no. Their general, Sir Guy Carleton, insisted on keeping the promise he made to blacks who had joined the British cause. He wanted to give each black person an official certificate of freedom. He also wanted to help them escape to other countries so they wouldn't become slaves again.

In May of 1783, General Washington asked for a meeting with General Carleton. They met as gentlemen. In a quiet voice, Washington asked Carleton to return everything that belonged to the American victors, "including the Negroes." Carlton answered that he meant to honor his promise, and that some of the blacks had already left New York harbor. *Already left?* Washington was shocked. He would be even more shocked later, when he learned that Deborah Squash was on one of those first ships, and long gone. She and her husband were bound for the town of Port Roseway in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Sources: British Headquarters Papers, Manuscript and Archives Division, New York Public Library, item no. 10247 ("Book of Negroes"), pp. 23-24; Henry Wiencek, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

Deborah Squash

Boston King

Boston King was one of the first of New York's slaves or former slaves who wrote a book about his experiences. He said writing his memoir was not "an agreeable task," but he did it in order to thank God for delivering him from his oppressor. It is one of the first and most important accounts of slavery by a former slave.

King began with the story of his birth around 1760, a few miles from Charleston, South Carolina. He was only six when he was put to work, waiting on his master. By the age of nine, he was minding cattle. At 16, he was apprenticed to a carpenter who was cruel to him. This was about the time the Revolutionary War began. One day he escaped his master and ran away to Charleston, which the British controlled by spring of 1780. He was welcomed by them, and began to feel a measure of freedom he had never known before. He fought for the British army, and made his way to New York City, which was the British stronghold. He married a woman named Violet, and they were both in New York when the British lost the war.

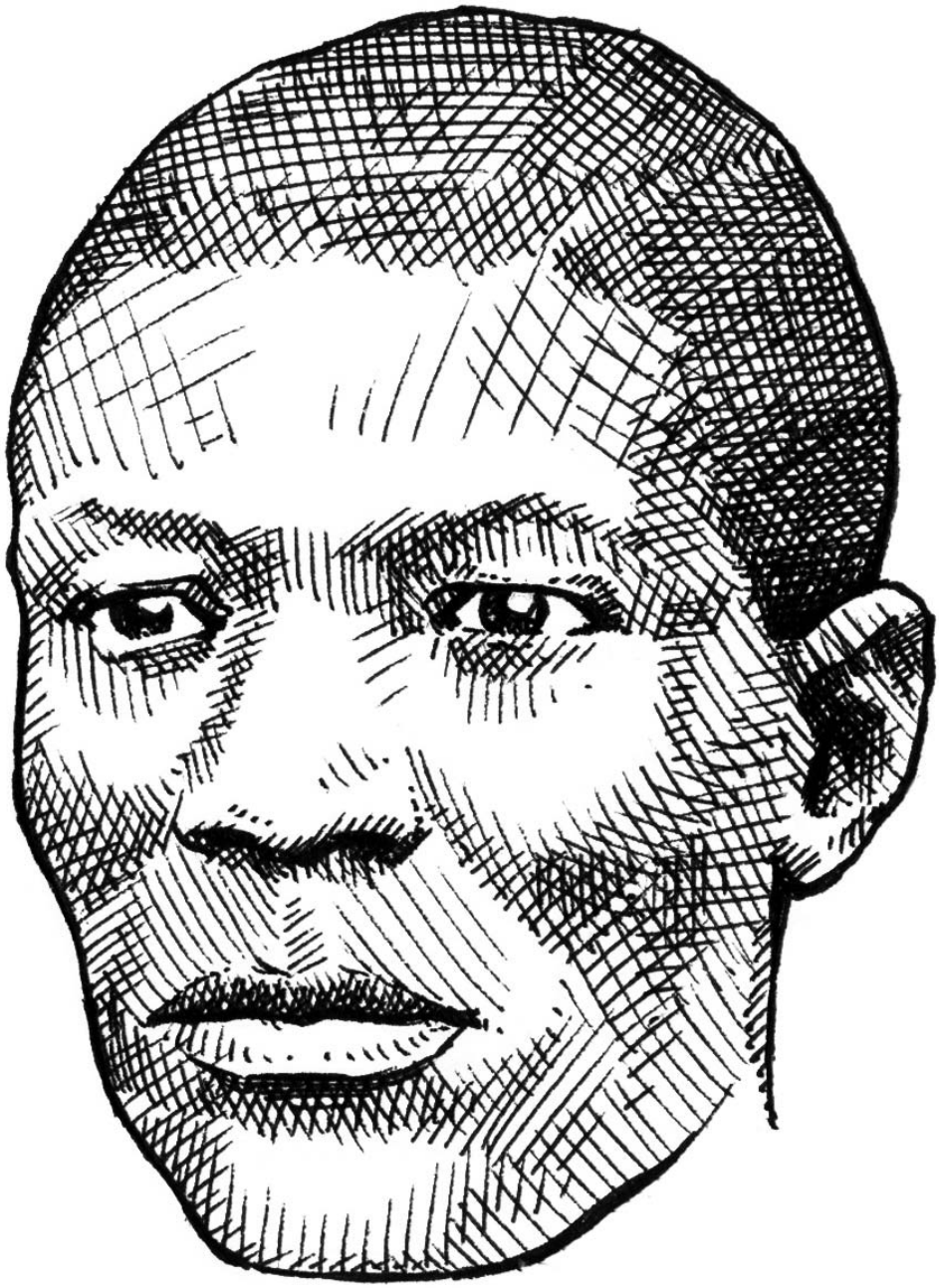
More than 3,000 blacks had fled to New York City to help the British. They were called Black Loyalists. They did not expect a Patriot victory, and when it came they did not know what it would mean for them. A rumor spread that they would be returned to slavery. They saw old masters come up from Virginia, North Carolina, and other areas, and seize their former slaves right on the streets of New York. Slave catchers dragged people out of bed and carried them away. Boston King wrote that the blacks in New York City were filled with "inexpressible anguish and terror….For some days, we lost our appetite for food, and sleep departed from our eyes."

But the British did as they had promised. They gave certificates of freedom to blacks who had fought for them during the war, and took them by ship to countries where they could live free. Boston King was one of many blacks aboard ships headed for Nova Scotia, in Canada. After all the years of slavery, Nova Scotia must have sounded like paradise.

For the first three years, the British gave the relocated black people in Nova Scotia provisions to carry them through until their farms were established. The land, however, was too hard and rocky for farming. When the provisions stopped coming, people became desperate. Some of them sold their clothes and blankets for flour. Many died. Boston King was saved from starvation when a man asked him to make a wooden chest, and paid him with Indian corn. Then the man hired him for other carpentry work, so King and his family had enough to eat. His faith helped him, too. He had joined the Methodist church and become a preacher.

But life in Nova Scotia was too difficult. In January of 1792, Boston King and his wife joined about 1,200 other blacks and sailed for the British colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa. He worked there as a teacher and minister, and he published the story of his remarkable life in 1798.

Sources: King's *Memoirs* downloaded at http://collections.ic.gc.ca/blackloyalists/documents/diaries/king-memoirs.htm, accessed 5/4/05; his autobiography can be downloaded at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p60.html, accessed 5/4/05.



Boston King

John Jea

The question of whether Christian baptism would mean freedom for black people was never entirely resolved. Dating back to Dutch times, many slaveholders felt a Christian obligation to convert slaves. Some also thought it was wrong to enslave a fellow Christian. The Dutch and British both tried to settle the question with laws ruling that Christian converts could remain enslaved, but some white people still had doubts. Even after the American Revolution, enslaved blacks continued to hope and believe that baptism would bring them freedom, and sometimes it did. After John Jea was baptized, his owner freed him reluctantly, because he felt he had to. That does not mean that the conversions to Christianity were insincere. John Jea was a deeply religious man who later became a well-known minister in America and in Europe. He published *The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher* in England around 1811. His retelling of his early years provides some of the few known details about the daily lives of enslaved people in New York.

I… was born in the town of Old Callabar, in Africa, in the year 1773. My father's name was Hambleton Robert Jea, my mother's name Margaret Jea; they were of poor, but industrious parents. At two years and a half old, I and my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, were stolen, and conveyed to North America, and sold for slaves; we were then sent to New York, the man who purchased us was very cruel, and used us in a manner, almost too shocking to relate;…he gave us a very little food or raiment [clothing], *scarcely enough to satisfy us in any measure whatever; our food was what is called Indian corn pounded or bruised and boiled with water…and about a quart of sour butter-milk poured on it; for one person two quarts of this mixture, and about three ounces of dark bread, per day, the bread was darker than that usually allowed to convicts, and greased over with very indifferent hog's lard; at other times when he was better pleased, he would allow us about half-a-pound of beef for a week, and about half-a-gallon of potatoes; but that was very seldom the case, and yet we esteemed ourselves better used than many of our neighbours.*

Our labour was extremely hard, being obliged to work in the summer from about two o'clock in the morning, till about ten or eleven o'clock at night, and in the winter from four in the morning, till ten at night. The horses usually rested about five hours in the day, while we were at work; thus did the beasts enjoy greater privileges than we did. We dared not murmur, for if we did we were corrected with a weapon an inch and-a-half thick, and that without mercy, striking us in the most tender parts, and if we complained of this usage, they then took four large poles, placed them in the ground, tied us up to them, and flogged us in a manner too dreadful to behold….

Source: *The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher, Compiled and Written by Himself*; available at http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jeajohn/jeajohn.html, accessed 6/24/05.

John Jea

Jupiter Hammon

Jupiter Hammon was born a slave on Long Island in 1711. His owner was a rich merchant named Henry Lloyd. As Hammon grew up, he was trained as a clerk and bookkeeper and taught to read and write. Lloyd hired a Harvard graduate and a British missionary to teach him, so he could help with the Lloyd family business. Hammon was hardly the only black person in New York who could read and write, but he was much more educated than most.

Hammon converted to Methodism in the 1730s, and he began writing religious poetry. He often wrote about his belief that in God's eyes, all people were equal. It was through his poems that he fought against slavery. In 1773 he published a book of poetry, one of the very first blacks to do so in America.

The years after the Revolution were a tense time. Many people, black and white, wondered if the principles of freedom and equality would mean the end of slavery. Hammon's position sounds surprising today. He said that whether slavery was right or wrong, it was the duty of slaves to obey their masters. If a master was really cruel, a slave should serve him well and convince him to be kinder.

In 1787, Hammon wrote "An Address to the Negroes of the State of New York." He spoke directly against slavery. He urged young African Americans to pursue freedom, but he warned that spiritual salvation mattered more. For himself, he said he did not want to be free. He was 76 years old, and he would not know how to take care of himself if he were free. He had also not had a typical slave's life. "My lot has been so much better than most slaves have had. I suppose I have had more advantages and privileges than most of you."

Hammon did want young people to be free, though. "Liberty is a great thing, and worth seeking for." He also wanted them to behave in a disciplined, Christian way. He thought sin was a kind of slavery in itself. He advised young blacks to avoid anger and bitterness, to put their faith in God, and to act in a way that no one could criticize. This remained his position until he died some years later, still enslaved to the Lloyd family.

Sources: "Jupiter Hammon," in Berlin and Harris, eds., *Slavery in New York* (New York: New Press, 2005; forthcoming); American National Biography, s.v. "Hammon, Jupiter."

Jupiter Hammon

Mary

On the summer of 1817, Mary was an eight-year-old black girl on a ship in New York harbor. She was about to be taken to the South and sold into slavery. Just a few days earlier, she had been living in Poughkeepsie, a city about 70 miles north of New York. She was an indentured servant, which meant she would work for a white family for a certain number of years. This was a way that many people, black and white, spent their youth. They would be taken care of, maybe learn a skill, and be free at the age of 21. Mary's parents may have been free blacks themselves. Their last name is unknown.

In June of 1817, three white men went to Poughkeepsie and bought six black people. The men had already been to Albany, further north, and bought two blacks there. Most of the blacks were around 20 years old, but there were three children. Mary was the youngest. They were brought down the Hudson River by boat, and taken aboard the schooner *Creole* in New York harbor. It was against the law to take New York blacks to the South and sell them into slavery, but that was about to happen to Mary and the other blacks on board. If she stayed in New York, Mary would be free when she turned 21. In the South, she would be enslaved her whole life.

Fortunately, Samuel Kelley lived in Poughkeepsie, and he had been watching. He was a member of the New York Manumission Society, a group of wealthy and powerful white people who helped blacks fight for their rights under the law. When he saw three white men buying slaves and heading toward New York, he became suspicious. He hurried to Manhattan and asked for a special meeting of the Manumission Society and told them what he knew. The next day, the Society hired a group of officers to go on board the *Creole*. When they did, they found Mary and the others and brought them off the ship.

The three men were charged with kidnapping, tried, and found guilty. One died before he could be sentenced. One was fined $25. The remaining man was sent to the city penitentiary for three years at hard labor. This sentence was a warning to anyone who might think of capturing or buying New York blacks and selling them in the South.

Mary and the other blacks were given their freedom by the court. She could go back to Poughkeepsie and find her parents. Until then, she may have stayed with Catherine Ferguson for a while. Ferguson was a black woman who lived as a baker and opened her home to children who needed help.

Sources: New York Manumission Society Papers, Ms., New-York Historical Society Library, Minutes, Vol. 10, p. 333; Vol. 11, pp. 1, 7, 11.

Mary

Catherine Ferguson

Catherine Ferguson was born around the time of the American Revolution. She and her mother were enslaved to a man who lived on Water Street in New York City. Catherine was very young when her mother was sold. She never forgot the pain of losing her. It was one reason why she later worked so hard to help young children, especially poor children.

When Catherine was about 14, she became a Christian. At about the same time, a white woman bought her for $200 and set her free. Catherine paid half the amount back, though it must have been difficult for her to raise this much money.

Catherine Ferguson made a living by baking cakes for weddings and parties. She was famous for her wonderful cakes, but she cared most about her membership in the Presbyterian Church, and poor children. At one time, she had had a husband and two children, but they apparently died young. Most of her life she lived as a single woman.

She began a Sunday school that may have been the first one in Manhattan. She brought in poor children, taught them religion, and made sure they had enough to eat. She used her own cake money for this. Over the course of her life, she raised or took care of 48 children, 20 of them white. Sometimes she did her charity work with white people, and sometimes she worked alone. White people respected her generosity and faith, and this gave her the freedom to do the work so important to her. After she died of cholera in 1854, her obituary was written by a well-known white businessman and anti-slavery activist. He called her a saint. It was hard not to admire a loving, Christian woman who baked delicious cakes and spent her life teaching and taking care of needy children.

Sources: Lewis Tappan's obituary of Catherine Ferguson is at http://www.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Ferguson.html, accessed 5/4/05.

Catherine Ferguson

Rose Butler

Rose Butler was born in Westchester County in 1799. According to the first Gradual Emancipation law, black girls born to slave mothers in or after 1799 would be servants until they were 25, and black boys until they were 28. Then they would be free. This was not the same as being a slave, because it was not permanent. It was not quite the same as being an indentured servant either, because blacks were given no choice in the matter.

In reality, though, whites and blacks knew that the end of slavery was in sight. During Rose Butler's childhood, blacks began to bargain with their owners and win release. As a result, there were more and more free blacks in New York. Rose Butler was not one of them. Instead, her contract was sold to a series of buyers. She was 16 when she came to the home of William Morris in New York City. Four years later, she set the Morris house on fire and her trial caught the attention of white New York. A white minister named John Stanford interviewed her and wrote a pamphlet about her.

According to Stanford, Rose said she had begun to steal when she was very young. She started small, taking thread and silk from a store owned by her master. When she wasn't caught, she stole again, and she still wasn't caught. By the time she was living with the Morrises, she was taking anything she wanted. Once she took $300 in silver coins. She made no effort to hide the money she had. She would buy presents for her family and take her friends on steamboat rides. She would spend money at Corlear's Hook, the area of New York City where black and white, slave and free, held wild parties that respectable residents found scandalous.

Rose Butler said she set the Morris house on fire in order to get even with Mrs. Morris, with whom she had had many conflicts. For the first time, she was caught. Two white men had helped her set the fire, but she never identified them. She alone was tried for arson and found guilty. On July 9, 1819, she was led through the streets of New York to the gallows. While several thousand people watched, she was hanged.

Everybody was talking about Rose Butler. Some white people thought all blacks were like her – immoral, and out of control. Many were very nervous about what would happen in 1827, when slavery would come to an end. These fears were fanned by Stanford's pamphlet, which portrayed Rose Butler as part of a large network of disorderly poor people, black and white, who lived outside the rules of white society.

Sources: "The Rose Butler Case," in Berlin and Harris, eds., *Slavery in New York* (New York: New Press, 2005; forthcoming); Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 111-116.

Rose Butler

New-York Historical Society

Jack DeVoo

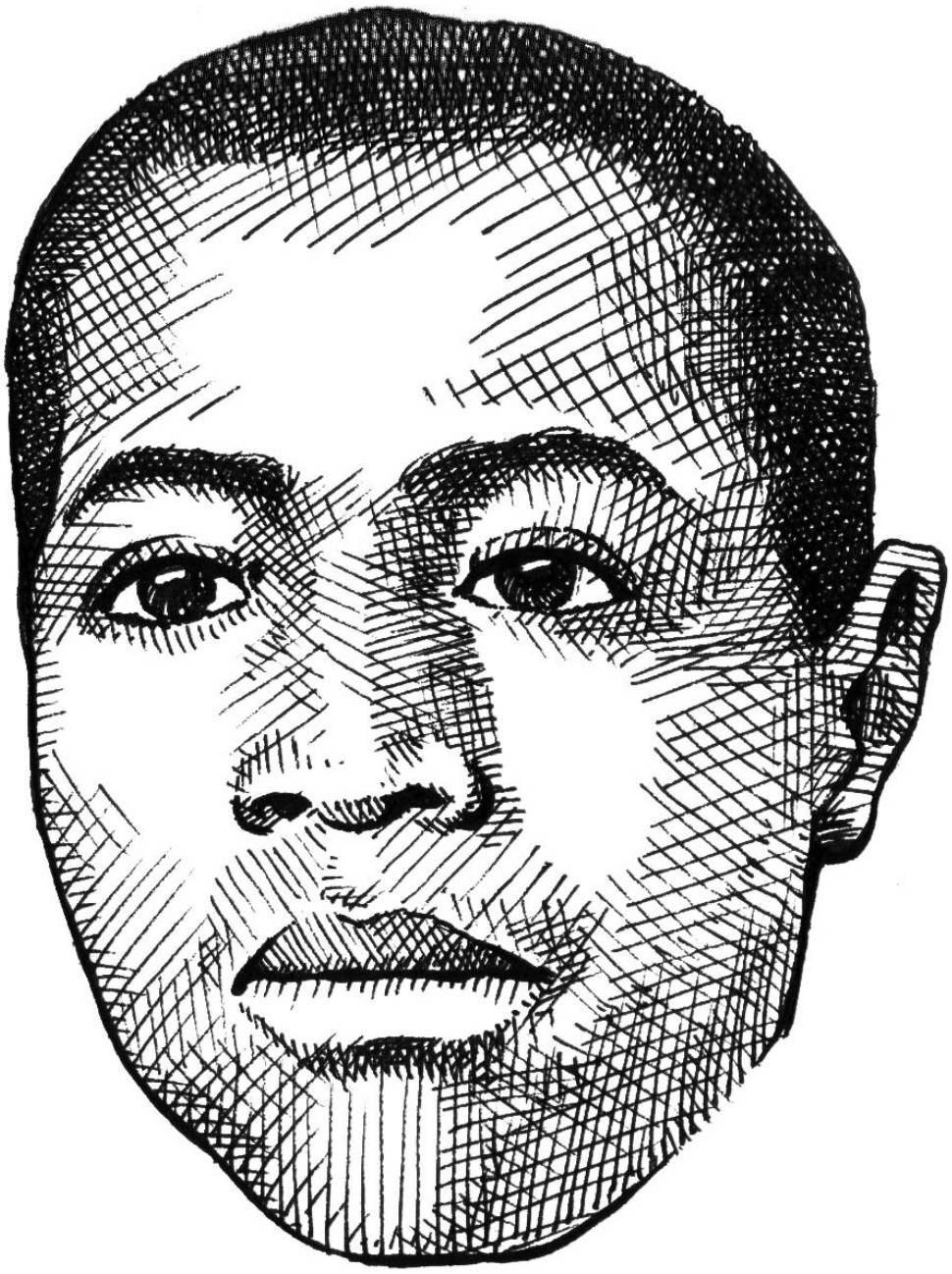
Jack lived on Long Island but he came to New York City often. He was the slave of a butcher named Frederick DeVoo, who owned a 20-acre farm in Williamsburg, now part of Brooklyn. On holidays, owners sometimes gave slaves time off. For Pinkster, the biggest black holiday of all, they might get three days to themselves. That is when Jack and other Long Islanders liked to go across the East River to the big Catherine Market, near the Catherine Slip. People came there to buy and sell vegetables, meat, and fresh fish. Sometimes the butchers would ask blacks to come and dance a jig, or what was called a "break down." They wanted to attract a crowd who might buy some meat. After a while, Catherine Market became known for its dancers.

The dancing took the form of a contest. A wide board about 6 feet long was put on the ground. The dancers had to stay on the board as they danced. They kept time by slapping their hands against their thighs. The moving feet and slapping hands were like drums keeping a beat. At the end, dancers passed the hat to collect money, the way people in New York streets and parks still do. New Yorkers voted for the best dancer with their money, and Jack was often the winner.

Jack's owner thought very highly of him. He considered him smart and faithful. As slavery was soon to end in New York, DeVoo bought Jack a new suit and made him an offer. "Jack, if you go home with me, you shall never want; but if you leave me now, my home shall never more know you." In other words, it was now or never.

Jack replied that he wanted to stay in the city, and that's what he did. He spent his days at the Market, looking for work. It may not have been the life Jack was hoping for. The whites who watched him dance were sometimes laughing at him, not appreciating his skill. He could hardly make enough money to live. Some of the people at the Market worried about him and asked DeVoo to take him back. DeVoo refused. "The laws set him free and he left me," he said, "now let the laws take care of him."

Sources: Thomas DeVoe, *The Market Book…* (New York, 1862), pp. 341-345; reprinted in Paul A. Gilje and Howard B. Rock, eds., *Keepers of the Revolution: New Yorkers at Work in the Early Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 224-228.



Jack DeVoo

Serena Baldwin

Serena Baldwin was sitting in a city in Haiti, writing a letter. “Dear Teacher,” she began. “With pleasure I hasten to inform you of our safe arrival in St. Domingo.” It was September 29, 1824. Serena was about 14. Her teacher, Eliza J. Cox, was back in New York City, teaching other students.

During the period of slavery in New York, most black people were not taught to read and write. There had always been a few masters who educated their male slaves, but not women or girls. The American Revolution had begun to change people’s thinking. After the war, some prominent whites formed the New York Manumission Society in order to provide legal help for blacks and to push the legislature for laws that would end slavery. They knew that black boys and girls would need an education. When the Episcopal Church opened the African Free School, the New York Manumission Society paid the expenses so every child could attend for free.

Serena attended the girls’ department. In 1824, the year Serena finished her studies, there were about 150 girls and 350 boys in the African Free School. The girls learned to read and write, as well as to sew and knit. They made shirts, samplers, suspenders, and many other items. At graduation, their work was exhibited for the public. People came to admire the items on display and hear the students’ speeches. Many of these students later became important leaders of the black community.

Serena was writing to thank Miss Cox for what she had taught her. She promised to follow all her teacher’s advice, and she would have the opportunity soon. Serena and some other girls from the African Free School had gone to Haiti to become teachers themselves. Haiti was a new, independent country, run by black people. The slaves had rebelled there, just as the American Patriots had. In her letter, Serena wrote: “Among your good wishes, you wish I may live to enjoy freedom. Dear Teacher, if ever there was a country where liberty dwells, it is here. It is a blessing enjoyed alike by all men, without respect to fortune or colour – it cannot be otherwise, as our motto is ‘Liberty and Equality.’”

Serena went on to proudly describe the farm where she lived with her parents and brothers. They had 12 acres of land, a cottage, fruit trees, chickens, and two cows. She seemed very excited about what lay ahead for her and her new country.

Source: Abigail Mott, comp., *Biographical Sketches and Interesting Anecdotes of Persons of Colour* (New York: M. Day, 1826), s.v. “African Schools in New York City”; available at http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/mott26/mott26.html, accessed 5/4/05.

Serena Baldwin

William Hewlett

William Hewlett was a black man and a famous stage performer, an actor and singer who knew how to keep an audience entertained. He performed at the African Grove Theater, which was started by William Brown, a black man from the West Indies. All of the actors and actresses were black. The audience was drawn from the increasing number of free blacks who could afford a theater ticket. For some performances, there were blacks and whites in the audience, separated by a curtain. Hewlett played the lead in many productions, from serious plays by Shakespeare to comedy skits and musicals. He was considered the Theater's star. There was a time in the 1820s when every New Yorker knew his name.

Some whites were not happy about the African Grove Theater. When William Brown tried to move it to a white neighborhood, white gangs attacked. They damaged the building and beat the actors and Brown. The police came, but instead of arresting the whites, they put the *actors* in jail. They let them go only when they promised not to do more Shakespeare. There was a white theater in the new neighborhood that probably didn't want competition. It was not the last time the African Grove Theater would be attacked by whites. Brown had to close it down a few years later.

William Hewlett went on to a solo career. He performed in Europe and in New York, but in America there was competition from a new form of theater called minstrel. In these performances, white actors would wear make up and pretend to be black people. Minstrel shows became popular because white people found them funny. Fewer people came to watch a real black man on the stage, and Hewlett's career ended. His last performance was in 1831.

Sources: George A. Thompson, Jr., *A Documentary History of the African Theatre* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998); Shane White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

William Hewlett

William Hamilton

In 1817, a law was passed that would end slavery in New York as of July 4, 1827. It seemed far away at first, and blacks were angry that freedom would not come sooner. However, they also used the time to continue an important process they started a few years earlier: building black organizations and laying the groundwork for an independent black community.

William Hamilton was a free black man who worked as a house carpenter during the early 1800s. He was part of a new black middle class in New York City. He believed blacks should help other blacks, so he helped start an organization called the New York African Society for Mutual Relief. The members were skilled workers and ministers who contributed money to help each other during sickness or other times of need.

Hamilton was very hopeful about the future for black people. He believed that white people would see that blacks were as clever, as smart, and as good as anyone. However, he thought that black people had to show the best possible behavior, to act in a way no whites could criticize. He was worried about what would happen otherwise. He was especially worried about July 4, 1827, the day that New York slavery would come to an end. In previous years, the Fourth of July was a day when young white men drank too much and attacked black people. Many blacks feared the attacks would be worse on such a historic day. Hamilton and other black church members thought the celebrations should take place in churches. He wanted ministers and black leaders to speak about civil rights and the need to abolish slavery in the South. He thought a quiet, thoughtful event would show white people that blacks were serious and smart and qualified to live free. He also thought it would be safer.

Other black people wanted a big parade and celebration, with music and dancing. They thought that blacks should show the world how happy they were that slavery was over in New York. They did not like the idea of keeping the celebrating quietly indoors.

In the end, there were two events. The first, on July 4, 1827, was held in the churches, and Rev. Hamilton was one of the speakers. The following day, there was a long and noisy procession through the streets of New York City, led by black men on horseback. Hundreds turned out to watch, and the day passed without violence.

Sources: Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Graham Russell Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

William Hamilton

John Russwurm

John Russwurm was born in Jamaica in 1799, the son of a Jamaican woman and a white merchant. When he was a boy, his father sent him to Canada to be educated. As a teenager, he went to live with his father and his white stepmother. His father died soon after, but Russwurm remained close to his stepmother all his life.

In his twenties, John Russwurm graduated from Bowdoin College in Maine. He was one of the first nonwhite college graduates in this country. Then he moved to New York City. He had lived with whites for most of his life, but now he devoted his energies to the concerns of black people. He taught at the African Free School. In 1827 he and Samuel Eli Cornish began publishing *Freedom's Journal*. This was the first black newspaper in the United States, and it was also read in Canada, England, and Haiti.

The first months of *Freedom's Journal* were exciting, but tense. Slavery was about to end in New York State and blacks did not agree about how to honor the day or what to do after freedom came. They even disagreed about whether to stay in America or leave. Some white people had formed an organization called the American Colonization Society, which was supported by many prominent whites. They believed black people should go to Africa to live, even if they had been born in America. Most American blacks did not like the idea. They thought it was just a way for white people to be rid of blacks.

John Russwurm opposed colonization too, in the beginning. After the abolition of slavery in New York, however, he stopped believing that America was a place where black people could better themselves. He did not think they would ever be treated as the equals of whites. By late 1828, he decided to leave. His decision was controversial in the black community, but Russwurm sailed for Liberia, a colony in West Africa that had been set up for former American slaves. Later he became the governor of the Maryland colony in Liberia. He never lived in America again.

Sources: *American National Biography*, s.v. "Russwurm, John."

John Russworm

Peter Williams, Jr.

Peter Williams, Jr. was born in Brunswick, New Jersey around 1780. His mother was a black indentured servant from St. Kitts. His father supported the Patriot side during the American Revolution. Later Peter said that his father had filled him with love for the American government.

Peter Williams, Jr., was well educated. He was taught at the African Free School and by private teachers. Later, like his father, he made his living by selling tobacco. He was one of the growing number of free blacks in New York City after 1800. Many, like Williams, were reformers who worked hard for political rights for black people and for the end of slavery. He was a member of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief, a black group that helped its members financially and worked for black freedom.

On January 1, 1808, the United States ended its role in the international slave trade. This marked the last time that Africans would be legally imported to this country as slaves. Peter Williams delivered a speech at the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church to celebrate the day. He reminded listeners that Africans had been regularly kidnapped into slavery for hundreds of years. He thanked God for hearing the cries of Africa, and he thanked white people who had helped to end America's role in the slave trade. Like his father, he believed in the promise of the American Revolution: All men are created equal. He knew there were whites who opposed blacks' rights, but he believed that blacks would triumph if they behaved honorably and respected the country's laws.

Williams' speech was published a few days after it was delivered. In a note, Williams noted that "some people doubt my being the author," so he asked four prominent white men to certify that they had seen the manuscript for the speech, written in Williams' own hand.

Like many other black leaders in these years, Williams was deeply religious, and a minister. He became the head of a small black Episcopalian congregation, and helped raise enough money for a church. The first St. Philip's African Church was built downtown on Collect Street, now called Center Street. Later the congregation moved to 134th Street in Harlem.

Sources: *American National Biography*, s.v. "Williams, Peter"; Peter Williams, Jr., *An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Delivered in the African Church, in the City of New York, January 1, 1808* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1808).

Peter Williams, Jr.

Belinda Lucas

On 1826, a white Quaker named Abigail Mott published a book of biographies and stories about black people. She wanted to show the deep religious beliefs of the people she profiled and to reassure whites that former slaves would behave as good Christians. In the spring of 1825, Mott went to Belinda Lucas's house on Chrystie Street and talked to her. They sat together in Belinda's room on the first floor. There was a bed in the room, with a nice coverlet. The room also had a mirror, an armchair, a carpet on the floor, and other furniture. Because Mott wrote down Belinda's words, and because Belinda had lived a long life, this profile is one of the few first-person narratives of a black woman who lived in New York during slave times.

Belinda began her story with an early memory. *When I was a small child in Africa, being one day at play in the woods, some people came along. One of whom catched me, and throwing me over his shoulder, ran away with me. After he had got some distance, he put me down and whipped me to make me run. When we came to the water, they put me into the ship, and carried me to Antigua. Soon after, the captain of a vessel from New-York taking a liking to me, bought me and brought me here. I was then so little that I sometimes slept at my mistress's feet.*

Belinda was sold several times, married twice, and had a child who died young. Her last owner was a lawyer named Livingston. *When I was about forty years old, I bought my freedom for twenty pounds. Not long after I married my last husband I paid for his freedom, and we went to Charleston. After living there about seven years, he died. And knowing I had many friends and acquaintance in New-York, I came back. I brought a hundred dollars with me, which I put into the church stock. From that I have received seven dollars every year, and with it I buy my winter firewood.*

Belinda was a determined and hard-working woman. *By working early and late, besides my day's work, I earned money and got a life-lease on this spot of ground. I built this house, and in this room I have lived many years. The upper part I rent…. I have been asked many times to sell it, but I think it is much better for me to stay quietly here than to be moving about. And besides, I let Mr. _____ have fifty dollars, and when he failed, I lost it. And the bad folks have several times taken money out of my chest. And I was afraid if I did sell, I should lose that also, and then I should be very bad off.*

She was not sure how old she was, but thought she might be close to 100. Still, she liked living alone. *If I have somebody with me, they will want other company, and that will make more noise than I like. I love to be still, then I can think. And when I am sick, the people upstairs are kind to me, and do what little I want done.*

Belinda learned to spell a little when she was a child, but she did not know how to read until she went to the Clarkson School, which taught adult black women. Now she could read her Bible. Speaking of her reading, she said: *I met with a bad accident lately. I dropped my spectacles in the fire, and it spoiled them. When I can get into the Bowery to Mr. _____'s [store] I can get another pair. But nobody can get them for me, they would not know how to suit my eyes. And then I always pay cash for what I get. I have found it the best way. In all my life long there has never [been] any body had the scratch of a pen against me.*

Source: Abigail Mott, comp., *Biographical Sketches and Interesting Anecdotes of Persons of Colour* (New York: M. Day, 1826); available at http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/mott26/mott26.html, accessed 5/4/05.

Belinda Lucas

New-York Historical Society

Peter Van Wagener

Peter was born on the Dumont farm about 90 miles north of New York City. His parents, Thomas and Isabella, were both slaves. He had three sisters, but he was the only boy in the family. In late fall of 1826, when Peter was about five, his mother left to work on a nearby farm. A few weeks later, Peter was sold to one of his owner's relatives. Then he was sold to Solomon Gedney, another member of his owner's family.

Solomon Gedney then gave Peter as a wedding gift to a man named Fowler, whose bride, Eliza, was also a Dumont relative. The Fowlers took Peter to their plantation in Alabama. Fowler beat Peter severely. Sometimes Eliza Fowler would find Peter hiding after a beating, and put ointment on his wounds. Many masters were cruel, but Fowler was unusually brutal. He was later arrested for beating Eliza to death.

Peter had been in Alabama a few weeks before his mother learned he was gone. She went to the Dumonts and asked for her son to be returned. The family laughed. Isabella decided to fight in court, a courageous and unusual move. She had the law on her side, because New York blacks could not be taken south and enslaved. Solomon Gedney knew this and was afraid he would be fined and maybe sent to jail.

Peter did not know that his mother was trying to help him. One day when he had been in Alabama for around a year, suffering Fowler's beatings, Solomon Gedney came to the plantation and took Peter on the long journey back to New York. He brought him to a courthouse where people started asking the boy about his mother.

Peter was scared and did not understand what was happening. He said he didn't have a mother who lived in New York, and asked to stay with his "kind master." When his mother was brought to the court, he screamed at the sight of her. Eventually, he calmed down and said she did look the way his mother used to look. He was given his freedom by the court, and went home with Isabella. Later, when she saw the welts and bruises that covered his body, she said, "Oh my God! Pete, how *did* you bear it?"

Slavery in New York State had just ended, and Peter's mother decided to move with her son to New York City, where they used the name Van Wagener, after the family who had bought and freed Isabella. Slavery had left many scars on Peter and he had a difficult time growing up in the city. He couldn't hold a job. He stole and gambled. When he was 18, a minister urged him to go on a whaling voyage and straighten himself out. He agreed. While he was at sea, he wrote five letters home to his mother, each time asking her to write him back, to remember him, and to forgive him. He never received any letters from her, though she may have tried to write.

By this time, Isabella was middle-aged and a devout Christian. She put her time as a slave behind her and began a new stage of her life. In 1843, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth, left New York City, and began her fierce public battle against slavery, the battle that would make her lastingly famous. Her final letter from Peter had been dated September 19, 1841. She never heard from him again.

Sources: Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); Olive Gilbert, ed., *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Boston: 1850); available at http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/truth/1850/1850-16.html, accessed 5/13/05.

Peter Van Wagener

Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth's name is one of the most famous in American history, but this woman began her life as a slave named Isabella. She was born around 1797 in Ulster County, about 90 miles north of New York City. This was an area where many Dutch people still lived and followed the old customs, and Isabella grew up speaking Dutch. When she was about 12, she was sold to the family of John Dumont. Some three years later, her owner chose a husband for Isabella, an older Dumont slave named Thomas.

Her relationship with the Dumonts was long and complicated. She was treated harshly by her owner and his wife, but she looked up to John Dumont. She had a low opinion of herself, but she thought he was strong and important. Slavery often made black people thinks poorly of themselves and highly of their white masters.

In 1826, Isabella took her youngest child, an infant, and moved to a nearby farm. She believed she was free, that Dumont had promised to free her a full year before slavery was due to end in New York State. Dumont disagreed, but Isabella remained with the Van Wageners, a family who opposed slavery and paid Dumont for Isabella's freedom.

Then came one of Isabella's darkest hours. She learned that her only son, five-year-old Peter, had been sold or given to Dumont family members and was now on a plantation in Alabama. After 1817, it was illegal to sell a New York slave to the south, so Isabella did a rare thing: she sued in court for Peter's return. She spent a frantic year winning Peter's release, and many more trying to help him recover from the terror and abuse he suffered.

In 1828, Isabella and Peter moved to New York City. Slavery was over in the state, but black people still faced many difficulties. Isabella worked as a maid for a white family, doing the same household chores she had done as a slave. Black children like Peter were not accepted in the new public schools. Isabella and her son were not permitted to go on the streetcar. She was a pious woman who took comfort in God and preaching, but she was getting angry.

In 1843, she followed her religious convictions and her anti-slavery passions. She left New York to begin the life for which she is now famous. She gave herself a strong new name, Sojourner Truth, and she began speaking in public, an almost unheard-of activity for women. She argued for an end to slavery in the South and for the rights of women. She was a powerful presence, almost six feet tall, very dark-skinned, with a deep speaking voice. Her English was fluent by then, but the lingering sound of her original Dutch made her voice even more compelling. Sojourner Truth spoke forcefully and tirelessly, year after year, and people paid attention.

Sources: Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); Olive Gilbert, ed., *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Boston: 1850); available at http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/truth/1850/1850-16.html, accessed 5/13/05

Sojourner Truth