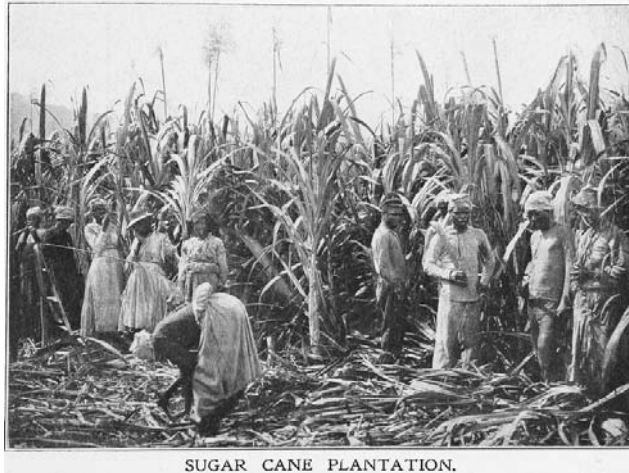


THE BEGINNING OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA

The first Africans in America arrived as Indentured Servants via Jamestown, Virginia in 1619. The first slaves were brought to New Amsterdam (New York) by the Dutch in 1629. They were the property of the Dutch West India Company. The value of a slave was 40 Dutch Guilders (about \$ 16).

From 1619 to about 1640, Africans brought to Jamestown could earn their freedom working as laborers and artisans for the European settlers. These first slaves did enjoy some of the liberties like other new settlers. However, by 1640, Maryland became the first colony to institutionalize slavery. In 1641, Massachusetts, in its written legislative *Body of Liberties*, stated that "bondage was legal" servitude. This statement then changed the conditions of the African workers - they became "chattel" slaves. They could now be openly bought and became the property of their masters.



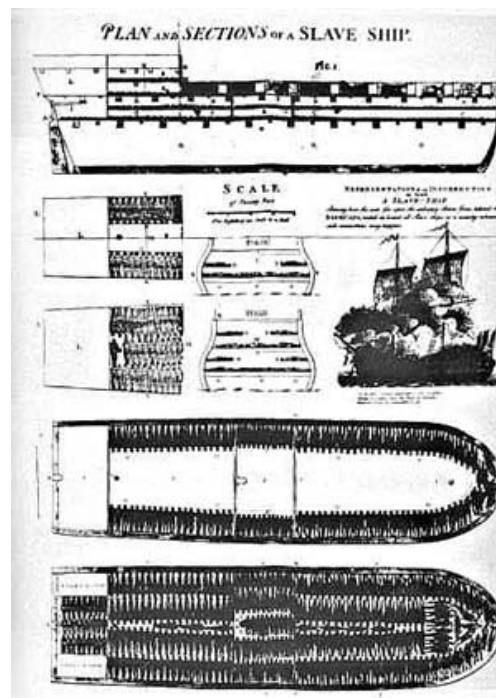
THE SLAVE TRADE

The Portuguese were the first to start the slave trade starting around 1562. The practice of slavery grew rapidly from 1646 up until 1790. A prime area for purchasing slaves for the needs of the Europeans was on the west coast of Africa. This area was ruled by three major empires: Ghana (790-1240), Mali (1240-1600), and Songhai (670-1591). Other smaller nations were also used by slavers along the west coast; they included: Benin, Dahomey, and Ashanti. The peoples inhabiting those African nations were known for their skills in agriculture, farming, and mining. The Africans of Ghana were well known for smelting iron ore, and the Benins were famous for their cast bronze art works.

During these time periods, there were many African tribal wars. Captured enemies were taken to the slave markets and their right of ownership was passed along during barter trading between natives and Europeans. The main commodities of barter used by the Europeans to secure African slaves were glass beads, whiskey, rum, ivory, and guns. Other slaves were kidnapped by white and black hunters.

The need for more slaves was due to the rising demand in Europe for sugar, coffee, cotton, and tobacco. Spain, France, the Dutch, and English were in competition for this cheap labor needed to work their colonial plantation systems. The slave trade was so profitable that, by 1672, the Royal African Company chartered by Charles II of England became the richest shipper of human slaves to the mainland of the Americas. The slaves were so valuable on the open market - they were called "Black Gold."

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE



Artists drawing of a slave ship

The Middle Passage is the term given to the portion of the "triangular trade" route from Africa to the Americas. The system worked as follows: a typical British slave ship went south down to the coast of West Africa. These English slavers brought cargoes of rum, brandy, glass, cloths, beads, guns, and other assorted goods to bargain with African traders for their tribal captives. Some slavers took matters into their own hands and went ashore and kidnapped unsuspecting natives. They then took them aboard their slave ships or kept them in waiting areas near the shore called "barracoons" or slave barracks.

When the Traders had achieved their desired number of African slaves, the “middle passage” voyage from Africa, across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, then began. Their destinations were one of several ports in the West Indies and Caribbean (including: Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Santo Domingo, and the islands of St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix, and Barbados).



Drawing of the conditions in the hold of a slave ship

In the West Indies and Caribbean, some slaves were off-loaded and sold to work at the sugar plantations in this area. They became known as the "Sugar Islands." The raw molasses extracted from the cane was then taken by ships to the rum factories located in Newport, Rhode Island, Bristol, Connecticut or Rhode Island.

Some slaves were taken up the Atlantic coast where they were exchanged for goods or cash in such cities as Charleston, South Carolina and Boston, Massachusetts. It was from these cities that the slaves were taken to a market and sold to plantation owners or wealthy white citizens who kept them as housekeepers or maids.

The goods produced on the plantations in North America (sugar, cotton, tobacco) were then loaded aboard the now empty slave ships for the trip back to England. The rum from the rum distillers went directly back to Africa in order to barter for more slaves. The “Triangular Trade Route” was now complete

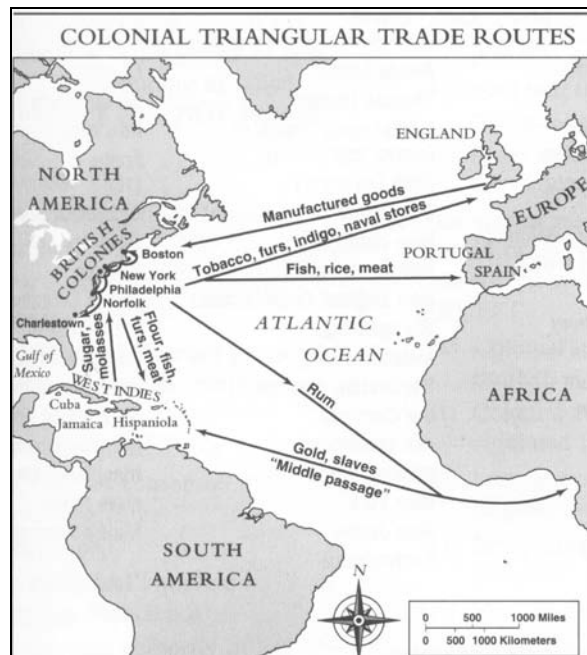


Table of the estimated number of slaves brought across the Atlantic every year

Country (beginning in 1768)	Number of Slaves per Year
Britain	53,000
France	23,000
The Netherlands	11,000
Portugal	8,700

Estimates of up to 10 million slaves took the Middle Passage Voyage to reach the Americas. It was however, the Portuguese that physically brought slaves over to the New World, the majority going to Brazil and other lesser areas of Central and South America.

SLAVERY AND RACE

Many Europeans came to America to practice religious freedom. The matter of Slavery had to be justified. The black slave quickly became a race that was inferior, subhuman, and destined for servitude. The early Christian churches did not take up the cause of eliminating slavery until much later in the century. Many found an excuse for the mere existence of slavery as it was, according to them, fully legal and legitimate, and clearly written within the text of the bible! The famous Boston theologian, Cotton Mather, in 1693 included in his *Rules for the Society of the Negroes* the explanation that "Negroes were enslaved because they had sinned against God." He later included a heavenly plan that "God would prepare a mansion in Heaven," but slaves would never be admitted.

SLAVE CODES AND RESISTANCE

Slave codes were created in the colonies, especially in the South. These codes robbed the Africans of their freedom and will power. Some slaves did resist this treatment, but they received cruel punishments such as whippings and beatings for disobeying their masters. Slaves were forbidden from carrying guns, taking food, striking their masters, and running away. Some slaves were even killed in front of the rest of the slave population as an example for resisting or breaking these codes.

Some slave states required both slaves and free blacks to wear metal badges. Those badges were embossed with an ID number and occupation.



Slave Tags

Freedom was always on the minds of the enslaved Africans. Gaining that freedom was almost impossible for many.

The most common form of resistance used by the slaves against their masters was to run away. To live as a runaway required perfect escape routes and exact timing. Where to hide, finding food, leaving their family and children behind became primary issues. A severe punishment was given whenever a hunted slave was caught and returned to bondage. Many slaves ran off and lived in the woods or vast wilderness in the undeveloped American countryside. These groups of slaves were called "maroons." They hid in remote areas of thick forests and lived off wild fruits and small animals. Some maroons ran married the Native American populations. They were later called "Black Indians."



Black Indians