

740 History of Slavery in America OLLI Fall 2021

Week 4 Slavery in the North

Youtube: Slavery and the Making of America episode 1

Sources:

Berlin, Ira Many Thousand Gone, The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America
Lepore, Jill New York Burning

Summary: About five years after the arrival of enslaved African in the Jamestown colony, eleven enslaved Africans were brought by the Dutch West India Company to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam. These men were the property of the company. They were brought to New Amsterdam to establish the infrastructure of the town. They cleared forests, built port facilities, laid out streets and built public buildings. These members of the charter generation were able to negotiate limited concessions to improve their lot. Women were imported and families were formed. The charter generation were able to use courts to obtain back wages in some situations. Some were able to negotiate a half freedom from the company in which they had land and worked for themselves. However this half free status was not inheritable, the children of the half free were enslaved. When the English took the colony from the Dutch in 1664, the condition of the enslaved became worse. Arson has played a large part in the resistance of the enslaved population and in the fears of the white colonists. The burning of the Fort George in 1741 occasioned one of the most brutal retaliatory massacres in colonial history.

Slavery was part of the labor force in all of the northern colonies. These remained societies with slaves and did not evolve into slave societies largely because these were not plantations of staple crops. Most enslaved people in the north worked on small farms, in small businesses, or as domestic servants. Conditions could be harsh. As enslaved people gained their freedom, restrictions on where free blacks could live and work continued to make life difficult for free-men.

The northern colonies' indirect participation in the slave economy prolonged and promoted slavery in the colonies and new nation. Rhode Island participated in the triangle trade by shipbuilding, trading rum for enslaved Africans, and buying sugar and molasses from the sugar plantations in the West Indies. In the other northern colonies textile production with southern cotton, provisioning the sugar colonies in the West Indies, manufacturing using slave produced materials such as ivory in piano industry. The financial structure headquartered in NYC grew and prospered with slave labor.

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Essential Understanding:

- Slave Society and Society with slaves
- Complicity of north in all aspects of slave society in the south
- Slave plot of 1741 as example of extreme response of white colonists to black resistance..

Suggested Supplemental Materials and Activities

Watch the first episode of Africans in America available on youtube

Visit the NPS site at the African Burial Ground on your next visit to NYC