

CHAPTER 4

Colonial Slavery

■ Virginia and Maryland

The twenty Africans who were put ashore at Jamestown in 1619 by the captain of a Dutch frigate were not slaves in a legal sense. And at the time Virginians seemed not to appreciate the far-reaching significance of the introduction of Africans into the fledgling colony. These newcomers, who happened to be black, were simply more indentured servants. They were listed as servants in the census counts of 1623 and 1624, and as late as 1651 some blacks whose period of service had expired were being assigned land in much the same way that it was being assigned to whites who had completed their indenture. During its first half-century of existence Virginia had many black indentured servants, and the records reveal an increasing number of free blacks.

But as time went on Virginia steadily fell behind in satisfying the labor needs of the colony with Indians and indentured servants. It was then that the colonists began to give serious thought to the "perpetual servitude" of blacks. Virginians began to see what neighboring islands in the Caribbean had already recognized, namely, that blacks could not easily escape without being identified; that they could be disciplined, even punished, with impunity since they were not Christians; and that the supply was apparently inexhaustible. Black labor was precisely what Virginia needed in order to speed up the clearing of the forests and the cultivation of larger and better tobacco crops. All that was required was legislative approval of a practice in which many Virginians were already engaged. Indeed, by 1640, some

Africans in Virginia had become bondservants for life. The distinction between black and white servants was becoming well established. In that year, when three runaway servants, two white and one black, were recaptured, the court ordered the white servants to serve their master one additional year. The black servant, however, was ordered "to serve his said master or his assigns for the time of his natural life here or elsewhere." Thus, within the first generation of Virginia's existence, African servitude was well on the way to becoming African slavery.

The actual statutory recognition of slavery in Virginia came in 1661. The status of blacks already there was not affected if they had completed their indenture and were free. As a matter of fact, the recognition was almost casual and was first indicated in a law directed at white servants: "That in case any English servant shall run away in company with any negroes who are incapable of making satisfaction by addition of time . . . that the English so running away . . . shall serve for the time of the said negroes' absence as they are to for their owne." In the following year, 1662, Virginia took another step toward slavery by indicating in its laws that children born in the colony would be held in bond or free according to the condition of the mother. Some mitigation of slavery was intended by a 1667 law indicating that slaves could be baptized as Christians. In order to protect the institution of slavery, however, this law provided that "the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedome." Thus, "diverse masters, freed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavour the propagation of christianity."

At first the black population of Virginia grew quite slowly. In 1625 there were only 23 in the colony, and as late as the middle of the century scarcely 300 could be counted. With the chartering of the Royal African Company in 1672 the shipment of slaves into the colony was accelerated. By the end of the century they were being brought in at the rate of more than 1,000 per year. It was in the eighteenth century that the black population grew at what some Virginians began to view as an alarming rate. In 1708 there were 12,000 blacks and 18,000 whites. By 1756 there were 120,156 blacks and 173,316 whites, with blacks outnumbering whites in many communities.

Although Virginians greatly appreciated the importance of slave labor in the development of the colony, they soon became apprehensive about such large numbers of blacks living among whites. Already whites and blacks were mixing, and a mulatto population was emerging. There were, moreover, persistent rumors of conspiracies of rebellion, and many whites feared for their lives. Those who were apprehensive took the lead in attempting to control the importation of slaves, but commercial interests fought off these attempts with all the resources at their command. For the time being they were successful.

But the fears of insurrection were not groundless. Within two years after the first statutory recognition of slavery, the blacks of Virginia were showing clear signs of dissatisfaction and began to plot rebellion against their masters.

In 1687, while a funeral was taking place, a group of slaves in the northern neck planned an uprising, but the plot was discovered before it could be carried out. Rumors continued, and plots of varying sizes were uncovered. Where there were no plots there was general disobedience and lawlessness. By 1694 Virginia slaves had become so ungovernable that Governor Edmund Andros complained that there was insufficient enforcement of the code which, by that time, had become elaborate enough to cover most of the activities of slaves.

The Virginia slave code, borrowing heavily from practices in the Caribbean and serving as a model for other mainland codes, was comprehensive if it was anything at all. Slaves were not permitted to leave plantations without the written permission of their masters. Slaves wandering about without such permits were to be returned to their masters. Slaves found guilty of murder or rape were to be hanged. For major offenses, such as robbing a house or a store, slaves were to receive sixty lashes and be placed in the pillory, where their ears were to be cut off. For petty offenses, such as insolence and associating with whites or free blacks, they were to be whipped, branded, or maimed. The docility of slaves, about which many masters boasted, was thus achieved through the enactment of a comprehensive code containing provisions for punishment designed to break even the most irascible blacks in the colony. With the sheriffs, the courts, and even slaveless whites on their side, the masters should have experienced no difficulty in maintaining peace among their slaves.

While slavery in Maryland was not recognized by law until 1663, it came into existence shortly after the first settlements were made in 1634. As early as 1638 there was reference to slavery in some of the discussions in the legislature, and in 1641 the governor himself owned a number of slaves. Colonists had no difficulty, therefore, in turning their attention to the problem of the status of blacks and in concluding that legislation was necessary to fix their status as slaves. The law of 1663 was rather drastic. It undertook to reduce to slavery all blacks in the colony even though some were already free, and it sought to impose slave status on all blacks born in the colony regardless of the status of their mothers. It was not until 1681 that the law was brought in line with established practices by declaring that black children of white women and children born of free black women would be free.

The slave population of Maryland was slow to increase, not because of any disinclination on the part of colonists to own slaves but because they were not in ample supply during the colony's early years. This is the principal reason why, during the restoration period, laws were enacted to encourage and facilitate the importation of slaves. In 1671 the legislature declared that the conversion of slaves to Christianity would not affect their status. Masters now felt that they could import African heathens, convert them to Christianity, and thus justify the act of holding them in slavery. By the end of the century the importation of slaves was increasing steadily. In 1708 the

governor reported that 600 or 700 had been imported during the preceding ten months. By 1750 there were 40,000 blacks as compared with 100,000 whites.

As in Virginia, blacks in Maryland early showed resentment against their status as slaves. In several instances white masters died at the hands of their slaves, and there was more than one case of a black cook poisoning an owner. In 1742 seven blacks were executed for the murder of their masters. Others were convicted for committing acts of sabotage such as arson, stealing of property, and the brutal treatment of livestock.

The increase in the black population and fear on the part of whites for their own safety led to the enactment of stringent laws covering their conduct and activities. In 1659 came laws relating to the return and treatment of fugitive slaves. Soon there were laws forbidding slaves to deal in stolen goods and liquor, as well as laws providing for the punishment of free blacks and slaves found guilty of murder, arson, larceny, association with whites, insolence, and going about without permission. Punishment ranged from death to branding and whipping. Enforcement was rigorous, but clemency was not rare. There are numerous examples of intervention on behalf of slaves accused by masters who, while approving of the strict enforcement of the law, wanted "on just this occasion" a bit of leniency.

There is a real possibility that the blacks in Maryland were a contributing factor to the religious strife that existed in that colony. From its very beginning in 1634, Maryland had witnessed an intense rivalry between Catholics, favored by the ruling Calverts, and Protestants, who were heartened by the Puritan ascendancy in England. In 1689 there were rumors that the Catholics were plotting against the government of Maryland. Indians were suspected of collusion with the Catholics, and the blacks of some of the southern counties were also watched with suspicious eyes. This doubtless led to the law of 1695 which prevented frequent meetings of blacks. In the eighteenth century when some Maryland colonists hoped for a Jacobite succession in England, those opposed to it continued to keep under surveillance all the Catholics, Indians, and blacks to be certain that they did not conspire to commit some devilish act. No effective rebellion ever materialized, but blacks enjoyed the distinction of being suspected of belonging to an international clique conspiring to overthrow the government of Maryland before handing it over to the French, the Indians, the English Catholics, or all three.

■ The Carolinas and Georgia

It was a foregone conclusion that slaves would be introduced into the Carolinas as soon as it was feasible. After all, four of the proprietors of the colony were members of the Royal African Company and fully appreciated the profits that could come from the slave trade. By 1680, moreover, the

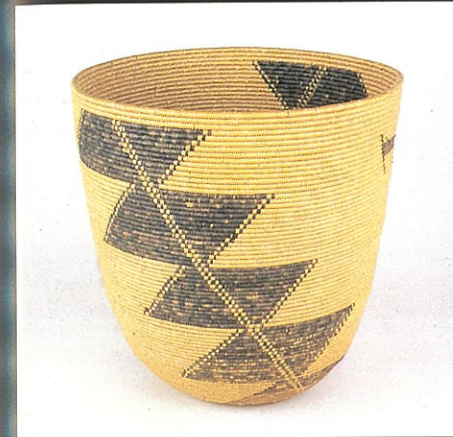


DRIVING NEWLY ARRIVED BLACKS TO THE SLAVE MARKET. Prior to the American Revolution, slavery was sanctioned in all thirteen British North American colonies. As a consequence, slaves of both genders and all ages were appraised and sold just as any other merchandise. (*The Bettmann Archive.*)

examples of Virginia and Maryland led them to believe that Carolina could become prosperous, with plantation slavery as one of the important foundations of the colony's economic life. Perhaps John Locke had these things in mind when, in his *Fundamental Constitutions*, he wrote, "Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever." This statement clearly sanctioned slavery and protected it against any possible destruction that might have come through the conversion of slaves to Christianity.

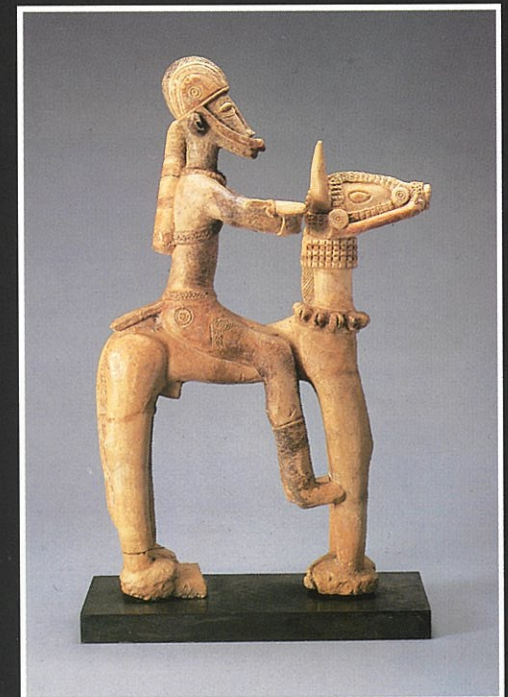
Blacks were present in the Carolina colony virtually from the beginning. This was undoubtedly the result of deliberate encouragement of the impor-

Gallery of African Art



Basket
Rotse peoples, Zambia
Fiber, dye
38.7 cm. (15 1/4 in.)
(*Photograph by Jeffrey Ploskonka*)

Equestrian figure
Inland Delta Region, Mali
Terra cotta
70.5 cm. (27 3/4 in.)
(*Photograph by Franko Khoury*)



(All works of art in this insert are courtesy of the National Museum of African Art, Eliot Elisofon Archives, Smithsonian Institution.)



Vessel
Possibly Bamana peoples, Mali
Terra cotta
57.5 cm. (22 5/8 in.)
(Photograph by Delmar Lipp)

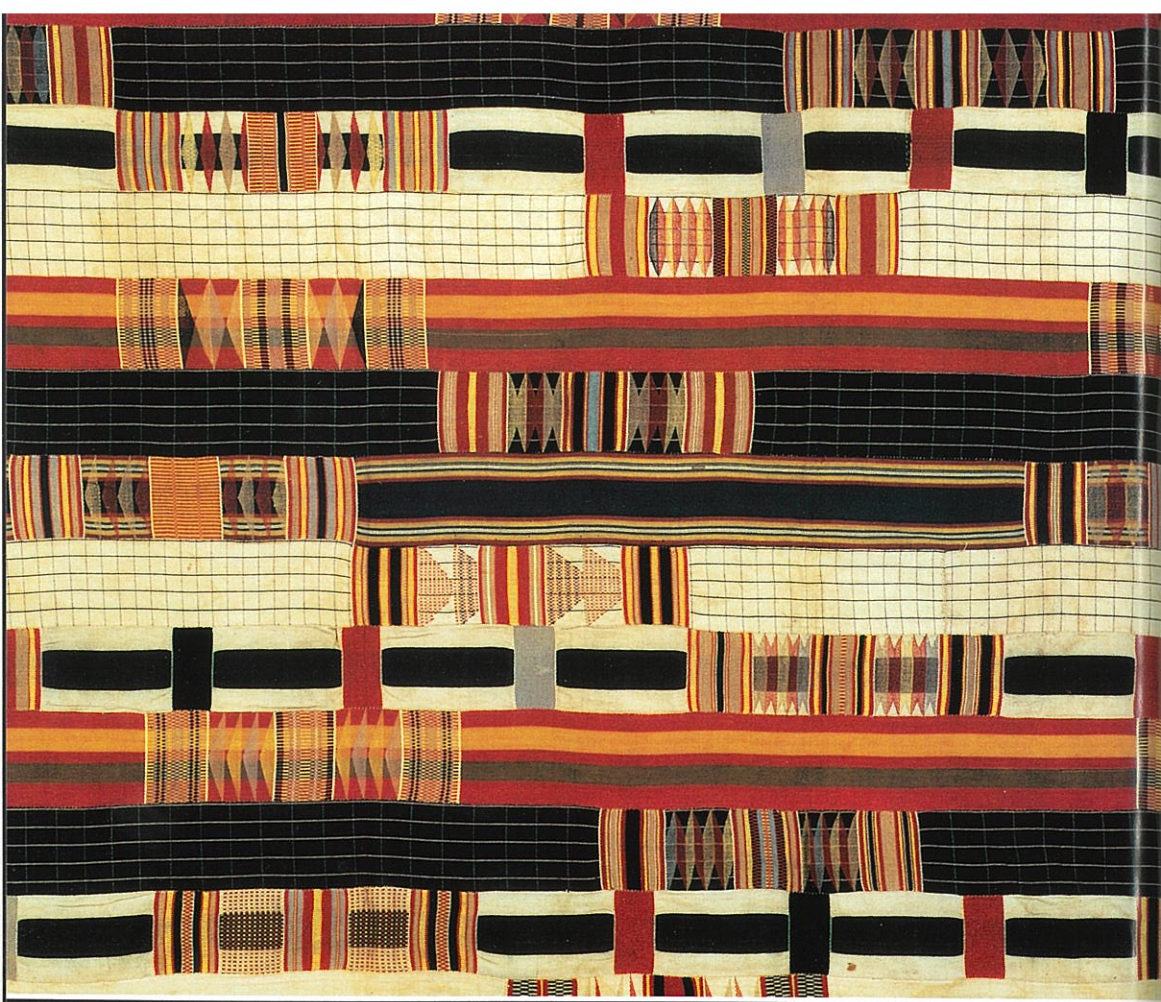
Chair
Southern Mande or Kru peoples,
Côte d'Ivoire
Wood
32.1 cm. (12 5/8 in.)
(Photograph by Franko Khoury)



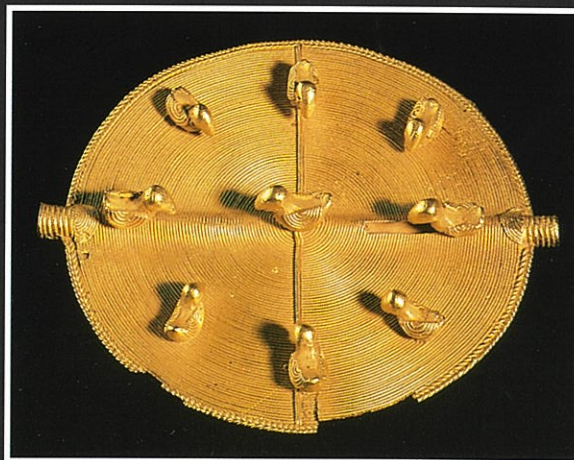
Female figure and children
Yoruba peoples, Nigeria
Wood, pigment
38.5 cm. (15 1/4 in.)
(Photograph by Franko Khoury)

Plaque with multiple figures,
Mid-16th-17th century
Edo peoples, Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Copper alloy
48.6 cm. (19 1/8 in.)





Wrapper
Asante peoples, Ghana
Cotton, silk
159.1 x 101.3 cm. (62 5/8 x 39 7/8 in.)
(*Photograph by Franko Khoury*)



Pendant
Baule peoples, Côte d'Ivoire
Gold alloy
8 cm. (3 1/2 in.)
(*Photograph by Franko Khoury*)

tation of slaves by the proprietors. In 1663 they offered to the original settlers twenty acres for every black man slave and ten acres for every black woman slave brought into the colony in the first year. Somewhat smaller incentives were offered for the importation of slaves in subsequent years. Twenty years after the original settlements, the black population in the Carolinas was equal to that of the white. By 1715 blacks outnumbered whites 10,500 to 6,250. In 1724 there were three times as many blacks as whites, and the growth of the black population was to continue for decades to come.

As in the other colonies, the growth of the black population led to the enactment of legislation aimed at controlling the activities of slaves. As early as 1686 the Carolina colony forbade blacks to engage in any kind of trade, and it enjoined them from leaving their masters' plantations without written authorization. In 1722 white justices were authorized to search blacks for guns, swords, "and other offensive weapons" and to capture them unless they could produce a permit less than one month old authorizing them to carry such a weapon. Patrols were given authority to search blacks and to whip those deemed to be dangerous to peace and good order. Punishments for offenses by slaves were summary and severe.

Carolinians had not established their controls too soon, for as early as 1711 there were rumors that blacks were getting out of hand. In 1720 several slaves were burned alive and others were banished because they were implicated in a revolt near Charleston. In subsequent years there were other revolts or rumors of revolts. In 1739 the well-known Stono Rebellion twenty miles west of Charleston threw the countryside into a state of wild excitement. After slaves killed two guards in a warehouse and secured arms, they went on a full-scale drive to destroy slavery in that area. The uprising was put down, but not for several days and not before thirty whites and forty-four blacks had lost their lives. As Peter Wood has said, the black majority in South Carolina would be a continuing cause of apprehension. Later in the century there were other uprisings, and the general state of affairs led to a full-scale revision of the slave code.

Before the Revolution, South Carolina, now divided from North Carolina, had enacted one of the most stringent set of laws governing slaves to be found anywhere in the New World. The selling of liquor to slaves was prohibited. Owners were warned against undue cruelty to slaves which might incite them to revolt. Owners were prohibited from working slaves more than fifteen hours per day between March 25 and September 25 and for more than fourteen hours per day between September 25 and March 25. These last few provisions were a tacit admission that slaves could be driven to revolt. What Carolinians realized all too late was that slaves were not as tractable as they had believed and that the danger of having so large a slave population in their midst was more real than fancied.

If conditions were at all ameliorated among Carolina slaves, it was the result of the efforts of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. SPG missionaries sought to raise the level of living among both whites

and blacks. In some instances they met with considerable success. They suggested that slaves should be given time to study the Scriptures and to learn to read and write. In many cases they taught slaves themselves, and in one notable instance they fostered the establishment of a school for blacks in Charleston in which the teachers were slaves owned by the SPG. While these were significant ameliorations, they were also evidences of acceptance of the basic idea of enslavement, and with the religious sanction that the SPG gave to slavery, planters felt more secure than ever in their belief in the righteousness of the institution.

The presence of Quakers in North Carolina had a salutary effect on the conditions of slaves in the colony. They urged the establishment of regular meetings for slaves, and Quaker slaveholders were urged by their coreligionists to treat their blacks well. Before the end of the colonial period there was some sentiment among the Quakers to discourage members from purchasing slaves, and finally, in 1770, the organization described the slave trade as "an iniquitous practice" and sought its prohibition. Members of the SPG also sought to improve conditions among blacks as well as Indians and, as they had done in South Carolina, blacks encouraged masters to permit their slaves to attend religious services.

It is interesting to note that there was no real slave insurrection in North Carolina during the colonial period. The fact that the slave population was relatively small and that there was little impersonality on North Carolina plantations was doubtless responsible for this peaceful situation. In comparison with neighboring colonies, North Carolina presented a picture of remarkable calm in the period before the War for Independence.

Georgia was the only important New World colony to be established by England in the eighteenth century. It differed in several significant ways from the earlier English colonies: it was to grant no free land titles, to permit the use of no alcoholic beverages, and to allow no slavery. From the time of its establishment in 1733, however, each of these proscriptions was subjected to enormous pressure from the settlers, and one by one the restrictions collapsed. It was in 1750 that the third petition of the colonists brought about the repeal of the hated prohibition against slaves. From that point on the black population grew and slavery flourished. By 1760 there were 6,000 whites and 3,000 blacks. In 1773, when the last estimate was made before the War for Independence, the white population had increased to 18,000, while the black population numbered some 15,000.

Much of Georgia's slave code, adopted in 1755, was taken from the South Carolina code, and it reflected South Carolina's experience rather than Georgia's. For example, the interdiction against more than seven Negroes being out together without a white chaperone indicated South Carolina's general fear of black uprisings. Between Saturday evening and Monday morning, not even those slaves who were authorized to possess firearms were permitted to carry them on their persons. Under no conditions were they to be taught to read and write.

If the slaves of colonial Georgia did not actually engage in rebellion, they nevertheless resisted their enslavement by running away to Florida and by committing acts of sabotage. Strangely enough, Georgia displayed a relative indifference to insurrection by subjecting her slaves to service in the militia. Perhaps the service that Spanish Florida rendered as a place of escape for more discontented blacks made possible the paradoxical practice of using blacks as Georgia militiamen to assist in the return of fugitive slaves to Georgia.

■ The Middle Colonies

Although the Dutch were primarily interested in the slave trade and made great profits from transporting slaves to various colonies, they did not neglect their own New World settlements. There were large plantations in New Netherland, particularly in the valley of the Hudson River, and by 1638 many of them were cultivated largely with slave labor. The institution of slavery, as practiced by the Dutch in the New World, was relatively mild, with slaves receiving fairly humane treatment and many considerations as to their personal rights. The Dutch slave code was not elaborate, and manumission was not an uncommon reward for long or meritorious service. Although the demand for slaves always exceeded the supply, the number imported by the Dutch never reached such proportions as to cause serious apprehension or difficulty during the period of their domination.

The character of the institution of slavery changed when the English took over New Netherland in 1664. In 1665 the colonial assembly recognized the existence of slavery where persons had willingly sold themselves into bondage, and in the statute of 1684 slavery was recognized as a legitimate institution in the province of New York. In subsequent years the black population of New York grew substantially. In 1698 there were only 2,170 blacks in a total population of 18,067, while in 1723 the census listed 6,171 slaves. By 1771 the black population had increased to 19,883 in a total population of 168,007.

The slave code of New York became refined early in the eighteenth century. In 1706 the colony enacted a law stating that baptism of a slave did not provide grounds for a claim to freedom. A further and certainly significant provision was that a slave was at no time a competent witness in a case involving a freeman. In 1715 the legislature enacted a law providing that slaves caught traveling forty miles north of Albany, presumably bound for Canada, were to be executed upon the oath of two credible witnesses. Meanwhile, New York City was enacting ordinances for better control of slaves. In 1710 the city forbade blacks from appearing "in the streets after nightfall without a lantern with a lighted candle in it."

The concentration of an increasing number of slaves in the city of New York brought with it increased dangers to the white population. Blacks defied

authority and disobeyed the laws. In 1712 the ungovernable temper of New York blacks flared up into a fully organized insurrection in which twenty-three slaves armed with guns and knives met in an orchard and set fire to a slaveholder's house. During the melee that followed nine whites were killed and six were injured. In the ensuing trial of the accused blacks twenty-one were found guilty and executed.

Almost thirty years later, in 1741, there was a rumor of an even larger insurrection. After a series of fires, the rumor spread that blacks and poor whites were conspiring to destroy law and order in the city and to seize control. After the city offered generous rewards for the apprehension of the conspirators, almost 200 whites and blacks were arrested and prosecuted. At least 100 blacks were convicted, 18 of whom were hanged, 13 burned alive, and 70 banished. Four whites, including 2 women, were hanged. There were no more serious outbursts during the colonial period, and by the time of the Revolution, New York had begun to recognize the moral and economic undesirability of holding human beings in bondage.

South of New York, the colonies of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware each in its own way subscribed to the institution of slavery. After the English came to dominate New Jersey, they encouraged slavery in every way. Soon, the black population there was growing steadily: 2,581 in 1726, 3,981 in 1738, and 4,606 in 1745 out of a population of 61,000. In Pennsylvania the growth was not so rapid, largely because of the opposition to slavery by the Quakers. In 1688 Germantown Quakers issued their celebrated protest, and in 1693 George Keith remonstrated with Pennsylvanians for holding persons in perpetual bondage. But in 1685 no less a person than William Penn himself expressed the view that African slaves were more satisfactory workers than white servants, and this had the effect of greatly encouraging slavery in some quarters. In 1721 the black population of Pennsylvania was estimated at between 2,500 and 5,000. Thirty years later there were about 11,000 in the colony. In 1790 there were 10,274 blacks, of whom 3,737 were slaves and 6,537 were free.

In Pennsylvania there was some respect for blacks as human beings, and this attitude led to an early movement for manumission. Even those to whom the institution was acceptable shrank from the wholesale and indiscriminate enslavement of black people simply because it was possible to do so. Pennsylvania was not only relatively free from violence and interracial strife, but the blacks there made strides toward genuine accommodation to their new environment. The lines of communication between blacks and whites were not altogether closed, and the former gained much through these contacts. Schools and churches were a part of the lives of blacks, the institution of marriage was generally respected, and the black family achieved a stability unlike that reached by blacks in most English colonies.

Meanwhile, as early as 1636 slavery existed on the right bank of the Delaware. Since Delaware was a part of Pennsylvania until 1703, the laws of the latter colony applied to Delaware. After that date Delaware was on its own, and the slave population increased at a somewhat more rapid rate

TABLE 1
White and Black Population in the Colonies, 1750
(estimated)

COLONY	WHITE	BLACK
New Hampshire	26,955	550
Massachusetts	183,925	4,075
Rhode Island	29,879	3,347
Connecticut	108,270	3,010
New York	65,682	11,014
New Jersey	66,039	5,354
Pennsylvania	116,794	2,872
Delaware	27,208	1,496
Maryland	97,623	43,450
Virginia	129,581	101,452
North Carolina	53,184	19,800
South Carolina	25,000	39,000
Georgia	4,200	1,000

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970; Part 2. Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C. 1975.

than it did in Pennsylvania. As this occurred, Delaware drifted away from the parent colony and became more closely identified with the interests of the neighboring colonies to the south.

Slavery was never really successful in the Middle colonies. Their predominantly commercial economy, supplemented by subsistence agriculture, did not encourage the large-scale employment of slave labor, and many of the slaves that cleared through New York and Pennsylvania ports were later sent into the Southern colonies. Even where there were extensive agricultural enterprises there was no desire for slaves, for the Dutch, Swedes, and Germans cultivated their farms with meticulous care and seemed to prefer to do it themselves. There were those, moreover, who had moral scruples against using slaves. Thus, many in the Middle colonies welcomed the arguments against slavery that became more pronounced during the Revolutionary period.

■ Blacks in Colonial New England

Although New England's primary interest in slavery was in the trade of blacks, some were early introduced into Massachusetts and Connecticut. In 1638 a Salem ship unloaded several Africans in Boston, and in the following

year there were blacks in Hartford. Before a decade had passed, blacks were used in the construction of houses and forts in Connecticut. By the middle of the century the refugees who founded Rhode Island were using blacks to help establish that colony. While the status of these early New England blacks was rather uncertain, it gradually became clear in all New England colonies that slavery was a legitimate institution.

Whether slaves landing in New England were to be settled there or shipped to other colonies, they became important to the commercial life of the New England colonies. New England slave traders competed in the trade, although they were at a serious disadvantage compared to the powerful European trading companies. After England secured a monopoly of the slave trade to the New World in 1713, it welcomed New England merchants since there was more than enough for its own traders. In the first half of the eighteenth century New England traders thrived. Boston, Salem, Providence, and New London bustled with activity as outgoing ships were loaded with rum, fish, and dairy products, and as Africans, molasses, and sugar were unloaded from incoming ships. Up until the War for Independence the slave trade was vital to the economic life of New England.

The black population in New England grew slowly. In 1700, when the total population of the entire region was approximately 90,000, there were only 1,000 blacks. In the eighteenth century growth was more rapid. Massachusetts led with 2,000 blacks in 1715 and 5,249 by 1776. Connecticut was second with 1,500 blacks in 1715 and 3,587 by 1756. The largest percentage of blacks was to be found in Rhode Island, where in 1774 there were 3,761 blacks to 54,435 whites. The number in New Hampshire remained negligible all during the colonial period.

New England slavery needed little legal recognition for its growth and development. When the codes emerged late in the seventeenth century, slavery had already become well established. In 1670 Massachusetts enacted a law providing that the children of slaves could be sold into bondage, and ten years later it began to enact measures restricting the movement of blacks. In 1660 Connecticut barred blacks from military service, and thirty years later it restrained them from going beyond the limits of the town without a pass. The restrictions against the education of slaves were not as great as in other regions, and frequently blacks learned to read and write.

Since the number of slaves in New England remained relatively small throughout the colonial period, there was little fear of insurrections. Nevertheless, many slaves indicated their dislike of the institution by running away. Others attacked their masters and even murdered them. Still others plotted to rebel. In 1658 some blacks and Indians in Hartford decided to make a bid for their freedom by destroying several houses of their masters. In the eighteenth century there were a number of conspiracies to rebel in Boston and other towns in Massachusetts. The situation became so serious in Boston in 1723 that the selectmen found it necessary to take precautionary measures by forbidding slaves to be on the streets at night and to be "idling or lurking together."

Phillis Wheatley's "An Address to the Atheist"—1768

Thou who dost not daily feel his hand and rod
Darest thou deny the essence of a God!
If there's no heav'n, ah! whither wilt thou go
Make thy Ilysium in the shades below?
If there's no God from whom did all things spring?
He made the greatest and the minutest Thing.
Angelic ranks no less his power display
Than the least mite scarce visible to Day.

M. A. Richmond, *Bid the Vassal Soar, Interpretive Essays on the Life and Poetry of Phillis Wheatley and George Moses Horton* (Washington, 1974), p. 23.

Despite some restrictions, blacks in New England seemed to have been free to associate with each other and with peaceful Indians. The houses of some free blacks became a rendezvous where they danced, played games, and told stories. Slaves like Lucy Terry of Deerfield, Massachusetts, and Senegambia of Narragansett, Rhode Island, had a seemingly limitless store of tales about Africa and other faraway places that filled many an hour with excitement and pleasure. There was, moreover, ample opportunity for blacks to associate with whites, for hardly a house or church raising, an apple paring, or a corn husking took place without the presence of at least a portion of the slave population. On Guy Fawkes Day, Lorenzo Greene says, "Negroes joined in the boisterous crowds that surged through the streets of Boston, much to the annoyance of pedestrians."

Blacks in New England were in a unique position in colonial America. They were not subjected to the harsh codes or the severe treatment that their fellows received in the colonies of the South. Nevertheless, it is possible to exaggerate the humanitarian aspects of their treatment. Masters in New England held a firm hand on the institution and gave little consideration to the small minority that argued for the freedom of slaves. Although New Englanders took their religion seriously, they did not permit it to interfere with their appreciation of the profits of slavery and the slave trade. At the same time, they did not glut their home market with slaves and increase the number to the point where they would be fearful for their safety. There seemed to be the characteristic Yankee shrewdness in the New Englander's assessment of the importance of slavery to economic and social life.