



Fairfield Museum
EXPLORE *the past*, IMAGINE *the future*

Slavery in Connecticut: Educator Guide [excerpt]

Teaching About Slavery in Connecticut

Slavery is often taught within the context of the Civil War, but its history in America goes back to the nation's beginnings. In 1619, the first Africans stepped foot onto North American soil at Jamestown, Virginia; they were slaves captured from a Portuguese ship and were sold in Jamestown. In New England, the first slaves in the Massachusetts Bay colony were Africans who had been exchanged for Pequot War prisoners in Barbados. New England colonies adopted a fugitive slave law in 1643, and in the 1660s laws in Virginia firmly established slavery. In Connecticut, trade and rich farmland produced an abundance of agricultural goods which were sent to the West Indies to support the sugar plantations and their slave populations. Connecticut's coastline, rivers and waterways provided the routes and ports that connected the colony to England, Africa, and the West Indies in the "triangle trade" that exchanged New England products for rum, molasses, and slaves. By the early 18th century, slavery was an integral part of this commerce and trade, and slavery was a part of daily life in many Connecticut communities.

Connecticut's role in the Triangle Trade is a small, but integral part in the larger context of our nation's birth and the beginning of the global economy. Our state has a legacy of people who stood for racial equality, such as Prudence Crandall, John Brown and the *Amistad* case, but that is not the whole story. Connecticut had a significant slave population, held onto slavery as long as it could, and also benefited from trade with larger slaveholding areas. Historians have presented the research and information to provide a balanced view of history that accounts for multiple perspectives on the past.

Slavery in Fairfield

By the early 18th century African-American slavery had become an established institution in Fairfield as well as in other parts of Connecticut. By the time of the American Revolution, Connecticut was the largest slaveholding colony in New England, with slaves comprising about three and a half percent of the population. In Fairfield, the percentage ran higher: about six percent, or 260 of its 4455 residents.

Slavery was never the basis of the agricultural economy in Connecticut as it would become in southern states like Virginia and South Carolina. Rather, slaveholders generally owned one or two people and put them to work as household servants or day laborers. Fairfield's slave owners were mainly wealthy and affluent people, including several of the patriots who supported the cause of liberty—Gold Selleck Silliman, Caleb Brewster, Thaddeus Burr, and others—as well as Loyalists.

Credits: The **Slavery in Connecticut Primary Source Workshop** for students and educators was developed in conjunction with the exhibition *Promise of Freedom: The Emancipation Proclamation*, which was on view from September 23, 2012 – February 24, 2013. Education Partners included: ~ Fairfield University Graduate School of Education & Allied Professions, Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, Sacred Heart University & University of Connecticut Neag School of Education

I. Slavery in Connecticut: Compelling Questions

Themes (from CSSF, Grade 8):

- Evaluate how individuals, groups, and institutions in the United States have both promoted and hindered people’s struggles for freedom, equality, and social justice.
- Analyze how the concept of the “American Dream” has changed and how various groups have endeavored to reach this goal over time.
- Explore how CT contributed to various key events in U.S. history.
- Evaluate the political, economic, and social impact of key Connecticut industries on the state and national economies.
- Analyze the reasons for the existence of slavery in Connecticut during this era and the relative importance of slavery in the state.

CSSF: HIST 8.1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 & 10, ECO 8.3 & GEO 8.4

Additional Questions:

- What is slavery? What is freedom?
- How did slaves react to their enslavement?
- What do these primary sources tell us about slavery?
- How were their lives documented?

1) What was the significance of Connecticut’s contribution to America’s story?

Analyze the reasons for the existence of slavery in Connecticut during this era and the relative importance of slavery in the state.

2) Is there an American national identity; what does it mean to be an American?

How has American identity changed over time?

How did *Africans* become *American*?

Reading I:

Within 120 years of English settlers' arrival in the 1630s, the Connecticut colony was booming. Connecticut, says one historian, "was designed by God for trade." With 254 miles of Atlantic coastline and 60-mile-long rivers snaking inland, the colony was perfect for marine transport and small, fast ships. Even in its earliest history, Connecticut was part of a larger economic system that included slave labor: when the great city of Hartford was little more than a raw fort, a ship from Wethersfield was already ferrying onions and a horse down to Barbados, where African slaves worked the sugar plantations.

Connecticut grew crops, raised cattle and felled logs to send to the West Indies, because many Caribbean islands, though capable of growing their own food, were busy growing the vastly more profitable sugar cane. It would be more accurate to say that enslaved black people, in a labor that often killed them, were growing that sugar cane. And Connecticut was feeding them.

Citizens All: <http://glc.yale.edu/outreach/teacher-programs/citizens-all-african-americans-connecticut-1700-1850/connecticut-stories-1>

Reading II:

By 1750, both free and enslaved black people, despite the hardships of their lives, manifested a deepening attachment to America. The majority of blacks by now had been born in America, rather than in Africa. While a collective cultural memory of Africa was maintained, personal and direct memories had waned. Slave parents began to give their children biblical rather than African names. Even the pattern of slave flight became more Americanized. Newly enslaved Africans often fled in groups and established African-style "maroon" communities on the frontier, but American-born slaves usually escaped alone or in pairs to better avoid detection.

Source: PBS <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2narr1.html>

Primary Sources Set II:

Danenberg Cargo Lists (double-sided)

- Using this list as a guide, if you were a ship captain in the late 1700s, what would you chose to trade in the West Indies? What would you bring back?

- What does the amount of a certain item (for example feathers) indicate about agricultural production in this area?

Source: *Fairfield Museum and History Center Manuscript Collections, Elsie Danenberg, #MS 29..*

Primary Source Set III:

Objectives: Slavery existed in Connecticut and the other New England states.

How did slavery contribute to the Connecticut economy?

What happened to slavery in New England?

Population & Census

1) "A Map of the Colonies of CT and RI," 1758 Map by Thomas Kitchin.

2) "A Map of the Colonies of CT and RI," 1758" with overlay of 1790 Census of Slave Population.

3) 1790 Federal Census: New England

4) Connecticut Slave Population by County and Town

- Which towns and regions have the largest slave populations?
- Which towns and regions have the smallest slave populations?
- Compare and contrast the slave populations in 1774 with those in 1779.
 - What changes do you see?
 - What may account for these changes?

Source: *Fairfield Museum and History Center Map Collections, 108 - A*

Source (statistics): 1790 Census, "Complicity," *Hartford Courant*

Primary Source Set IV:

Objectives: Slaves were an important part of the economy and were considered property.

Slaves began to seek their own freedom (by running away).

1) The will of Primus Burr, former slave. Source: *Fairfield Museum*

2) Slave Sale Receipt for Nell. Source: *Fairfield Museum*

Suggestions for Additional Primary Sources:

3) Runaway Slave Advertisement. Source: *The Connecticut Courant* / ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

4) Slave Sale Advertisement. Source: *Ibid.*

5) Illustration: "Am I not a woman and a sister?" "Am I not a man and a brother?"

Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661312/>

Online Teacher Resources & Lesson Plans

The Amistad Center for Art & Culture <http://www.amistadartandculture.org>

Citizens All: The Right to Education

Details disputes and attitudes towards slaves in Prudence Crandall's efforts to create schools for blacks.
<http://www.yale.edu/glc/citizens/stories/module4/page1.html>

Complicity: How Connecticut Chained Itself To Slavery. Published in *The Sunday Magazine of the Hartford Courant*, September 29, 2002.

<http://www.courant.com/courant-250/moments-in-history/hc-250-complicity-story-gallery-20140603-storygallery.html>

CT Freedom Trail

The Connecticut Freedom Trail documents and designates sites that embody the struggle toward freedom and human dignity, celebrate the accomplishments of the state's African American community and promote heritage tourism.

<http://www.ctfreedomtrail.org/>

CT History

Welcome to ConnecticutHistory.org, a project of Connecticut Humanities and your home for stories about the people, traditions, innovations, and events that make up the rich history of the Nutmeg State.

<http://connecticuthistory.org/topics-page/slavery-and-abolition/>

CT History: Nancy Toney's lifetime of Slavery

Nancy Toney of Windsor may have the distinction of being Connecticut's last enslaved person.

Nancy's mother, Nanny, belonged to Reverend Andrew Eliot, minister of the First Congregational Church in Fairfield (then called Christ's Church). Her father, Toney, belonged to Jeremiah Sherwood in nearby Green Farms.

<http://connecticuthistory.org/nancy-toneys-lifetime-in-slavery/>

Fairfield Museum and History Center

Slavery in Connecticut outreach program, Professional Development and educator resources.

<http://www.fairfieldhistory.org/education>

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/>

Gilder Lehrman Center’s “Citizens All” focuses on CT

The project provides a scholarly introduction to the history of slavery in Connecticut, the process of gradual emancipation, and the struggle for citizenship rights by free blacks and abolitionists both within and beyond the state's boundaries.

<http://www.yale.edu/glc/citizens/stories/index.html>

Life of James Mars, A Slave Born and Sold in Connecticut. Written by Himself

Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Company, 1864. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/mars64/summary.html>

Library of Congress

Slavery in the United States: Primary Sources and the Historical Record

This lesson introduces students to primary sources, learning techniques for analyzing primary sources and applying these techniques to analyze documents about slavery in the United States.

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/slavery/>

The Life & Times of William Webb: An African-American Civil War Soldier from Connecticut

Kevin Johnson of the CT State Library portrays William Webb. He is available to visit your school, but he’s in high demand! Kevin.johnson@ct.gov / 860-757-6589

<http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/gallery/life-times-william-webb-a>

Harriet Beecher Stowe Center: Teacher Resources and Articles

Lesson Plans, Teacher Guides and Professional Development

https://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/worxcms_published/school_page108.shtml

History is Central:

A collaborative project of thirteen Connecticut school districts, Central Connecticut State University, and the Connecticut Historical Society Museum, American Voices seeks to improve student learning in American history in grades 4-8. Related teacher-developed lesson plans:

<http://www.historyiscentral.org/HSI/case12/cover.html>

<http://www.historyiscentral.org/HSI/case11/cover.html>

Mattatuck Museum: Fortune’s Story www.fortunestory.org

Fortune was an African American man enslaved by Dr. Porter in the 18th century. His skeleton was preserved by the doctor and later donated to the Mattatuck Museum. This website explains his story.

Money Conversion Tool (1800 to the present)

www.westegg.com/inflation

The New York Times: DISUNION A Map of American Slavery

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/10/opinion/20101210_Disunion_SlaveryMap.html?_r=0



PBS: Africans in America

For and Against Freedom: Teacher Guide & Lesson Focus

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/tguide/4tgfocus.html>

See also:

The Growth of Slavery in America: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1narr5.html>

Slavery and the Origins of the Civil War by Eric Foner

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/tguide/tgsocw.html>

PBS & Frontline: God in America, The New Adam

This study guide complements lessons on the impact of New Englanders values and beliefs on slavery.

Students can read *A Model of Christian Charity* by John Winthrop and *The Puritan Experiment*.

<http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/study-guide/one.html>

Picturing U.S. History

Picturing United States History: An Interactive Resource for Teaching with Visual Evidence is a digital project based on the belief that visual materials are vital to understanding the American past.

<http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/>

The Slave Trade in 2 Minutes

http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_history_of_american_slavery/2015/06/animated_interactive_of_the_history_of_the_atlantic_slave_trade.html

Slavery – American Voices (Books List)

<http://libraryschool.libguidescms.com/content.php?pid=205947&sid=1802758>

Former slave **Venture Smith** related his life story to Elisha Niles, a schoolteacher and veteran of the Revolutionary War. It was published in 1798. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h5.html>