



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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Librarian of Virginia

To Be Sold: Virginia and the American Slave Trade **Opens October 27 at the Library of Virginia**

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(Richmond, Virginia) – *The year: 1853. The place: Richmond, Virginia. A traveling British artist casually peruses the city's newspapers and scans the ever-present notices of slave auctions alongside the advertisements for dry goods, patent medicines, and runaway slaves. His curiosity aroused, he decides to attend a sale of human beings.*

The resulting paintings and illustrations by the artist Eyre Crowe created an enduring image and record of Richmond's infamous trade. The exhibition **To Be Sold: Virginia and the American Slave Trade** will open at the Library of Virginia on October 27, 2014, and run through May 30, 2015. Crowe's featured paintings—*Slaves Waiting to Be Sold* and *After the Sale*—provide powerful and compelling visual evidence of the domestic slave trade in America.

Curator and University of Virginia professor Maurie McInnis based the exhibition on her award-winning book *Slaves Waiting for Sale*. **To Be Sold** will put visitors not only in Crowe's shoes but also in the shoes of the many of enslaved African Americans sold in Richmond. The forced exile of as many as two million enslaved people from Richmond into the Deep South fed the rise of "King Cotton" as the engine of American economic development before the Civil War. The booming slave markets of Richmond enriched the city's traders as well as Deep South planters and Northern capitalists, especially the masters of the New England textile industry.

To Be Sold will examine the impact of the domestic slave trade on African American families. On display will be bills of sale from a Fairfax County Chancery suit that include names of enslaved people being sold (including some surnames) as well as names and residence locations of slave-owners. This information is invaluable for African American family historians, since such personal data on enslaved people is difficult to locate.

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Richmond's slave-trading district will be explored through more than 70 maps, paintings, insurance policies, bills of sale, broadsides, and other items drawn largely from the Library's extensive collections. The exhibition will trace what these images and manuscripts reveal about the slave trade from the time a slaveholder decided to sell a slave through the Richmond market to the moment when the enslaved person was sent south.

Among the loaned items on display will be an iron collar, paddle, and whip from the Massachusetts Historical Society; leg irons from the Mariners Museum; an auction flag from the South Carolina Historical Society; Lumpkin's slave jail ledger from the Valentine Richmond History Center, and Eyre Crowe's paintings *Slaves Waiting to Be Sold* from the Heinz Family Foundation and *After the Sale: Slaves Going South* from the Chicago History Museum.

The Library will offer a number public programs to complement **To Be Sold**, including workshops on researching African American genealogy; a March 2015 symposium using video conferencing between Richmond (the front end of the interstate slave trade) and New Orleans (the major terminus); talks on the African American Narrative Project, an effort to collect the names of enslaved Virginians from the Library's vast collections; and a variety of other book talks and lectures.

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Editor's Advisory: Images and curator interviews available upon request.

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