Slavery in Virginia: A Selected Bibliography

About the latter end of August [1619], a Dutch man of Warr of the burden of a 160 tunes arrived at Point-Comfort, the Comandor name Capt Jope, his Pilote for the West Indies one Mr Marmaduke an Englishman. They mett with the Trer in the West Indyes, and determedy to bold consort ship hetherward, but in their passage lost one the other. He brought not any thing but 20. and odd Negroes, with the Governor and Cape Marchant bought for virtuelle (whereof he was in greate need as he pended) at the best and easiest rate they could. He hadd a large and ample Comission from his Excellency to range and to take purchase in the West Indyes.

The Records of the Virginia Company of London, Volume III

OVERVIEW

Throughout much of Virginia’s early history until the Civil War, slavery was a major feature of life. Although the legal importing of slaves “by sea or land” may have stopped in 1778, the institution of slavery thrived in Virginia. Edmund S. Morgan, in his article “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox” (Journal of American History, June, 1972), concluded that, rather than a conscious decision, slavery automatically developed because “Virginians bought the cheapest labor they could get.” As slaves became an increasingly larger part of society, Virginia began codifying the status of slaves in the 1600s. Commenting on this feature in Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619–1860, Thomas D. Morris states that “the origins of Southern laws on slavery lie deep in seventeenth-century Virginia.”

Census figures show that, while slaves in other states may have composed a larger percentage of the total population, Virginia always had the largest total number of slaves. According to The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM, a compact disc with the records of 27,233 trans-Atlantic slave ship voyages, 84,247 slaves disembarked in Virginia between 1650 and 1775. The Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery gives a figure of 950 slaves in Virginia in 1660, growing to 140,470 by 1760.

With slavery playing such a prominent role, the examination of its history in the state facilitates a greater understanding of Virginia’s past. The following is an attempt to aid in that understanding by providing a select list of data and resources, showing material about both the slave trade and slavery.

Census Figures (top five slaveholding states)

Historical Census Browser from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html

<table>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Slaves</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Slaves as % of Total Population</th>
<th>Ranking by % Slaves</th>
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</table>

Notable Virginians Born as Slaves


**Brooks, Walter Henderson** (30 August 1851–6 July 1945), clergyman, temperance leader, and poet, was born in Richmond, Virginia, the son of Albert Royal Brooks and Lucy Goode, slaves. In 1866, Brooks began studies at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and, after obtaining college and theological degrees in 1873, returned to Virginia. He worked as a Sunday school missionary with the American Baptist Publication Society and in 1877 became pastor of the Second African Baptist Church of Richmond. By 1875, he was nationally known as a temperance advocate. Later, Brooks helped start the Virginia Historical and Literary Society and was a trustee of the Virginia Theological Seminary and College in Lynchburg, Virginia.

**Jasper, John** (4 July 1812–30 March 1901), Baptist preacher and orator, was born in Fluvanna County, Virginia, the son of slave parents, Philip Jasper, a slave preacher, and Nina, head servant of the Peachy family. While a slave, Jasper was an active and dynamic orator in the First African Baptist Church of Richmond, gaining widespread public acclaim from his “The Sun Do Move” sermon. Immediately after the Civil War, Jasper ran the Third Baptist Church of Petersburg. He then returned to Richmond, and in 1867 helped organize what was to become the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist church.
Jefferson, Isaac (December 1775–c. 1850), enslaved blacksmith, was born at Monticello in Virginia, the son of George, a foreman and overseer, and Ursula, a pastry cook and laundress. Jefferson's reminiscences were recorded by Charles Campbell and later published in 1951 as *Memoirs of a Monticello Slave, as Dictated to Charles Campbell in the 1840's by Isaac, One of Thomas Jefferson's Slaves*. Many value it as a detailed depiction of slave life in Virginia.

Mitchell, John, Jr. (11 July 1863–3 December 1929), newspaper editor and banker, was born near Richmond, Virginia, on the estate of James Lyons, where his parents, John Mitchell and Rebecca (maiden name unknown), were house slaves. As editor of the African American newspaper *Richmond Planet* for forty-five years, Mitchell modernized the publication and helped make it a relatively profitable company. While at the newspaper, he vigorously campaigned against racial discrimination, often ignoring death threats. Mitchell was also active in Virginia's Republican party, serving as a member of the Richmond City Council from Jackson Ward. He later turned his talents towards economic development, founding the Mechanics Savings Bank in 1902.

Russell, James Solomon (20 December 1857–28 March 1935), educator and priest, was born on the Hendrick Estate in Mecklenburg County near Palmer Springs, Virginia. His father, Solomon, and his mother, Araminta (maiden name unknown), lived as slaves on adjoining properties, with the North Carolina state line between them. He attended the Bishop Payne Divinity School in Petersburg, Virginia, and was later tutored by the Reverend Giles Buckner Cooke. In 1882, Russell became an ordained deacon in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and an active speaker. In 1888, Russell opened Saint Paul's Normal and Industrial School in Lawrenceville, Virginia.

**SLAVE TRADE**

**General**


Deyle has written a study of the informal and organized commerce of trading in slaves born in America, focusing on the movement of slaves between the Upper South and the Lower South.


The author examines southerners' changes in perception towards the slave trade, slave speculators, and slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.


This text of this revised edition of Rawley's 1981 publication reflects changes in historical interpretations of the slave trade. Added are current data tables and a select bibliography.


Using such sources as census records, coastal manifests, and court records, Tadman concludes that slave trading was central to the institution of slavery in the antebellum South. Table A6.3 in Appendix 6 shows Richmond slave prices gathered from trade circulars and reports.


Thomas has written a detailed single-volume study of the entire Atlantic slave trade that includes the participation of the English, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Africans, and North Americans.


This database contains information about 27,233 slave ship voyages made between 1527 and 1866, including where slaves disembarked (between 1650 and 1775, 84,247 slaves disembarked in Virginia); the number of slaves disembarked; the names of ships and their captains; the port of departure; and the year of departure. Accompanying the database is a printed manual with an introduction edited by David Eltis, Stephin D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein.
Virginia


First published in 1931, this work is part of the Southern Classics Series of the Institute for Southern Studies and the South Caroliniana Society of the University of South Carolina that "returns to general circulation books of importance dealing with the history and culture of the American South." It includes a chapter about Virginia and the Richmond slave market.


In this chapter, Chambers provides an economic, demographic, and social analysis of the slave trade in Virginia.


This early study contains valuable references about the slave trade in Virginia.


This volume includes a chapter with more than 80 acts, letters, petitions, proceedings, and orders pertaining to the trading of slaves in Virginia during the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries. Also included are detailed lists of ships that imported slaves into Virginia.


Within this book is a chapter titled “Slaves and Shipping in 18th-Century Virginia” that details the Virginia slave trade.


Minchinton, King, and Waite have greatly expanded the material first collected in Elizabeth Donnan's *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America.*

Dissertations


Articles

The following articles are either entirely about the Virginia slave trade or contain a substantial portion about Virginia within the longer narrative:


**SLAVERY**

**General**


Berlin, Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, has written a study of 300 years of North American slavery that emphasizes the slave. It is an extension of his earlier award-winning study, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*.


Winner of the Bancroft Prize, the Frederick Douglass Prize, the Owsley Prize, and the Rudwick Prize, this publication is an examination of slave societies in North America from the early seventeenth century through the American Revolution.


Davis, Sterling Professor of History Emeritus at Yale University, offers a study of the major aspects of slavery that, while focusing on the United States, includes antecedents from ancient times and the workings of the slave system in Brazil and the Caribbean.


Fogel (a 1993 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences) and Engerman provide a cliometric analysis of the slave economy in America, and conclude that, among other features, slavery was a comparatively profitable enterprise.


In this interpretative study of African American slavery, Genovese centers on the concept of paternalism as being critical in the relations between masters and slaves.


In this book, initially appearing as an extended critical review in the January 1975 *Journal of Negro History*, Gutman characterizes Fogel and Engerman’s *Time on the Cross* as a “profoundly flawed work.”


This reference resource contains chapters about sixteen slave-owning states. Included are a timeline and appendices that contain the number of slaveholders in 1860 by state; the dates of admission to, secession from, and readmission to the Union; and economic statistics.
Virginia


Originally published in 1902, *A History of Slavery in Virginia* is a concise scholarly study that describes the major features of the institution at the state, national, and international levels.


This work is the Bancroft Prize–winning history of the nineteenth-century free black settlement Israel Hill in Prince Edward County, Virginia.


Scot has written a cultural study of Nat Turner's rebellion and “America's search for transcendent meaning in its troubled past.”


Using such sources as court records, eighteenth-century tithable lists, planters’ papers, and slaves' testimonies, the author has provided an in-depth study of slave patrols and their legacy.


Levy examines the story of Robert Carter III, grandson of Robert “King” Carter, and the Deed of Gift, a document signed on September 5, 1791, that freed almost 500 slaves.


The author explores the connection of slavery, slaves, and politics in Virginia, and how that affected secession.


This publication is a collection of newspaper advertisements from the *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer*, the *Alexandria Daily Advertiser, Commercial and Political*, the *Alexandria Daily Gazette, Commercial and Political*, the *Alexandria Gazette Daily Advertiser*, and the *Richmond Enquirer*. Included are appendices with lists of the names of masters and slaves.


Morgan’s book is an examination and interpretation of the paradox of the existence of slavery alongside the idea of freedom in Virginia.


The author contends that the emerging politically influential social class of Virginia planters brought racial slavery to the colony.


This book has recouped the remaining interviews originally conducted by the Virginia Writers’ Project in 1936 of former Virginia slaves.


Ruggles tells the story of the life of Henry “Box” Brown, the escaped Virginia slave who had a later career as an abolitionist speaker and stage performer.


Schwarz describes those Virginians who migrated to the Midwest or North to leave behind the institution of slavery, whether as fugitive slaves, free blacks, or whites who no longer wanted to be associated with owning slaves.

This book is not a history of Gabriel's Conspiracy of slaves to overthrow their masters in Richmond, Virginia. Instead, it is a study of blacks' and whites' social environments in eighteenth-century Virginia that led to the rebellion, and how those societies reacted in the early years following the revolt.

The author presents an urban history of the city of Richmond and an examination of its slave system from the city's incorporation in 1782 to the end of the Civil War in 1865.

This study focuses on the slaves of Carter's Grove plantation near Williamsburg, Virginia, and includes the history of the Burwell family's slaves who lived throughout the James-York peninsula during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Wiencek documents the changes in attitude of George Washington that led him to free his slaves.

Fiction

Winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished fiction by an American author, The Known World is a novel set in the fictitious Manchester County, Virginia, and concerns black former slaves as slave owners and their complex environment.

Styron's controversial portrayal of Nat Turner's Southampton slave insurrection was awarded the 1968 Pulitzer Prize and the 1970 William Dean Howells Medal.

In this collection of essays, the contributors are critical of Styron's novel, particularly its historical and cultural accuracy.

Dissertations


Master's Theses


Government Documents


Articles


Internet Sites


The Book of Negroes is a record of approximately 3,000 African Americans who sided with the British during the American Revolution and boarded British ships headed to Nova Scotia. For compensation to their owners, George Washington required registration of runaway slaves’ names, ages, appearances, previous owners, and places of residence when they boarded British ships. To see the full text on this site, click on “Documents” then on “Official Documents and Proclamations” and select “The Book of Negroes.”

Geographies of Family and Market: Virginia’s Domestic Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century


Virginia Runaways

Thomas Costa, University of Virginia’s College at Wise http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/subjects/runaways/search.html http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etextbin/costa-browse?id

Runaway slave advertisements from eighteenth-century Virginia newspapers.

The Practise of Slavery

Virtual Jamestown / Virginia Tech, the University of Virginia, and the Center for Digital History at the University of Virginia http://www.virtualjamestown.org/practise.html

Selected Virginia records relating to slavery.
The Geography of Slavery in Virginia
Thomas Costa, University of Virginia's College at Wise
http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/

The Geography of Slavery in Virginia is a digital collection of advertisements for runaway and captured slaves and servants in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Virginia newspapers. The project presents full transcriptions and images of all runaway and captured ads for slaves and servants placed in Virginia newspapers from 1736 to 1790, and is in the process of compiling advertisements well into the nineteenth century. In addition, the project offers a number of other documents related to slaves, servants, and slaveholders, including court records, other newspaper notices, slaveholder correspondence, and assorted literature about slavery and indentured servitude.

Genius of Liberty Runaway Slave Advertisements: Research Tool for Loudoun County, Virginia, and Beyond
Friends of the Thomas Balch Library
http://www.balchfriends.org/Slaves/index.htm

The Thomas Balch Library is a history and genealogy library owned and operated by the Town of Leesburg. Collections focus on Loudoun County, regional and Virginia history, genealogy, military history with special emphasis on the American Civil War, and ethnic history. It is designated as an Underground Railroad research site. For this project, digital images of advertisements are taken from a rare complete collection of the Genius of Liberty newspaper, a four-page weekly published in Leesburg, Loudoun County, Virginia from 1817–1843.

Slavery Era Insurance Policies Registry
Illinois Department of Financial & Professional Regulation, Division of Insurance
http://www.ins.state.il.us/Consumer/SlaveryReporting.nsf

This registry is a database providing information about insurance policies issued for slaveholders by six companies: New York Life (Nautilus), ACE USA, Aetna, Penn Mutual, Providence Washington, and United States Life Insurance Company in New York City. While the database is primarily arranged under the slave’s or slaveholder’s name, searching can be done by entering a state’s abbreviation (VA for Virginia).

Enslaving Virginia
Research Division of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
http://research.history.org/Historical_Research/Research_Themes/ThemeEnslave.cfm

The Research Division of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has produced links to the following eight articles about slavery in Virginia:

- “‘Little Spots allow’d them’: Slave Garden Plots and Poultry Yards,” by Patricia A. Gibbs
- “The Newsworthy Somerset Case,” by Emma L. Powers
- “Slavery in John Blair’s Public and Personal Lives in 1751,” by Julie Richter
- “After 1723, Manumission Takes Careful Planning and Plenty of Savvy,” by Linda H. Rowe
- “The Burwells Move Their Slaves to the Southside,” by Julie Richter
- “New Findings about the Virginia Slave Trade,” by Lorena S. Walsh
- “A Biographical Sketch of Matthew Ashby,” by Emma L. Powers
- “A Portrait of York County Middling Planters and Their Slaves, 1760–1775,” by Kevin P. Kelly

Slave Narratives on the Internet

WPA Life Histories Collection (Virginia)
Library of Virginia
http://ajax.lva.lib.va.us/F?func=file&file_name=find-b-clas06&local_base=CLAS06

The Virginia Writers' Project, formed under the Works Progress Administration in 1936, interviewed more than 300 ex-slaves. The Library of Virginia maintains a searchable index to more than 50 interviews with former slaves, and includes document images online.

American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology
Bruce Fort, Corcoran Department of History, University of Virginia
http://sroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/wpa/wpahome.html
http://sroads.virginia.edu/~hypert/wpa/index.html

This is a group of slave narratives from the WPA Writer's Project (several subjects are from Virginia) posted on the Web as a project for the American Hypertext Workshop at the University of Virginia, Summer 1996.
Thomas Jefferson on Slavery in *From Revolution to Reconstruction*
University of Groningen / Department of Humanities Computing
http://www.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/tj3/writings/slavery.htm
*From Revolution to Reconstruction* is a hypertext project on American history from the colonial period until modern times. This selection is taken from Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Boston, 1829).

**From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1822–1909**
American Memory / Library of Congress
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aapchtml/aaphome.html
American Memory is a Library of Congress program that provides free and open access through the Internet to written and spoken words, sound recordings, still and moving images, prints, maps, and sheet music that document the American experience. Materials presented, from the collections of the Library of Congress and other institutions, chronicle historical events, people, places, and ideas that continue to shape America.

*From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1822–1909* presents 396 pamphlets from the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, published from 1822 through 1909, by African-American authors and others who wrote about slavery, African colonization, Emancipation, Reconstruction, and related topics. Some of the documents that have particular relevance to Virginia include:

- “Speech of Thomas J. Randolph in the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the abolition of slavery.”
  American Memory / Library of Congress
  http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/raapcbib:@OR(@field(AUTHOR+@band(Randolph,+Thomas+Jefferson,+1792-1875+))+@field(OTHER+@band(Randolph,+Thomas+Jefferson,+1792-1875+)))

- “Narrative of Henry Watson, a fugitive slave.”
  American Memory / Library of Congress
  http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/raapc:@field(DOCID+@lit(raapc32910div0))

**Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938**
American Memory / Library of Congress
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/mesnibb:@field(STATE+@od1(Virginia))
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html
*Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938* contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves.

**Documenting the American South, North American Slave Narratives**
University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/
“North American Slave Narratives” collects books and articles that document the individual and collective story of African Americans struggling for freedom and human rights in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. This collection includes all the existing autobiographical narratives of fugitive and former slaves published as broadsides, pamphlets, or books in English up to 1920. Also included are many of the biographies of fugitive and former slaves and some significant fictionalized slave narratives published in English before 1920. Items related to Virginia include the following:

- “Narrative of Henry Box Brown.”
  Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/boxbrown/menu.html

  Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/randolph/menu.html

- “The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, Va.”
  Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  http://docsouth.unc.edu/turner/menu.html
• “Africa for Christ. Twenty-Eight Years a Slave: Johnson, Thomas Lewis, b. 1836.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/johnsontl/johnsontl.html

• “Autobiography of James L. Smith, Including, Also, Reminiscences of Slave Life, Recollections of the War, Education of Freedmen, Causes of the Exodus, etc.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smthj/smthj.html

• “Life of George Henry. Together with a Brief History of the Colored People in America.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/henryghenryg.html

• “The Life of Rev. John Jasper, Pastor of Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Richmond, Va., from His Birth to the Present Time, with His Theory on the Rotation of the Sun.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jasper/jasper.html

• “A Narrative of the Life of Rev. Noah Davis, A Colored Man. Written By Himself, at the Age of Fifty-Four.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/davisn/davisn.html

• “Remarks on the Subject of the Ownership of Slaves, Delivered by R. R. Collier of Petersburg, in the Senate of Virginia, October 12, 1863.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/ims/collier/collier.html

• “Sketches of Slave Life: Or, Illustrations of the ‘Peculiar Institution.’”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/randol55/randol55.html

• “Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/fedric/fedric.html

• “Horror[s] of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations. The True Story of Dinah, an Escaped Virginian Slave, Now in London, on Whose Body Are Eleven Scars Left by Tortures Which Were Inflicted by Her Master, Her Own Father. Together with Extracts from the Laws of Virginia, Showing That Against These Barbarities the Law Gives Not the Smallest Protection to the Slave, But the Reverse.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/simpson/simpson.html

• “The Narrative of Bethany Veney: A Slave Woman.”
Documenting the American South / University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://docsouth.unc.edu/veney/veney.html

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February 2007