

# Slavery in Connecticut: Educator Guide



## Slavery in Connecticut

***Developed as part of Professional Development and Education Programs for the Fairfield Museum and History Center, Fairfield CT***

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## Slavery in Connecticut

### 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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. The exhibit and programs explored the American ideals of **freedom and equality** and how these principles have been tested over time. 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

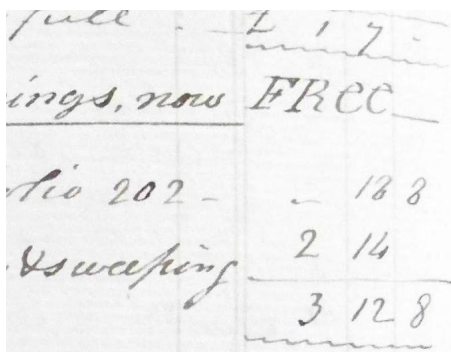
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### Primary Source Workshop: Slavery in Connecticut



This program complements the activities in the *Slavery in Connecticut* classroom kit and is available as an Outreach Program at your school or as part of a field trip to the Fairfield Museum. The workshop emphasizes critical thinking skills and promotes historical empathy and understanding.

Through slave sale receipts from the Museum Collections, students trace the plight of one slave, Jeffery, as he is bought and sold in Fairfield and then finally emancipated. Account books from our collections reveal the items bought and sold by former slaves as evidenced in the records of debit and credits, as well as the work they accomplished in order to secure the items that they needed. Finally, students investigate a petition for freedom filed by two Fairfield slaves to the CT General Assembly.



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#### **Workshop Description:**

What was slavery like in Connecticut? Find out about the lives of slaves with historical clues including a petition for freedom by two slaves in 1779, slave sale receipts and other primary source documents. Learn about and debate the slavery issue in the 18th century and discover how America's founding documents contradicted the realities of slavery.

### **CT Social Studies Frameworks, C3 & Common Core**

The new **Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks (CSSF)** was created and written by a team of Connecticut social studies educators. The CSSF is guided by the **College, Career, and Civic Life (C3)** Framework for Social Studies State Standards, created by social studies experts and specialists throughout the United States. The C3 and CSSF has informed the Fairfield Museum's educational programs and supports our educational mission.

The Fairfield Museum actively collaborates with the CT State Department of Education, the CT Council for Social Studies, UCONN Neag School of Education, and the CT League of History Organizations as well as other organizations to offer the support and resources in order to implement the Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks. Connecticut's rich history offers ample opportunities to support CSSF with local content that can enrich national and global themes to make history personal and engaging for our

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students. The entire Frameworks, more information, and acknowledgements are on the State Department of Connecticut website.

The frameworks offer a unique opportunity to integrate local and state history with national themes, emphasizing the local within the global context. The Fairfield Museum and History Center has been promoting **Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS)** as part of a project begun with a Library of Congress grant in 2007. TPS emphasizes inquiry and utilizing primary sources to evaluate evidence, make judgments and formulate conclusions. These are recognized as “21<sup>st</sup> century skills” and serve as an important component to the Connecticut frameworks which are guided by College, Career, and Civil Life (C3) Frameworks for Social Studies and reinforce Common Core English Language Arts.

Social studies as a discipline naturally allows students to master key reading, writing, analysis, speaking and listening skills that are outlined in the common core literacy standards. Below is how the CT Core Standards are integrated into each section of the social studies framework:

### **The Inquiry Arc:**

<b>Dimension of Inquiry</b>	<b>Connecticut Core Standards</b>
Developing questions and planning inquiry	R1, W7, SL1
Applying disciplinary concepts and tools	R1-10, W1, W2, W7, SL1, L1-3, L6
Evaluating sources and using evidence	R1-10, W1, W2, W7-10, SL1, L1-3
Communicating conclusions and taking informed action	R1, W1-8, SL1-6, L1-3

### **Engaging with Historical Sources**

There are many ways in which students could interact with the historical sources provided in this classroom kit. The following suggestions are intended to provide students with a rich, engaging experience in working with historical documents and images.

**Student Stations Report Back:** Break class into groups of four and hand each group one set of sources (I-IV). Give students 10 minutes to examine their set and develop questions and/or draw initial conclusions. After 10 minutes, have students rejoin the class and ask each group to share any questions or conclusions they developed regarding their sources.

**Rotating Student Stations:** Set up four stations in the classroom, each with a set of historical sources (I-IV). Divide class into four groups and assign each group to a station. Give each group ten minutes to examine their set of sources and record questions and conclusions. After 10 minutes, have the students rotate to the next station to examine the next source set. Repeat this until all students have rotated through each of the four stations. Allow time for a whole-class discussion where students can share their observations and questions.

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**Whole Class Examination and Discussion:** Project images of sources (I-IV) in front of the class and conduct a whole-class examination and discussion of each source or source collection. Class participation may be in form of “popcorn”, where every student must comment on the source in succession. Students may also respond to a teacher prompt about the document or image before moving onto the next source.

**Gallery Walk:** Hang sources (I-IV) in stations on the walls around the classroom. Hand each student a pad of sticky notes and give them 15 minutes to walk around the room looking at the sources. Guiding questions can be projected in front of the class to provide direction on what students should pay attention to. Encourage students to write their questions, comments, and observations on sticky notes and post them on the wall next to the sources. After 15 minutes, have all students come back to their seats and then go on a “gallery walk” around the room and read what their peers wrote. A whole-class discussion can follow.

### **Format**

I. Compelling questions for a unit or lesson plan on slavery in Connecticut, page 8.

II. Themes / Content / Materials

Each primary source set is precluded by a series of compelling questions and information to guide the lesson.

Page 9 = Background reading or hand-outs for students to read

### **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.

**HIST 8.1:** Analyze connections among events and developments in historical contexts.

**HIST 8.2:** Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

**HIST 8.4** Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time (e.g., American Revolution, slavery, labor, the role of women).

**HIST 8.6** Detect possible limitations in the historical record based on evidence collected from different kinds of historical sources.

**HIST 8.7** Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.

**HIST 8.8** Evaluate the relevance and utility of a historical source based on information such as maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

**HIST 8.10** Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.

**ECO 8.3** Analyze the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in a market economy.

**GEO 8.4** Explain how the relationship between the environmental characteristics of places and production of goods influences the spatial patterns of world trade.

**Additional Questions:**

- What is slavery? What is freedom?
- How did slaves react to their enslavement?

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- 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*?**

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### 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>



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### 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>

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### Reading III:

#### *The Right to Education*

"What benefit can it be to a waiter or coachman to read Horace, or be a profound mathematician?" editorialized a local newspaper when a group of forward-thinkers attempted to found a school for young black men in New Haven in 1831. (By a vote of 700 to 4, townspeople rejected the idea of the school.)

Though Connecticut's free black population paid taxes, they were not allowed to send their children to certain schools with whites, and the schools they established independently operated with few resources and little community support. Yet education was treasured among blacks, and was clearly understood to be a link to upward mobility, property ownership and a better life.

Source: The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, Yale University  
<http://glc.yale.edu/outreach/teacher-programs/citizens-all-african-americans-connecticut-1700-1850/connecticut-storie-16>

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### **II. Primary Sources**

Objectives: The maritime trade in Connecticut created wealth for those involved, including farmers, merchants and ship captains.

Understand the importance of maritime trade in the local and national economy.

- NOTE: These documents reflect the importance of maritime trade to Fairfield's economy but do not reflect directly on "Triangle Trade" with the West Indies, as they are from a later time period

#### **Primary Source Set I:** shipping records, photographs, painting

1) Letter of Instructions and Terms, 1818. Thomas Smith of NYC to Abraham G. Jennings of Fairfield, CT

- What did Capt. Jennings use his 8 tons of privilege for?
- What would you use 1 ton of privilege for? (use Danenberg Cargo list as a guide)

2) Photograph Portrait: Captain Abraham G. Jennings

- Who was he?
- What did he do?
- Where did he live?

3) Painting: *The William Chamberlain*, Isaac Jennings, Ship Captain.

- How many crew members do you think were needed to operate this ship?
- Could the crew benefit from the voyage in any way?
- What would it be like to be on a ship like this for 10 months?

4) Photograph: Captain Isaac Jennings

- What does his dress and stance tell you about Isaac?
- How do you think his appearance compares to that of his crew?
- What do you imagine Isaac's relationship to be with his crew?

Source: *Fairfield Museum and History Center Collections.*

#### **Primary Source 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.* Danenberg wrote numerous books on naval history and the Museum is the repository of her research on maritime records.

#### **Primary Source Set III:**

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

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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).

The abolition movement grows (#5)

- 1) The will of Primus Burr, former slave. Source: *Fairfield Museum*
- 2) Slave Sale Receipt for Nell. Source: *Fairfield Museum*
- 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/>

*The Fairfield Museum and History Center is a non-profit educational institution chartered in 1903 as the Fairfield Historical Society. Created in 2007, the Museum features engaging exhibitions, a research library, education classroom, and meeting hall overlooking Fairfield’s Historic Town Green. The Fairfield Museum’s vision is to use history to strengthen community and shape its future.*