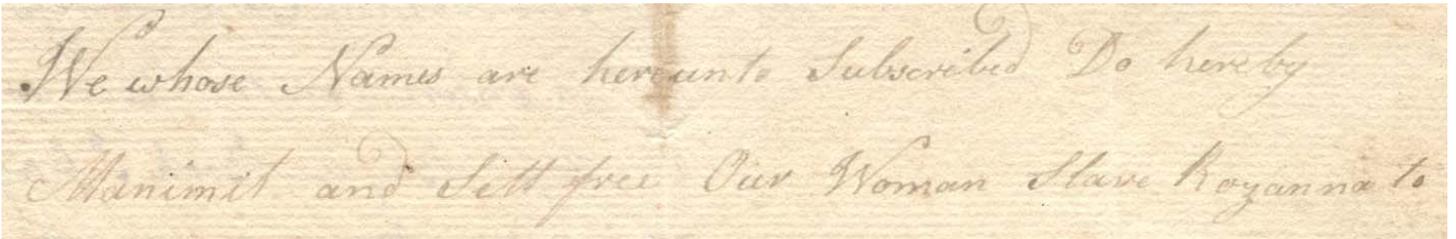


Slavery on Long Island



The Monfoort Manumission 1801. A witnessed fragment with seals by Abraham Monfoort and Ranshe Monfoort for the manumission of their slave, Rozanna. Entered on the Records of Oyster Bay in Book 1. page 299. 1801.

Origins: Why Long Island?

In 1626, officials of the Dutch West India Company in New Amsterdam purchased eleven Africans to be used by the company to work on public projects and in the defense of the colony.⁽¹⁾ At first, they were considered employees of the Company, but would eventually become defined as “chattel property” and “servants for life.”⁽²⁾ With this purchase, the institution of slavery in what would later be known as New York was born. During the slave era, New Yorkers owned more slaves than all of the New England colonies combined.⁽³⁾ By 1698, there were approximately 2,130 blacks in the colony.⁽⁴⁾ The great majority of these Africans were enslaved, and almost half of them lived on Long Island.⁽⁵⁾ By the time of the Revolutionary War, there was upwards of 20,000 slaves in New York.⁽⁶⁾

The practice of owning other human beings would prove particularly popular on Long Island due to an increasing demand for labor.⁽⁷⁾ As available land on Long Island disappeared, fewer and fewer European laborers decided to work on existing farms as opportunities to purchase their own property in the future diminished.⁽⁸⁾ In his book, *Slavery on Long Island*, Richard Moss claims that a plantation-based system of slavery (like that of the South) failed to develop due to the fact that “such factors as inefficient farming techniques, short planting season, population pressures, and deteriorating soil conditions combined to limit the emergence of an extensive agrarian economy, and by extension, a comparable peculiar institution.”⁽⁹⁾

Life as a Slave: The Nature of Servitude



A slave family prays to God in their quarters. Harper's Weekly

In contrast to the gang-oriented plantations of the South, most Long Island slaveholders were yeomen (or free) farmers who usually only owned one to three slaves to work their limited acreage. (10) By 1790, 54.8 percent of Suffolk County slave owners had one slave, and 88.7 percent owned less than five. (11) By the same year, only seven families in Suffolk County owned ten or more slaves. As a result, most slaves lived in their masters' houses as opposed to separate slave quarters, further complicating efforts by lawmakers to completely segregate Long Island's African population. (12)



A colonial African American slave with a goose.
Long Island Studies Slavery on Long Island.

Long Island's African slave population was highly multi-occupational. Besides agriculture, slaves also worked in secondary industries such as tailoring and whaling. (13) African females were often assigned roles as domestic servants with tasks ranging from cooking to caring for their owners' children. (14) African slaves, along with the occasional Native American slave, often worked alongside free African workers, European indentured servants, paid European workers, and even the slave owners themselves. (15)

Trade and Exchange: Human Cargo



African American slaves forced to march. Harper's Weekly

During the 17th century, many farmers had hired Native Americans as day laborers once labor became scarcer. Settlers who attempted to enslave Native Americans would discover that they were often easily able to resist slavery. Consequently, as the agricultural, secondary, and commerce industries expanded, Long Islanders began to turn to imported Africans as a relatively reliable source of labor. During Dutch rule, settlers depended mostly on the Dutch West India Company for their African slaves. One could usually acquire slaves through either cash, barter, and even on credit. (16)

When English settlers soon began to migrate to Long Island, they often brought their African slaves along with them. The first slaves in Suffolk County arrived in 1654 with their owner Nathaniel Sylvester, after he decided to move from Barbados to Shelter Island. (17)

In the New World, profits took precedence over the ideals of liberty and justice. After the English took over New Netherlands (changing the name to New York) in 1664, the colony became more deeply involved with the importation of slaves via the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and from the Caribbean. In order to satisfy labor demands in their colonies, the English actively sought to step up their efforts to transform African men, women, and children into chattel property. The Census and tax data from the late 17th century indicates that approximately two out of five households in Queens and Suffolk Counties included one or more slaves. (18)

By the mid-eighteenth century, an internal slave trade was the predominate method of exchanging and acquiring slaves on Long Island; (19) and it greatly contributed to the seven-fold increase in the number of slaves by the early 19th century. (20)

Unlike New York City, with its public forums, the buying and selling of slaves on the Island was typically a private matter during this time. Some bills of sale were highly formal and included printed words such as this document.

K NOW all Men by these Presents,
That I *Henry Lowers* of
Flushing in the Province of N. York
For and in Consideration of the Sum of *Fifty seven Pounds 1/4*
Current Money of the Province of *New York* to me in Hand
paid, at and before the Ensealing and Delivery of these Presents, by
Hampton Lillebridge the Receipt whereof I do hereby
acknowledge, and myself to be therewith fully satisfied, contented and
paid: Have granted, bargained, sold, released; and by these Presents
do fully, clearly, and absolutely grant, bargain, sell and release unto the
Said Hampton Lillebridge a Negro Wench
Slave Lucie
To have and to hold the said *Negro Wench*

The Lillebridge Slave Receipt 1783: A partially printed and witnessed document with remnant of seal, signed by Henry Lowerr [sp.?] for the sale of a "Negro Wench Slave Lucie," for fifty seven pounds current money to Hampton Lillebridge. Flushing. 1783.

Other bills of sale were relatively informal such as this exchange, which occurred in 1783 between two Fanning family members in order to settle a debt. When slave owners died, most of their slaves were passed on to their descendents as specified in their wills. Like a piece of farming equipment, slaves were sometimes leased to their owners' neighbors for periods of time. The illegal slave trade and births (three-fourths of enslaved African children under ten years old were sold and split from their families) also contributed to the increasing population of African bondsmen on the Island. (21)

May 3^d 1783
I Say Received of John Fanning
Sum of all Demands Upon any accounts
I Have on Him for a Negro man called
Prince I Say I Say Received by me
John Fanning Junior

The Fanning Slave Receipt 1783: A fragment by John Fanning Junior for the conveyance of a "Negro man called Prince," for the satisfaction of accounts owed him by John Fanning. No location. 1783.

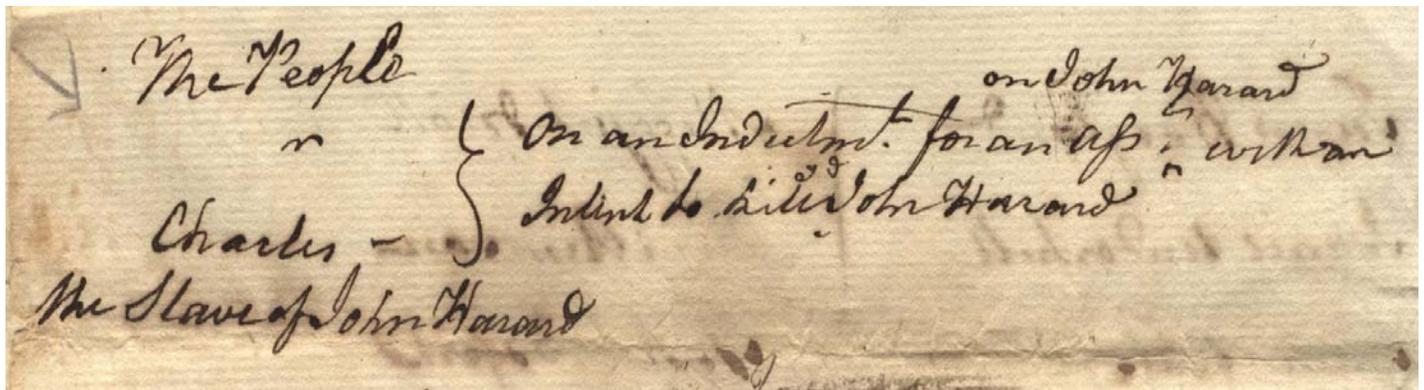
Black Codes on Long Island: Subjugating a People

Compared to their Southern counterparts, Long Island slaves were granted a significant amount of mobility to earn an independent income on their limited free time (on Sundays, for example). Although this practice reduced maintenance costs for slave owners, many lawmakers interpreted limited independence for a potential threat to society. (22)

Even though (or perhaps because) yeoman farmers usually lacked the financial and physical means to closely supervise their human property, New York lawmakers created Black Codes, which Richard Moss claims to be “the harshest criminal laws and penalties enacted by northern colonists.” (23) As opposed to the policies of the Dutch West India Company, the English colonists sought out increasingly harsher legislation to actively regulate everything from the legality of the congregation of slaves to marriage between slaves. (24)

The first major slave law in New York, the *Act for Regulating Slaves* of 1702, made it legal for any slave who struck a free Christian (white) to be subjected to up to fourteen days imprisonment and reasonable corporal punishment. (25) Most slave owners sought not to have their slaves punished to the full extent of the law as this would damage their valuable property. (26) However, slave owners could be fined if they were found to have failed to punish their slaves as ordered by the courts. (27) Subsequent slave laws such as those passed in 1706, 1708, and 1712, forbade the congregation of over three enslaved Africans, outlawed the owning of property by slaves, held that children born of slave mothers would be slaves, made the testimony of slaves against whites in court inadmissible, and barred a slave from traveling more than a mile away from his or her master’s home without permission. (28)

Despite attempts to segregate and regulate Long Island’s enslaved African population, court documents show that these bondsmen were certainly not a passive people. In an extremely detailed Long Island court account, Charles, the slave of John Harand, was indicted for assault with intent to kill his master and later sentenced to be transported to Barbados after serving ten months in prison.



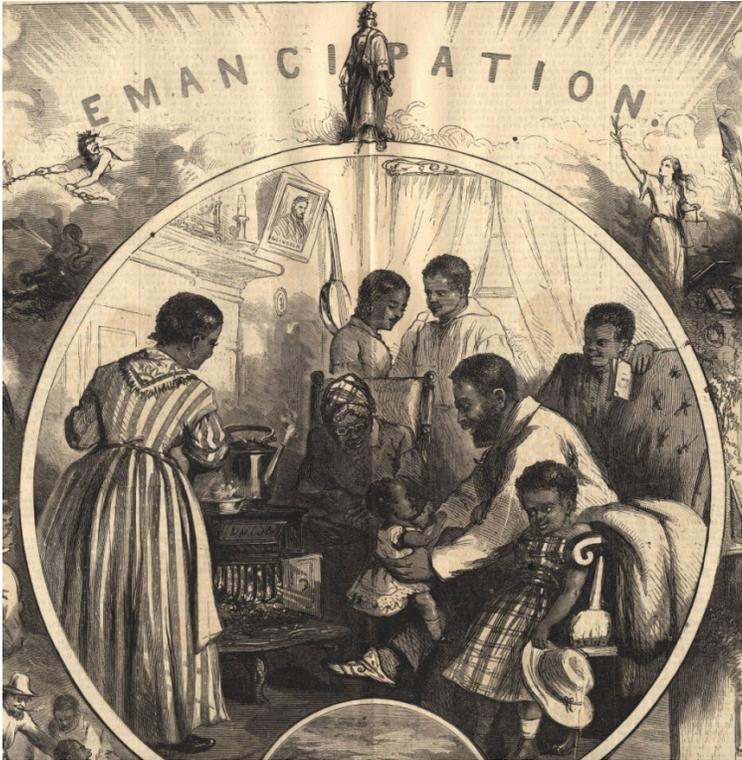
Indictment for Charles the slave of John Harand for allegedly intending to kill his master. 1802.
Manumissions Recorded at Magistrates Court North Hempstead 1797-1808.

Slaves seen unfit to live alongside whites were often sent to sugarcane fields in Barbados. Many slaves, especially young men, attempted to escape from their fetters. In one striking case, three slaves owned by George Mumford of Fisher’s Island even stole food, money, and clothing before fleeing enslavement via boat. The most common crime for which slaves were indicted was burglary, with arson as a close second. (29)

The People } The Off: being put to the Bar —
Charles the Slave } Ordered & adjudged ^{as to} on the assault in
of John Harard. } the Indictm^t: of which he was found guilty
that he stand committed to the Goal of
Queens County for the period of 10 Calendar
Months —
And it is ~~ordered~~ certified
by the Court that the crime whereof the Defendant is
convicted is of such a nature that transportation
would be a proper punishment; & it is accordingly
ordered ^{by the Court} that his Master have leave to
transport him at the expiration of his im-
prisonment.

Charles the slave of John Harard found guilty of assault and sentenced to 10 months – there after to be transported (most likely to Barbados). September 10, 1802. Manumissions Recorded at Magistrates Court North Hempstead 1797-1808.

Manumissions and Freedom: How Slavery Ends in New York



The road toward freedom for slaves on Long Island was indeed arduous. During the 18th century, the New York colonial government began regulating the manumission, or emancipation, of African slaves. (30) At a time when some people were considered the property of others, the status of a person's life could be determined by the stroke of a pen.

A drawing of a slave family celebrating the news of Emancipation. Harper's Weekly.

Court met according to adjournment
Present as before
Jacob Squash the Property of Israel Dearrale manumitted

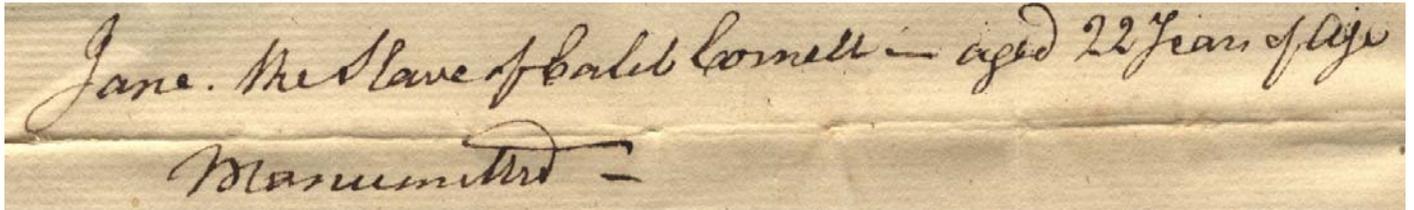
Jacob Squash the Property of Israel Dearrale manumitted. Series of Manumissions Recorded at Magistrates Court North Hempstead 1797-1808.

As the need for labor persisted for generations, manumissions were relatively rare with only 857 documented cases in over 200 years of slavery on Long Island. One such recorded case occurred in Oyster Bay when Tonne, the slave of Tredwell Sand, was manumitted.

Tonne the Slave of Tredwell Sand of Oyster Bay manumitted

Tonne the Slave of Tredwell Sand of Oyster Bay Manumitted: Manumissions Recorded at Magistrates Court North Hempstead 1797-1808.

Another manumission even includes the age of a former slave, Jane, who was freed by her master, Caleb Cornell, at the age of twenty-two.



Jane. the Slave of Caleb Cornell - aged 22 Years of Age
Manumitted -

Jane the Slave of Caleb Cornell – aged 22 Years of Age Manumitted. June 15, 1797.
Manumissions Recorded at Magistrates Court North Hempstead 1797-1808.

Some Long Islanders manumitted their slaves in attempts to evade financial burdens such as caring for the sick or elderly, while others were responding to the increasing antislavery sentiment in New York. Manumissions were sometimes required under bills of sale for slaves after a period of service. (31)

In order to protect non-slaveholders from being charged with caring for freed slaves, the 1712 *Act for [P]reventing Suppressing and [P]unishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other Slaves* required that slave owners must first post “two Securities not less than the Sum of Two Hundred pounds, to pay yearly ... to [the freed] Slaves during their lives ... Twenty Pounds.” Although this particularly extreme piece of legislation was later modified under intense protest, courts usually required slaveholders to prove that their slave could survive independently before allowing any manumission. Due to limited economic opportunities and discrimination, many manumitted Africans simply continued working on their former owners’ lands. (32)



Lady Liberty breaks the bondsman's chains. Harper's Weekly

The decline of slavery in New York can be partially attributed to the spread of the ideals of the American Revolution and the growing power of the Northern abolitionist movement. The Quakers, who had a significant number of adherents on Long Island, were greatly involved in the efforts to end the institution of slavery in New York since the mid-eighteenth century. In 1799, New York State passed the *Gradual Emancipation Act*, which declared that female slaves were to be set free upon reaching the age of twenty-five and male slaves of twenty-eight years if they were born after the Fourth of July of that year. (33)

In 1817, New York legislators passed a statute that would free all slaves with few exceptions ten years later. New York State officially repealed a section of the 1817 statute in 1841 that allowed transients to the state to keep their slaves. Although there is evidence of an illegal slave trade operating on the Island that forced kidnapped blacks back into slavery down South, this act would officially abolish the tragic institution of slavery in New York. (34)



Former slaves thanking Providence for their new found freedom. Harper's Weekly.

In order to comprehend the African-American experience on Long Island, one must understand the mark left by the institution of slavery on the local community. To fully grasp our history, we must be prepared to accept these awful truths about our past. Slavery in New York was certainly not nominal or insignificant. The practice of possessing other persons was widespread and critically significant with concern to agriculture and to the overall economy during three centuries on Long Island. As an ode to those individuals who struggled for freedom in the face of injustice and persecution, the accounts of human bondage in New York must never be forgotten.

Jupiter Hammon of Lloyd Manor: Poetry and Slavery

Lloyd Manor: Work to be Done

In 1676, James Lloyd of Boston purchased a 3,000 acre peninsula of land on the North Shore of Long Island. A royal grant would make his property the Lordship and Manor of Queens Village. James' son, Henry, would build the first manor house of the estate after his father's death. There was an abundance of work to be done on the estate, including maintaining the Lloyd family's peach, plum, and apple trees. Laborers were also needed to farm the wheat, corn, and various other grains. There was no lack of available oysters and clams to be plucked from the surrounding muddy waters. Livestock needed to be tended, too, and timber needed to be collected for sale. The Lloyds would turn to the practice of slavery in order to insure they had the laborers necessary to work the manor. (35)

In an essay written in *Long Island Studies: Evoking a Sense of Place*, Sondra A. O'Neale states that, "As one of the few families on Long Island, or for that matter in the state of New York, that had business connections to Boston, Hartford, New York City, and London, the Lloyds obtained slaves for their section of the state, prospering from the exchange of merchandise and human chattel. Their family papers and account books contain scores of financial transactions on the sales of the slaves in the island community." The first mention of a slave in the Lloyd family's records was Rose, who was rented out to a tenant for "a pork barrel per annum" in 1687. (36) Slaves were considered such valuable property that, like most Long Islanders, the Lloyd family made their own doctors available to any slaves who fell ill. (37)

Jupiter Hammon: The 'Privileged' Slave

Jupiter Hammon, the first published African American poet, would spend the great majority of his life on Lloyd's Neck. (38) Born in 1711, Hammon's unique status as a favored slave to the Lloyd family is considered quite an anomaly. (39) Langston Hughes claims, "Hammon was an intelligent and privileged slave, respected by his master for his skill with tools and by his fellow slaves for his power as a preacher." Hammon was probably educated with the Lloyd children in the Queen's Village schoolhouse by family members and schoolteachers such as Harvard graduate Nehemiah Bull. (40)

In May of 1733, the favored bondsman would purchase a Bible with Psalms from his master for seven shillings and sixpence (indicating he had his own income and free time). (41) It is believed that the Lloyd family allowed several slaves, including Hammon, to accompany them to church in Huntington Village and in Stamford. (42) Hammon's published work is deeply religious in nature and similar in style to the poetic forms of hymn writing. Negro spirituals and religious folk poetry evidently influenced his work as well. Stanley Austin Ransom, editor of *America's First Negro Poet: Jupiter Hammon of Long Island*, declares, "Hammon's poetry reflects his great intellectual and emotional involvement with religion, to the point where it approaches intoxication." (43)

Published Works: Breaking New Ground

Jupiter Hammon made history in the winter of 1760 by becoming the first published African American poet. His first work was an eighty-eight line poem printed in double column entitled, "An Evening Thought. Salvation By Christ, With Penitential Cries: Composed by Jupiter Hammon, a Negro belonging to Mr. Lloyd, of Queen's Village, on Long Island the 25th of December, 1760." As testimony of this 18th century black slave's great intellect, the Long Island poet would publish a total of four poems and four prose pieces. (44)

Although some of his contemporaries considered Hammon an accommodationist, a close evaluation of his writings indicates he used Biblical language in order to create hidden codes and patterns that criticized the institution of slavery. (45) He often pictured a heaven where blacks and whites were judged and treated equally. (46) Furthermore, in Hammon's *Address to the Negroes of the State of New York* (published in 1787), while referring to the American Revolution, he claims that, "I must say that I have hoped that God would open their [whites'] eyes, when they were so much engaged for liberty, to think of the state of the poor blacks, and to pity us." (47)

Later in his *Address*, Hammon says "... for my part I do not wish to be free, yet I should be glad if others, especially the young Negroes, were to be free; for many of us who are grown up slaves, and have always had masters to take care of us, should hardly know how to take care of ourselves; and it may be more for our own comfort to remain as we are." Hammon, who actually appeared in court to deter his master's attempts to manumit him, cited his uniquely privileged life and his belief that his master had a responsibility to care for him in his old age (he was 76 at the time of the *Address*) as reasons for not personally seeking freedom. After having lead a remarkably accomplished life, the poet died sometime between 1790 and 1806 while still in the service of his master. (48)

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