

# Did Slavery Exist in the North?

It existed in the North, in Pennsylvania, in Montgomery County and even here in Upper Merion Township.

The early Dutch, Swedish and British settlers brought the institution of slavery and servitude in general with them to these shores.

The first record of an enslaved person in what is now Pennsylvania is Antony Swart (Black Anthony) who is mentioned being in the service of Governor Printz of New Sweden.

# A Note on Terminology

The word “slave” is a term that often lacks humanity.

We take the suggestion of Marc Howard Ross in his Slavery in the North, and use “enslaved African”, which better humanizes the cruel situation that it describes, and which can be contrasted with “indentured European” - a separate institution of servitude.

The term “African American” is avoided because it leads to the misleading impression that Africans were accorded the same rights as European American citizens under the law in Pennsylvania, which was not true after 1700, even when they were free.

# Slavery in Pennsylvania

year	population	total nonwhite	free	slave
1790	433,611	10,238	6,531	3,707
1800	602,365	16,271	14,565	1,706
1810	810,091	23,287	22,492	795
1820	1,049,058	30,413	30,202	211
1830	1,348,233	38,333	37,930	403
1840	1,724,033	47,918	47,854	64
1850	2,311,786	53,626	53,626	0

# Slavery in Montgomery County

year	population	total nonwhite	free	slave
1790	22,918	553	440	113
1800	24,150	560	527	33
1810	29,703	674	671	3
1820	35,793	877	874	3
1830	39,406	744	743	1
1840	47,241	680	680	0
1850	58,291	904	857	0

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Upper Merion, July 24, 1751.

**T**O be sold by Richard Bevan, living near the Gulph-mill,  
a likely Negroe-man, about 30 years of age, fit for town  
or country business, and is expert in driving a team. Also a Ne-  
groe-girl, about 15 years of age. As the said Bevan intends to lett  
out his plantation, any person inclining to purchase either of said  
Negroes, may agree, on reasonable terms, with

RICHARD BEVAN.

Pennsylvania Gazette August 8, 1751

# Indentured vs Enslaved

Indentured servitude had a contractual end; enslavement was for life, and the lives of the descendants.

Indentured European women were not expected to have children - that was considered a breach of contract.

Enslaved African women were expected to have children, which became the property of the master who could decide to sell them separately.

There is no easy way to know if day-to-day treatment differed. It seems likely, given the racial views of the time.

Note in the case of indentured Europeans, it was their contractual time that was for sale, whereas for the enslaved African it was the person that was for sale.

Punishment for the indentured could include an extension of time. Typical punishment for the enslaved was public whipping.

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To be sold by

W I L L I A M C U R R I E,

In the Great-Valley,

**T**WO likely Negro Men, both compleat Farmers, named Glasgow and Quaco ; Glasgow is about 21 Years of Age, and Quaco about 36 : Likewise two Negro Wenches, named Deb and Moll ; Deb is about 24 Years of Age, and has a fine Child, about 8 months old ; Moll is about 40. and has a fine Boy, past 4 years old, both to be sold with the Mothers : As also a Dutch Servant Lad's Time, who has been 7 Years in the Country, and has 5 Years and 4 Months to serve ; all which are sold for no Fault, but because their Master intends to quit Farming. The Purchaser may have a Year's Credit, giving Security, and paying interest. Tbc. 6 W.

# The Indentured Europeans

Usually indentured Europeans were young, 10 to 16 years of age and from a poor family.

A term of service would be agreed upon, typically 4 to 7 years.

Meals and housing (and transport if bound for America) were provided by the master.

Servant's time could be sold to other masters, as long as the original terms of service were adhered to.

Occasionally, free Africans were also indentured, sometimes as punishment.



# The Enslaved Africans

Enslaved Africans usually came to America as second generation slaves, born in the West Indies. This was called “seasoning”, a simple term for a cruel reality that first generation Africans could not endure American winters.

Servitude was for life, and any children of enslaved women were born into slavery.

In Pennsylvania, there were no large plantations. The typical slave owner might only have a few, thus enslaved Africans were more likely to be separated from their families.

Because Pennsylvania’s economy was more commercialized and unstable compared to the agrarian South with its large plantations, the enslaved were also more likely to be sold several times in their lifetime.

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To be S O L D,

**A** Likely Negro woman, about 23 years of age, fit for town or country business, with her child, 3 years old, last May; she will be sold with or without the child. Enquire of James Whitehead, at the Work house. §

Pennsylvania Gazette November 20, 1755

# Running Away Was Common

Working conditions were harsh and mortality was high among both indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans.

The Pennsylvania Gazette is filled with ads for both runaway servants and enslaved people.

Typically a very extensive description was given, as well as a reward offered.

Before 1700, Pennsylvania colonial law did not distinguish between indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans.

After 1700, restrictions and punishments were enacted especially for enslaved and free Africans.

**R**Un away from Richard Bevan, of Upper Merion, in the County of Philadelphia, on the 23<sup>d</sup> of April last, a negroe man, named Frank, of short stature, can speak good English, and is mark'd with the small pox: Had on when he went away, a light coloured old homespun cloth jacket, with flat pewter buttons, brown homespun cloth breeches, with mohair buttons, an old felt hat, neither shoes nor stockings; but as it is thought he has got money with him, he may get other apparel, change his name, or say he is free, as he is a lying, artful fellow, and has done the like before. He formerly belong'd to William Macneell of Philadelphia. Whoever takes up the said negroe, and brings him to his said master, or to William Rakestraw, of this city, or secures him, so that his master shall have him again, shall have Twenty Shillings reward, paid by

RICHARD BEVAN.

N. B. As he may attempt to go to sea, all masters of vessels are desir'd not to take him. ⊕

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*Philadelphia, May 29. 1746.*

**R**UN away the 2d Instant, from John Pawling, at Perkiomen, a likely, lusty, Negroe Man, named **TONEY**, 6 Foot high, about 24 Years Years of Age, and speaks good English and High Dutch. Had on when he went away, a striped Linsey Woolsey Jacket, Tow Shirt and Trowsers, and old Felt Hat. Whoever takes up and secures said Negroe, so that his Master may have him again, shall have Twenty-five Shillings Reward, and reasonable Charges, paid by



**JOHN PAWLING.**

Pennsylvania Gazette May 29, 1746

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**R**UN away on the 2d Inst. from *Isaac Rees* of *Upper Merion* in this County, an *Irish* Servant Man, named *David Punch*, of middle Stature, long black strait Hair, paleish complexion'd, has a large Scar on the back Part of his Head near his Crown, he is a Weaver by Trade: Had on when he went away, a light copper-coloured new Druggert Coat, with Buttons of the same, and mohair Button-holes, linnen Jacket, new black and white Hose, light colour'd cloth Breeches much worn, homespun Shirt, new felt Hat, and half worn Shoes.

Whoever secures the said Servant, so that his Master may have him again, shall have *Thirty Shillings* Reward, paid by *Isaac Rees*.  
*Philad. April 5. 1739.*

# Patterns of Enslavement in the Colonies

In geographical terms, slavery generally decreased in the colonies from north to south.

But there were far fewer enslaved people in Pennsylvania, relative to the population, than in surrounding states.

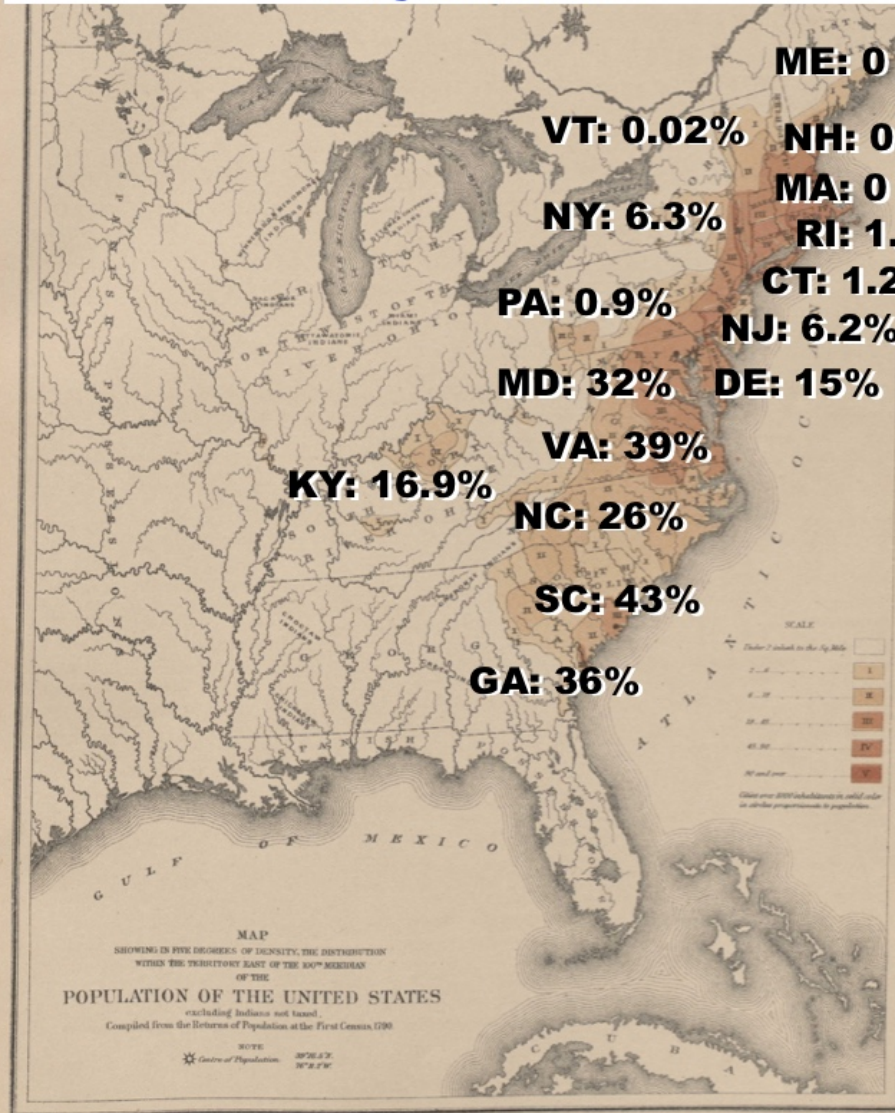
Pennsylvania was a center of industry and commerce, more so than the other colonies.

Pennsylvania's frontiers favored smaller farms, rather than large plantations.

Poorer European American laborers may have resisted the influx of enslaved laborers.

# 1790 Census Data

## The Enslaved as a Percentage of Population





# Early Abolitionists

There were those who felt that slavery was wrong, but it was not the English Quakers - at least not at first.

It was the Dutch-German Quaker converts - newly emigrated from Europe and living in Germantown. For them, slavery and servitude in general were not customary.

The Dutch-German Quakers invoked the Golden Rule. They saw the connection between the religious freedom they sought and freedom in general.

Throughout Pennsylvania's history, German immigrants and their descendants rarely enslaved anyone.

This is to y<sup>r</sup> <sup>most</sup> worthy <sup>and</sup> <sup>beloved</sup> <sup>brother</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>Agert</sup> <sup>Worms</sup>.  
Here are the reasons why we <sup>oppose</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>trade</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>men</sup> <sup>as</sup> <sup>followeth</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>there</sup> <sup>any</sup> <sup>thing</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>done</sup> <sup>or</sup> <sup>ordered</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>marriage</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>old</sup> <sup>or</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>slave</sup> <sup>for</sup> <sup>all</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>time</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>his</sup> <sup>life</sup>.  
How fearful & fainthearted are many on sea when they see a frigate  
being afraid it should be a Turk, and they should be snatched  
and sold for Slaves into Turkey. Now what is this better done  
as Turks doe: you rather is it worse for them, w<sup>ch</sup> say they are Christs  
for we hear that you most part of such Negroes are brought hither  
against their will & consent, and that many of them are stolen.  
Now if they are black, we can not conceive there is more liberty  
to have them slaves, as it is to have they white ones. There is a  
saying that we shall doe to all men, like as we will be done.  
our selves, making no difference of what generation, descent or  
colour they are. And those who steal or rob men, and those who buy  
or purchase them, are they not all alike? There is liberty of Con-  
science, w<sup>ch</sup> is right & reasonable here ought to be likewise liberty  
of goe any except of evildoers w<sup>ch</sup> is in other cases. But to bring  
men hither, or to rob and sell them against their will we stand against  
In Europe there are many oppressed for Conscience sake, and here there  
are those oppressed w<sup>ch</sup> are of a black colour, w<sup>ch</sup> we shall have  
that men must not commit adultery, forsoe doe commit adultery in others,  
separating wives from their husbands, and giving them to others,  
and some sell the children of their poor partners to other men.  
Oh! doe consider well this things you who doe it, if you would be  
done as they manner: and if it is done according Christianity?  
you surpass Holland & Germany in this thing. This makes  
an ill report in those Countries of Europe, where they hear off,  
that you have here harden men like they harden there  
we have heard that some have no mind or inclination  
to come hither. And who shall maintain this your cause?  
plainly it is freely we can not do so except you shall  
inform us better hereoff, w<sup>ch</sup> that Christians have liberty  
to gratify this things. Now what thing in the world can be  
done towards us then if men should rob or steal us away  
& sell us for slaves to some Countries, separating husbands  
from their wives, and children from their parents. During now this is not  
at that manner we will not be persecutors we contradict & stand  
against this traffick of a body, and we who profess

1688 Letter from the  
Germantown Meeting House  
to the Society of  
Friends in Philadelphia,  
written by Francis  
Daniel Pastorius and  
three more members.

# An Act for the Better Regulation of Negroes in this Province 1725-26

In the early 1700s, free and enslaved Africans began to be treated differently under Pennsylvania colonial law.

Their movements and their ability to gather and trade freely with their fellows were severely restricted.

Europeans and Africans were prohibited from marrying or living together.

Slave owners had to pay an indemnity of £30 to free an enslaved person. This clause of the act had a chilling effect on the granting of freedom.

# Gradual Abolition

In 1780, Pennsylvania enacted the first democratically adopted abolition law in the world.

But it was **GRADUAL** abolition. Those born after 1780 would become essentially indentured servants until age 28. Their children were born free.

Those born before 1780 would remain enslaved for the rest of their lives.

Thus slavery died out slowly in Pennsylvania.

Massachusetts, by contrast, would free enslaved people in 1783 when its supreme court decided that African Americans were people. Their state constitution thus already applied to them so no law was required.