

This is a newspaper clipping, from 1797 advertising the sale of an enslaved woman in New York. Just like advertisements you see on TV and magazines for selling cars, movies, video games, and other things, enslaved people were commonly advertised in newspapers like clothing and furniture. In this advertisement, the person being sold is a 22 year-old female who has a nine month-old baby. The seller informs the potential buyer that this mother and her baby do not have to be sold together, but the baby is available “at the purchaser’s option.” Think about this. Does the seller seem interested in keeping this family together? What was the seller’s primary goal?

Think about the fact that this is an advertisement for a young woman. The advertisement says she is only 22 years old, and has a child that is almost one year old. Does this change the way we think about people who were enslaved? What does this tell us about enslaved women? How about enslaved children?

This newspaper clipping uses language that is considered inappropriate today. The word *Negro* was a typical way African-Americans were referred to even in the time of Martin Luther King. The word *wench* was a disrespectful and insulting way of referring to women. It was used very commonly to refer to enslaved women. What does it say about slavery that people were referred to in this way in newspapers?

Sometimes slavery has been referred to as a “Southern Problem.” This means that slavery was something that happened in Southern states like Georgia, Virginia, and South Carolina. Where is this newspaper advertisement from? Does this prove or disprove slavery as a “Southern Problem?”

Citation:

African American Presence in the Hudson Valley Collection, Senate State House Museum, "1797, Advertisement for the sale of a slave," New York Heritage Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2021.
<https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/hhs/id/558>

This is another advertisement for the sale of enslaved people, published in 1760.

This advertisement let potential buyers know about a new shipment of people from Africa arriving off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina. Around 250 people were on this ship, the *Bance-Island*, arrived in America from the Windward and Rice Coasts in Africa. Today, we call these places West Africa. Why do you think knowing where enslaved people came from was important?

This advertisement was printed by Austin, Laurens, and Appleby, a group of merchants in South Carolina. Document 8 is also from one of these men, Henry Laurens. Think about these two documents together. What can we figure out about these people from the documents? Where were they from? What did they do?

Citation:

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. "To be sold, on board the ship Bance Island, ... negroes, just arrived from the Windward & Rice Coast" New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-b78d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

The voyages of the ship *Bance Island* to South Carolina with enslaved people can be found in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, here: <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/DX9jYCJf>

This image is an illustration of enslaved people on the deck of the slave ship *Wildfire*. Originally published in the magazine "Harper's Weekly" on June 2nd, 1860, it was copied from a daguerreotype, which is an early type of photograph. Since there was no internet and social media in this time, this illustration was one of the few ways Americans and others around the world were able to see conditions in the slave trade.

The ship in this illustration, the *Wildfire*, departed from New York. Its crew took captured Africans from the Congo River area with the intention of selling them in Cuba. However, before they could do so, American anti-slave trade cruisers intercepted the *Wildfire* at sea. The United States made the transatlantic slave trade illegal in 1808, although it was still legal to sell enslaved people within the United States. Navy ships would patrol the coast to try and capture ships like the *Wildfire*. The ship was taken to Key West, Florida, and then to Liberia, which was a country established by the United States as a place in Africa to send freed slaves.

The photograph was taken after the enslaved people were told they would be freed. Because of this, they are less confined and have more space than they did earlier in the voyage. Does it seem like people have much space in this illustration?

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The image is of an illustration of the Gold Coast in the late 17th century, now known as the country Ghana in West Africa. It shows several African canoes carrying enslaved people to European ships anchored off the coast. These ships would then take these captured people across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. Towards the rear, the illustration shows these canoes coming from several forts along the coast. European traders established such forts with the permission of local African rulers who wanted to trade with Europeans, selling enslaved people in exchange for cloth imported from Europe and Asia, iron, alcohol, and other items. From the left to the right the forts indicated are: Elmina, St. Jago, Cape Corso, and Fort Royal at Manfrow.

Access to the Gold Coast was fought over by European powers involved in the slave trade. In the 16th century, gold was the main commodity, or good, that the early European powers traded and took from the region. However, at the end of the 17th century, when this illustration was made, the main commodity became enslaved Africans.

The image is reproduced courtesy of Tracy W. McGregor Library of American History, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

This document from 1849 shows a cross-section of a canoe. In West Africa, canoes were the main vehicles for transporting captured Africans from the coast to the larger ships that would take them across the Atlantic Ocean. According to *The Illustrated London News*, during the 1840's in Sierra Leone, such canoes could carry 200 slaves in their bottom. The size of these canoes were about 40 feet long, 12 feet wide, and seven or eight feet deep.

West African societies did not have ships that could travel on deep ocean water and cross the Atlantic Ocean. They used canoes just like these for long-distance trade on the many rivers in the area. They were used for fishing and trade along the coast as well. They were also used for warfare.

The image is reproduced courtesy of the Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

The image is of a plan of the slave ship *Vigilante*. It shows the slave decks and the instruments used to chain captured Africans. These slave ships were overcrowded and unclean spaces that took Africans from their homeland to the Americas. These journeys lasted weeks and many enslaved people died in the crossing. This image was published as part of a pamphlet printed first in London, and then Paris in 1823.

The Brig *Vigilante* was a French slaver captured in the Bight of Biafra, which is now called Nigeria, on April 15th, 1822. Since Great Britain had declared the Atlantic slave trade illegal for British traders in 1808, the British Navy sometimes patrolled the African coast to make sure British traders obeyed the law. In 1822, a British cruiser approached a French slave trading brig called the *Vigilante* to check to make sure it was not a British ship trading illegally, and the French ship fired its cannons at the British cruiser, killing several British seamen. The British then captured the *Vigilante* and took it to England, where the enslaved people on board were set free.

The image is reproduced courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

This is an excerpt from the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano published in 1789. In this passage, Equiano writes about the sale of enslaved people in the Caribbean. Most of the time in these marketplaces that sold people, family members were separated from one another. Typically they never saw each other again, although there was constant hope that they would reunite either in this life or in the afterlife. What other documents talk about separating families? Can you think of other examples, either in history or in current events, where families have been forced to separate?

Olaudah Equiano was an abolitionist and former enslaved person from Igbo territory in what is now southeast Nigeria. He was captured and brought to the Americas and sold into slavery. While he was enslaved, Equiano worked aboard a British merchant ship in the Caribbean. His experience meant he was able to share the many horrors of the slave trade. In Equiano's time, there were no cameras or recording devices. This meant that his autobiography was one of the main ways people learned about the slave trade. How do you think people felt after reading his book?

This document is an announcement in a newspaper from December 15th, 1758. It alerted the public about an enslaved boy or young man named Harry who had run away from his owner. Such announcements appeared frequently in early American newspapers and were posted around early American towns. Historians use such announcements for evidence of enslaved people's resistance and also to look for details about enslaved people's lives and families. This announcement was put out by Henry Laurens and his associate George Austin. These two were also responsible for the advertisement from document two. What can we figure out about these two people from these documents? Where were they from? What did they do?

In early America, slavery was legal, so it was very dangerous and difficult for enslaved people to resist or to attempt escape. Slaveholders often used violence to keep control of their slaves and make them fearful of the consequences if they were caught escaping. The police or other citizens would also help capture escaping slaves and return them to the person who claimed to own them. Famous Americans like Harriet Tubman helped many escape captivity along the Underground Railroad. Although when Harry ran away, this escape route did not exist since slavery was still legal in the North. Despite the many dangers and small chance of escape, enslaved people often resisted their captivity with great courage. Why do you think people attempted to escape? Why do you think Harry went further South to Georgia to free himself?