1664-1686. Slavery in British America

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, New York City is one of the major cities of the world. It is home to over 8 million people, some of the major corporations in the world and the United Nations. But in the 17th century, the settlement that would become New York City teetered on the brink of survival. For the Dutch, who established New Amsterdam as the first permanent European settlement in the area, the port and the lands surrounding it were a minor part of a global trade empire that was centered in Holland and had spokes extending to East Asia, Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean. The New Netherland colony itself included part of the present day states of New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, and Maryland and the West Indies island of Curacao.

Unlike Brazil and the Caribbean where sugar was an extremely valuable staple crop, the northern part of the Dutch New World territories were seen as of great economic value. The Dutch West Indies Company that coordinated the operation of the colony was unable to attract sufficient settlers to make the venture successful and after twenty-five years, it generally sent only two ships a year to New Amsterdam. Because of its isolation, it was run in an autocratic way by its governor and a small group of local merchants. Many residents actually welcomed the British force that overthrew Dutch rule.

In August, 1664, a small British expedition that consisted of four ships and 2,000 soldiers arrived in Brooklyn and demanded that Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch governor, surrender the colony. On September 8, 1664, the control shifted from the Dutch West Indies Company to James Stuart, the Duke of York. In the Treaty of Breda in 1667, the Dutch officially recognized British sovereignty in what was now known as New York in exchange for Dutch control over Surinam on the northern coast of South America. Fragmentary documents from the early years of British control give historians a small glimpse into conditions for enslaved and free Africans in early New York.

1664. Proclamation by Duke of York
No Christian shall be kept in bond slavery, villenage, or captivity, except such who shall be judged thereunto by authority, or such as willingly have sold or shall themselves, in which case a record of such servitude shall be entered in the court of sessions held for the jurisdiction where such masters shall inhibit, provided that nothing in the law contained shall be to the prejudice of master or dame who have or shall by any indenture or covenant take apprentices for term of years, or other servants for term of years or life.

1664. Terms of Sale of Negroes

[Conditions and Terms on which the Director General and] Council of [New Netherland] propose [to sell to the] highest bidder a lot of Negroes and Nelligresses. 29 May, 1664.

The buyers shall immediately take possession of their purchased negroes, and may use them as bond slaves, and also sell them to others.

But whereas, the meaning of the directors is, to promote and advance the population and agriculture of this province more and more, the purchased negroes or negresses shall not be sold, carried away or transported beyond this province. Who so acts contrary hereunto, shall forfeit for each negro or negress, One hundred Guilders, beaver value.

Payment shall be made, one fourth part down, the reminder in September or October next, in good beaver at eight guilders the skin, or in merchandize, beaver price, or in provisions such as the Hon’ble Company may require, to be delivered here at the Manhattans at the following prices:
Wheat at 55 stivers, Pease at 50 stivers, Rye at 45 stivers, the skepel.
Salted beef at 4 stivers, Pork at 5 stivers, the pound

The purchaser shall be bound to give sufficient security. On the foregoing Conditions, the following were the purchasers:

<p>| Jacobus Backer | 1 Negro, for | Florins 555 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dom’e Johannes Theodorus</td>
<td>1 Negress, one Negro for 440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polhemius</td>
<td>Account</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolas Verleth</td>
<td>1 Negress, for 1 Negro, 1 Negress and child, 1 Negress, 290</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Colonists Account</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannes Verveelen</td>
<td>1 Negro 445</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulus Leendertsen Vande Grist</td>
<td>1 Negro 425</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Thomas Willet</td>
<td>1 Negro 502</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timotheus Gabry</td>
<td>1 Negro 485</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. John Laurence</td>
<td>1 Negro 345</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerominus Ebbingh</td>
<td>1 Negro 485</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaacq Fooroest</td>
<td>1 Negro 545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Leyseler</td>
<td>1 Negro 615</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolaes De Meyer</td>
<td>1 Negro 460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Terneur</td>
<td>1 Negro 465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Bedlo</td>
<td>1 Negro 430</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques Cousseau</td>
<td>1 Negress ditto 335</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto 305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willem Maerschalck</td>
<td>1 Negro ditto 500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govert Loocquermans</td>
<td>1 Negress 305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egbert Myndersten</td>
<td>1 Negro 562</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriaen Vincent</td>
<td>1 Negress 255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carel Verbrugge</td>
<td>1 Negress 300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Negro 600</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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**1676. Sir John Werden To William Dyer, 30th Of November, 1676**

. . . Secondly the deputy govern'r of the R'll Company tells me that that Company only pretend to the first empcion [importation] or transportacion of Negroes out of Guiny, and when they are once sold in Barbadoes, Jamaica etc. by them or their factors, they care not whither they are transported from thence; for the more are carryed of, the more againe wilbe wanting; and therefore you need not suspect the Company will oppose the introducing of black Slaves into New Yorke from any place (except from Guiny) if they were first sold m that place by the Royall Company or their agents.


**1678. Governor Andros responds to Questions about the Colony**


Our Merchants are not many but with inhabitants & planters about 2000, able to bear arms, old inhabitants of the place or of England, except in & near New York of Dutch Extraction & some few of all nations, but few Servants, much wanted & but very few slaves.

No persons whatever are to come from any place but according to act of Parliament which the magistrates and officers of the several towes or places are to take care of, accordingly the plantacon is these late years increased but
no General account hath been taken so is not known how much nor what persons. Some few slaves are sometimes
brought from Barbadoes, most for Provisions and should about a £30 or £35 Country pay

1685. Order In Council On Captain Billop's Appeal.

At the Court at WHITEHALL the 23d of December 1685.
Present: The Kings most Excellent Majesty in Council.
Upon readings Report from the Right Hon'ble the Lords of the Committee for Trade and Plantations in the words
following
May it please Your Majesty, In obedience to your Majesty’s Order in Council of the 4th of December 1685. Wee
have examined the petition of Captain Christopher Bullop complaining that having consigned from Nevis some
Negroes and other Goods to Mr. John Injohns of New York, the said Negroes and Goods or the effects of them were
attached at New York by Mr. John West Attorney to John Bawden and others of London where the said West
obtained Judgem't against the Pet'r for eleaven hundred and forty pounds Sterl.; from which sentence or Judgement
the said Injohns desired to Appeal, which was refused; And therefore praying that the Mayor of New York may be
ordered to stop all proceedings there, and to send over an Appeal for a final determination before your Majesty.
Whereupon wee most humbly Offer our Opinion that your Majesty bee pleased to admit the pet'rs appeal before
Your Ma'ty in Council from the said sentence in such manner as is desired by the pet'r within four months after
notice given of your Ma'ty's pleasure; the pet'r having first given security here for the summ of Two Thousand
Pounds to your Majesty to bee levied upon the Petitioner's Estate both Real and Personal, as well on your Ma'ty's
province of New York in America, as in England or elsewhere, to answer such determination in his said appeal as
your Majesty in Council shall award. And that in the mean time all proceedings against the said Billop in relation to
this matter doe cease. All which is most humbly submitted. His Majesty in Council the same, and being graciously
pleased to admit of the pet’rs Appeal hath this day thought fit to Order That the matter of the said appeal bee, and
the same is hereby appointed to bee heard before His Ma'ty in Council within four months after notice hereof shall
bee given to the Mayor of New York, who is to transmit to this Board an account of all proceedings in his Court
relating thereunto. And it is further ordered that in the mean time all Proceedings against the said Capt: Billop or his
Agent relating to this matter doe cease; Hee having this day given security here, according to the Report, to answer
such Determination in the Appeal, as His Majesty in Council Shall award. Whereof the said Mayor of New York,
or the Mayor thereof for the time being and all others concerned are to take notice, and give obedience hereunto.
And Colonel Thomas Dungan His Ma'ty's Governor of New York is hereby directed to take care and give order that
all things bee performed accordingly.

1686. Instructions to Governor Dongan
Source: E.B. O’Callaghan, ed. (1856). Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York;

You are to give all due encouragement & invitation to Merchants & others who shall bring Trade unto Our said
Province, or any way contribute to the advantage thereof; And in particular to ye Royal African Company of
England.
And you are to take care that there bee noe Trading from ye Province of New York to any place in Africa within the
Charter of the Royal African Compa. And you are not to suffer any ships to bee sent thither without their leave or
Authority.
You shall pass a Law for the Restraining of Inhuman Severitys which by all masters or overseers may bee used
toward their Christian servants, or slaves, wherein provision is to be made that ye willful killing of Indians &
Negros may bee punished with death, And that a fit penalty bee imposed for the maiming of them.
You are alsoe with ye assistance of Our Council to find out the best means to facilitate & encourage the Conversion
of Negroes & Indians to the Christian Religion.
To the five and Twentieth
It is the endeavor of all p’sons here to bring up their Children & servants in that opinion which themselves profess; but this I observe that they take no care of the conversion of their Slaves
Every Town & County are obliged to maintain their own poor, which makes the bee soe careful that noe Vagabonds, Beggars, nor Idle Persons are suffered to live here
But as for the Kings natural-born-subjects that live on long Island & other parts of Government I find it a hard task to make them pay their Ministers
Tho Dongan