

## Exhibit Credits

### Images Courtesy:

Belize Archives & Records Service  
National Heritage Library  
Eric King Collection

Bolland, N.O. (2003). Colonialism & Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology. Belize: Cubola Productions. Krohn, L. & Salam, F. (Eds.) (n.d.) Readings in Belizean History Edition III. Belize: Print Belize.

(2011). Revealing Histories: Remembering Slavery. Retrieved from <http://www.revealing-histories.org.uk/africa-the-arrival-of-europeans-and-the-transatlantic-slave-trade/objects/slave-shackle/images.html,image3>

Son of the South. (2008). Whipped Slave. Retrieved from <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1863/july/whipped-slave.htm>

Simon K. (2010). Slavery. Retrieved from <http://sites.google.com/site/katherinesimonportfolio/blog>

Institute of Common Wealth Studies. (n.d.) Caribbean Online- Routes to Roots. Retrieved from [http://commonwealth.sas.ac.uk/libraries/caribbean/gall\\_abol\\_58.htm](http://commonwealth.sas.ac.uk/libraries/caribbean/gall_abol_58.htm)

Les Anglonauts. (n.d.) Slavery. Retrieved from [http://www.anglonauts.com/hist\\_us\\_slave/hist\\_us\\_slave.htm](http://www.anglonauts.com/hist_us_slave/hist_us_slave.htm)

(n.d.). Your U.S. History. Retrieved from <http://yourushistch2.blogspot.com/>

(n.d.) Slavery: advertisement for the sale of slaves. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/bps/media-view/96849/1/0/0>

(n.d.) Winter Americana Auction. Retrieved from <http://www.willishenry.com/feb09preview.htm>

### Information Courtesy:

Bolland, N. O. (1998, 2003). Colonialism and Resistance: Essays on historical sociology. Belize: Cubola Productions.

Leslie, R. (ed.) (2008). A History of Belize: Nation in the making. Belize: Cubola Productions.

Thompson, P.A. (2005). Belize : a Concise History. Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean.

Bolland, N. O. (1977). The Formation of a Colonial Society: Belize from conquest to crown colony. USA: John Hopkins University Press.

Krohn, L. & Salam, F. (Eds.) (n.d.) Readings in Belizean History Edition III. Belize: Print Belize.

Dobson, N. (1973). A History of Belize. Trinidad & Tobago: Longman Caribbean

Green. W.A. (1976) Sugar Colonies and Great Experiment 1830- 1865: British Slave Emancipation Act.

Mathieson, W.L. (1976). British Slavery & its Abolition 1823- 1838: Abolition of Slavery

Murray, R. (2006). Family and People Well: An account of the occurrences in the business of mahogany and logwood cutting in the Bay of Honduras in 1789. Belize: Cubola Productions.

BBC. (2011). Abolition. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/>

Carey, B. (2003). Slavery Timeline 1901- 2003. Retrieved from <http://www.brycchancarey.com/slavery/chrono7.htm>

National Archives. (2011). Caribbean Histories Revealed. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/caribbeanhistory/>

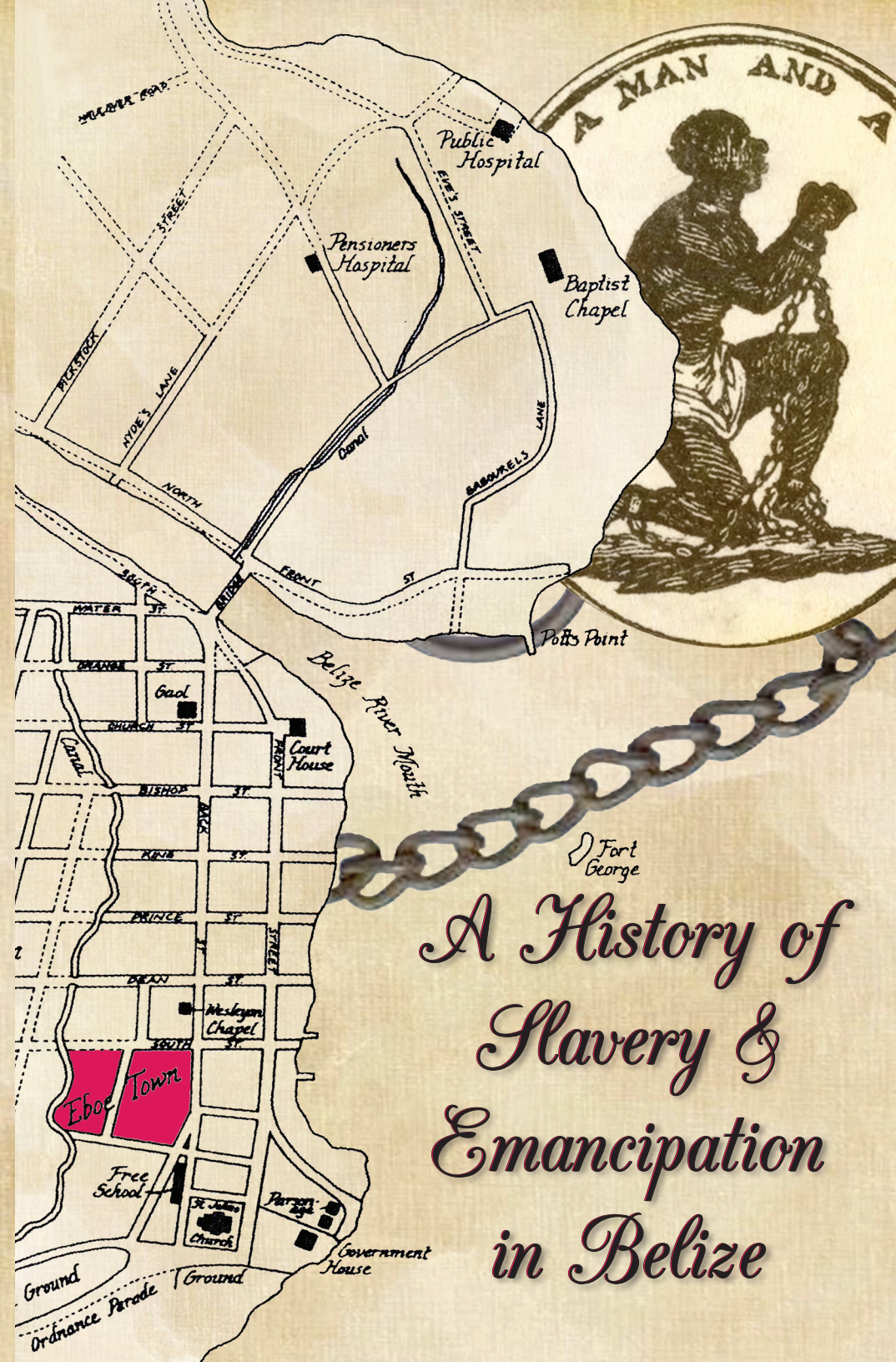
(2009). The Abolition Project. Retrieved from <http://abolition.e2bn.org/slavery.html>

### Research Team:

Mison Ferguson, Phylcia Pelayo, Nigel Encalada



national institute of culture and history



*A History of  
Slavery &  
Emancipation  
in Belize*

## Belize Slavery & Emancipation Timeline

- 1492- Columbus in the Americas.
- 1502- Arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the Americas.
- 1510- The systematic transportation of African slaves to the New World begins after King Ferdinand of Spain authorizes a shipment of 50 African slaves to be sent to Santo Domingo.
- 1650- British Buccaneers settle in British Honduras.
- 1660- Bartholomew Sharpe, British pirate, makes British Honduras his base and begins to harvest logwood for sale to U.K.
- 1724- Report by Spanish missionary's reports the presence of enslaved Africans in the settlement and states that the British recently had been importing them from Jamaica and Bermuda.
- 1765 & 1768 - Slave revolts. In 1768 23 slaves had gone off to the New River to the Spaniards.
- 1773- An uprising began in May on the Belize River; Captain Davy arrived at St. George's Caye and sent officers to contain the slaves. This was the biggest revolt which lasted several months and resulted in the recapture of 14 slaves while many escaped for refuge at the Spaniard's post on the Rio Hondo.
- 1807- On March 25th, the Act for the Abolition of Slave Trade was passed by the British Parliament which made the trading of slaves illegal throughout the British Empire.
- 1820- Last slave revolt led by slaves Will and Sharper who were believed to be leaders of the revolt. This took place on the Belize and Sibun Rivers. The Superintendent declared Martial Law as a considerable number of slavers were well armed. The revolt lasted for approx. one month.
- 1833- Act for the Abolition of Slavery - Britain abolishes slavery and provides for the emancipation of enslaved people in the British West Indies, to take effect on 1 August 1834. The Act declares that the former enslaved people must serve a period of unpaid apprenticeship before receiving full emancipation.
- 1838- Emancipation of Slaves in Belize and throughout the British Empire.
- 1926- League of Nations adopted the definition of slavery to include "the state or condition of an individual on which are exerted attributes of the right of ownership or some of those rights".
- 1948- On December 10, General Assembly of the United Nations adopts Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 4 states: 'No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.'
- 1956- Supplementary Convention adopted which added servitude for debt, serfdom, the marriage of a woman without her consent and the assignment of children for purposes of exploitation to the list of slavery institutions and practices.



The Baptist Chapel and School House

### 1838 BELIZE, ON THE EVE OF EMANCIPATION

(JULY 31, 1838)

The Baptist Church in Belize was composed almost entirely of non-whites,

included many former slaves. The account of the Baptist preacher, Alexander

Henderson presents a picture of reverence, gratitude, and exhilaration:

"At the quiet hour of midnight" said Henderson, "the victims of injustice sought the house

of God, to render praises, and to spend the first hour of freedom in his worship. A little

before twelve I went down and found the place full, almost all blacks, and the greater

proportion must have been slaves.

I laid my watch on the table, sitting down silently till twelve, when I rose telling them that

slavery was no more with them. Then we all fell on our knees, and afterwards rose to sing.

Oh, what hearty singing! A member, lately a slave, prayed. Again we sang. Another

member prayed; again we sang. All seemed seriously cheerful, and gladness dwelt on every

countenance."

( Ref: Christianity In Belize- page 238)



## Apprenticeship Period to Full Emancipation 1838

The first step towards emancipation was the registering of all slaves in the settlement before August 1834. An Order-in-Council reached Belize in March 1834 and established a registration period of two months. In order to compensate slave owners for their losses they would incur once the slaves were free, Britain paid 20 million pounds in government bonds. This was equal to roughly 40% of the national budget at the time and about 1.34 billion pounds today; on the other hand the slaves received nothing. Instead the final emancipation would be reached over a period of six years which was later shortened to four years. In Belize slave owners were paid an average of £54 per enslaved person.

In British Honduras, the period of apprenticeship was generally free of disturbances and revolts. While little seemed to have changed in terms of labor control there were new power relations between the master and the slaves. Matters regarding punishments and other disciplinary actions were not dealt with until after Emancipation.

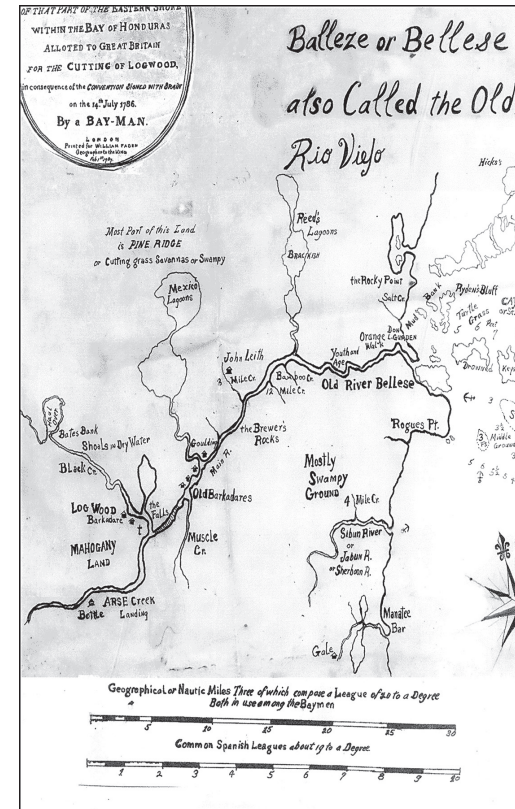
A special magistrate was appointed to each colony to oversee relations and enforce that the slaves were working a required 45 hours per week. The end of the apprenticeship period came early since it was found that abuse and ill-treatment of enslaved people had gotten worse.

In British Honduras, the end of the apprenticeship period on its eve of July 31st, 1838 was marked with prayer and mild celebration... In places like Jamaica, the end of slavery was symbolized by burying a coffin containing a whip and chain inside. The Superintendent of the Belize reported that the day after most of the ex-slaves were carrying on with their own activities.

### Life after Emancipation

After Emancipation the former masters still found various ways to control the labor force and developed a system of dependency. The first step was to change free land grants in 1858 and allow only white men to own land and no crown land would be given out the former slaves. It was argued that the allowing the ex-slaves to obtain land "would discourage labor for wages". Land was then to be sold at a price £1 per acre which was too expensive for the ex-slaves to purchase. The British woodcutters further controlled the labor law system and developed the 'advance system' where advances given under a strict contract system. This ensured that the laborers were bound to the employer for a period of six to twelve months. The laws imposed a penalty of imprisonment with hard labor for 3 months on a servant failing to perform a contract and allowed the apprehension of a servant without a warrant by the employer. In combination with the advance system was the "truck system" which forced laborers to take a portion of their wages in goods from their employers' store. The effect of all these forms of labor control was that the freed men remained bound to their former masters.

## Slavery in Belize



The system of slavery throughout the British Caribbean based on sugar production is well documented in historical records and settlements such as Jamaica were major sugar producing colonies. Large numbers of enslaved persons worked on huge plantations and this led to the emergence of Caribbean societies influenced by the cultural values of enslaved Africans.

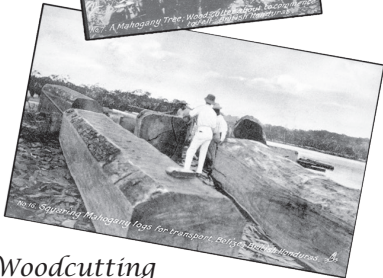
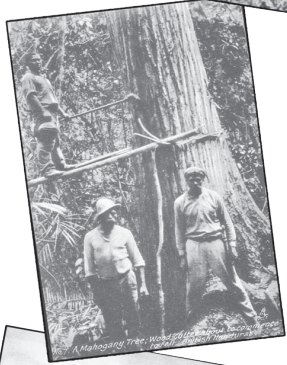
In Belize, the slave trade was centered on the cutting of logwood and by the end of the 19th century on the cutting of mahogany. This resulted in a system in which slave occupations were distinctly different from other parts of the sugar growing Caribbean. Despite the differing occupations the fact was that slaves were treated as the property of their masters and could be bought and

sold in a system referred to as "Chattel Slavery".

The first settlers in British Honduras cut their own logwood but as the logging trade expanded and became more lucrative the need for a larger labour force arose leading to the forced importation of African people. The earliest historical record of enslaved Africans in Belize was from a Spanish missionary in 1724 who reported that they had been imported from Jamaica and Bermuda. The location of timber supplies led to logging camps being situated along the rivers, creeks and lagoons. It was a seasonal occupation where cutting was done during the dry season and the rafting of logs down river being done during the rainy season.



## Slave Occupations



Woodcutting

square the wood in preparation for final shipment. Slave owners worked with as few as two slaves or with as many as fifty depending on how much slaves they could own.

Other occupations not directly linked to the woodcutting trade played an important part in sustaining the day to day livelihood of the settlement. The cultivation of provision grounds for the production of ground-foods, vegetables and other subsistence crops.

Women were responsible for the domestic operations of the household and they also cooked, sewed, washed and ironed.

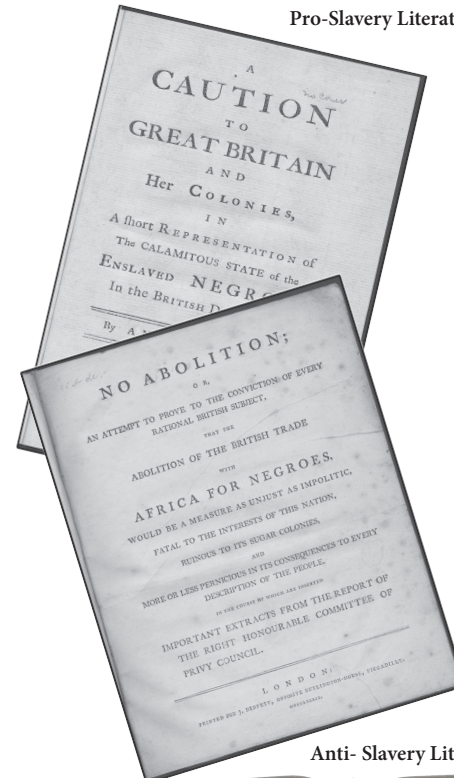
With the slavery system based on the woodcutting industry enslaved persons were given into various jobs. A number of distinct occupations were required in the process of mahogany extraction. First there were the huntsmen whose job it was to search and survey the forest to locate the mahogany trees. The slave owner depended on the huntsman's skill to not only find the mahogany but also to report his find. This was perhaps the occupation with the most freedom as huntsmen worked independently with minimal supervision. When the trees were found the axe men were sent to cut the trees. This was one of the most dangerous and arduous jobs as it required the operation of a heavy axe on a springy platform twelve feet off the ground known as a "barbecue". There were also cattlemen who were responsible to feed and work the cattle used in hauling the huge trunks. After the trees were cut, men were also used to receive the logs at the river mouth and to

## Road to Emancipation

### 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade

The first major step on the road to emancipation was an 'Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' in 1807. The members of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade decided to concentrate on a campaign to persuade British Parliament to prohibit trading in slaves. They felt they were more likely to succeed than if they demanded the abolition of slavery itself throughout the empire. They also believed that if the trade was ceased, slavery would eventually be brought to an end. In the decades until 1838 several bills were put to Parliament, the first in 1791 which was rejected. For all the awareness raised in by abolitionists' campaign, they were those with economic interest who benefited from the trade and therefore formed strong opposing opinion. The Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was introduced in the House of Lords on 2nd January 1807. On 25th March, 1807 the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade made it illegal to carry enslaved people on British ships. When it became clear that the abolition of the slave trade would not result in the end of slavery, the campaign for the total abolition gained momentum.

### Pro-Slavery Literature



### Anti-Slavery Literature

### 1833 Abolition of Slavery

In July 1833, a Bill to abolish slavery throughout the British Empire was passed in British Parliament. This was the result of several factors which included:

- The education campaign led by the abolitionists.
- Major slave revolts in Jamaica, Demerara and Barbados.
- Reduced Demand for slave-based goods.
- The Reform Act of British Parliament in 1832.

As of August 1, 1834 Slavery was officially brought to an end pending a transition period known as Apprenticeship.



## Slavery Statistics



**Table 1: Slave Population of Belize, 1745-1832**

Date	Number of Slaves			Total	Slaves as Percentage of Total Population
	Male	Female	Children		
1745	....	....	....	120	71
1779	....	....	....	3,000	86
1790a	1,216	550	411	2,177	75
1790b	1,091	515	418	2,024	76
1803	1,700	675	584	2,959	75
1806	1,489	588	450	2,527	72
1809	....	....	....	3,000	73
1816	....	....	....	2,742	72
1820	1,537	600	426	2,563	....
1823	1,440	628	400	2,468	60
1826	1,373	577	460	2,410	46
1829	1,113	486	428	2,027	52
1832	895	435	453	1,783	42

Source: Bolland, N. (1977)

**Table 2: Occupations of the Slave Population of Belize, by Age and Sex, 1834**

Occupations	Male, Years in Years								Female, Age in Years								Total	Total
	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total		
Woodcutter	1	88	158	144	244	121	39	795	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	795	
Waiting boy or girl	56	42	2	....	....	....	....	100	40	14	1	....	....	....	....	....	55	
Laborer	....	2	4	2	9	13	8	38	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	38	
Carpenter or carpenter's boy	....	5	12	5	5	2	1	30	....	....	3	2	1	1	4	11	....	
Plantation man or woman	1	2	....	....	4	11	19	37	....	....	3	2	1	1	4	11	48	
Sailor or Boatman	....	3	3	3	....	3	1	13	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	13	
Cattlemen	....	3	3	1	1	1	1	10	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	10	
Footman	5	3	1	....	....	....	....	9	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	9	161	
Washerwoman	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	9	52	37	47	14	1	1	161	....	
Housemaid, servant, or domestic	....	2	....	....	....	2	....	4	6	48	47	10	6	4	4	125	129	
Chambermaid	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	2	30	12	1	....	....	....	45	45	
Cook	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	4	34	38	28	9	4	117	117	
Seamstress	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	10	17	18	6	2	....	....	53	53	
Drudge	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	2	3	3	8	9	5	30	30	
Other	....	2	4	2	3	1	2	14	2	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	
No occupation	140	1	....	....	....	....	3	144	122	....	....	....	....	....	....	123	267	
Total	203	153	187	157	266	154	74	1,194	182	125	172	98	93	40	18	729	1,923	

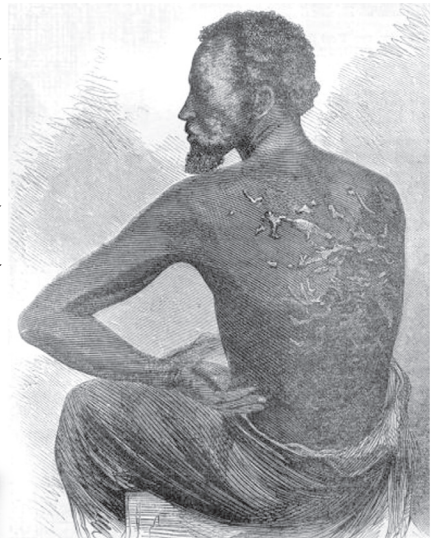
Source: Slave Register, 1834, Belize Archives & Records Service



## Treatment of Slaves

Incidences of slave children born to white Masters are evidence of the sexual favors enslaved women were required to perform as mistresses. Children born in slavery became adapted to the life of servitude from a young age. Young girls and boys would wait at tables. Girls also served as chambermaids while boys served as footmen. As the children grew older they were moved on to more demanding occupations.

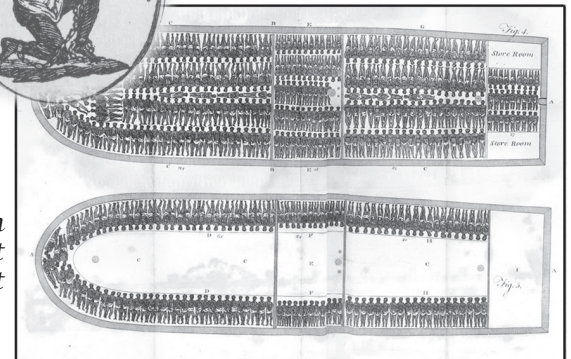
In 'Correspondences Relative to Slaves at Honduras 1820-1823',



Superintendent George Arthurs wrote a series of letters to England detailing the harsh cruelty suffered by the slaves at the hands of their masters. With no formal law in place for the protection of slaves, it wasn't until 1821 that the King of England gave a royal proclamation that the "Consolidated Slave Law of Jamaica"



should be observed in the settlement when it came to the treatment of slaves.



## Slave Revolts

Resistance against slavery has been recorded throughout its existence in the settlement of Belize. Slaves used both active and passive approaches to resisting their enslavement. For women it was observed through actions such as abortions where women who were made pregnant by their British slave masters had abortions as they refused to raise a child under the conditions of slavery. Obeah was also believed to be practiced by some of the slaves against their masters and was made punishable by death in 1791. Men resisted slave control in a more active approach which resulted in running away or revolts.



### 1773 Revolt

The largest reported revolt occurred in May 1773 and involved fifty slaves that took control of five logging camps and killed six British men. It was not until five months later and with the assistance of seamen and a British naval force brought in from Jamaica that the revolt was suppressed. It began on the Belize River and on the 21st June it was reported that the slaves were armed with muskets, cutlasses and other weapons and as the settlers tried to attack them this made them retreat farther into the forest. Fourteen slaves surrendered to Captain Davey and he organized three parties that consisted of forty men each to track down and kill the remaining fugitive slaves. During this time trade was at a standstill for most of the area while settlers remained in fear. Settlers reported that the fugitives had been trying to reach the Spaniards who offered asylum to the slaves at their post on the Rio Hondo River. Eleven slaves were reported to have made it and it was not until November that the revolt was over.

### 1820 Revolt

In 1819 Superintendent George Arthur reported that there was brewing tension between the slaves and their masters at Christmas and it wasn't before long that the last major slave revolt occurred in 1820. In a letter to Earl Bathurst, Superintendent Arthur reported "a considerable number of slaves" had organized a group at the Belize River and were well armed and had already created disturbances and offenses. Arthur travelled there in hopes of finding a middle ground with the slaves through a "milder means of persuasion" and "without having to recourse to military force". The rebels had destroyed some cattle and robbed two houses. Martial Law was proclaimed and a reward was given for the apprehension of the slaves. It was at this time that slaves Will and Sharper were believed to be leaders of the revolt. Almost a month after the revolt started it was over and Martial Law was ended.

## Peggy



In September of 1821 Dr. Mansfield Bowen, a magistrate in the settlement, was brought to trial for cruelty to his slave named Peggy. Peggy was suspected of having stolen two dozen handkerchiefs. As a result, she was tied up and severely flogged, then handcuffed and chained in a rat-infested shed for five days and nights.

Her common-law husband Sergeant Rush, a retired pensioner, offered to pay for the handkerchiefs if they were not found. When she was released she filed a report on Dr. Bowen. In response Dr. Bowen tied Peggy to the ground fastened to four stakes and had her clothes removed to below her waist and then ordered for Peggy to be flogged by another woman. Bowen supervised the punishment.

In the trial the prosecutor requested that three enslaved women, Sarah, Thisbe and Nancy be called to provide evidence against Dr. Bowen. The Magistrate determined that as legally held slaves they could not testify. Despite the injuries to Peggy, the jury returned a verdict of: **NOT GUILTY.**

