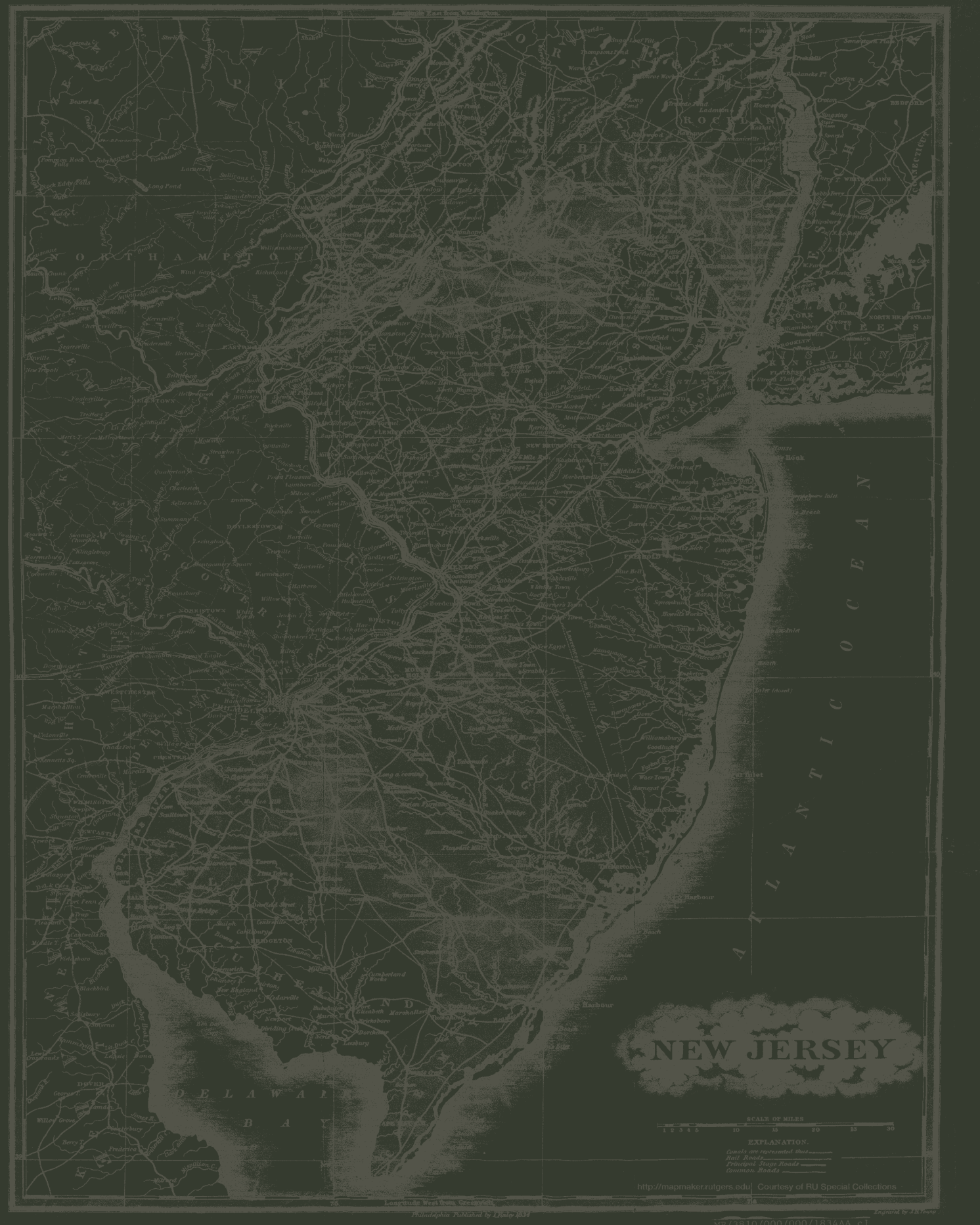

SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY: A TROUBLED HISTORY

by Gail R. Safian



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Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters. 1863-1865
Library of Congress

CONTENTS

	Notes	<i>i</i>
Chapter 1	Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History	1
Chapter 2	The Forces of Abolition in New Jersey	7
Chapter 3	The American Colonization Society	11
Chapter 4	Juneteenth: A Celebration of Freedom	13
Chapter 5	Why Were Constitutional Amendments Needed in Addition to the Emancipation Proclamation?	17
	1830 Census Data Map	21
Chapter 6	New Jersey Laws Regulating Slavery	23
	Newspaper Advertisements About Enslaved People	29
	References	32

Author's Note

It is difficult to think about people being claimed or sold as property. The use of the words “slave” or “enslaved” in this booklet is intended only to describe the condition of those who were unwillingly forced into unpaid servitude and in no way is meant to suggest any diminishment of their dignity as human beings. Throughout we have tried to provide an accurate picture of New Jersey and American society and government as they were in the 200 years between the colonization of New Jersey and the end of the Civil War. We hope that the information offered here will encourage further reading and understanding of a dark time in our history.

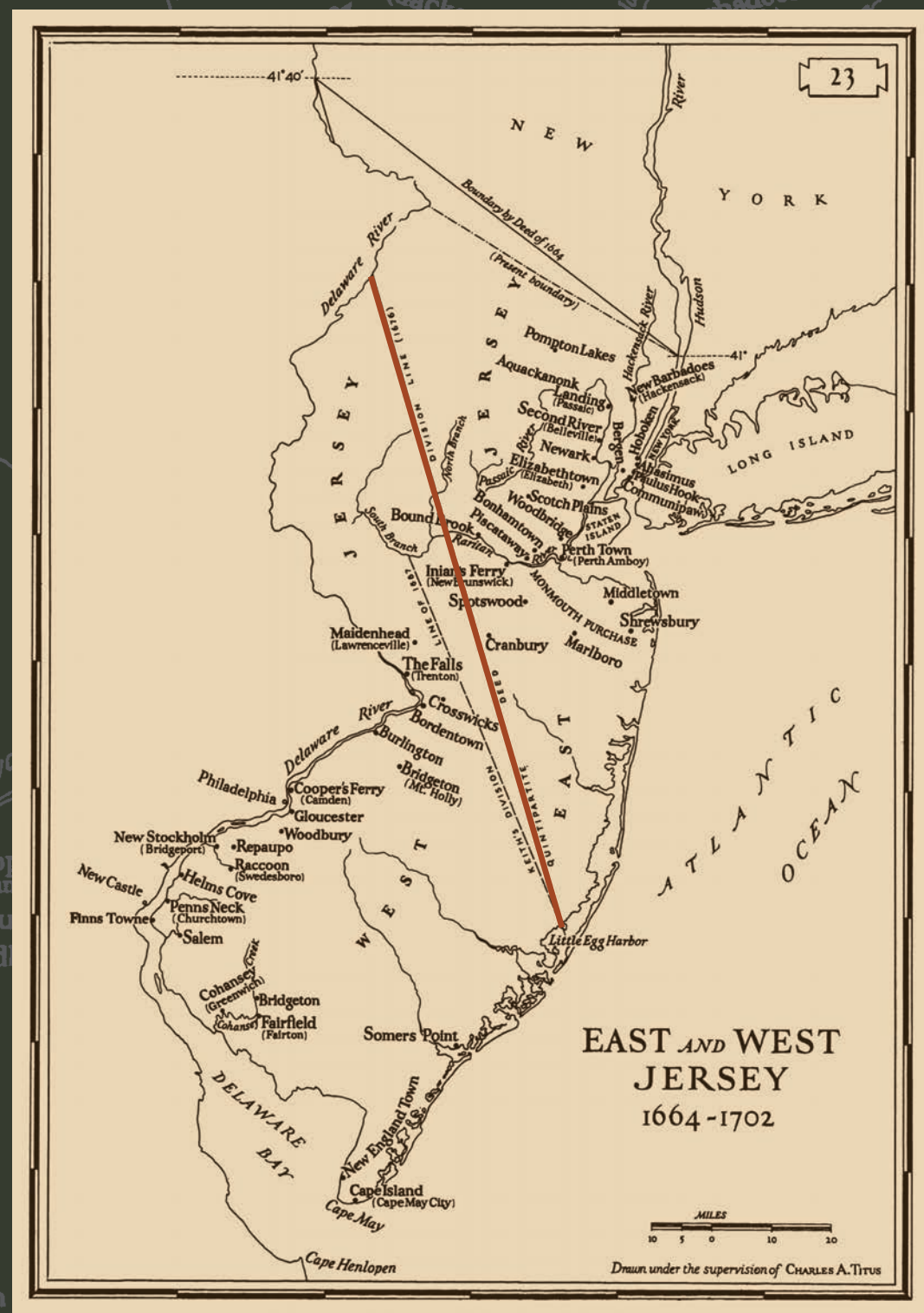
Advertisements About Enslaved People

We believe that the newspaper advertisements for runaway slaves and enslaved people for sale, placed by New Jersey slaveholders, humanize the enslaved, reveal their names, physical features (often through the lens of their prejudiced masters), skills, and bravery. They also emphasize the fact that enslaved people were not just waiting to be freed but were taking heroic actions – always dangerous – to escape from bondage.

Based on an exhibit produced by the Durand-Hedden House
in consultation with the
South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race

Design by John Branigan

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SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY: A TROUBLED HISTORY

People today might assume that New Jersey, being in the North, was a benevolent – or at least not hostile – place for Africans brought to this country by force and for enslaved people trying to escape from the South. Unfortunately, slavery in this state persisted from the earliest days of settlement right through the Civil War. New Jersey was the last Northern state to abolish slavery (1804) – and then only through “gradual abolition,” which freed no one for more than 20 years. It was also the last Northern state to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, in 1866, after the Amendment already had become law.

How it all started

The mostly Dutch and English settlers in New Netherlands (later New York and northern New Jersey) brought the first African captives to the region in 1626. By 1664, one of every 8 White residents enslaved Black people. In the 1660s-1670s planters from the Caribbean, primarily Barbados, established estates in what are now Bergen and Passaic Counties, bringing with them their slave-owning culture.

Quakers controlled West Jersey, and in their Charter of 1676 Quaker leaders included a general provision: “All and every person ... inhabiting the said Province, shallbe free from oppression and slavery.”

East Jersey leaders did not follow the Quakers’ example. Various East Jersey laws established penalties for harboring, transporting or helping fugitive enslaved people. Over the next decades, laws restricted such things as enslaved persons’ ability to carry guns, and how far from home they could travel.

< From 1664 to 1702, the colony of New Jersey was split into East and West Jersey. Quakers predominated in West Jersey, which included most of the southern and western part of the present state. Quaker influence continued there until the Civil War.

James Truslow Adams, Atlas of American History, ©1943 Charles Scribner's Sons



Dutch farmsteads like this one in Bergen County, some dating from as early as the 1620s, relied on enslaved labor. Bergen County continued to have the highest slave population of any New Jersey county until the Civil War.

Nicholas Haring House, Piermont Road, Rockleigh, Bergen County, NJ.
Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, 1933.
Library of Congress

EAST AND WEST
JERSEY

THE GROWTH OF SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY

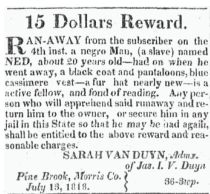


Although East and West Jersey were reunited in 1702, many philosophical differences remained. Slavery was considered an important source of commerce to the colony, especially in East Jersey, although it was never as extensive as in the South. The wheat, barley and other crops raised in New Jersey were not as labor-intensive as the South’s cotton and rice crops so most White slaveholders had only one or two enslaved people, using additional paid laborers during planting and harvesting times.

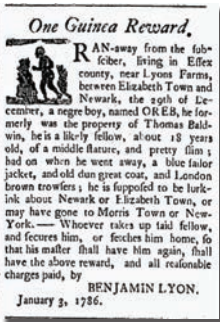
After a revolt in New York City in 1712, New Jersey expanded Slave Codes to create harsh penalties for crimes committed by enslaved people. Owners offered rewards for capturing those who escaped from other colonies and cities, but running away as a form of protest by slaves against their bondage continued -- as old as African enslavement itself on American soil.



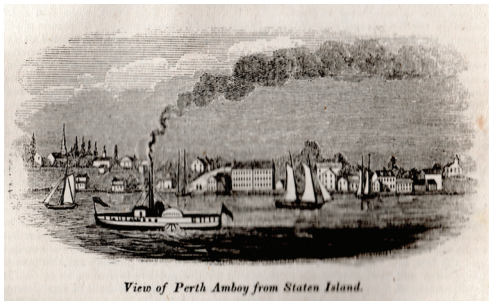
New-Jersey Gazette,
Trenton, NJ
May 2, 1781



Centinel of Freedom,
Newark, NJ
Aug. 4, 1818

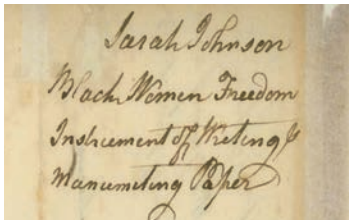


Political Intelligencer,
Elizabethtown, NJ
Jan. 18, 1786



John Barber and Henry Howe, Historical Collections of
the State of New Jersey, New York 1846

A 1745 census showed that 74% of the enslaved people in the colony of New Jersey -- of a total of about 4,000 -- lived in Bergen, Somerset, Middlesex and Essex counties. This trend continued throughout the first half of the 19th century (see 1834 map).



Manumission paper of Sarah Johnson
Archives Division of the Monmouth County Clerk

Manumission – The freeing of an enslaved person by his or her owner

The 1713-14 Slave Codes included a provision for manumission, but the owner had to pay £200 (\$56,000 today) to the government, and a £20 (\$5,600) annual payment to the freed person. Eventually pressure from Quakers and other abolitionists over the rest of the century resulted in the removal of the payment to the government for manumission in 1786.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND THE START OF THE NEW NATION



This 1837 “Moral Map of the U.S” shows New Jersey as outside of the slavery region, although at the time, more than 2,300 enslaved people were in bondage there.
By Julius Ruben Ames. Cornell University – P.J. Mode
Collection of Persuasive Cartography

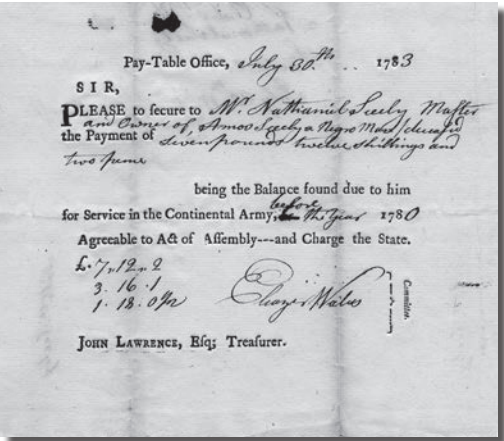
The Revolutionary War enabled the freedom of many enslaved people in New Jersey. In the upheaval of war some slaves escaped. Some enslaved men earned their freedom by fighting for the Continental Army or the NJ Militia. The British Army also promised freedom to any slave who fought for the British.

Many historians note the dissonant reasoning of the Founding Fathers in the wording of the Declaration of Independence. It states, “that all men are created equal”, but this pointedly excluded women and people of color.

New Jersey outlawed importation of slaves from Africa in 1786, but free Blacks were not allowed to move into the state. After the Revolution, the White population increased significantly, providing a pool of affordable laborers who did not have to be fed, housed and guarded in the same way as enslaved workers.

Nevertheless, slavery continued to exist in New Jersey, and slaveowners continued to be a vocal and powerful political force, resisting the efforts of abolitionists.

Request for compensation to be paid to Nathaniel Seely for his slave, Amos Seely, who was killed in the Revolutionary War, 1783.
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division. From the New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1783.



New Jersey (slowly) eliminates slavery

The new Northern states of the Union began to abolish slavery in the years following the Revolution, but New Jersey was the last. In 1804, the state passed the Gradual Abolition Law, which did not free any enslaved people immediately:

“Every child born of a slave...after the fourth of July [1804] ... shall be free, but shall remain the servant of the owner of his or her mother...” until age 21 (for females) or 25 (for males).

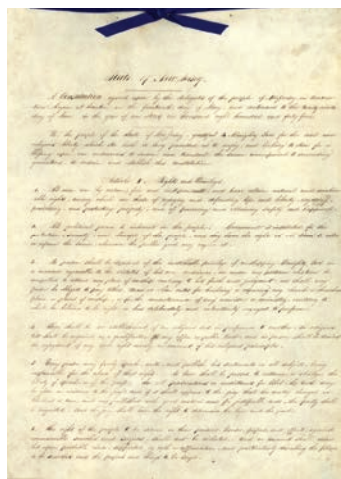
Thus was created the concept of “slaves for a term” – neither free nor technically enslaved. New Jersey laws in the 1790s and early 1800s showed an ambivalence toward slavery and enslaved people. Some statutes provided a degree of protection; other provisions restricted such things as slaves’ ability to gather in groups or be out after 10:00 pm.

SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY DECLINED OVER TIME BUT DID NOT END UNTIL AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

- In 1800, there were 12,422 enslaved people in New Jersey.
- In 1830, 90% of Black people in New Jersey were free.
- By 1840, there were about 3,500 enslaved people in all the Northern States. About 3,000 of them – enslaved or “slaves for a term” -- lived in New Jersey, along with almost 18,400 free Black people.



Charity Still, who twice escaped from slavery in the South to Lawnside, NJ Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division. From the New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1872.



The first page of the 1844 NJ Constitution
New Jersey State Archives,
New Jersey Department of State

Updating the State Constitution, but not freedom for Black people

The New Jersey legislature updated its State Constitution in 1844. Despite aggressive efforts by abolitionists, the new State Constitution made no mention of slavery and thus left in place the 1798 slave law.

- **In 1846, a New Jersey law claimed to “abolish” slavery. In reality, it merely reclassified enslaved people as “apprentices for life.” There was no way for “apprentices” to get out without buying their own freedom or hoping that the slaveholder would manumit them if they could be self-supporting.**
- **Children born to apprentices were officially free at birth, but from a practical standpoint, would likely stay with a parent until they were old enough to work.**

Over time, the number of enslaved and “slaves for a term” decreased, but also became harder to track because of the many terms that defined them. Despite the growing population of free Black people and the declining population of slaves, the laws in New Jersey carefully protected existing property owners’ rights – including ownership of people. No owner was forced to lose an enslaved or apprenticed worker. Sometimes owners would sell “slaves for a term” to buyers in the South – actions which enraged many abolitionists.

- **In 1849, the legislature passed a joint resolution stating – apparently with no irony -- that “the people of New Jersey, believing the institution of human slavery to be a great moral and political evil....” would resist its extension into new territories.**

THE CIVIL WAR – AND FINALLY, AN END TO SLAVERY



Arlington, Va. Band of 107th U.S. Colored Infantry at Fort Corcoran
Library of Congress

As slavery waned in New Jersey in the 1850s, tensions in the country increased, and the Civil War started in April 1861. More than 88,000 White soldiers from New Jersey fought in Union Army infantry and cavalry regiments.



Freedom for All: 6th Regiment United States Colored Troops
Library of Congress

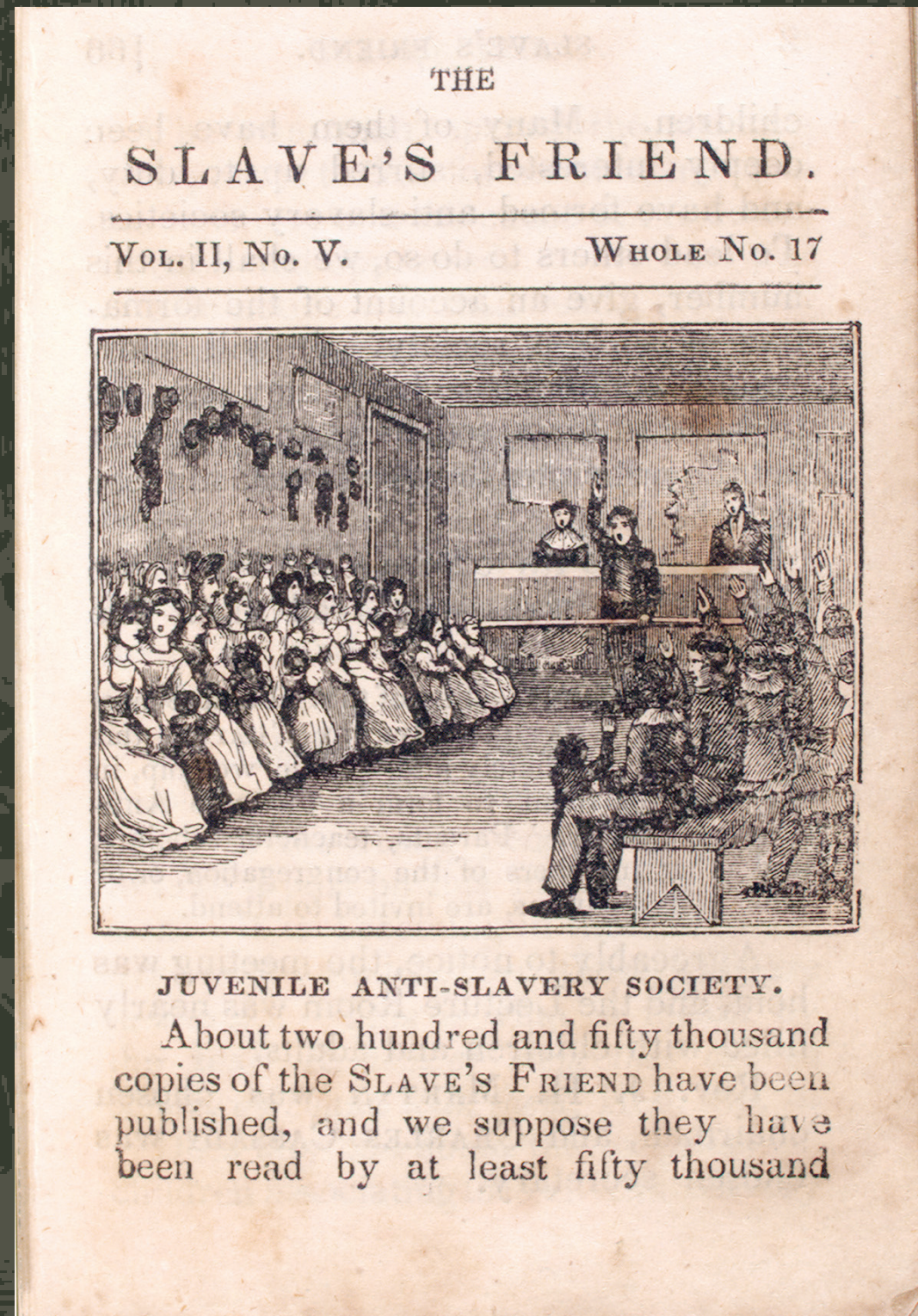
On Jan. 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. While it did not free any



Two brothers at arms, Union Army
Library of Congress

Blacks in New Jersey, the Proclamation provided for the establishment of Colored Troops, and many apprenticed men used the opportunity to join the fight for the Union. Despite heavy casualties, many fought with distinction, and 15 soldiers of the Colored Troops received the Medal of Honor and numerous other honors.

This was a turning point in the war, changing its focus from preventing secession to ending slavery throughout the nation. Although the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were still needed to make the rights of African Americans official in all states, the legal status of slavery was at an end in the rebel states.



The Slave's Friend, published by the American Anti-Slavery Society from 1836 to 1838, was the first abolitionist magazine for a young audience in the U.S.
From The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1837.

THE FORCES OF ABOLITION IN NEW JERSEY

The many Quakers living in the southern and western counties of New Jersey had a strong abolitionist philosophy. As a result, the number of enslaved people in most of those counties was low and declined throughout the 1700s and early 1800s.

Quaker arguments against slavery were often overshadowed as slaveholders in the northeastern counties continued to be a powerful and vocal group. After the Revolutionary War, slave ownership increased in those areas.

In 1786-88, Quaker pressure resulted in laws that helped their abolitionist cause, including:

- Banning the importation of enslaved people
- Fines against masters who abused their slaves
- Allowing owners to manumit (free) enslaved persons aged 21-35 without bond
- Requiring owners to support former slaves financially if they needed it.

In the early 1790s, Quakers formed the New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (SPAS), a chapter of the most prominent abolitionist group in the United States. The SPAS aggressively intervened in the courts to free Black people unlawfully held in bondage and charged the state with failing to uphold the principles of equality, justice, and liberty put forth in the Declaration of Independence.



From the New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1864.

Enslaved people motivated to take action

The growing efforts of abolitionists in the state inspired slaves and free Black people to take action themselves to press for freedom through the courts. Abolitionist lawyers also filed suit to protect free Blacks from being kidnapped and sold South – a growing problem in New Jersey.

New Jersey's enslaved people sometimes negotiated with owners for liberty – a situation made easier because slaveholders were worried about slaves revolting and burning down their property. African Americans published multiple petitions and wrote to Congressional leaders to plead their case. Many enslaved people took their lives into their own hands and ran away, helped by Black and White abolitionists. The first railroad trains in the US in 1829 made the concept of an Underground Railroad possible as a means to get Black people safely to New England and Canada.

The SPAS lobbied legislators and participated in abolitionist conventions designed to push for an end to slavery on a national scale. In the 1790s, they presented petitions to show that Whites wanted abolition as a realization of the ideals of the Revolutionary War. In the face of strong political opposition, SPAS advocated for gradual legal abolition.



Running Away
From the New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1864.

Gradual abolition

New Jersey was the last Northern state to begin the process of dismantling its slave system. The 1804 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery created a new category of “slaves for a term”:

“Every child born of a slave... after the fourth of July [1804]... shall be free; but shall remain the servant of the owner of his or her mother....” until age 21 (for females) or 25 (for males).

Some abolitionists viewed this law as a triumph, but although it attempted to appease them, in fact it was designed to reduce financial losses of slaveholders. Slaveholders soon realized that their “slaves for a term” were worth far more if they were sold to the South. New Jersey PAS members pushed for laws, enacted between 1818 and the 1830s, that limited slaveholders’ ability to transport or sell slaves out of state, and increased punishment for slave-catchers.

The Underground Railroad

Beginning in 1830, the Underground Railroad, a secret network of people and places – sometimes well organized and other times loosely structured – connected runaway slaves trying to escape from the Upper South and even New Jersey. The British Empire abolished slavery in 1833, making Canada a safe haven. People in New England and upper Midwestern states provided shelter and information and guidance on the trip north, even though it was illegal to help fugitive slaves.

Although the Underground Railroad stops such as Lawnside in Southern New Jersey and New Brunswick are most well-known, Perth Amboy is believed by some historians to have been an Underground Railroad stop as well.



Map by Michael Siegel, Department of Geography, Rutgers University. Courtesy of the New Jersey Historical Commission



Eagleswood House, in Perth Amboy, had a school led by Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, and may have served as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

New Jersey was a center of anti-slavery activity. Noted abolitionist Theodore Weld, his wife, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Angelina’s sister, Sarah Grimké, taught at a multiracial school at Eagleswood House, near the Raritan River in Perth Amboy, from 1854 to 1860. The compound may have served as a stop on the Underground Railroad as well.

Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the daughters of a South Carolina rice plantation owner, became outspoken abolitionists in the 1830s, at the same time that Weld joined the American Anti-Slavery Society and began an active speaking tour promoting the abolition of slavery. Many historians regard Weld as the most important figure in the abolitionist movement, although many of his writings were done anonymously.

Weld spoke several times at meetings of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society in 1841 and 1842. The minutes of July 5, 1841 note the presence of “Theodore D. Weld, than whom the cause has no more able advocate”.

One of the most notable anti-slavery activists in New Jersey and Delaware was Harriet Tubman, a fearless conductor of the



Theodore Weld was a prominent abolitionist who led a school at Eagleswood, Perth Amboy.

Angelina Emily Grimké and Sarah Moore Grimké were noted abolitionists who fought for the end of slavery. Angelina was married to Theodore D. Weld.

Underground Railroad.

Recent scholarship suggests that between 30,000 and 50,000 runaway slaves were involved in the Underground Railroad. Although running away was a very common form of protest, the majority of enslaved people in the South who absconded in the years before the Civil War remained in the South, many going to the region’s cities where they were sometimes able to pass as free Black people.

The advent of the Civil War marked the end of the Underground Railroad, as runaway slaves ran to the shelter of the invading Union forces.



Harriet Tubman, a leader of the anti-slavery movement, who operated in Delaware and New Jersey. Library of Congress

NOTICE—The Essex County Anti Slavery Society, will hold a meeting in the Free Church, Clinton street, next THURSDAY AFTERNOON and EVENING, at 3 and 7½ o'clock P. M. Mr. T. D. Weld will address the meeting in the evening. The public are affectionately invited to attend. au2-2t

Newark Daily Advertiser,
Wed. Aug 10, 1842 Page 3



Illustration by Hammatt Billings for the 1853 Edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature,
Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia

THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY

Was a new African colony of free Blacks the answer?

The more than 18,000 free Black people in 1820s New Jersey found themselves as essentially “slaves without masters” – legally free but without basic human and citizenship rights.

Presbyterian minister Robert Finley of Somerset County viewed free Black people as “ignorant Africans” incapable of improving their own lives. Finley’s 1816 essay “Thoughts on the Colonization of Free Blacks” led to the founding of The American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1817. ACS proposed that sending free African Americans to a new colony in Africa as an alternative to emancipation in the United States would essentially “end” slavery. In 1822, the society funded and established a colony on the west coast of Africa that in 1847 became the independent nation of Liberia.

In New Jersey, the state abolition society had lost momentum since the passage of the gradual abolition act of 1804, and some abolitionists viewed the ACS as a way of sustaining the movement, arguing that removal of freed slaves to Africa was the next step to full freedom. Many Whites agreed with the prevailing view of the time that free Blacks could not be integrated into White America.

Although membership in the ACS was almost completely White (including many slave owners), from 1821 to 1840, thousands of free Black individuals, whose lives were legally restricted in much of the U.S., moved to Liberia.

Some saw colonization as a humanitarian effort and a means of ending slavery, but many antislavery advocates opposed the society, believing that its true intent was to preserve the institution of slavery and “solve the problem” of free Blacks. Disparaged by people on both sides of the slavery debate and short on funding, the society declined after 1840.

Nevertheless, the idea persisted, and Harriet Beecher Stowe in her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853) sent most of the Black characters to Africa at the end. It was one of the most controversial aspects of the novel for abolitionist and African American readers.



American Colonization Society membership certificate
signed by James Madison, 1833.

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History



Juneteenth Celebration band, June 19, 1900
Photograph by Grace Murray Stephenson
Photo # PICA0548 Austin History Center
Austin Public Library

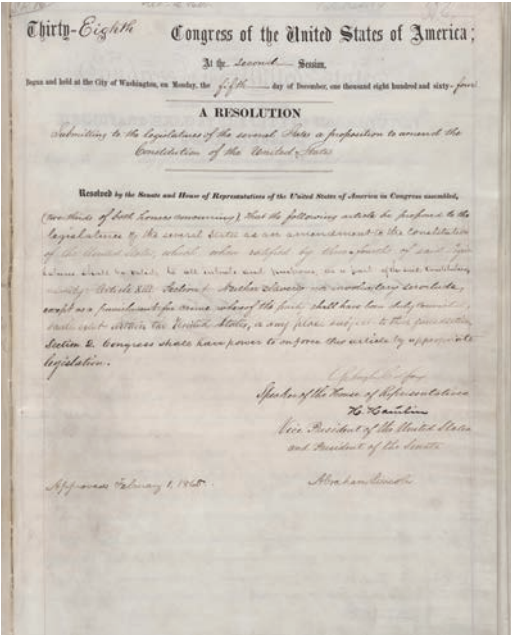
JUNETEENTH: A CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

Sometimes known as “Freedom Day” or “Emancipation Day,” Juneteenth is a contraction of the words “June Nineteenth.” Juneteenth commemorates the June 19, 1865, announcement of the abolition of slavery in the state of Texas, 18 months after the Emancipation Proclamation, and five months after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. The celebrations that followed the Union Army’s occupation of Texas began a tradition that has lasted for 154 years. Today, in cities and towns in 45 U.S. states, Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement.

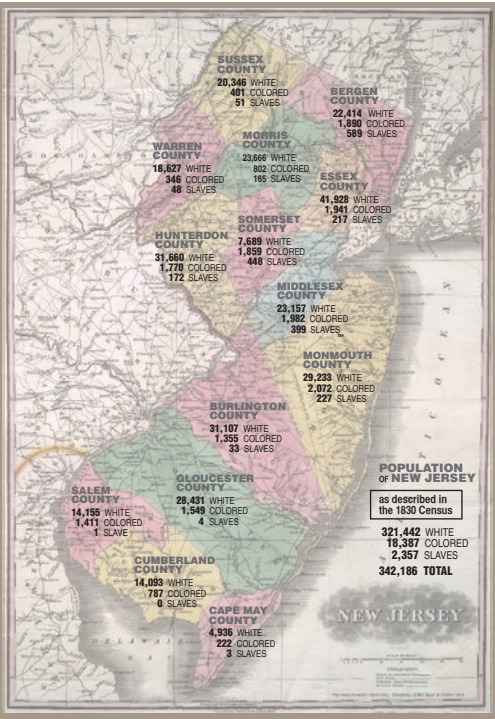
Why should this matter to me in New Jersey?

Although most people associate slavery in the United States with the South, slavery existed in the North. Enslaved people lived in New Jersey from the late 1600s through the Civil War. In 1830 there were about 2,300 enslaved people in New Jersey, more than 200 of them in Essex County.

In fact, some historians note that the last 16 enslaved people in New Jersey were not freed until the passage of the Thirteenth

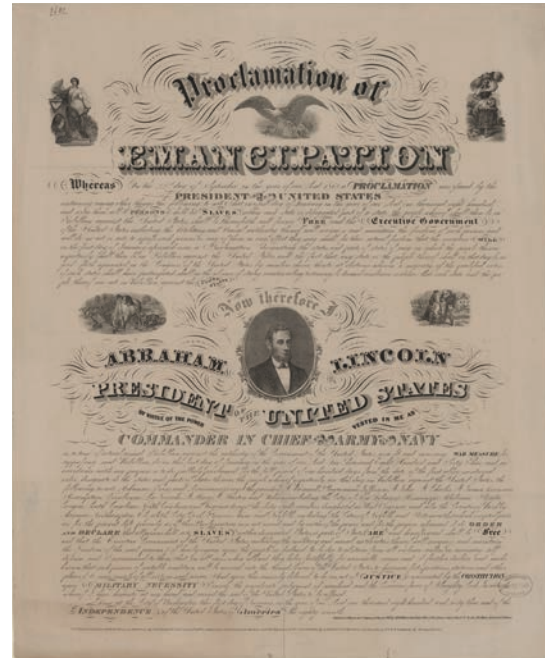


National Archives of the United States



Map of New Jersey, 1834. Rutgers University Special Collections and University Archives. Used by permission. Data from 1830 U.S. Census added.

Amendment on Jan. 31, 1865, truly ended slavery in America. New Jersey, in 1866, was the last northern state to ratify that amendment.



The Emancipation Proclamation. A. Kidder, Publisher, NY
Nov. 22, 1865

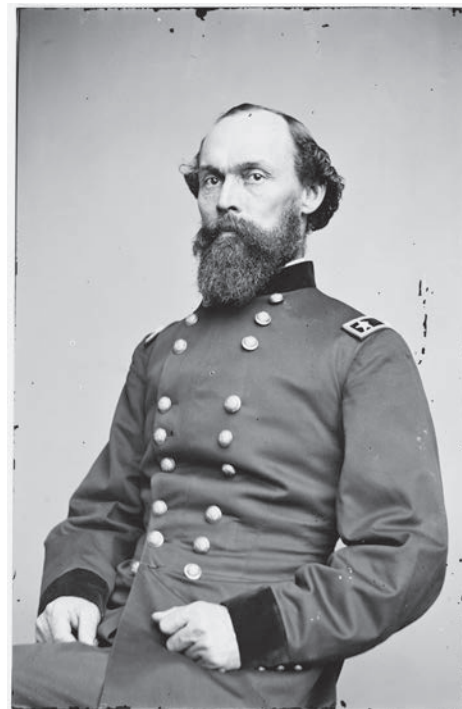
Why did Juneteenth happen in Texas?

Texas was isolated geographically from the Civil War battlegrounds. By 1865 there were an estimated 250,000 enslaved people there. People enslaved there did not know about the Emancipation Proclamation – and slave owners did not tell them.

Union Army General Gordon Granger arrived at Galveston Island, Texas with 2,000 federal troops to occupy the state on behalf of the federal government, and on June 19th, 1865, standing on the balcony of Galveston's Ashton Villa, Granger read aloud the contents of "General Order No. 3", announcing the total emancipation of those held as slaves:

What about the Emancipation Proclamation?

On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation, which declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebel states "are, and henceforward shall be free." The proclamation also allowed those formerly enslaved to join the armed forces of the United States. An estimated 180,000 African Americans went on to serve in the Army, while another 18,000 served in the Navy.



General Gordon Granger
Library of Congress

The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor.



Juneteenth Emancipation Day, June 19, 1900.
Photograph by Grace Murray Stephenson. Photo # PICA05476
Austin History Center Austin Public Library



Abraham Lincoln and his Emancipation Proclamation
The Strobbridge Lith. Co., Cincinnati, c. 1888. Library of Congress

WHY WERE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS NEEDED IN ADDITION TO THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION?

The **Emancipation Proclamation** was an executive order issued by United States President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. The Proclamation declared that all slaves residing in territories in rebellion against the federal government were free.

- However, the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to enslaved people living in border states fighting on the Union side, and it did not apply to enslaved people in the South in areas already under Union control.
- It also did not affect New Jersey, which had passed a gradual abolition law in 1804, but still had enslaved people, “slaves for a term,” and “apprentices for life”.
- The proclamation did show Americans—and the world—that the Civil War was now being fought to end slavery.

The push for an Amendment to end slavery in the United States

An amendment to the U.S. Constitution was necessary for abolition of slavery to have the force of law in all states after the Civil War.

The Thirteenth Amendment was approved in the Senate in April 1864 and in the House of Representatives on January 31, 1865. President Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865. His successor, President Andrew Johnson, had to manage putting the country back together while getting two-thirds of the states to ratify the Amendment.



Scene in the House of the Passage of the Proposition to Amend the Constitution, Jan. 31, 1865.
Harper's Weekly, Feb. 18, 1865

On December 6, 1865, **the Thirteenth Amendment** became law, stating:

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

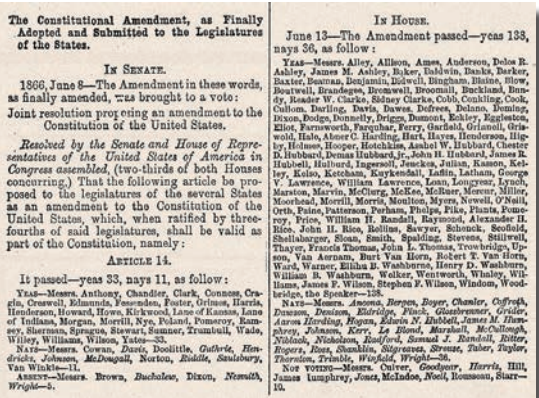
> New Jersey rejected ratification in 1865 but ratified it on January 23, 1866, the last northern state to do so.

Slavery was now outlawed all across the land, and the amendment freed nearly 4 million enslaved people.

But it was not enough.

Though the Thirteenth Amendment formally abolished slavery in the United States, “Black Codes” – restrictive laws enacted in the Southern states to limit the freedom of African Americans and ensure their availability as a cheap labor force -- as well as White supremacist violence, and selective enforcement of laws continued to subject some Black Americans to involuntary labor, particularly in the South.

It became clear that more legislation was needed to protect Black citizens.



A Handbook for Politics for 1868.
Washington City: Philp & Solomons, 1868, p. 102.

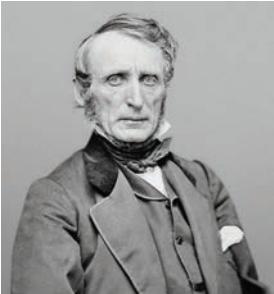
The “equal protection clause” was intended to stop State governments from discriminating against Black Americans. Over the years it would play a key role in many landmark civil rights cases.

> New Jersey ratified the amendment in 1866, rescinded ratification in 1868, and re-ratified in 2003.

The Fourteenth Amendment,

passed in 1868, established that:

- Anyone born or naturalized in the U.S. is a citizen of the U.S. and of the State in which they live.
- States could not deprive anyone of life, liberty or property, without due process of law.
- Every person in the U.S. had the equal protection of the laws.



Representative John Bingham of Ohio, principal author of the Equal Protection Clause
Photograph by Matthew Brady c. 1861-65

But it was still not enough.

Yet another amendment was needed to give Black men the right to vote.

The Fifteenth Amendment

prohibited the federal government and each state from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen’s “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

< 1870 print celebrating the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in February 1870, and the post-Civil War political empowerment of African Americans.

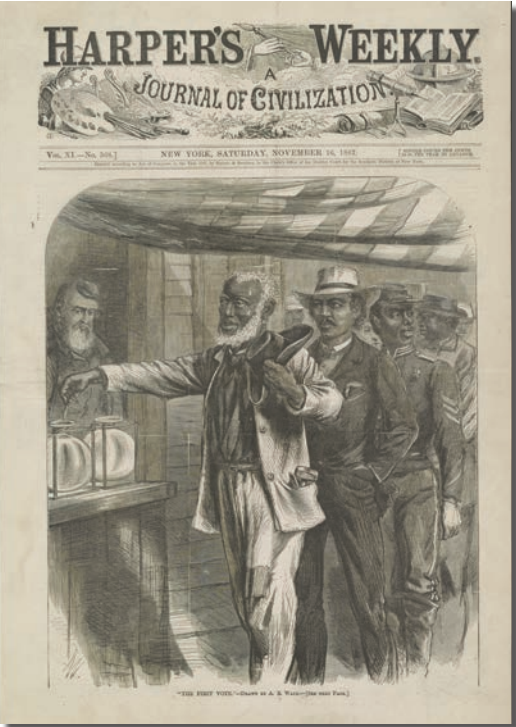
By Thomas Kelly, 1870. Library of Congress



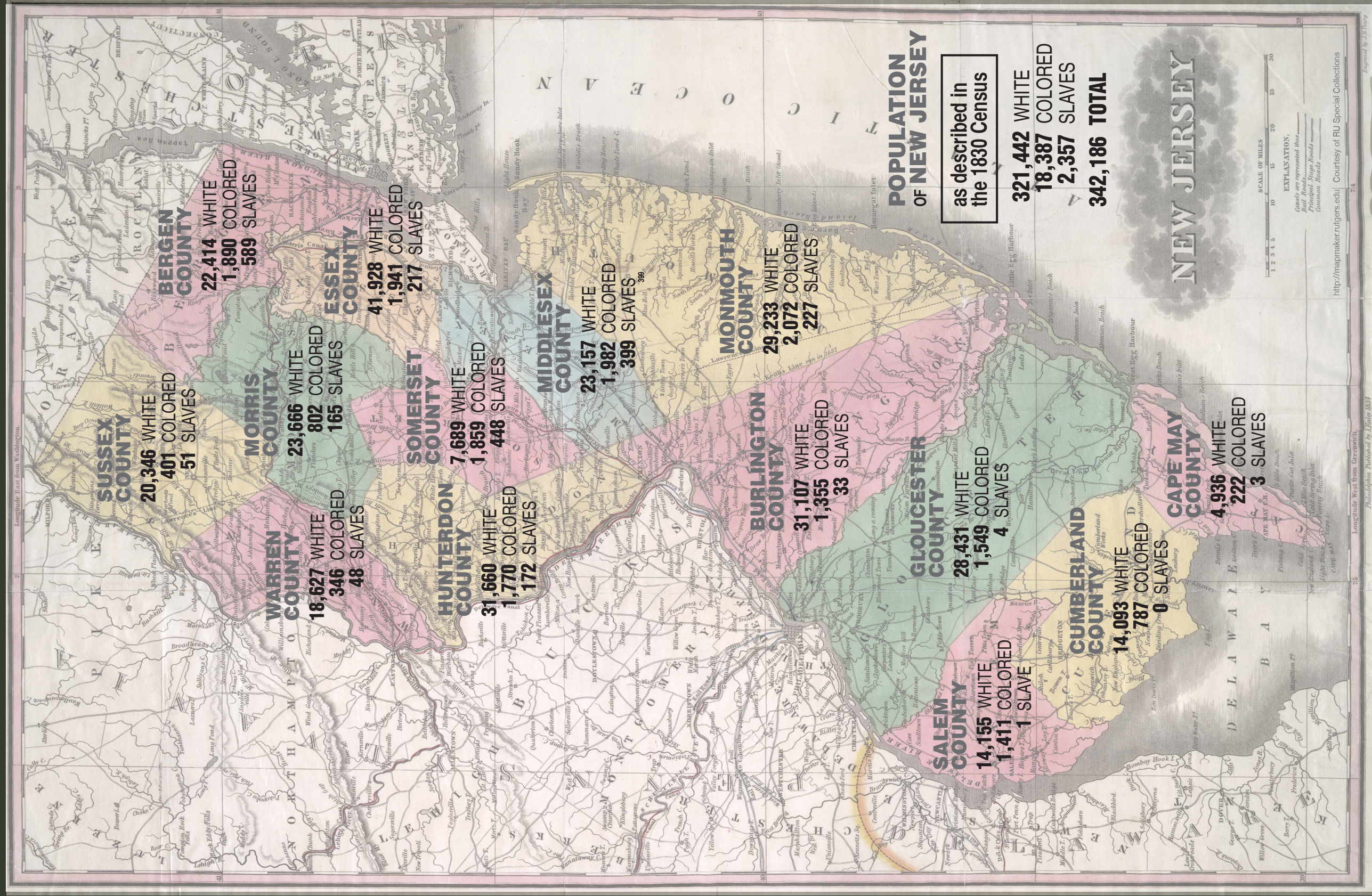
It was ratified on February 3, 1870. It did not provide the right to vote to any women. Passage of that amendment (the Nineteenth) would take another 50 years.



Thomas Mundy Peterson (October 6, 1824 – February 4, 1904) of Perth Amboy, New Jersey was the first African American to vote in an election under the just-enacted provisions of the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution. His vote was cast on March 31, 1870
Collection of the Perth Amboy Public Library.



The First Vote.
Harper's Weekly, Nov. 1867



Map of New Jersey, 1834. Rutgers University Special Collections and University Archives. Used by permission. Data from 1830 U.S. Census added.



The State Capitol of New Jersey -- original 1794 building with 1845-46 additions. T. Sinclair Lithograph, Philadelphia. Library of Congress

NEW JERSEY LAWS REGULATING SLAVERY 1674-1870

Year	Name of Law	Provisions
1674		Colony of New Jersey split into East Jersey and West Jersey; West Jersey owned by Quakers
1675	Capital Laws of East Jersey	Penalizes transportation of fugitive enslaved persons
1676	Charter or Fundamental Laws of West Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Includes general provision against enslaved persons<i>“All and every person ... inhabiting the said Province, shall, as far as in us lies, be free from oppression and slavery.”</i>
1682	A Bill against Fugitive Servants and entertainers of them - East Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Penalizes transport of enslaved persons and harboring or helping runaway enslaved persons.
1682	An Act against Trading with Negro Slaves -- East Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Penalizes buying from, selling to, bartering or trading with “any Negro slave, or Indian slave, or servant”Forbids “Negro or Indian slaves or servants” from selling, bartering, or trading without permission or licence of his master or mistress.“All Masters and Mistresses having Negro Slaves, or others, shall allow them sufficient Accommodation of Victuals and Cloathing.”
1693	Quaker protest against slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Philadelphia Quakers offered the first anti-slavery protest in America
1694	Act Concerning Slaves – East Jersey	<p>Passed by East Jersey legislature in response to “growing problem of theft by slaves”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Enslaved persons forbidden to carry guns except when accompanied by masters or other White menEnslaved persons forbidden to keep their own swineMade it legal for anyone to apprehend and punish an enslaved person who was 5 miles from his master’s domicile
1695	Slave Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Established special courts where “Negroes or other Slaves” accused of felony or murder were tried<i>Abolished by NJ legislature in 1768</i>
1702		East and West Jersey reunited as a single Royal Colony
1704	Slave Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Restricted the harboring of fugitivesProhibited enslaved persons and free Blacks from owning propertyInstituted harsher punishments for enslaved persons convicted of theft.
1712		Enslaved persons revolt in New York City

NEW JERSEY LAWS REGULATING SLAVERY 1674-1870

Year	Name of Law	Provisions
1713-1714	Slave Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Harsh penalties for crimes and misdemeanors committed by enslaved people due to 1712 revoltPunishment of enslaved people escaping from other colonies and payment to anyone capturing themProhibited enslaved persons from owning propertyManumission fee: Established a fee of £200 bond (equivalent of \$56,000 today) to the government from any owner wanting to free a enslaved person and £20 payment per annum to the former enslaved person
1776	First constitution of the State of New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Granted voting rights to "all inhabitants of this Colony, of full age, who are worth fifty pounds proclamation money", including non-Whites, unmarried women and widows; married women could not own property under the common law.
1786-88	Law banning slave importation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Importation of enslaved persons banned in New Jersey, although few enslaved persons had been imported since the 1760sQuaker pressure resulted in the law allowing owners to manumit (free) enslaved persons aged 21-35 without bond, and to require owners to support former enslaved persons financially if they needed itProvided for fines against masters who abused enslaved persons.
1793	Federal Fugitive Slave Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enslaved person owners could bring fugitive enslaved persons before a local judge to gain permission to extradite them to another state
1798	Slave Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enslaved persons to continue as such unless manumittedBringing enslaved person into state for sale prohibited; N.J. citizens may bring in their own enslaved persons, if certified as being their property before passage of this actAbuse of enslaved persons indictable.Enslaved persons born since Nov.26,1788 to be taught to readProvisions against use of ships for enslaved person trade.Regulated enslaved persons' behavior, banned them from assembling in "a disorderly or tumultuous manner", established a 10 pm curfew; and prohibited them from testifying against free persons

NEW JERSEY LAWS REGULATING SLAVERY 1674-1870

Year	Name of Law	Provisions
1801	Revised law of Slave Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allowed enslaved persons convicted of felonies to be sold outside of NJ (usually to the Deep South)
1804	Gradual abolition law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Did not</i> free any enslaved people immediately.Created a new category of bound laborer or "slave for a term": <i>"Every child born of a slave...after the fourth of July [1804] ... shall be free; but shall remain the servant of the owner of his or her mother...." until age 21 (for females) or 25 (for males).</i>
1807	An act to regulate the election of members of the legislative council and general assembly, sheriffs and coroners in this state	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Restricted the right to vote to free, White males
1812	Consent law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reiterated 1788 law that an enslaved person had to consent to be sold or transported to another state. Minors had to have the consent of a parent for transfer
1818	Revision of 1812 law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Limited who could sell an enslaved person out of state,Prohibited the sale of enslaved persons to nonresident masters
1820	Act affirming gradual abolition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reaffirmed gradual abolition law of 1804
1821	Prima facie slave ruling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">"All Black men were <i>prima facie</i> slaves" unless they could prove that they were free
1826	Personal liberty law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased oversight of slave-catchersAllowed suspected fugitive slaves to defend themselves in court
1836	Landmark NJ Supreme Court case	<ul style="list-style-type: none">NJ Supreme Court mandated jury trials for suspected fugitive enslaved persons
1836	Ruling ending prima facie slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overturned the requirement of 1821 that Blacks were presumed to be enslaved unless they could prove their free statusAllowed certain due process rights
1837	Personal liberty law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allowed a 3-judge panel to determine an alleged fugitive enslaved person's status with provisions for either side to request a jury trial
1840		<p><i>There were about 3,500 enslaved people in all the Northern States. About 3,000 of them -- enslaved and "slaves for a term" -- lived in New Jersey, primarily in Bergen, Passaic and Hudson Counties.</i></p> <p><i>(Passaic County was created in 1837 from portions of Bergen and Essex Counties)</i></p>

NEW JERSEY LAWS REGULATING SLAVERY 1674-1870

Year	Name of Law	Provisions
1844	NJ Constitution <i>State v Post</i> , legal challenge to slavery's constitutionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Despite aggressive efforts by abolitionists, the new State Constitution made no mention of slavery and thus left in place the 1798 slave law.Article I of the Constitution provided that “<i>all men are free and possess certain unalienable rights, including the right to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness</i>”.Abolitionists filed a legal case, <i>State v Post</i>, claiming that this phrase abolished slavery, but the Justices ruled that since the Constitution did not specifically abolish slavery, the language provided “<i>general phrases of abstract natural right, no stronger than those in the declaration of independence</i>”.
1846	An Act to abolish slavery	<p>Law abolishes slavery but reclassified enslaved persons as “apprentices for life”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Apprentices could not be sold out of stateApprentices could file complaints for injurious service or working conditionsApprentices could be manumitted (released from service) if they could support themselvesChildren born to apprentices were free at birth
1849	Joint resolution "Against the extension of slavery into free territory and the traffic in enslaved persons in the District of Columbia"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">“The legislature, representing the views and opinions of the people of New Jersey, <i>believing the institution of human slavery to be a great moral and political evil....</i>”“Therefore, ...while we would <i>refrain from ...interference with the institution of slavery, in the states where it constitutionally exists</i>, yet we would peaceably, but firmly resist, by all constitutional means, its further extension [into new territories [in this case, New Mexico and California]“The existence of the traffic in slaves in the District of Columbia is inconsistent with the theory of our national institutions, and <i>a reproach to us as a people</i>, and ought, in the opinion of this legislature, to be speedily abolished.”
1852	An Act making appropriations to the New Jersey Colonization Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Appropriations for transport and subsistence of free persons of color to western Africa. Supported the idea – taken up by some free Blacks – to create the country of Liberia in Africa and encourage Blacks to move there
1865	Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Abolished slavery.New Jersey did not ratify this amendment until 186616 enslaved persons remained in the stateApprentices for life – probably fewer than 100 -- were freed at this time“Slaves for a term” were freed

NEW JERSEY LAWS REGULATING SLAVERY 1674-1870

Year	Name of Law	Provisions
1870	Fifteenth Amendment to US Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Right to vote cannot be denied based on that citizen's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude". <i>This right did not extend to women of any color.</i>Thomas Mundy Paterson (1824-1904) of Perth Amboy became the first African American to vote in an election
1920	Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>All women win the right to vote for the first time in the US, and in New Jersey since 1807</i>

Sources:

New Jersey Digital Legal Library, Rutgers University. *The Law of Slavery in New Jersey: An Annotated Bibliography* compiled by Paul Axel-Lute, 2013

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Newspaper advertisements for runaway slaves and sales of enslaved people

New-Jersey
Gazette,
Trenton, NJ
Sept. 30, 1778


New-Jersey
Gazette,
Trenton, NJ
May 2, 1781

New-Jersey
Gazette,
Trenton, NJ
Nov. 20, 1786

Thirty Dollars Reward.
Salem, New-Jersey, September 12, 1778.
RAN-AWAY on the 26th of February last, with the British light infantry, a **NEGRO MAN** named Harry, but it is probable he may change his name; he is about 28 years of age, five feet 8 or 9 inches high, a stout well made fellow, born at Salem, at one Jost Miller's; has a large nose. He went as waiting-man to Capt. Hambleton, of the 54d light-infantry. It is thought he will leave the soldiers and go into the country, and may perhaps endeavour to pass for a free man: Had on when he went away, a fustian coat with a red collar, light broadcloth breeches, two coarse shirts; one fine ditto, a good hat cut maccaroni fashion, good stockings and shoes. Whoever takes up the said Negro, and secures him in any gaol, so that his master may have him again, shall have the above reward, and reasonable charges, paid by **ROBERT JOHNSON.**
N. B. All persons are forbid to harbour said Negro at their peril.

Two Thousand Dollars Reward.
RAN-AWAY from Hackett's Town, Sussex County, on Saturday evening the 21st of April, two negro men and one woman, the wife of the eldest. One of the men named Frank, is about forty years old, the other about 25. The woman named Phoebe, is near forty, and has a child with her. They stole two horses, one a very large sorrel horse, eight or nine years old; the other a dark bay, four years old, and fifteen hands high. It is supposed they are gone towards New-York. The above reward will be paid to have them apprehended and secured, by the owner, Mrs. Wilton, at Hackett's Town, Col. Thompson, at Trenton, Mr. Bray, at Raritan Landing, or Colonel Stewart, at Head-Quarters, New-Windfor.

Forty Shillings Reward.
RAN away on the 2d inst. from the subscriber, a negro man named **SAM**, aged 25 years; he is about 5 feet 6 inches high, square shouldered and well made, steps quick, and is an active fellow—over his right eye is a fresh scar from a cut he lately received. He plays on the fiddle, is talkative and fond of strong liquor: he had off when he went away a short blue livery coat, cuffs and collar white, much worn and dirty, an olive coloured jacket, homespun trowsers, good shoes, flowered copper buckles, and an old round hat bound with black ferret. He was late the property of John Lawrence, Esq. in Burlington, where he is well known. Whoever secures the said negro in any gaol, shall have the above reward and reasonable expenses.
ROBERT L. HOOPER.
N. B. His wife is a free black woman, and used to live near Mount-Holly, but has removed to Philadel. Trenton, Nov. 4, 1786.

One Guinea Reward.

RAN-away from the subscriber, living in Essex county, near Lyons Farms, between Elizabeth Town and Newark, the 29th of December, a negre boy, named **OREB**, he formerly was the property of Thomas Baldwin, he is a likely fellow, about 18 years old, of a middle stature, and pretty slim; had on when he went away, a blue sailor jacket, and old dun great coat, and London brown trowsers; he is supposed to be lurking about Newark or Elizabeth Town, or may have gone to Morris Town or New-York. — Whoever takes up said fellow, and secures him, or fetches him home, so that his master shall have him again, shall have the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid, by **BENJAMIN LYON.**
January 3, 1786.

FOR SALE,
A **NEGRO MAN**, about thirty years of age, acquainted with all kinds of service, and suitable for a gentleman or farmer.—**ALSO**, a girl 15 years old, who can knit, spin, sew, &c. The terms of payment will suit any purchaser. The above servants can be well recommended, enquire at this Office.

25 Dollars Reward.
RAN-AWAY from the subscriber, on Wednesday, the 20th November last, a **NEGRO MAN**, named **HARRY**, 22 years of age, about 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high, not very black, is rather slim; when spoken to has a down look, and a remarkable scar on his nose, between his eyes, the grissal has been broke by a stroke of a former master; had on when he went away a dark drab coatree, brown homespun jacket and trowsers, and an old roram hat. Whoever takes up said negro man, or secures him in any gaol, so that his master may get him again, shall have the above reward, and reasonable charges.
CORNELIUS VERMEULE.
Barnerdstown, Somerset County, }
Dec. 9, 1805. } 80-3w*

Political
Intelligencer,
Elizabethtown,
Jan. 18, 1786

Centinel of
Freedom,
Newark, NJ
March 17, 1801

Centinel of
Freedom,
Newark, NJ
Dec. 10, 1805

New-Jersey
Telescope,
Newark, NJ
Jan. 31, 1809

Centinel of
Freedom,
Newark, NJ
Oct. 23, 1810

Trenton
Federalist,
Trenton, NJ
March 18, 1811

Centinel of
Freedom,
Newark, NJ
Nov. 19, 1811

FOR SALE,
A **NEGRO WOMAN**, twenty six years old, with a male child eight months old. She is used to all kinds of work, except cooking; and is very healthy. Also, for Hire during the Winter, A **NEGRO MAN**, well acquainted with Horses, and a good driver either of two or four horses. Enquire at this Office.
Newark, Nov. 22, 1808. 6lf

TEN DOLLARS REWARD.
RANAWAY from the subscriber a negro girl, named **MARY**, about 18 years old, tall and well made, rather on the yellow; she took with her a bundle of clothes, containing a plad purple gingham gown, a plad short gown, one white muslin, one black bumbazett petticoat, and sundry other clothes; she wore a bonet made of plad gingham. Whoever will secure the said servant and deliver her to the subscriber at Mount-Hope, in the county of Morris, near Rockaway, shall receive the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid, by **HENRY W. PHILLIPS.**
Mount-Hope, Oct. 8, 1810. 32-3wp

TEN DOLLARS REWARD.
RANAWAY from the subscriber some time in January last, a black Girl, about 23 years of age, named **RACHAEL**; it is thought she went into Amwell or Sussex, as she has connections in those places. She had on when she went away a light coloured coating cloak and black bonnet. She has a large scar on her left hand between the wrist and last joint of her thumb, occasioned by a cut. She is not tall but of a thick and clumsy make. Any person taking up said Girl and lodging her in any jail, or bringing her to the subscriber in Trenton, shall have the above reward and all reasonable charges paid by **Jane Craft.**
March 4, 1811.
N. B. If said Girl will procure for herself a master, and voluntarily give herself up to be sold for a term of years, she shall be manumitted according to law, and a reasonable price taken for her.
J. C.
27—3w.

15 Dollars Reward.
RAN-AWAY from Mount Pleasant, on Sunday Morning, the 29th Oct. 1811, a female slave, named **DINAH**, leaving behind her two infants. She is about 27 years old, very tall, and not dark; had on a blue silk bonnet, edged with straw trimmings; a long yellow or brown gown; has also taken a large bundle of clothes with her. It is supposed she may have gone towards Philadelphia. Any Constable or other person taking her up, or lodging her in jail, shall receive **15 DOLLARS REWARD.**
Charles H. Stone.
Newark, Oct. 21, 1811. 85-1f.

10 Dollars Reward.
RAN-AWAY from the subscriber, on Wednesday evening the 27th of February a negro man named **MINK** about thirty six years old, five feet six inches high he is tung tied, speaks dutch and engilah but crooked, has a scar and lump on the upper knuckle of the four finger on the right hand; it come by a cut of a scythe; when he left home could not count five; had on when he went away a gray sailor jacket of homespun fulled cloth, no buttons on, black homespun pantaloons, good boots near to his knees, a double breasted jacket of a brown colour, a black wool hat about half worn; he is of a black complexion. Any person that will apprehend the said negro, and deliver him to me, or secure him in any gaol so that I get him, shall be entitled to the above reward and all reasonable charges.
Charles Beach.
Ringwood, March 19, 1811. 45-4w.

FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.
Ranaway from the subscriber, the 21st inst. a **NEGRO BOY** named **BOB**, aged 13 years, very black, had some dim letters printed on his arm, a little above the wrist, and had an iron strap round his neck;—he also had on when he went away, an old hat, tow trowsers, and a man's round jacket made of linen woolsey. Whoever takes up said Negro boy, and secures him in any gaol, or returns him to the subscriber, shall have the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid. All persons are forewarned harboring him at their peril.
JOHN WOOD, JUN.
Elizabeth Town, Sept. 28, 1812.

FOR SALE,
A **BLACK WOMAN**, about 27 years of age, a slave for life. Also, a female **CHILD**, aged 2 years. The woman is a healthy, good natured, a good cook or would suit a farmer, being more or less accustomed to that work. The owner is going out of the state—and the woman ranaway, but is now confined in Newark Jail. Under these circumstances the Woman and her Child will be sold at 100 dollars. Apply to **JAPHIAH HARRISON.**
Newark, March 26, 1816. 16-3wp.

Centinel of
Freedom,
Newark, NJ
March 26, 1811

New-Jersey
Journal,
Elizabethtown, NJ
Oct. 20, 1812

Centinel of
Freedom,
Newark, NJ
April 9, 1816

Centinel of Freedom, Newark, NJ
June 7, 1814

Centinel of Freedom, Newark, NJ
June 1, 1813

Centinel of Freedom, Newark, NJ
Oct. 1, 1816

25 DOLLARS REWARD.

RAN-AWAY from the subscriber living in Woodbridge N. J. on Sunday the 29th May, a negro man named JACK, about 20 years old—about 5 feet 6 inches high, light made, has a racking stiff walk, coarse voice, a small lump on one of his hips—by trade a blacksmith and farmer, large feet and thick lips for his size—has no beard, and downy about the chin. Had on and took with him a dark coloured cloth coatee, the lappels were sewed on, red and white cotton vest, striped linen trowsers, two pairs of shoes, one new, and a pretty much worn fur hat, a round about striped coat and vest, and a pair of plain tow trowsers. It is suspected he has gone towards New York. Whoever will apprehend said Negro, and lodge him in any gaol, or return him to me, shall have the above reward and reasonable charges.

EDWARD MUNDY.

June 1, 1814.22-4w

50 Dollars Reward.

RAN-AWAY from the subscribers, on the night of the 16th inst. two NEGRO MEN, one named FRANK, about 5 feet 5 inches high, about 34 years of age, his fingers are considerably crooked, he walks tubbardly, has naturally a down look ; had on and took with him a coat and pantaloons. (London smoke colour) three striped waist-coats, one rorum hat, several pair of stockings, and 2 or 3 handkerchiefs—and some other articles not recollected—The other named HARRY about 5 feet 10 inches high, 21 years of age, stout made, has a long swinging walk, a scar above one of his eyes, another on one of his legs—can read and spell, of which he is fond of—when challenged by any person, has a cast down look, somewhat forward and saucy to white people, had on and took with him a bear skin coat, red striped pair of trowsers, one rorum hat, well worn, and sundry other clothes not recollected —Any person who will take up said RUNAWAYS, and bring them to the subscribers, or secure them in any jail, and give them information, shall receive the above REWARD, and all reasonable charges.

DAVID LERCH,
ISAAC HUGHES.

Greenwich, Sussex county, New-Jersey.
May 18, 1813.68—3wp

Ten Dollars Reward.

RAN-AWAY from the subscriber on Tuesday the 17th inst. a black woman named SOOK, aged 24 years, has a very heavy walk. looks grum—had on a green frock, yellow over shawl, with a red border, a straw hat, with a red ribbon ; she took a bundle of clothes with her and is likely to have changed her dress. The above reward and all reasonable charges will be paid to any person that will take up said black woman and deliver her to the subscriber in Pompton Plains, or confine her in any jail in the State and give notice to the subscriber.

HENRY M. DEMOTT.

September 18, 1816.42 3wp

15 Dollars Reward.

RAN-AWAY from the subscriber on the 4th inst. a negro Man, (a slave) named NED, about 20 years old—had on when he went away, a black coat and pantaloons, blue cassimere vest—a fur hat nearly new—is a active fellow, and fond of reading. Any person who will apprehend said runaway and return him to the owner, or secure him in any jail in this State so that he may be had again, shall be entitled to the above reward and reasonable charges.

SARAH VAN DUYN, Adm^r.

Pine Brook, Morris Co. } of Jas. I. V. Duyn
July 13, 1818. } 36-3wp.

Centinel of Freedom, Newark, NJ
Aug. 4, 1818

Twenty Dollars Reward.

RAN-AWAY from the subscriber in July last, a black man, named JOE, about 32 years—about 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high—thick set, stout built, full face, flat nose, thick lips, not very black—has a down lock, and likes a glass of spirits. He may be identified by a scar on one of his feet near the great toe —and formerly lived with William Halsey, Esq. in Newark. There is no doubt but he has changed his name. Whoever will return said Slave to his Master, shall be entitled to the above reward and reasonable charges—or 20 dollars by confining him in any Jail so that he may be had.

MATTHEW WOODWARD.

Baskinridge, Somerset Co. } 23-4f.
April 3, 1818. }

Centinel of Freedom, Newark, NJ
Jan. 26, 1819

Five Dollars Reward.

RANAWAY on Tuesday morning the 15th instant, a black Boy named TILMAN, about 14 years old, five feet four inches high, and not a jet black, a large full eye, white teeth, and talks Yankeeified ; had on when he went away a light coloured thick round about jacket, a pair of bottle green pantaloons, his clothes almost new, a red Bandana handkerchief about his neck. The above reward and all reasonable charges paid for the return of said boy by

JAMES VAN DYK.

For sale a BOG PLOUGH, enquire as above.
Newark, April 26, 1819.77-3to.

Centinel of Freedom, Newark, NJ
April 27, 1819

Notice.

WHEREAS a coloured Woman named BETTY, a slave owned by the subscriber, is absent without my consent; notice is therefore given forewarning all persons from harbouring said slave or employing her without my vermission as they will be prosecuted to the rigour of the law.—Any person wishing to purchase said slave can have a bill of sale for ten dollars.

AMOS DAY.

Connecticut Farms, June 14, 1824.5-3w

Centinel of Freedom, Newark, NJ
June 22, 1824

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