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## Abolition of transatlantic slave trade pdf free online free

This new enslaving boom greatly alarmed abolitionists, turned (them) into sugar islands, places of the lash, where fortunes could be made, sugar the new gold." Still, sugar was just the first in a series of lucrative slave-produced stimulants grown in the tropics and initially produced for luxury markets, stimulants that eventually became popular consumer goods for ordinary workers as well. In 1791, slaves revolted against their owners on the French section of the island of St. Domingue. Still, sugar was king during the era of British slavery. Community and conservation organizations, meanwhile, advocated for protection of local African-American culture. In 1860, one district of Charleston—now called the French Quarter—had 40 separate businesses where slaves were sold, though the most notorious of all was Ryan’s Mart, says Nichole Green, director/curator of the Old Slave Mart Museum, which opened in October 2007. Many U.S. slaveholders in the years following the War of Independence didn’t need influxes of kidnapped Africans. The formerly slave-based American South was in ruins after the Civil War. The museum is located in the one remaining building of what was once Ryan’s Mart, a black-long slave-auction complex. Portugal began importing slaves from sub-Saharan Africa in the 1440s to work on sugar plantations on islands off West Africa. A woodcut of a male slave in chains appeared in the 1837 publication of John Greenleaf Whittier’s anti-slavery poem, “Our Countrymen in Chains.” Graphic: Library of Congress. Capitalism and Anti-slavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective. Britain had recently poured great sums into improvements of toll roads—called turnpikes—and this investment transformed the speed of stagecoach travel. Slave women along the Atlantic seaboard bore far more surviving children on average than did enslaved Africans anywhere else in the New World. The College of Charleston’s Lowcountry and the Atlantic World Program, under direction of Simon Lewis, is sponsoring a March 2008 conference, “Ending the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Bicentenary Inquiry,” in collaboration with community organizations, historic sites, and museums. This year’s commemoration acknowledges not only the struggle to abolish the British and American transatlantic slave trades but also the long, bloody fight against the “peculiar institution” itself. Planters now needed influxes of new slaves. Edgar, Walter. This was the century when transatlantic slaving reached its grisly heights. That argument seems unconvincing today. Other lowcountry historic sites have followed suit. Deportation Flows, 17th Century. The descendants of Africans in the New World, historians also learned, managed to hold on to many aspects of their culture over centuries. As the Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul, born and raised in Trinidad, observes: “The competing empires of Europe had beaten fierce on the islands . . . In 1944, historian Eric Williams, a black Trinidadian, argued that the British slave trade was already dying economically when it was outlawed and that the empire had actually given up little of value. So influential southerners sought a grace period before a new national government could act against the foreign slave trade. Southern planters were increasingly leaving exhausted agricultural lands on the eastern seaboard and looking to the west for opportunities. Britain was the leading slaving nation when it outlawed the Atlantic trade. The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870. Quakers embraced the principle that the “Inner Light” of God’s revelation shone on everyone, European and African, free and enslaved. “Drayton Hall and Middleton Place have done fantastic jobs of changing their approach to interpretation,” says Dulaney. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Several states in the North, moreover, abolished slavery or passed gradual emancipation laws by that time. Deportation Flows, 15th - 16th Century. In 1763, Adam Smith, author of the classic  *Wealth of Nations*, observed, “Slavery . . . For an ambitious Englishman with the right connections and considerable financial backing, the Caribbean was a place to get even richer. The Old Slave Mart Museum opened in downtown Charleston in October 2007. Middleton Place Morgan, Phillip D. National Park Service’s Low Country Gullah Geechee Special Resource Study Penn Center Thomas, Hugh. A wood engraving (bottom) shows slaves on a captured bark “Wildfire,” brought by officials into Key West on April 30, 1860. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. A generation passed before the British, in the 1830s, freed all slaves in their colonies and compensated slaveholders. Then the Dutch, English, and French followed their example in the Caribbean, where sugar islands became immensely important colonial assets. By diplomatic and military means, Britain sought to put an end to slaving by other European powers. In the United States, President Jefferson’s measure to end this country’s transatlantic slave trade was accepted with scant protest, given its foundation in a provision of the U.S. Constitution. Africans, in leg irons, suffocated below deck in rancid conditions. Abolitionists published a torrent of books, sermons, pamphlets, tracts, newspaper editorials, and journal articles against slavery and the slave trade. Slavery had become unpopular during the Revolutionary War period partly because it was seen as an institution inherited from Britain. Therefore slavery was fundamentally incompatible with the ideals of the American rebellion. By the 1640s, Britain dominated transatlantic slavery, carrying Africans to Caribbean sugar plantations. The same is true of the South Carolina lowcountry after emancipation. “Slaves were shipped by the thousands to North America but by the millions to the Caribbean,” says Joseph Opala, a historian at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. In 1807, British slavers were still taking profits, and slaveholders in the Caribbean were still buying captives for the charnel houses of sugar plantations. Perhaps most important, American slaveholders already had enough African labor. In 2008, the commemoration is coming to South Carolina. Photo by Wade Spees, the Post and Courier. Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World. Moreover, blacks in certain regions of the Americas—including the South Carolina lowcountry—created creole societies, forged in the furnace of slavery, from African and European traditions and practices. Barbados, moreover, set the mold for English slave-based plantation agriculture throughout the Caribbean. In a Charleston Museum display, slave badges, used to identify names and jobs, evoke slavery’s dehumanization. They wanted more slave labor, but President Thomas Jefferson’s measure in 1807 outlawed transatlantic trafficking in Africans. Two more were non-Anglican religious dissenters who continued to work against slavery for the next 20 years. Granville Sharp, who helped Africans fight the legal basis of slavery, and Thomas Clarkson, who collected evidence about the brutality of the slaves trade. “The president of Sierra Leone came here, and people said, ‘He speaks like us, he eats the same food we do.’ People who had denied they were of African descent saw their own reflection.” Of Gullah descent, Michael Allen, an education specialist with the National Park Service’s Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, recalls several later projects that further lay the groundwork for greater public understanding of Gullah history. The Quakers, somber and severe in their wide-brimmed, high-crowned black hats, couldn’t have been more direct in appearance and conduct from the gaudily dressed, pleasure-loving sugar planters. But, until the 1790s, when Haitian slaves beat back invading European armies, these rebellions were always suppressed. Americans tend to think of slavery only in terms of our own national history, particularly the conflict between North and South in the Civil War. These groups multiplied into thousands of abolitionist societies in Britain and later in America. Trade Route. In 1869, a British historian described the national crusade against slavery as “among the three or four perfectly virtuous acts recorded in the history of nations.” Other historians, though, haven’t been so convinced of Britain’s virtue. Then the French returned to St. Dominique under Napoleon and sustained tens of thousands of casualties. Fighting the institution of slavery throughout the British colonies would be futile, the 12 abolitionists reluctantly decided. In 1789, a former slave named Olaudah Equiano self-published a two-volume book about his experiences, and it became a bestseller. This year, the lowcountry commemorates the anniversary of that initial victory. A display at the Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston describes the transatlantic slave trade, which linked Africa, Europe, and the Americas. In the West Indies, small numbers of white planters, supported by local militias, brutally held sway over large populations of Africans. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. By 1798, a decade after the Constitutional Convention, all of the Atlantic seaboard states, including South Carolina, had banned slave imports. Hochschild, Adam. A British abolitionist created a newsletter—publishing five hundred to a thousand copies—and then delivered it to every donor in the United Kingdom, asking for another country to join the fight against the transatlantic slave trade. He called it “The Atlantic World.” Initially, historians published their findings in specialized books and articles for an academic audience. One principle dear to colonial rebels was that every person held certain natural rights—such as “liberty” and “equality”—that could not be ignored or taken away. The Gullah/Geechee people are the descendants of those West African slaves brought here to work on colonial and antebellum rice plantations. The wealthiest sugar planters—many of whom were absentee landowners residing in Europe—lived in the state of kings. It was in this atmosphere in 1807 that William Wilberforce, a conservative figure with powerful political allies, pushed a bill through both Houses of Parliament that outlawed the British transatlantic slave trade. Photo by Wade Spees. Some establishment leaders realized that dramatic change was necessary to avoid further revolution and chaos. Perhaps the abolitionists’ most powerful weapon was the printed word. There would be newspapers and pamphlets available, which would go through lots of hands.” In a 2005 book, historian Adam Hochschild describes how British abolitionists established a public-education effort that was unprecedented in scale and effectiveness, explaining to Britons why the slave trade was barbaric and evil. Much of the work on a West Indian sugar plantation was unskilled, and planters figured that a slave could be easily replaced. The wealth pouring out of the sugar islands supported a British armada of slave ships, merchant ships, and warships, helping to ensure the empire’s maritime dominance. “We heard from those who were directly affected by the history of this area, who wanted to preserve African-American culture and heritage,” says Dulaney. According to that principle, it was against nature itself to degrade human beings into chattel property, abolitionists argued. Graphics: Library of Congress. Marvin Dunley, director of the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, notes the lowcountry’s recent progress in facing slavery’s legacy. Virtually no region in North America and South America where Europeans had settled was left untouched by slavery until the mid-nineteenth century. A sugar planter knew he could make excellent money if an African survived five years after arrival. During the same decade, not coincidentally, Britain became the most powerful slave-trading nation in the Atlantic Basin. Many slaveholders thought that slavery would die out over time, but they wanted to control the pace of its extinction. Cultural exchanges with Sierra Leone made many lowcountry Gullah people look at themselves differently, says Marquetta Goodwine, a resident of St. Helena Island who is known as Queen Quet. Dunn, Richard S. A cotton boom had arrived in upland areas, where Eli Whitney’s cotton gin was processing short-staple cotton. Frequent catastrophes occurred: ships went down at sea, slaves died aboard ships in huge numbers, and wars disrupted the coming and going of British vessels. Historian Richard S. Meanwhile, many American colonials were becoming increasingly angry with the heavy-handed representatives of the British crown. But a slave rebellion lasting some 13 years opened many Britons’ eyes to the nature of Caribbean bondage. Historians today regard abolitionism, says Tom Heeney, a College of Charleston communications professor, as “the most important and the largest social movement in the history of the West.” Now the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British and American slave trades brings another opportunity to look anew at lowcountry and African-American history, the influence of Charleston in maritime trade, and the continuing power of citizen movements. “The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade was a main factor in the growth of the domestic trade,” she says. Slaves in the American colonies heard them, too. The Portuguese established the first successful sugar plantations in Brazil in the 1530s. British and American abolitionists crisscrossed the Atlantic to confer on strategy, trading ideas and developing expertise in raising funds, gathering evidence against the slave trade, and marshalling arguments that could win over public opinion. “Coffeeshouses were important meeting spaces,” says Tom Heeney of the College of Charleston. The most successful British planters there gained immense fortunes, using slaves to cultivate sugar cane, mill it, and ship sugar and sugar-based products—rum and molasses—to markets in Europe. If the slave trade could be abolished, then the institution would dry up over time, the abolitionists decided. Slave-grown sugar became far and away the most lucrative cash crop exported to European markets. Barbadian planters soon realized that a sugar-cane field was potentially as valuable as a gold or silver mine. In all, scholars agree, a profitable British or French sugar plantation was a super-efficient enterprise and one of the cruelest exploitations of human beings in world history. Not long after the American War of Independence, lowcountry rice planters, aggressively pro-slavery, decided that the new nation’s transatlantic slave trade must stop eventually. Discussing slavery and slaves suddenly was no longer beyond the pale. Americans began to speak of the “slavery” of British rule, calling for fellow colonists to fight for individual freedom and natural rights—what we now call human rights—themes that later became central to the Declaration of Independence. Three uprisings—the American Revolution, the French Revolution, which began in 1789, and the Haitian Revolution—created an explosive political climate in Western Europe. Aside from Britain, several other Western European maritime powers—France, Holland, Spain, Denmark, and Portugal—were either major slave traders or profited from the trade as exploiters of captive Africans living in the Americas. How did the institution of the African slave trade, which had seemed permanently embedded in Western European and New World economies, disappear in just one century? “Memory is on the move,” says Simon Lewis, who teaches African literature at the College of Charleston. Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry. Britain and the United States banned their transatlantic slaving in 1807 and 1808, respectively, but other nations continued the practice until later in the century. David Brion Davis, a Yale University historian and the pre-eminent author on the subject of transatlantic slavery, observes that sugar “became the principal incentive for transporting millions of Africans to the New World.” In the West Indies, slave trade was a notoriously dangerous place for slaves, among the deadliest in the Americas. Graphic: Library of Congress. They were Christians, but few belonged to established churches. The Caribbean economy, for example, collapsed without African slave labor. More than half of all people in England at the end of the 1700s were literate, while many of their parents and grandparents were not. In the late 1980s, Joseph Opala, now a historian at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, organized a series of meetings between the Gullah/Geechee people and those of Sierra Leone on the “Rice Coast” of West Africa. The domestic slave trade was especially vigorous between the U.S. eastern seaboard and new lands farther west where a new generation of planters sought more Africans for cotton production. Slaves committed suicide and perished in numerous revolts. In the late nineteenth century, for instance, conservation groups such as the Audubon Society focused public attention on a crisis—overhunting of wild birds for the hat trade—and called for boycotts of certain bird feathers, published articles in newspapers and magazines, and pushed for legislation against overhunting. So the newly formed society of abolitionists decided to shine a bright light on the slave trade’s horrors and push Parliament to stop it. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Abolitionists also found innovative ways to raise funds. British ships began patrolling for slave vessels off the coasts of West Africa and the West Indies in 1808, and in 1819, Britain established a special Royal Navy squadron to enforce treaties that outlawed the slave trade. Also in 1807, President Thomas Jefferson signed into law a measure that abolished importation of slaves into the United States, effective January 1, 1808, though illegal smuggling continued. In the first years of the 1800s, however, a new technology changed how South Carolina planters thought about slave imports, has hardly any possibility of being abolished.” Slavery “has been universal in the beginnings of society, and the love of dominion and authority over others will probably make it perpetual.” The British weren’t the first Europeans to trade slaves, but they dominated slave trafficking for more than 150 years. In their first meeting, the 12 men in London decided to call their group the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. One more generation passed before the United States ended bondage with President Lincoln’s Emancipation Declaration in 1863 and the end of the Civil War in 1865. Charleston was a crucial port in this transatlantic commerce—an entry point for slave traffickers in North America and a loading station for rice, indigo, and other goods bound for Europe. Nevertheless, the British slave trade, historians now agree, was as lucrative as ever when it was outlawed by Parliament. British officers, returning home, told of the depravity of West Indian bondage, the slaves’ fighting skills, and the impossibility of defeating large numbers of Africans fighting for their freedom. Slaves in North America had relatively healthy birth rates. Britain had more than a thousand book stores, untold bookstalls on sidewalks, and more than a hundred libraries in London alone. European empires and every nation in the Americas had abandoned African slavery, with the exception of Spain’s colonies, where it was banned in 1886, and Brazil, which outlawed it in 1888. For centuries, artisans and merchants had established guilds and other groups to protect their own economic interests. Many Britons of all classes embraced Enlightenment virtues of free expression and what some observers have called the “democratization of knowledge” promoted by the printing press, the rising rates of literacy, and gathering places that allowed for free expression of ideas. In the 1780s and 1790s, southern slaveholders had selfish reasons for criticizing the transatlantic slave trade. During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, northern and southern states reached a compromise, agreeing that the federal government would have to wait 20 years—until 1808—before it could ban slave imports. Sidebar South Carolina’s Slave Trade The 1808 ban on slave imports to the United States had unintended consequences for those who opposed human bondage. The Caribbean was hungry for slaves because Europe was hungry for the products of Caribbean agriculture, particularly sugar. In the late 1990s, at Dulaney’s urging, Drayton Hall and Middleton Place, two nationally known lowcountry plantations, created new exhibits and other programming about African-American history, showing how slaves lived and worked there, contributing to the region’s unique culture and economy. In March 2007, dozens of British government agencies, art and history museums, the BBC, and other major institutions acknowledged the 200th anniversary of the bill’s passage. This is a time, moreover, to think about how the past is excavated and explained—how the stories we have chosen until the present have changed over time, and are changing still. Branded. For centuries, natural resources in the New World tropics were exploited primarily by the use of African slave labor. They could increase the value of their own slaves by preventing further imports of Africans. Right to Freedom. Historians also began to realize the depth of cultural hybridizations and historical tragedies among Western European slaving nations, West Africa, the Caribbean, and the eastern seaboard countries of the U.S. Americas. Lowcountry planters had specifically sought slaves from West Africa who already knew how to grow rice. “There was some discomfort and fear in talking about the African-American experience and particularly slavery,” says Marvin Dunaney, a College of Charleston historian and director of the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. Upland southern planters used this expanded slave labor to grow staple crops, particularly cotton, for the global marketplace. Scholars, instead, focused on how Europeans settled the country and how colonists eventually freed themselves from British fetters. Then, during the 1940s and 1950s and gaining momentum during the civil-rights movement of the 1960s, American scholars began to understand the degree to which African slavery had been central to the European development of the Western Hemisphere. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. In May 1787, 12 men gathered in London to create a unique organization against the trade. Most were looked upon as outsiders, eccentric, even radical in their day. It was cheaper to drive a slave to an early grave and buy another man or woman off a ship from Africa than to raise a slave from infancy. Deportation Flows, 19th Century. Nichole Green is the director/curator of the recently reopened Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston, one of a growing number of museums around the country focused on African American history. The recent changes in historical interpretation, however, couldn’t have occurred without scholarly advances dating back a half-century. The twelfth man was William Wilberforce, an Anglican and aristocrat who eventually introduced legislation in Parliament to outlaw the transatlantic slave trade. He was exceptionally resourceful but also lucky to have escaped West Indian bondage. Sugar and Slaves. On average, about 15 percent of slaves died during a ship’s crossing. The region didn’t revive until the tourism boom of the late twentieth century. Slavery affected economic life in colonies from French Quebec in the north to Spanish Chile in the south. Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire’s Slaves. University scholars worked with “public historians” such as Michael Allen to tell the story of America at historic sites and other venues. So the new organization decided to focus at first on fighting only the British slave trade. And, finally, a further generation went by before Brazil, the last holdout, banned slavery in 1888. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998. To dispatch their allies around the British Isles, abolitionists took advantage of the country’s sophisticated transportation network. Today, the Gullah people are trying to sustain their creole culture—food, religion, crafts, stories, songs, and language—in the face of rapid coastal development. History Lesson. Many British leaders began facing up to the reality of slavery. For generations, they continued to live in quiet rural enclaves as farmers and fishermen. A historical marker was installed on Sullivan’s Island, where thousands of African slaves had arrived in America and were held in quarantine before being sold. It was created not to help its own membership, business associates, or close neighbors but to aid a foreign people living thousands of miles away. Meanwhile, planning continues for the International African American Museum to be located in downtown Charleston. Slave-grown cotton was rapidly becoming the new king of cash crops in the South. In London, smoke-filled coffeeshouses were gathering places for politicians, merchants, poets, and Grub Street writers who swallowed cup after cup of sugar-sweetened, caffeinated drinks, read a flood of cheaply produced pamphlets and newspapers, and vigorously debated issues of the day—issues that one day would include slavery and the slave trade. Raking in profits, successful sugar planters embraced the high life, indulging in gaudy attire, extravagant homes, and copious bottles of port. British investments in slave ships that hauled Africans to the Americas were financially high-risk but high-reward. That is, a slaveholder’s freedom was fully insured against loss.) In all, many thousands of British families relied on the slave and sugar trades for their livelihood. The laws of 1807 were a major turning point in the history of the Atlantic World and crucial first steps in the abolitionist movement’s century-long effort to stop the ownership of human beings. To many slaveholders, the ideals of the American Revolution were bound up with the manacle and whip. Abolitionist authors rode the countryside on speaking tours, hawking their critiques from town to town. The park service launched its study by organizing seven public meetings in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Many slaves entering this continent arrived first on Sullivan’s Island to be quarantined before being sold in Charleston. That 200 years ago a maritime empire would outlaw its transatlantic trade in human beings—at significant cost in capital and power—should be an inspiration to today’s great powers facing moral, economic, and environmental problems of global consequence. Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World Davis, David Brion. But Britain’s initial breakthrough, in 1807, was particularly important because it showed that the British people could be moved by decency and compassion for people they did not know. At first, in the late 1780s, tiny abolitionist groups spearheaded by Quakers were started in London and Manchester and also in Philadelphia and New York. David Brion Davis calls the abolitionist century from the 1780s to the 1880s “a moral achievement that may have no parallel.” The two years of 1807 and 1808 were a crucial turning point in that achievement. Dysentery, called the “bloody flux,” was epidemic, as were other maladies. The profits nourished bankers, merchants, and insurers. It seems clear that Britain outlawed the slave trade not because slaving was dying out but because the British people realized, finally, that it was reprehensible. Deportation Flows, 18th Century. The answer can be found in the crucial period between 1787 and 1807. Moreover, scholars agree that many descendants of slaves in coastal South Carolina preserved more of their African cultural history longer than any other large group of blacks in the United States. Clyburn of South Carolina, the National Park Service began a five-year study of the potential for historical tourism, economic development, and educational projects on Gullah/Geechee history and culture in the coastal lowlands from North Carolina to northern Florida. The British turnpikes were the interstate superhighways of their day. “Some people who run the plantations also came to the meetings, and they heard about the neglect of Gullah/Geechee culture by mainstream organizations, and that had an impact.” As a result of its study, the National Park Service plans to create three interpretive sites about the Gullah/Geechee people to be located along the Highway 17 corridor in South Carolina and Georgia. Virtually every large-scale enterprise in European colonies within hot-weather regions of the Americas relied on slave labor, including sugar cultivation in Brazil and later in the Caribbean Islands, cocoa operations in what became Venezuela, rice plantations in coastal South Carolina and Georgia, gold mines in Brazil, and cotton plantations throughout the American South. Many rice plantations were abandoned, and freedmen instead created their own subsistence farms. In a series of books since the late 1970s, historian Seymour Drescher has shown that the British acted against their own economic self-interest in stopping the slave trade. In some respects, the plantations of the West Indies were like today’s oil fields in the Middle East—hotly contested resources central to the interests of great powers. From the 1640s to 1807, the slave trade was central to Britain’s transatlantic trade and colonial wealth, helping to create an empire that largely dominated Atlantic seaways. Numerous special events will honor the anniversary in the lowcountry, which is taking national leadership on this topic. British abolitionists, however, believed that destroying the slave trade would destroy slavery itself. Sugar planters, the shipping industry, bankers, and other economic interests were too powerful to defeat on that score. Some of their descendants still live on those same parcels along the coast in places like St. Helena Island, Wadmalaw Island, and the Phillips community in Charleston County. During the American War of Independence, the navies of the British and the upstart colonials battled to control Atlantic and Caribbean shipping lanes. News of slave rebellions in the West Indies would terrify whites throughout the sugar islands and the American South. “People could have face-to-face conversation, relatively undisturbed by religious or civic authorities. In the mid-eighteenth century, virtually anyone in New York or Charleston or London would have thought you’d lost your mind if you’d called for the abolition of slavery or the slave trade. A ship’s surgeon wrote, “The deck (of their rooms) was so covered with blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it resembled a slaughterhouse.” Arriving in the New World, most slaves became captives in “factories in the field.” These were large-scale agribusnesses, ruthlessly regimented, usually relying on gangs of slaves to produce cash crops with methods that foreshadowed assembly lines and other modern industrial techniques. Dunn observes that the Caribbean elite became known for “overdressing, overeating, and overdinking.” Defending slavery in 1746, the English economist Malachy Postlethwayt wrote, “The Negroe-Trade and the natural Consequences resulting from it may be justly esteemed an inexhaustible Fund of Wealth and Naval Power to this Nation.” So how could a tiny band of abolitionists possibly win a fight against the juggernaut of transatlantic slavery? British abolitionists heard these arguments against slavery and took heart. In 1807, the British Parliament passed a bill banning the British slave trade between Africa and the Americas, which became effective on May 1 of that year. South Carolina: A History. Quakers and their allies were organized and committed enemies of slavery. Almost exactly one century after the 12 abolitionists gathered in London in 1787, African bondage in the New World was finished. Among well-polished anecdotes about English candlesticks, French porcelain, and rocco parlor chairs, tour guides would delicately mention the so-called “servants” who had worked in plantation fields and grand homes before the Civil War. Britain’s ban, in particular, was unprecedented. Slave-grown sugar, coffee, cocoa, and tobacco stoked the energies of eighteenth-century Europe. But this London organization was something new. Also, southern planters wanted to keep out Caribbean slaves who might have been infected by notions of revolt; the West Indian sugar islands were frequently rocked by slave rebellions. Africans were worked beyond exhaustion in the hot sun or in the cauldrons of the sugar-processing mills. Local people got up to tell their own stories. By the mid-1860s, however, the Atlantic World—the Americas, West Africa, and Western Europe—had undergone a seismic cultural and economic shift. “All of these were incubators,” Allen says, “for the Gullah/Geechee project”—a National Park Service effort that has changed how coastal South Carolinians view themselves and their history. In 2000, at the request of U.S. Representative James E. Of the 12 men, nine were Quakers. The commerce in slaves and sugar brought vast wealth and power to the British Empire. Into the Light. Following the war’s conclusion in 1782, however, British ships poured into the West African coast to purchase slaves for the New World markets. There were contradictions and complexities, of course, within American revolutionary ideals. The British and French were the superpowers of their day, but the combination of fierce guerilla war waged by former slaves and epidemics of malaria and yellow fever decimated the European forces. In the 1670s, Barbados became the model for the new Carolina colony, the only North American colony designed from its earliest settlement to rely on slave labor. “We’ve gone from focusing on the Middleton family to focusing on the people who worked here and their lives on the plantation.” Step One. The Middle Passage—the slaves’ voyage from Africa to the Americas—was one of the cruelest elements of a ghastly transatlantic enterprise. Lacking influxes of imported Africans to sell legally, southern investors, bankers, agents, and traders created profitable domestic slave markets that continued until the Civil War. Some two-thirds of all Africans brought to the New World were purchased to labor on sugar plantationsin the West Indies or Brazil. Pro-slavery advocates fought back just as hard, creating their own campaigns to discredit abolitionists. The reality is that the British slave trade remained a productive part of the empire’s economy until it was outlawed. Britain lost 1.8 percent of its annual national income through more than a 50-year period, according to a 1987 book by Drescher. For the next five years, he traveled the British Isles on what Hochschild calls the “first great political book tour,” drumming up support for abolition of the slave trade in every corner of the country. It was, Hochschild points out, probably the world’s first direct-mail fundraising letter. South Carolina shocked the nation in 1803 by reopening its foreign slave trade. Almost everywhere that African slavery existed in the Americas, death rates among slaves were extraordinarily high and birth rates catastrophically low. Coastal Heritage Magazine Two hundred years ago, abolitionists gained their first victory in the long struggle to abolish the ownership of human beings. The Haitian revolution electrified societies throughout the Atlantic world. Before the 1950s, African slavery was little discussed in North American colonial history. Sea trade, including transatlantic commerce in slaves, dropped off. Most of the early white abolitionists were Quakers or other religious dissenters. By the 1760s, some Pennsylvania Quakers were already anti-slavery advocates in the colonies. “Yet slavery was the major game in town, and to ignore it is to ignore most of the history of this area.” Then, with remarkable swiftness, attitudes changed in what Delaney calls the “mainstream historical community,” which started to address, in a frank way, the lives of African Americans in colonial and antebellum South Carolina. Moreover, the United States, in 1803, had acquired the Louisiana Territory, which opened vast territories for settlement and agriculture. And the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture is expected to open on Washington’s Mall in 2015. By 1804, slave rebels were in control, declaring themselves free and calling the new country “Haiti.” Napoleon’s treasury was so depleted by the Haitian conflict that he was forced to sell the vast Louisiana Territory to the United States. Michael Allen, an education specialist with the National Park Service, has been instrumental in raising public awareness of the lowcountry’s role in the slave trade. Drayton Hall Drescher, Seymour. In the late 1980s, however, researchers and journalists began synthesizing this knowledge for lay readers and describing, with a new directness and force, the realities of Atlantic slavery and the strong cultural connections between West Africa and many lowcountry blacks. During those two decades, British and American abolitionists, inspired in part by the ideals of the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions, created the world’s first human-rights movement and conceived the first international public-education campaign run by citizen volunteers. Death rates approached one-third in some instances. A powerful empire accepted leadership in addressing a historical wrong—slavery—and took significant economic losses as a result. Fifteen years ago, the word “slave” was taboo during tours of many historic plantations and mansions throughout the lowcountry. Today, advocacy groups still use many of the tools and strategies invented by abolitionists. Equiano, who used his trading skills to purchase his freedom, was an ideal hero for the cause of abolition. For generations afterward, volunteer advocacy groups have imitated abolitionist techniques. The lowcountry has special importance in African-American history. In South Carolina, a group of scholars and community leaders have worked for two decades to raise awareness of lowcountry African-American history. Edward Ball’s book, Slaves in the Family, was a national bestseller, describing the previously hidden family connections among lowcountry whites and blacks. Yet individual state governments would be allowed to ban slave trading from abroad. The only exception to this rule was North America, where populations of slaves continued to grow in former colonies. Only a handful of philosophers and intellectuals consistently argued against slavery. Free black laborers refused to work under the cruel conditions of sugar plantations. Grisly Voyage. The British dispatched soldiers to quell the uprising and to seize control of the rich sugar-growing colony, but after a bloody war they were driven out. “There has been an about-face in our interpretation,” says Tracey Todd, vice-president of museums at Middleton Place. It was during the 1640s that Britain established its first Caribbean sugar plantation in Barbados. Slavery’s death knell arrived only after concerted efforts by successive generations of activists.



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