

Understanding Enslavement in Wayne

Enslaved Africans were first brought to New Netherland, which encompassed parts of modern-day New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, in 1626, when the Dutch West India Company purchased sixteen African individuals from Portuguese pirates. By 1660, New Amsterdam had become the most important slave port in North America, having seen the arrival of 300 enslaved people directly from Africa only five years prior.¹ Following the British takeover of New Netherland in 1664, New York would remain a key port in the slave trade, with Perth Amboy serving as a secondary stop.

Enslaved people were brought to New Jersey beginning in the 1630s by Dutch, and later British, colonists, where their labor supported the development of the colony. In his book *The Ragged Road to Abolition*, James Gigantino describes enslaved Africans in New Jersey as “jacks-of-all-trades” for the varied kinds of work they did, including carpentry and skilled trades work, caring for livestock, and copper mining, but their primary focus was agriculture.² The forced labor of enslaved people in East Jersey provided New York, Philadelphia, and the Caribbean with grains and produce. Peter Hasenclever would describe common sights of the region following his 1764 trip up the Passaic River from Newark, “the Dutch are settled throughout this fertile river valley. The roads are lined with fields of prosperous-looking farms, in some cases of hundreds of acres; they are able to maintain such large properties by the use of slaves. I saw dozens of them hoeing in the furrows, men, women and children, often singing in a deep mournful-sounding way.”³

Before the formation of Wayne Township and Passaic County, the Van Riper-Hopper House and the Schuyler Colfax House sat in Bergen County, which had the highest population of enslaved people in New Jersey. Author Graham Hodges notes that “slaves made up 40% of the labor force in Bergen County by 1780.”⁴ By 1830, Saddle River Township- portions of which became Wayne- had the highest percentage of enslaved people to property owners of all the future Passaic County townships.⁵ Despite the high percentage, the average in the region was still around one or two enslaved individuals per household.⁶ This meant that enslaved people were spread over a wide, rural area, limiting daily interaction with others who were enslaved.

¹ Matthews, Christopher N. "The Black Freedom Struggle in Northern New Jersey, 1613-1860: A Review of the Literature." Montclair State University. Prepared for the Passaic County Department of Cultural & Historic Affairs. July 2019. <https://www.montclair.edu/anthropology/research/slavery-in-nj/>. 3.

² Gigantino, James J. *The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and Freedom in New Jersey, 1775-1865*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. 12.

³ Matthews, Christopher N. "The Black Freedom Struggle in Northern New Jersey, 1613-1860: A Review of the Literature." Montclair State University. Prepared for the Passaic County Department of Cultural & Historic Affairs. July 2019. <https://www.montclair.edu/anthropology/research/slavery-in-nj/>. 1.

⁴ Ibid, 12.

⁵ Aley, Alexis; Boyce, Eryn; Craft, Rachel; Harshbarger, Patrick; Lee, James. "Slavery at Dey Mansion Washington's Headquarters and Its Passaic County Environs: A Research Report on Archival Sources, Material Culture and Interpretive Themes." Hunter Research Inc, March 2021. 3-30.

⁶ Ibid, 3-18.

Timeline of Enslavement in Wayne

1630- By this date, enslaved Africans have been brought to New Jersey by Dutch settlers

1664- The English take control of New Amsterdam from the Dutch. In this same year, the British capture a ship which has 290 enslaved people on board. They determine that these individuals will be brought to New Jersey “to be employed solely in agriculture, which is the only means by which the State can be rendered flourishing...the slaves must be sold to our inhabitants on express condition that they will not be taken out of our district, but kept specifically there and employed in husbandry.”⁷

1682- Three bills, which make up New Jersey’s first slave codes, are passed. These double the time of servitude for those who attempt to self-emancipate from enslavement and fine those who help them. One of the bills also forbids trading with enslaved Africans and Native Americans, specifying that an enslaved individual who attempted to trade “shall and may be taken up and be whipped by the person or persons to whom he shall tender such sale, and such person whipping such negro, or Indian slave, or servant, shall have the reward of half a crown paid him by the master or mistress of such negro, or Indian slave, or servant.”⁸

1694- “An Act concerning Slaves, &c.” restricts gun use by enslaved people.

1695- “An Act concerning Negroes” is passed, setting standards for the trial and punishment of enslaved people accused of murder or theft. It specifies that “the said negro or negroes or other slaves, being so convicted, shall be publicly punished with corporal punishment, not exceeding forty stripes...”⁹

1704- “An Act for Regulating Negro, Indian and Mallatto Slaves within this Province of New-Jersey” is passed; author Christopher Matthews describes that this “firmly established a collective white authority over virtually all aspects of slave life from movement to socializing to sex to trade to religion.”¹⁰

1713- “An Act for Regulating of Slaves” is passed, reinforcing the act from nine years prior. Notable additions include forbidding freed African Americans or Native Americans from holding property, and two annual fees associated with manumission.

1751- “An Act to restrain Tavern-keepers and others from selling strong Liquors to Servants, Negroes and Molatto Slaves, and to prevent Negroes and Molatto Slaves, from meeting in large

⁷ Matthews, Christopher N. "The Black Freedom Struggle in Northern New Jersey, 1613-1860: A Review of the Literature." Montclair State University. Prepared for the Passaic County Department of Cultural & Historic Affairs. July 2019. <https://www.montclair.edu/anthropology/research/slavery-in-nj/>. 5.

⁸ Matthews, Christopher N. "Appendix B: Selected New Jersey Laws related to Slavery and Free People of Color, 1682-1846." From "The Black Freedom Struggle in Northern New Jersey, 1613-1860: A Review of the Literature." Montclair State University. Prepared for the Passaic County Department of Cultural & Historic Affairs. July 2019. [Selected New Jersey Laws related to Slavery and Free People of Color, 1682-1846. \(montclair.edu\)](https://www.montclair.edu/anthropology/research/slavery-in-nj/selected-new-jersey-laws-related-to-slavery-and-free-people-of-color-1682-1846/).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Matthews, "The Black Freedom Struggle in Northern New Jersey, 1613-1860: A Review of the Literature," 10.

Companies, from running about at Nights, and from hunting or carrying a Gun on the Lord's Day" is passed.

1786- "An Act to prevent the Importation of Slaves into the State of New-Jersey, and to authorize the Manumission of them under certain Restrictions, and to prevent the Abuse of Slaves" is passed, which simplified the manumission process and ended the sale of enslaved people in New Jersey brought directly from Africa. However, it also restricted the movement of freed African Americans in New Jersey.

1804- "An act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery" is passed, stating "that every child born of a slave within this state, after the fourth day of July next, shall be free; but shall remain the servant of the owner of his or her mother, and the executors, administrators or assigns of such owner, in the same manner as if such child had been bound to service by the trustees or overseers of the poor, and shall continue in such service, if a male, until the age of twenty five years; and if a female until the age of twenty one years."

1806- 54 men from the Preakness section of Wayne petition the New Jersey legislature to repeal the 1804 Act. Among the signers are Uriah Van Riper and his brother, Richard.

1830- Saddle River Township, portions of which later became Wayne Township, reports in the federal census that 14 percent of households include enslaved people; in average, this was about one enslaved person per household.

1850- As per the 1850 federal census, Wayne Township had a population of 1162, including 60 free African Americans and 2 enslaved people.

1865- The Thirteenth Amendment is passed, stating that "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."¹¹

¹¹ "13th Amendment- Abolition of Slavery." Interactive Constitution. National Constitution Center. Accessed January 27th, 2022. <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xiii>.