



Rebel Underground

Sons of Confederate Veterans
Major John C. Hutto Camp # 443
Jasper, Alabama

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July 2022 Newsletter

Major John C. Hutto Camp Meeting

The regular monthly meeting of the Major John C. Hutto Camp
in Jasper, Alabama will be

Sunday, 17 July 2022 at 2:00PM

The Honorable Hank Arnold of the Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp will be speaking

Meeting will be at the
First United Methodist Church's Adult Center
behind the church sanctuary.

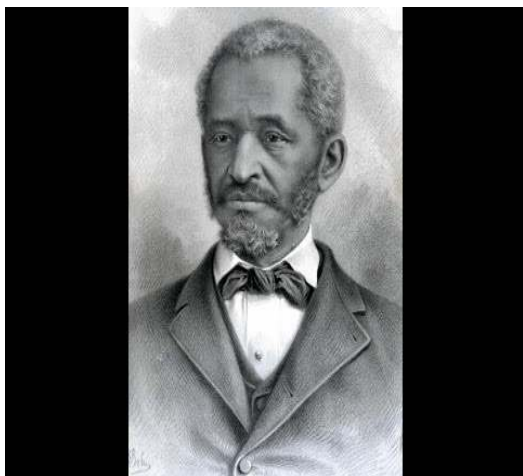
Family, friends & guest are welcome

10 Black Slave Owners That Will Tear Apart Historical Perception

D. G. Hewitt

In the year 1830, at the height of the transatlantic slave trade, there were an estimated two million people enslaved in the United States. (When the Civil War officially began in 1861, that figure had increased to four million.) In the vast majority of cases, they were Africans or the enslaved descendants of Africans, forced to work on plantations owned by wealthy, white individuals. But this wasn't always the case. The history books also show that some slaves were owned by people of color. More specifically, according to the historian Carter G. Woodson, in 1830, 3,775 freed former slaves owned 12,100 slaves between them, a tiny fraction of America's enslaved millions.

In many cases – and, perhaps in the majority of cases – people of color with slaves only owned one or two individuals. And even this was for personal, rather than business reasons. Upon earning their own freedom, they would purchase enslaved relatives in order to be close to their loved ones. But in some cases, freed slaves were every bit as business-minded, entrepreneurial and even ruthless as white plantation owners. Indeed, a handful of people of color not only managed to buy their own freedom, but they went on to amass small fortunes. Sometimes this money was made through the sugar or cotton trades, often on the back of slaves of their own. And, while some treated their slaves kindly, others were far more ruthless.



Anthony Johnson and then his son were notable slave owners in Virginia.

When the first British colonizers settled in Virginia, they faced a problem. How could they get people to work the land then, and in the decades to come?

They came up with the concept of 'indentured servitude'. Under this system, anyone wishing to travel to America but lacking the money could have their passage paid for them by a benefactor. In return, they would give their labor for a fixed number of years. Once they had fulfilled their obligation, they would be freed from their service and, so the theory went, they would have gained some valuable skills and be ready to start making a

life for themselves in the new world. In many cases, people didn't live long enough to fulfill their contracts and earn their freedom. But some did, including a certain Anthony Johnson.

Johnson came to the United States in traumatic circumstances. Captured by an enemy tribe in his native Angola, he was sold to an Arab slave trader and sent to Virginia aboard a ship called the James. He landed in 1621. Immediately upon his arrival into the British colony, Johnson was sold to a white tobacco farmer. As was the system, he was required to work to gain his freedom, though the precise number of years he was indentured for was not recorded. In 1623, a year after Anthony (or 'Antonio' as he was still known as then) almost lost his life in a skirmish with the Powhatan tribe, a female by the name of 'Mary' arrived to work at the plantation. She fell for Antonio and they married. Their union would last for more than four decades.

At some point, believed to be 1635 or 1636, Antonio gained his freedom. Upon release of his contract, he changed his name to Anthony Johnson and started working on a plot of land he had acquired through his terms of freedom. By 1651, he had acquired a further 100 hectares of land. To work his holding, he bought the contracts of five indentured servants, including his own son, Richard Johnson. One of the other indentured workers he held the contract for was a man named John Casor, who would earn a place in the history books himself. By 1643, Casor had earned his freedom under the traditional system. Johnson agreed to work for another farmer, but Johnson refused to let him go. He sued the other plantation owner and, in 1655, he won in court. Casor was returned to Johnson and would be indentured to him indefinitely. According to historians of the time, this was the first time a black person in America was made a slave, and a slave for life, with a black plantation owner as his master.

In 1661, Virginia had passed a law permitting any free man to own slaves as well as indentured servants. Johnson himself died in 1670. By that point, he was living with his family on a 300-acre plot of land in Maryland. Mary outlived him for just two years. However, she did not gain possession of his farm. Neither did either of his two sons. Instead, the land was given to a white man, with the judge presiding over the inheritance case ruling that the color of his skin meant Johnson was not technically a citizen of the colony.



William Ellison learned a trade, made money and then purchased slaves.

The Antebellum era of American history saw a number of people of color achieve marked success in business. Indeed, from the end of the 18th century right through to the start of the Civil War in 1861, several former slaves became entrepreneurs, none more so than William Ellison Junior. Indeed, by the beginning of the Civil War, he had grown to become one of the most successful businessmen in all of

South Carolina, despite being a Mulatto. As well as owning a considerable amount of land, he also held dozens of slaves by the time of his death. So how did a slave get to become such a prominent figure in Southern society?

William Ellison Jr. was born April Allison in 1790. He was born into slavery on a plantation close to Winnsboro, South Carolina, though there was some confusion over his parentage: either Robert Ellison, the plantation owner, or his son, William Ellison – who was listed as April's 'owner' – could have fathered the child. This status gave William some relative privilege on the plantation. Significantly, the Ellison men decided that young April should learn a skill. And so, at the age of 10, he became an apprentice cotton gin maker. Six years later, he finished his apprenticeship and was armed with a skill that was much in demand across the Deep South. He immediately got to work.

Since he was still technically a slave, albeit one who was 'hired out', April's master kept most of what the young man earned in a nearby workshop. April was, however, allowed to keep a small portion of his earnings, including wages for work done on a Sunday, and he was ultimately able to buy his freedom from Ellison. The date was 8 June 1816, and April was just 26 years old. Perhaps as a sign of gratitude, he changed his name to William Ellison Jr and immediately bought his wife's freedom and, as soon as he was able, that of his children. In 1817, he moved to Sumter County, South Carolina and set up shop as a cotton gin maker. Very soon, he had purchased four slaves to help him with his growing business. Then, by 1850, he had bought 156 hectares of land, with 32 slaves to work it.

A decade before the start of the Civil War, Ellison managed to acquire more land, so that by 1860, he had 53 slaves. His children also had slaves of their own. Once war erupted, he not only sided with the Confederate, he offered the army 53 of his slaves. Ellison also bought war bonds for the cause. With the defeat of the Confederacy, these became worthless. Like many others in the South, Ellison lost almost all his wealth. Nevertheless, when he died in 1861, Ellison left a will dividing more than 60 slaves up between his one surviving daughter and two sons.



Dilsey Pope was one of many freed slaves who paid for the freedom of their loved ones. Spartacus Educational.

Not every person of color who owned slaves did so for business reasons. In fact, many did so for sentimental reasons. In several states, while a slave was permitted to buy their own freedom, once they had

earned it, there were strict rules in place designed to discourage the newly-freed slaves from setting others free. For their part, owners who freed slaves were often required to send them to other states. Meanwhile, the freed slaves themselves were not only required to move states but they might also be barred from purchasing their loved ones' freedom.

Given this, some newly-freed slaves would set about earning enough money that they could buy slaves of their own. And, once they had the financial ability to do so, they would buy their husbands, wives, children or even friends. Thus, while the whole family might not be 'free' legally speaking, at least they could all be together. Dilsey Pope took such a course of action. Having bought her own freedom, she settled in Columbus, Georgia, and then successfully purchased her own husband's freedom. Husband and wife were reunited, even if they were also, in the eyes of the law, slave and master (or, in this case, slave and mistress).

In this sense, Dilsey's story was far from unique. What did earn her a place in the history books, however, is what became of the husband. At one point, Dilsey and her spouse had a heated argument. In a fit of rage, she sold her husband to a white neighbor. Though she soon changed her mind and asked to have him back, the new owner refused to sell him and the legal system of Georgia was on his side. Though certainly unique, the history books also contain a number of other stories where freed slaves traded family members, not always for benevolent reasons but sometimes out of spite or simply to turn a profit.



Nathaniel Butler would return escaped slaves to their owners – for a price. History.com

Not all slave owners of color purchased slaves in order to keep their families united, however. Nat Butler was far from sentimental. Once he gained his freedom, his sole concern was making as much money as he could, with trading slaves seen as the best way to earn some fast money. So cut-throat

was Butler in his dealings that it wasn't just slaves who feared crossing his path. His ruthlessness was also noted by white plantation owners, ensuring that Butler wrote himself into the history books.

Little, indeed next to nothing is known about Butler's early life, including his years as a slave and how and when he earned his freedom. Historians do, however, know something about his

years as a free man. He lived just outside of the town of Aberdeen in Hartford County, Maryland. While he may have cultivated his land, it appears that his main source of income came from the selling slaves. More specifically, he made a tidy profit sending escaped slaves back to their masters. Quite simply, if you were a plantation owner in Maryland and one of your slaves went missing, Butler could bring him or her back to you – for a price, of course.

In many cases, escaped slaves would turn to Butler for help. Perhaps they thought that, as a man of color himself and, moreover, one who had experienced the cruelty of slavery first-hand, he might show them compassion. But he only showed them cruelty. Butler would convince the slaves to stay on his property. While they thought they were safe, he would try and find out who the slaves ‘belonged to’, and more importantly, how much they were willing to pay for their safe return. If the reward was big enough, Butler would send the slaves back. If the slaves didn’t have a big price on their head, Butler would buy them for himself and then sell them for a profit.

Over the years, Butler amassed a relative fortune – especially for a person of color in Maryland. He also gained a reputation. Butler was feared by slaves. They were wary that, even if they managed to escape their plantations, they could fall into Butler’s hands and end up working in even tougher conditions in the Deep South, many miles from their loved ones. Even his fellow slave traders, as well as the white plantation owners themselves, felt he could be too tough, or cruel even. Indeed, so hated was Butler that slaves tried to kill him on several occasions, with no success. What ultimately became of Butler, however, remains a mystery as his later years are lost to history.



Slave traders bought and sold men, women and children.

The Pendarvis Family

For a white plantation owner to take a female slave as a mistress was hardly unique in eighteenth-century America. So, few people would have been so shocked to see the wealthy Joseph Pendarvis become involved with a lady of color. However, Parthena was more than just a slave lover for Joseph. The pair were so close that they had seven children together. And so,

when Joseph died, he remembered all of them in his last will and testament. The children, along with their mother, not only inherited a large expanse of arable land, they also took on dozens of

slaves. Indeed, in 1830s Carolina, few families owned more slaves than the Pendarvis clan.

In fact, James Pendarvis, the eldest son of Joseph, inherited 1,009 acres of land close to Green Savanna. He was also bequeathed on a plantation in nearby Charleston Creek. Moreover, according to the record books of the time, James inherited 113 slaves to work this land, making him the largest non-white slaveholder in all of South Carolina. James carried on growing his business interests and so, by the time of his death in 1798, the Pendarvis family owned 155 slaves, the majority of them picking cotton or rice.

James himself left his property as well as his slaves to the next generation. Well into the nineteenth century, then, his heirs were among the most prominent individuals in all of not just their native Collerton County (modern-day Charleston) but of all of South Carolina. Notably, however, the Pendarvis family were not the only people of color to use slave labor to work the rice fields of South Carolina. The history books noted that the Holman and Collins families, both descended from a female slave brought to America from Sierra Leone, both traded in and made use of slaves during the second half of the 18th century.



Justus Angel

Men and women of color owning slaves was not so uncommon, even in 18th century South Carolina. However, in most cases, they would own just one, two or three slaves, often family members. Which is what makes the case of Justus Angel so notable. In 1830s Collerton County, the part of the state where Charleston now lies, he was deemed a 'slave magnate'. Not only did he own dozens of slaves himself, he also traded in them, earning himself a fortune at the expense of other, more unfortunate souls.

As with so many cases of freedmen who made their fortune, almost nothing is known about Angel's early years. Where he came from, how long he lived as a slave, and how and when he earned his freedom, have all been lost to history. What is known, however, is that, by 1830, Angel was working with his partner, a certain Mistress L. Horry, in the slave business. Between them, they owned 168 slaves, putting them to work on their plantation and earning themselves huge amounts of money in the process. What also made Angel and his partner notable was their

treatment of their slaves. Quite simply, just because Angel was a person of color himself didn't mean he would treat his slaves kindly. Far from it, in fact.

While there is no evidence to suggest that neither Angel nor Horry were any crueller than the white plantation owners of the time, they definitely weren't any nicer. For them, slaves were nothing more than labor or possessions. The records show that they used their privileges as owners to punish any slaves that tried to escape. What's more, they would buy and sell slaves purely for profit, with no concern for their well-being. Undoubtedly, families would have been split up and some slaves would have been sold on to even crueller masters.



Born into slavery, Marie-Therese earned her freedom and then got very rich indeed. Slay Culture.

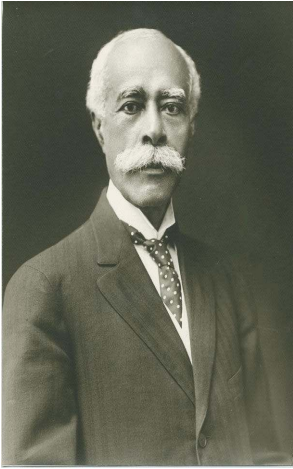
Marie Therese Metoyer

Marie Therese Metoyer was born into slavery but died a rich woman. And a rich woman with slaves of her own to boot. In fact, at the turn of the 18th century, Marie Therese was one of the richest ladies in Louisiana. As a free lady, she was an astute entrepreneur as well as a social climber. Moreover, she was Christian-minded and worked to improve the society she lived in – even if she did make use of slave labor. So, how did this lady, born to slaves, earn first her freedom and then her fortune? The answer is simple: thanks to a simple twist of fate.

Marie Therese was actually born Coincoin (with no given surname) in the Louisiana French outpost of Natchitoches. While she was born into slavery, she did have some education as a child, being trained in nursing and then pharmacy – skills that she would be able to put to good use later in life. The records show that she had children young. Five children, to be precise, though who their father was is not known. What is known is that in 1765, Coincoin's mistress decided to lend her to a man called Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer. It was a decision that would change the lives of both the slave and the young French merchant.

Metoyer fell in love with his new slave. In order to stay together, he purchased her, as well as her children. She took a French name and when they had six children of their own, he purchased their freedom too. But, after many happy years together, Claude Thomas fell for another woman, divorced Marie-Therese and returned to France. He left behind all his possessions, however. Marie-Therese was a wealthy woman. By 1830, it's estimated that she owned more than 1,000 acres, with an estimated 287 slaves working the land.

As with many plantation owners, Marie-Therese was tough with her slaves. She was obviously a shrewd businesswoman since she got steadily richer, suggesting she had little time for sentimentality. At the same time, however, she was a committed Catholic. She used her money to maintain her local parish church, and she even volunteered the labor of her own slaves for the task. Marie-Therese died in 1816, dividing her property – including her slaves – up between her surviving children.



Antoine Dubuclet had more than 100 slaves toiling on his plantations.

Antoine Dubuclet

At the time of his death in 1887, Antoine Dubuclet was a wealthy man. A very wealthy man. In fact, he was widely regarded as one of the richest men in all of the South, richer even than his white neighbors. According to historians' estimates, he was worth around \$265,000, around 200 times the average annual income. As well as his land, he also owned significant numbers of slaves. Moreover, he was well-respected in society, not just because of his riches. Dubuclet was, in many ways, a true Southern gentleman: smart, well-dressed and debonair. The Dubuclet family had come a long way in a very short space of time.

Unlike many slave owners of color of the period, Antoine Dubuclet was born to free parents. He was born in 1810, the son of a part-owner of a sugar plantation close to Baton Rouge. When his father died, his mother moved to New Orleans with Antoine's younger brothers and sisters. Antoine, meanwhile, took over at the plantation. As well as the land, he also inherited around 70 slaves. In 1834, the other partners in the plantation sold up and the whole business was split equally between Antoine and his siblings. However, Antoine retained a position of leadership, growing the business until, by 1860, it was one of the largest sugar plantations in all of Louisiana, with around 100 slaves toiling the fields.

The American Civil War sent the sugar industry into free-fall. Plantation owners, both white and black, lost huge sums of money. However, Antoine had married well back in the 1830s. His free, colored wife had wealth of her own and he had used it wisely, diversifying their investments. As such, Antoine came out of the war in good shape and soon entered the world of politics. He was nominated as the Republican candidate for the Louisiana state treasurer in 1868 and won. Against the odds, he got the bankrupt state back into the black, ensuring his re-election in 1870 and then again in 1874. He died in 1887 and is buried in New Orleans.



Some freed slaves would gain an education and earn money before taking on slaves of their own. Huffington Post.

Andrew Durnford

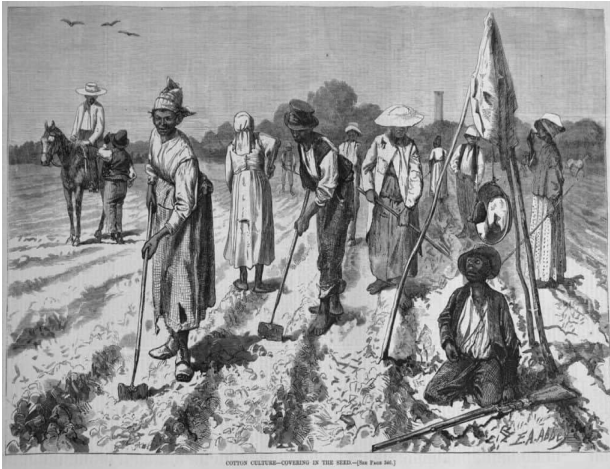
As a physician and man of science, surely Andrew Durnford should have seen that all men were born equally? Evidently not. For, as well as being a doctor, Durnford – a man of color himself – was also a plantation owner. From the 1820s onwards, he grew his sugar business across the state of Louisiana, ultimately

becoming the owner of not just large amounts of land but of dozens of slaves too. Furthermore, the history books show that he regarded the system of slavery as just and, indeed, even the ‘American’ way of doing things.

Born in 1800 in New Orleans, Durnford was the son of an Englishman and a free woman of color. Thanks to the Louisiana Purchase, he automatically became a citizen of the United States and earned a fine education, being fluent in both French and English. While Durnford was still a young man, his father died. After that, he became first friends, and then business partners, with one of his father’s old friends, a white New Orleans merchant by the name of John McDonogh. Though he was a trained physician, Durnford turned to McDonogh for credit in order to enter the plantation business. His friend agreed, they struck favorable terms and the young man was able to purchase a small piece of land just south of the city.

Over the years, Durnford’s plantation grew, and the man himself climbed steadily through Louisiana society. In the late 1820s, the historian David O. Whitten, has revealed, Durnford paid \$7,000 for seven male slaves, five female slaves and two children. What’s more, soon after that he traveled to Virginia to acquire 24 more slaves to work his land. In all, it’s estimated that Durnford owned more than 80 slaves at the peak of his operations, earning a small fortune off their hard work.

According to some accounts of the time, Durnford might have been able to free his slaves. A Creole man who had sent his former slaves to be free in Liberia, Africa, asked Durnford if he would consider doing the same. He demurred, apparently arguing that “self-interest is too strongly rooted in the bosom of all that breathes the American atmosphere”. In 1859, Durnford died on his own St. Rosalie Plantation, the land still tended by slaves, including slave children.



Not all owners were cruel. A tiny few even helped their slaves earn an education.

John Carruthers Stanly

Like many slave children born on plantations, John Carruthers Stanly's parentage was questionable. According to most accounts, he was born in March of 1795, the son of John Wright, a prominent merchant from New Bern, North Carolina. His mother was an enslaved Africa woman working on a nearby plantation. As such, the child their affair produced was also born

enslaved. Fortunately for him, however, the owners of the plantation, a couple called Alexander and Lydia Stewart, were far kinder to their slaves than the majority of their peers.

It was due to this benevolence that Stanly was able to learn a trade while still being enslaved. Alongside a standard education (itself quite rare for slave children), young John learned to become a barber. What's more, he was able to work part-time cutting hair while not busy on the plantation. After a few years, he had saved up a sum of money and earned himself a reputation in the local community as an honest and hard-working young man. So, in 1798, when he turned 21, he was able to buy his own freedom, backed by the support of the Stewarts.

In 1801, Stanly not only purchased his wife, Kitty, but two slave children as well. This meant he and Kitty could be legally married according to the State of North Carolina. Then, with his brother's freedom purchased, he focused his attention on moving out of cutting hair and into making some serious money. With two of his own slaves taking care of his barber shop, Stanly bought some land just outside of New Bern. Over time, he expanded his operations significantly and, at his peak, he had an estimated 163 slaves under his control.

At some point in the 1820s, Stanly's wife died. He was also forced to cope with some serious financial troubles. At one point, Stanly was even forced to sell some of his land and his slaves in order to cover a debt run up by his own brother. By the 1840s, he had lost much of his fortune. Indeed, at the time of his death in 1843, at the age of 71, Stanly had just 160 acres and seven slaves to his name. His children inherited all his property, slaves included.

Source:

<https://historycollection.com/10-black-slaveowners-that-will-tear-apart-historical-perception>

Dixie Africanus
By John Marquardt
June 14, 2022

Black slaves toiling in the fields of large plantations, gentlemen in frock coats and ladies in hoop skirts relaxing on the verandas of large mansions . . . all set in places named Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and Mississippi. Most would imagine this to be a picture of the antebellum American South, but they would be mistaken, as it would actually be a scene from mid-Nineteenth Century Africa. More specifically, an area on the Ivory Coast that contained not only Liberia, but the colonies of several Southern states.

To set the stage for our African story, we must first return to America's earliest days. Contrary to what is claimed by the "1619 Project," the first group of black Africans brought to the British Colony of Virginia that year did not become slaves there, but were employed as indentured servants who, like their white counterparts, had the opportunity of gaining their freedom by working off their indentures. Most of those early African arrivals became the first free blacks in America.

Even though actual chattel bondage had begun in America by the mid-Seventeenth Century, up until 1700 only about twenty thousand Africans had been brought to the North American colonies as slaves and, therefore, the number of free blacks also remained small. During the next century, however, almost three hundred thousand slaves were transported to the United States and this, combined with an extremely high black birth rate, created approximately four million black slaves in America by 1860, along with more than half a million free blacks. Of the latter number, well over half resided in the South.

By the start of the Nineteenth Century, prejudice against blacks had already developed throughout the country but such bias in the South differed greatly from that in the North where, unlike the South, it was generally felt that blacks and whites should not coexist. One answer to the problem was to return free blacks to Africa, and in 1816, a group for that purpose was founded.

The concept of African colonization for America's free blacks was conceived five years earlier by a Quaker ship builder from Boston, Paul Cuffee, whose father was a former Massachusetts slave from West Africa and his mother a member of the Wampanoag Tribe on Cape Cod. During a voyage from Philadelphia to the African West Coast in 1811, the idea came to Cuffee that former slaves might be better off by returning to Africa. Upon his return to America, he recruited

thirty-eight free blacks as colonists and in 1815, took them to the British Colony of Sierra Leone on Africa's West Coast that had been established in 1787 as a home for England's free blacks.

News of this event inspired such prominent Americans as Congressmen Henry Clay of Kentucky and Daniel Webster of New Hampshire, attorney Francis Scott Key of Maryland and three Virginians, Treasury Secretary William Crawford, Senator John Randolph and Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington, to form an organization for promoting colonization in Africa. In December of 1816, the group, headed by Presbyterian clergyman Robert Finley of New Jersey and with the support of President James Monroe, met at the Davis Hotel in Washington and formed the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America, later shortened to the American Colonization Society. Up until the 1860s, many other American political leaders, including Abraham Lincoln, were strong supporters of the Society's aims. After his election, however, Lincoln advocated such colonization in the area of Central America that is now Panama.

Chapters of the new Society were soon created throughout both the North and South and in 1821, agents for the Society headed by Navy Lieutenant Robert Stockton sailed from New York to the African West Coast to seek land for a colony. That December, they arrived at Cape Mesurado on the Pepper Coast near the British colony of Sierra Leone and began land acquisition negotiations with the local ruler, Zolu Duma, also known as King Peter. After some coercion, King Peter finally agreed to sell a thirty-six mile long strip of coastal land to the Society and the following year, the colony of Liberia was established with Monrovia as its capital.

A number of the Society's state chapters followed suit during the next fifteen years and started their own settlements which greatly expanded the area. These state colonies included New Georgia in 1826, Kentucky-in-Africa in 1828, Mississippi-in-Africa in 1831, the Republic of Maryland in 1834 and a Pennsylvania colony known as Bassa Cove in 1835. Society members in New Jersey had also planned a colony, but it was never established.

By 1837, Liberia had united all the separate state colonies and two years later, under the guidance of the Society, formed the Commonwealth of Liberia with a former free black from Virginia, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, as its governor. In 1847, Liberia declared its full independence, formed a constitutional republic and elected Roberts as its first president.

Roberts had been born free in Norfolk in 1809 and at age twenty, migrated to Liberia where he became a merchant in Monrovia and served as sheriff there in 1833. After taking office as Liberia's first president in January of 1848, Roberts traveled to Europe seeking recognition for the new republic, meeting first with Queen Victoria in London. Great Britain granted Liberia recognition that year and from 1852 to 1867, so did France, some of the German states, Belgium,

Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Portugal and Austria. The United States, however, did not establish formal diplomatic relations with Liberia until 1862 and the world's only other black republic at that time, Haiti, not until 1864.

From Liberia's birth in 1821 until the beginning of the War Between the States forty years later, some twelve thousand free blacks from various parts of America had settled in Liberia, with the majority coming from the South. The early settlers, known then as Americo-Liberians, ruled the area for well over a century, with those from the South, many of whom were former slaves, bringing with them all that they had known in the South and replanted it firmly in the soil of Africa. They adopted a Southern mode of life, including homes and buildings that resembled those in the South and all manner of Southern dress and customs, as well as plantations worked by native slaves.

One of the largest and most influential of the Southern groups was located in and around Harper, the capital of the former Republic of Maryland that existed from 1834 until 1837. Even today, parts of the town of Harper, the capital of what is now Liberia's Maryland County, still contain remnants of the antebellum South. An example would be the ruins of a Southern-style mansion that was once the home of William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman, the president of Liberia from 1944 to 1971.

Tubman's grandparents, William and Sylvia, were two of the sixty-nine slaves that had been freed in 1837 by their owner, Emily Tubman of Augusta, Georgia. Mrs. Tubman was a friend of Henry Clay who had suggested she send her freed slaves to Liberia and they arrived there in 1844. Rather than establishing a new land of liberty though, the former Tubman slaves, like others that had been freed and sent to Liberia before them, emulated their former white masters and created a mirror image of the antebellum South.

The same occurred with many of the new settlers from the United States, with the men and women dressing themselves in tailcoats and hoop skirts and setting out to recreate a microcosm of the world they had known in America. Those who could afford to do so built large Greek-revival mansions and laid out extensive plantations. The Americo-Liberians also became the absolute rulers of their new land and not only denied the indigenous natives many political rights, such as the right to vote, but used them as virtual slaves on their plantations.

For almost four decades after President Roberts took office in 1848, all of the eight men who followed him as president had come from America with all but one, Edward Roye of Ohio, having been born in the South. Even Liberia's first native-born president, Joseph Johnson, as well as all the others until 1980, had come from families of free-born or former slave immigrants. The last of the Americo-Liberian line of presidents was William Tolbert whose grandparents had

been slaves in South Carolina and Virginia. Tolbert had succeeded President Tubman in 1971 but was executed in 1980 during a violent military coup d'état led by army sergeant Samuel Doe who abolished the nation's constitution and declared himself president. Thus, after over a hundred thirty years, Doe became Liberia's first chief of state from a local native tribe.

Some might then ask, if both slavery and the antebellum South in which the institution existed are now condemned as evil, why would those who had actually experienced such evils want to recreate them in the land of their ancestors. Many today would merely dismiss it with some Kafkaesque psychobabble about a form of social metamorphosis in which the victim assumes the role of oppressor, but this would not be the case. The truth is that those who knew slavery first hand and whose roots were in the South viewed such things in a far different light than those who, for their own ends, now wish to condemn the South for what they perceive as its crime against humanity.

This was all brought to light over eighty years ago when, from 1936 to 1938, historians of the Federal Writers Project in President Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration interviewed two per cent of the more than a hundred twenty thousand former slaves still living at that time. While the responses were varied, ranging from fond memories of better times during their life of servitude to bitter accounts of cruel punishment, over eighty per cent of the respondents expressed generally favorable opinions of their former lives and masters.

As far as the remembered better times, the interviews clearly revealed that in many cases the former slaves did have a far better standard of living in bondage than after emancipation when it came to such basic needs as food, shelter, clothing and medical care. Other studies also showed that many workers in the North during the antebellum period, particularly newly arrived immigrants, fared far worse in regard to such needs, and certainly in the matter of job security.

The accounts of punishment should also be viewed in their proper context. Such punishment invariably referred to flogging, but corporal punishment was then standard practice in America for many crimes and remained so until well into the next century. At that time, flogging was also normal punishment in the U. S. military, as well as in schools and the home.

If one were to select a single interview to best illustrate the matter, perhaps the one with eighty-eight year old Elizabeth Finley of Gulfport, Mississippi, would serve the purpose. In her narrative, Ms. Finley spoke of her extremely hard life after the War and compared it to the life she had led in Gulfport where she had been born a slave in 1847. In her story, she said that "her white folks" were rich, lived in a "big white house with round posts in front" and that while they gave their slaves "plenty to eat and wear," they also "beat on them plenty."

Further on, she stated that “them Yankee men” told the slaves that “the government would give us some land and a mule to work with, but we never did get anything from them.” She ended by saying that they were “mighty proud of their freedom, but life is harder now than it was in those (earlier) times.” Many of the slave narratives repeated the same story of how hard their current lives were in comparison with the abundance they had known in bondage.

What took place during the formation of Liberia two centuries ago certainly does not coincide with today’s skewed concept of slavery and the antebellum South. Also, present-day media accounts of Liberia’s unusual early history are designed more to shock than to inform, but considering the background of those who created the nation, the actual history should not be surprising.

Of the seven Southern presidents who founded and first led Liberia, all but the final chief executive, former Kentucky slave Alfred Russell, had been born free. The Southern way of life they knew, therefore, was what they brought with them to Africa and transplanted there. Furthermore, it should also seem perfectly normal, judging from many of the comments made by actual former slaves, that those who settled in Africa would feel right at home in the Southern setting that had been created for them.

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Source:

<https://www.abbeyvilleinstitute.org/dixie-africanus/>

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