Slavery and the Law

Slavery and the Law features petitions on race, slavery, and free blacks that were submitted to state legislatures and county courthouses between 1775 and 1867. The petitions provide testimony on a broad range of subjects by a variety of southerners—Black and white, slave and free, slaveholder and non-slaveholder, man and woman. The documents vividly portray the contrasts, ambivalences, contradictions, ironies, and ambiguities that comprise southern history. They reveal not only what southerners were saying, but what they were doing; not only what happened to slaves, but how the slaves responded. They show how complex political, economic, legal, and social conditions affected the lives of southerners, Black and white, male and female, slave and free. This unparalleled resource offers topical, geographical, and chronological breadth and penetrating depth of this subject matter.

Responding to a specific event, situation, or danger, petitioners realized that it behooved them to be as forthright as possible. They often discussed their circumstances with remarkable candor. Included are rare biographical and genealogical details—how slaves, as chattel, could and often did find themselves sold, conveyed, or distributed as part of their master's estates; and the impact of market forces on the slave family. The guardianship and divorce petitions provide a unique picture of slaveholding white women.

Series I: Petitions to State Legislatures offers access to primary source materials to open new vistas of scholarship. Dramatically enriching understanding of slavery in the U.S. and on African American and southern history and culture, the collection will have convenient access to open new vistas of scholarship. The enhanced interface you see here, modeled after the ProQuest platform, with input from librarians and researchers, has led to enhanced access to decades of history in seconds. Beyond the ease and convenience of remote 24/7 digital access, the History Vault interface still allows for targeted searching of full text and metadata as well as more serendipitous discovery. Steve options include event timelines and detailed descriptions of the archival collections from which the materials are drawn. For a free trial or more information, visit www.proquest.com/go/history and contact us at www.proquest.com/go/contactus_hv.

New History Vault interface

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On the home page, module subscriptions are now grouped by five new categories that allow users to see the major content areas covered:

- Southern Life and Slavery
- Civil Rights and the Black Freedom Struggle
- International Relations and Military Conflicts
- Women's Rights
- American Politics and Society

See unique content highlights on “featured modules”

- • Key documents and contextual background notes help users find relevant material
- • Suggested searches customized to specific module
- • Linked documents from a durable module description that can be used on a Library A-Z module description that can be used on a Library A-Z
- • View all collections’ links leads to descriptions of all collections that compose a module

A visionary digital archive for today’s researcher

History Vault gives researchers what they need—with access to millions of primary source, cross-searchable, full-text/ full-image documents on the most widely studied topics in 19th and 20th-century American history. The vast majority of the content in History Vault is not available elsewhere. The sets of invaluable content in History Vault are perfect for researchers in history, African American studies, political science, social sciences, sociology, and international studies.

This unparalleled collection will continue to build, with new titles covering the full sweep of U.S. history from the American Revolution to the last years of the 20th century. ProQuest History Vault currently includes approximately 14 million pages of primary source material and is projected to grow to over 50 million pages in the next several years.

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Responding to a specific event, situation, or danger, petitioners realized that it behooved them to be as forthright as possible. They often discussed their circumstances with remarkable candor. Included are rare biographical and genealogical details—how slaves, as chattel, could and often did freed themselves sold, conveyed, or distributed as part of their master’s estate—and the impact of market forces on the slave family. The genealogical and emancipation petitions provide an unusually clear picture of the association between slave and free Black, and the divorce petitions provide a unique picture of slaveholding white women.

Series I: Petitions to State Legislatures offers access to important but virtually unused primary source materials that were scattered in state archives of Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The collection includes virtually all extant legislative petitions on the subject of race and slavery.

Series II: Petitions to Southern County Courts were collected from local courthouses, and carefully document the realities of slavery at the most immediate grassroots level in southern society. It was at county courthouses where the vast majority of disputes over the institution of slavery were referred. The petitions that were filed provide some of the most revealing documentation in evidence on the functioning of the slave system.

Slavery and the Law also includes State Slavery Statutes, a master record of the laws governing American slavery, covering 1799-1865. Materials in the collection cover virtually every aspect of the regulation of Blacks of the period. With the slavery statutes available digitally, historians will have convenient access to revealing legislation on African-American and southern history and culture.

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- Southern Life and Slavery
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- Women’s Rights
- International Relations and Military Conflicts
- Religion

Suggested searches customized to specific modules will provide a shortcut to a durable URL for a module description that can be used on a Library A-Z database list.

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“These modules of History Vault are extraordinary, necessary historical resources. Highly recommended for libraries serving serious scholars of Southern, African American and women’s history.”

—Dary Leal-Leal, library director

Substantial documents in this module from the holdings of the Louisiana State University Libraries document cotton and sugar plantations in Louisiana and the lower Mississippi Valley. One of the highlights of the Louisiana materials is the David ragin collection of letters to his family from his plantation in Louisiana. The letters discuss the financial struggles in the 1880s and 1890s, and family life, political life, and women’s issues.

Part 1 also includes numerous and important collections from the Virginia Historical Society. The Tyler Family collection documents the last land and slave holdings of the Tyler family in Virginia, Maryland, and Alabama. In addition, Virginia Historical Society collections also document the major geographical regions of Virginia. Many prominent Virginia families are documented in the Southern field collections. The Tyler collections come from families in circumstances ranging from vast wealth and influence to a more hardscrabble existence. Central Plantations concern tobacco and grain plantations, horse breeding, slaves and slavery, and social and political life.

The records presented in Part 1 come from the holdings of the Virginia Historical Society and Virginia Deliberations will find many major collections presented in this module from the holdings of the University of Virginia. One of the extraordinary collections is the papers of General John Ambler, a protégé of the American Colonization Society, a supporter of the American Colonization Society, a protégé of Thomas Jefferson, and an extraordinary collection of plantation records and personal correspondence regarding Clay's imprisonment, including letters to his wife, and letters from Virginia Clay to Andrew Jackson. Another of the major collections from the Duke holdings is the James Haycock collection from the holdings of the University of Virginia. The diary and letterbooks of Robert "King" Carter, one of the richest Virginians of the early 18th century, permit the study of plantation practices prior to the closing of the transatlantic slave trade. The John Ambler Papers include correspondence from overseers from several of Ambler's plantations as well as documents on slave sales, runaway slaves, debt, and the work loads of adults and children. The papers of John, Jacob, and his father, Philip Pendleton Randolph, contain revealing information on slave discipline and the plantation life. The papers of the Watson Family of Louisa County document the life of the Watson family in Virginia plantation management, and the life and family life of the Watson Family of Louisa County. The Watson collection provides insight into the culture and market of tobacco over the course of many decades. The Watson collection provides important insights into the social structure and the political life of the planter class.

During 1866-1915, the Watson collection provides insight into the Richmond National Archives. Through active libraries to the National Archives, the Watson Collection provides insight into the culture and market of tobacco over the course of many decades. The Watson collection provides important insights into the social structure and the political life of the planter class.

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Part 1: Sourced from the holdings of the South Caroliniana Library, the records are unmatched by any of the other available sources. Keeping journals, crop books, overseers’ journals, and account books, invaluable data remains. Family members often kept emotional diaries and corresponded extensively with friends and relatives far and near.

Southern Plantation Records illuminate nearly every aspect of plantation life: business operations and day-to-day labor routines, family affairs, roles of women, and relations between masters and slaves. Southern Life and African American History document the far-reaching impact of plantations on the lives of all enslaved persons. Based on feedback from librarians and researchers, History Vault has included in Part 1.

The records presented in Part 2 come from the holdings of the University of Virginia. One of the major collections from the University of Virginia is the Mary Monico papers, which contains over one thousand acres of land. As a planter, Monico was interested in improvements in agricultural practices, and he campaigned against tobacco as a cash crop. His opposition to tobacco planting was indicative of a more general reform spirit that characterized his life. During these years, the transition to a free labor economy, financial struggles in the 1880s and 1890s, and family life are the dominant themes in the Weeks Family Papers. There are several other notable collections from the Louisiana State University Libraries included in Part 1.

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During 1860–1915, the Wilson collection provides insight into the lives of planters to the cotton market in the years after the Civil War. The Clay papers reveal the experience of women on postbellum plantations. They also shed light on the correspondence of Virginia, regarding the efforts to maintain the family plantation in her husband’s native state. The Wilson Museum and Tulane University, such as the Valcour Aime Family Collection. Rounding out Part 1 are collections from the Louisiana State University Libraries and Tulane University, such as the Valcour Aime Family Collection. Rounding out Part 1 are collections from the Louisiana State University Libraries and Tulane University, such as the Valcour Aime Family Collection.
Southern Plantation Records illuminate nearly every aspect of plantation life: business operations and day-to-day labor routines, family affairs, roles of women, the social and economic relationships between masters and slaves, and the cultural life. Shared values, and tensions and conflicts that were inescapable from a slave society. All are revealed with a fullness and candor unmatched by any of the other available sources.

The extensive papers of James Henry Hammond and other Hammond family members are one of the highlights of this collection. Almost all of the documents held by the Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, the Hammond Part 1. Sourced from the holdings of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, the Hammond Part 1 also includes numerous and important collections from the Virginia Historical Society. The Taylor Family collection, for example, documents the vast land and slave holdings of the Taylor family in Virginia, Maryland, and Alabama. In addition, Virginia Historical Society collections also, in Part 2, contain records and snowpail correspondence constitute one of the most comprehensive Plantation collections in existence. The Southern Plantation Records and the Southern Plantation Records Historical Society chronicle several generations of plantations. The collection focuses on life in Maryland and the 18th and 19th centuries, and includes a sizable quantity of material from the Revolutionary War era. Topics include trans-Atlantic trade, Colonial and Revolutionary-era politics, 18th-century medical practice, and household production of consumable products, ranging from textiles to salt. Other notable collections from the Maryland Historical Society include the Susannah Warfield Diaries and the Martha Turner Diaries. "These modules of History Vault are extraordinary, necessary historical resources. Highly recommended for libraries serving serious scholars of Southern, African American and women's history." —Cheryl LaGuardia, Library Journal

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Southern Life and African American History, 1775-1915, Plantations Records

Part 1

Additional collections from the holdings of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, the Hammond Part 1 also includes numerous and important collections from the Virginia Historical Society. The Taylor Family collection, for example, documents the vast land and slave holdings of the Taylor family in Virginia, Maryland, and Alabama. In addition, Virginia Historical Society collections also, in Part 2, contain records and snowpail correspondence constitute one of the most comprehensive Plantation collections in existence. The Southern Plantation Records and the Southern Plantation Records Historical Society chronicle several generations of plantations. The collection focuses on life in Maryland and the 18th and 19th centuries, and includes a sizable quantity of material from the Revolutionary War era. Topics include trans-Atlantic trade, Colonial and Revolutionary-era politics, 18th-century medical practice, and household production of consumable products, ranging from textiles to salt. Other notable collections from the Maryland Historical Society include the Susannah Warfield Diaries and the Martha Turner Diaries.

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Series II: Petitions to Southern County Courts

Series II: Petitions to State Legislatures offers access to important but virtually unused primary source materials that were scattered in state archives of Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The collection includes virtually all extant legislative petitions on the subject of race and slavery between 1775 and 1867. The petitions provide testimony on a broad range of subjects by a variety of southerners—Black and white, slave and free, slaveholder and non-slaveholder, man and woman. The documents vividly portray the contrarieties, ambivalences, contradictions, ironies, and ambiguities that comprise southern history. They reveal not only what southerners were saying, but how they were saying it because virtually all of the petitions were formalized, as much as possible. They often discussed their circumstances with remarkable candor. Included are rare biographical and genealogical details—how slaves, as chattel, could and often did feel themselves sold, conveyed, or distributed as part of their master’s estates, and the impact of market forces on the slave family. The petitioning and remonstrations petitions present an unusually clear picture of the association between slaves and free Blacks, and the divorce petitions provide a unique picture of slaveholding white women.

Petition Analysis Report (PAR)

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