

IN LIGHT OF HISTORY

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FREE



Introduction

As part of Baltimore's first Light City Festival, In Light of History offers an opportunity for viewers to reflect on Baltimore's domestic slave trade. Old-fashioned street lamps with colored lights mark select locations along Baltimore's waterfront that were once prominent sites for participants in the trade during the 1830s through 1850s. Slave dealers and Baltimore merchants transported African American slaves in and out of the city, advertised their human property and their desire to buy, and negotiated sales and rental agreements to fulfill the needs for labor in the city and far beyond.

This installation is just the start of a project intended to explore Baltimore's stories of both slavery and freedom. During the same time the slave trade flourished in Baltimore, there were slave owners in the city who voluntarily freed their slaves,

abolitionists who called for an end to slavery, philanthropists who began schools for blacks, and a population of free blacks that far exceeded those enslaved, working as skilled laborers and artisans across the city.

This newspaper includes just a sampling of the newspaper advertisements, books, documents and digital media that informed this installation. More information can be found online at www.inlightofhistory.com. The history of the lives of Baltimore's merchants and slave traders, its abolitionists and agitators, its free black and immigrant populations weave together to tell a complex story of economic growth, survival, and cultural change. We hope that In the Light of History will encourage further exploration of the facts behind Baltimore's history of tragedy and survival, and inspire conversations of what this history implies for our future.

Paul Rucker in Collaboration with Reginald F. Lewis Museum

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Founding of Baltimore
Town by charter.

1729



Benjamin Banneker, a free black of Baltimore, writes a letter to Thomas Jefferson challenging his claims of liberty and equality in *The Declaration of Independence* and pleading for justice for African Americans.

1791

1710

Maryland's black population makes up roughly 18.7% of the state's population with many brought from the Gold Coast of West Africa.

1783

Maryland prohibits the importation of African slaves

1790

Baltimore's population is 13,503, including 1,255 free blacks and 323 enslaved blacks.



***Note to all readers: The lampposts mark the Pratt Street coordinate closest to the actual location of the slave dealer. For all actual locations, please see the advertisements.

LOCATION INFORMATION

#1 Slave Merchant: Joseph S. Donovan

NEGROES WANTED
The highest cash prices will be given for NEGROE. I WISH TO PURCHASE A LARGE LOT OF Negroes for Sugar and Cotton Planters. I also will give the largest sort of prices for House Servants or Mechanics. Those having such for sale, will find it to their interest to call at my office, Camden street, in the rear of the railroad Depot. July 23, 1847, Baltimore Sun.

CASH FOR NEGROES
The undersigned continues at his old stand No. 13 Camden Street to pay the highest prices for Negroes by railroad or steamboat, will find it very convenient to secure their Negroes, as my jail is adjoining the railroad depot, and near the steamboat landings. Negroes

received for safe keeping. April 26, 1851, Baltimore Sun.

FIFTY DOLLARS REWARD
—Ran away on the night of the 11th of Sept., a NEGRO WOMAN, named Sarah Green, 32 years of age, dark brown color, tall and straight, rather long waisted. Has lost her upper front teeth; her dress was reddish figured calico; had on cotton plaid handkerchief on her head. She was lately purchased from Richard Gardener, near Annapolis. Her mother (Hanna Green) lives in Strawberry Alley near Caroline Meeting House. The above reward will be paid upon delivery of her at J.S. DONOVAN, Pratt street, near Cove. September 21, 1844, Baltimore Sun

#2 Slave Merchant: Hope Hull Slatter

NEGROES WANTED — Having recently returned from New Orleans and being desirous to purchase a large number of

Negroes, such as field hands, house servants and mechanics for which I will pay the very highest cash prices. Persons having negroes to dispose of will find it to their interest to call on me at my old establishment, No. 242 PRATT Street, between Sharp and Howard. All communications promptly attended to if addressed to HOPE H.SLATTER Baltimore. November 25, 1847, Baltimore Sun.

CASH FOR NEGROES - The subscriber has built a large and extensive establishment and private jail for the keeping of SLAVES, in PRATT, one door from Howard St. opposite the Circus or Repository. The building having been erected under his own inspection, and without regard to price; planned and arranged upon the most approved principle, with an eye to comfort and convenience, not surpassed by any establishment of the kind in the United States, is now ready to receive SLAVES. The male and female apartments are completely separate—the

rooms for both are large, light and airy, and all above ground, with a fine large yard for exercise, with pure delightful water within doors. In erecting and planning this edifice, the subscriber had an eye to health and cleanliness of the slaves, as well as the many other necessary conveniences. Having a wish to accommodate my Southern friends and others in the trade. I am determined to Keep them on the lowest possible terms, at twenty-five cents per head a day, and furnish them with plenty of good and wholesome provisions. Such security and confidence I have in my building, that I hold myself bound to make good all jail breaking, or escape from my establishment. I also will receive, ship or forward to any place, at the request of the owner, and give it my personal attention. N.B.—Cash and the highest prices will at all times be given for likely slaves of both sexes with good and sufficient titles. Persons having such property to dispose of, would do well to see me before they sell, as I am always purchasing for the New Orleans

market-, or my agent can at all times be found at my office in the basement story of my new building. HOPE H. SLATTER- January 30, 1839, Baltimore Sun.

CASH FOR FIVE HUNDRED NEGROES — At the old establishment of SLATTER'S NO.244 PRATT STREET, Baltimore, between Sharp and Howard streets, where the highest prices are paid, which is well known. We have large accommodations for Negroes, and always buying. Receiving regular shippers to New Orleans, persons should bring their property here no commissions are paid, as the owners lose it. All communications attended to promptly by addressing H.F. SLATTER February 8, 1847, Baltimore Sun.

SLAVES WANTED - All persons who desire the largest kind of prices for SLAVES they may wish to sell, will be sure to receive it by calling at our office, No.26 CONWAY Street, before selling we are at all times anxious to make purchases in that way of Cooks, Washers, and Ironers etc. Also every kind of mechanics and families of Slaves. All communications addressed to us will be attended to immediately. We receive Negroes which are for sale on board at 26 cents per day. B.M. & W.L. Campbell November 25, 1847, Baltimore Sun.

NEGROES WANTED
Persons having SLAVES to sell will hereafter find us located at the extensive establishment formerly owned by Hope H. Slatter. We have purchased his entire possessions on PRATT STREET, No. 244, at which place all who have

SLAVES to sell will be sure to get the highest prices, when the negroes are young and likely. The place is now open to receive on BOARD negroes which are for sale at 25 cents per day. All communications will meet with prompt attention. B.M. & W.L. CAMPBELL January 20, 1849, Baltimore Sun.

#4 Participant in Slave Trade: The Baltimore Sun

FOR SALE - A first rate cook, washer and ironer with her two female children. She is well qualified for her profession being a first rate pastry, beignet and bread maker. A situation in the country would be preferred. Her husband, a first rate coachman can be purchased if desired. Enquire at the Sun office. July 1, 1845, Baltimore Sun.

FOR SALE - A COLORED BOY - 18 years of age, having 17 years to serve - understands attending and driving a horse. Apply at the Sun office. January 11, 1847, Baltimore Sun.

#5 Slave Merchant: William Harker

FOR SALE, a likely NEGRO BOY, about twenty years of age, and has near fourteen years to serve. He is a first rate hand with horse and will be sold a bargain, if immediate application be made to the subscriber, at No. 2 SOUTH CALVERT STREET, two doors below Baltimore street. William Harker, August 24, 1842, Baltimore Sun.

#6 Slave Merchant: John Woods

Light City location: Commerce & Water or Commerce & Pratt which is 2 blocks south Actual Location: The Old Exchange (Comer of Commerce & Water Street).

A VALUABLE NEGRO GIRL FOR SALE BY AUCTION
-On Friday next, at the Old Exchange at 12 o'clock immediately after the sale of Dry Goods, will be sold a stout healthy Negro Wench, 17 years old, recently from the country. Any person wishing to possess a valuable servant will do well to embrace the present opportunity. John Wood, Auctioneer. The American & Commercial Daily Advertiser, December 30, 1813.

#7 Participant in Slave Trade: The American & Commercial Daily Advertiser

EASTERN SHORE SERVANTS FOR SALE.

An elderly WOMAN, a slave for life, another to serve for a term of years, and a GIRL 12 years old,

also, to serve for a term of years. These women are as good Cooks, Washers, and Ironers as any in the country, and the GIRL is a first rate nurse, and house servant for her size. They are perfectly sober, honest, good, disposed people, and are sold for no fault. They will be sold to good masters at low prices, either for cash or approved endorsed notes at sixty days, interest and stamp added, apply at the American Office. The American & Commercial Daily Advertiser, 2 South Gay Street.

January 11, 1847, Baltimore Sun.

#8 O'Donnel's Wharf

Locations for incoming and outgoing brigs and barques where dockside sales of enslaved people took place.

#9 Slave Merchant: John N. Denning

NEGROES WANTED --- I will pay the highest price in cash, for any number of NEGROES with good titles, slaves for life, or for a term of years, in large or small families, or single negroes. I will also purchase negroes restricted to remain in State, that sustain good character. Families never separated. Persons having slaves for sale will please call and see me, as I am always in the market with the cash. Communications promptly attended to and liberal commissions paid by JOHN N DENNING, No. 104 North Exeter street, near the Methodist Episcopal Church. December 14, 1848, Baltimore Sun.

5,000 NEGROES WANTED
— I will pay the highest prices in cash for 5,000 NEGROES with good titles, slaves for life or for a term of years, in large or small families, or single negroes. I will also purchase Negroes restricted to remain in the State that sustain good characters. Families never separated. Persons having Slaves for sale will please call and see me, as I am always in the market with cash. Communications promptly attended to and liberal commissions paid by JOHN N. DENNING No. 18 South Frederick street, between Baltimore and Second street, Baltimore, Maryland. Trees in front of the House. August 5, 1852 Baltimore Sun.

Thomas Brown, a free black of Baltimore, seeks election to the Maryland House of Delegates to represent "many hundreds of poor blacks as in habit this town..."

1792

The Maryland General Assembly prohibits free blacks from voting.

1802



Benjamin Lundy, editor of the Genius of Universal Emancipation, is physically assaulted by slave dealer Austin Woolfolk on Pratt Street.

1827



Hezekiah Niles, Baltimore editor of The Weekly Register, writes, "Dealing in slaves has become a large business; establishments are made in several places in Maryland and Virginia at which they are sold like cattle."

1829

1797

Baltimore Town is incorporated as a city.

1816

The Protection Society of Maryland is formed by leading citizens of Baltimore to protect free blacks.

1831

The Maryland State Colonization Society is incorporated to relocate free blacks to West Africa.



1838

Frederick Bailey (Douglass), an enslaved caulker, escapes from Baltimore by train wearing sailor's attire and carrying a seaman's certificate.

1839

DEALERS IN HUMAN BONDAGE

Austin Woolfolk (1796 – 1847)

Operated mainly at Pratt Street West of Cove
Sometime after the War of 1812, veteran Austin Woolfolk established himself in Maryland as a slave dealer on the Eastern Shore. After moving to Baltimore, the Louisiana native set up a business model that persisted in the city for the next 40 years. Local dealers who succeeded Woolfolk used targeted ads to acquire slaves. Like Woolfolk, Hope Slatter housed slaves in a brick and mortar building with an attached residence. In addition, the Campbells turned their business into a family enterprise just as Woolfolk had, with relatives who oversaw operations in the deep South. What most distinguished Woolfolk from his peers was the extensive use of packet ships and other seagoing vessels to transport enslaved people South. According to Ralph Clayton (*Cash for Blood*), Woolfolk shipped over 2,600 people to New Orleans during his time in Baltimore.

Hope Hull Slatter (1790 – 1853)

Operated mainly at 242 & 244 Pratt Street Hope Hull Slatter a native of Clinton, Georgia, became a leading slave dealer in Baltimore after the era of Woolfolk. One of the most detailed descriptions of a Baltimore slave jail is found in one of Slatter's early newspaper ads. With a building centrally located on Pratt Street, Slatter used trains to transport slaves to Georgia and boats to transport others to New Orleans. In 1937, construction workers discovered a tunnel two blocks long leading to the Light Street wharf. Based on its location and on slave narratives collected during the 1930s, many believe Slatter built this structure to transport slaves to ships.

Joseph S. Donovan (circa 1801 – 1861)

Operated at Pratt Street near Cove (Austin Woolfolk's main location) and Camden Street (in the "rear of the Rail-Road Depot"). In the 9 years that he was in business (1843 – 1852), Donovan, a Maryland native, shipped over 2,100 people to the New Orleans market.

John N. Denning (circa 1813 – 1883?)

Operated at 104 N. Exeter Street and 18 South Frederick Street. An active dealer in the 1840s and early 1850s, Denning is identified in the 1850 census as a "Negroes Buyer" and Maryland native. At his death, he left \$150,000 (equivalent to over \$3,571,000 today) to his granddaughter; the will was contested by relatives who claimed Denning suffered from mental health issues.

Jonathan M. Wilson (circa 1797 - ?)

Operated in multiple locations. Wilson, a Virginia native, operated as a slave dealer between 1839 and 1849. He had multiple business partners, including Hope Slatter and Joseph Donovan. In 1860, he was listed as operating a store depot in the 3rd ward of New Orleans.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT: WOOLFOLK'S SLAVE MARKET

In 1852, Frederick Douglass gave a speech at Corinthian Hall in Rochester, NY in which he offered an account of Woolfolk's "grand slave mart" and the Baltimore slave trade.

"... To me the American slave-trade is a terrible reality. When a child, my soul was often pierced with a sense of its horrors. I lived on Philpot Street, Fell's Point, Baltimore, and have watched from the wharves, the slave ships in the basin, anchored from the shore. With their cargoes of human flesh, waiting for favorable winds to waft them down the Chesapeake. There was, at that time, a grand slave mart kept at the head of Pratt Street, by Austin Woolfolk. His agents were sent into every town and county in Maryland, announcing their arrival, through the papers, and on flaming "hand-bills," headed CASH FOR NEGROES. These men were generally well dressed men, and very captivating in their manners. Ever ready to drink, to treat, and to gamble. The fate of many a slave has depended upon the turn of a single card; and many a child has been snatched from the arms of its mother by bargains arranged in a state of brutal drunkenness. The flesh-mongers gather up their victims by dozens, and drive them, chained, to the general depot at Baltimore. When a sufficient number have been collected here, a ship is chartered, for the purpose of conveying the forlorn crew to Mobile, or to New Orleans. From the slave prison to the ship, they are usually driven in the darkness of night; for since the antislavery agitation, a certain caution is observed.

In the deep still darkness of midnight, I have been often aroused by the dead heavy footsteps, and the piteous cries of the chained gangs that passed our door. The anguish of my boyish heart was intense; and I was often consoled, when speaking to my mistress in the morning, to hear her say that the custom was very wicked; that she hated to hear the rattle of the chains, and the heart-rending cries. I was glad to find one who sympathized with me in my horror. —excerpt from *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* by Frederick Douglass

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT: SLATTER'S PRATT STREET JAIL

Hope Hull Slatter was known for welcoming out-of-town visitors to his Pratt Street jail. The Hutchinson Family Singers, an American singing group popular in the 1840s, visited Slatter's facility; their experience was recorded in a family memoir published in 1896.

"While standing looking on these unfortunates, a gate was swung ajar, and in came a company of stalwarts who went through the routine of some athletic exhibitions, cutting up some of their antics by which they were taught to show their power, their health, their ambition and their spirit, so they would be purchased in all confidence as contented, happy servants. The keeper tried their muscles. They rolled up their sleeves to show what strength they had. Some would make good field hands, others were for domestic use. This was a national institution, approved by the Constitution and laws of the land. Our hearts sickened at the sight. As we turned to retreat from the prison we inwardly cursed such an institution, and resolved and re-resolved to do everything in our power to ameliorate the slaves' condition." —excerpt from *Story of the Hutchinsons* (Tribe of Jesse)

by John Wallace Hutchinson



Riots occur on Pratt Street: Union troops and allied volunteer units are attacked by a local mob en route to the District of Columbia.

1861

Slavery is officially abolished in Maryland with the adoption of the new state constitution.

1864

1845

Frederick Douglass publishes *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* which becomes an important tool in the fight against slavery in the U.S. and abroad.

1863

President Abraham Lincoln issues the *Emancipation Proclamation*, granting freedom to enslaved people residing in states occupied by the Confederacy. Union troops under orders from Col. William Birney liberate the Campbell slave jail.