

## **Building America: Contributions of African American Slaves**

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American and Caribbean slaves often have been portrayed merely as unskilled agricultural field hands and domestics servants. However, as Stanley Engerman and Robert Fogel point out, “the common belief that all slaves were menial laborers is false.”

—Brendon Foley, *Slaves in the Maritime Economy 1638 -1865*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The accomplishments of African Americans and their contributions to our society have been left out of most history books. Therefore, most African Americans do not know of their contributions to history. I would like to develop a teaching unit pertaining to the contributions that African American slaves have made to American history.

Slaves performed all kinds of jobs within the United States of America. They worked on plantations and in the towns or cities at various kinds of occupations whether they were skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled. The slave labor helped to build the United States into the great country it is today. Enslaved African labor was necessary for the survival of European colonial economies in the Americas from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The slaves from West and Central Africa imported the knowledge of growing rice, which grew well in their land, to South Carolina and Georgia. The slaves taught the slave owners how to cultivate this crop. Rice did not grow in Great Britain. Other foods that came from Africa were watermelon, black-eyed peas, sorghum, okra, and millet. The Africans prepared these foods along with various gumbo and rice dishes.

Many Africans prepared single pot meals such as gumbo. They taught these cooking methods to other Americans. Some of the cooking utensils such as colono ware and terracotta vessels were used for cooking and storage, as well as African pottery.

The shotgun house is an example of Yoruba housing. As free Haitians came to Louisiana, they brought the knowledge of building these houses with them.

Shotgun houses are narrow (roughly 12 feet wide), 2 to 3 rooms deep, aligned with the gable and front door facing the street, which are distinctive parts of the design. Theoretically, one could open all doors of the house, fire a bullet through and not disturb anything, hence “shotgun” (Joyner 25-26).

The African influence is found in African American music, which uses repetition as a part of their song. This is found in many of the Old Negro Spirituals. As it was done in

Africa many of the slaves sang songs while they worked in the fields on the plantations. “In the arts, jazz, blues, and rock-and-roll are stamped with African influences as is bluegrass music with its signature instrument the banjo, being of African origin” (Joyner 2).

Some African words that have become a part of American English are okra, gumbo, goober, and jazz. The Gullah/Geechee cultures have their origins in Africa. Examples of these cultures can be found in South Carolina, Georgia, and Northern Florida. These cultures are found in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and the Golden Crescent of Georgia and Florida. Descendants of these cultures have practices, artisan skills, agricultural and linguistics attributable to Africa. These cultures survived because of the isolation from other areas and because people were brought from the same part of Africa.

Estevanico the Moor was also known as Esteban, a slave of Andres de Dorantes, an explorer, scout, medicine man, and interpreter. Esteban, along with his master, was a part of the Narvaez Expedition. The expedition met with hardships and the survivors built five small boats to sail across the Gulf of Mexico. Off the Coast of Galveston Island Esteban and the others became ship wrecked; only four of the explorers lived, and became slaves of the natives. After removing an arrow from a wounded Indian who then survived, they became shamans or medicine men. As medicine men they were able to make their way back to Mexico. While walking across Texas, Esteban, Cabeza de Vaca, and Andes de Dorantes heard stories about the Seven Cities of Gold. They told the governor of Mexico about them. Esteban, along with Fray Marcos de Niza, was chosen to lead the expedition. They discovered New Mexico and Arizona (Esteban’s picture is in the state house of Arizona as it founder). Esteban was killed by the Zuni Indians. York, a slave belonging to William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, helped to explore the Louisiana Purchase, and because of his color many of the Native Americans respected and trusted him. James Beckwourth, a runaway slave from St. Louis, Missouri traveled west. He lived with the Crow Indians for a while and discovered a pass in the Sierra Nevada. This pass is located north of Reno, Nevada. Many people traveled through it on their way to California.

Many African American slaves participated in the American Revolution. Many were promised freedom if they lived through the war, others fought in their masters’ places, still others were freed to fight. Prince Estabrook fought in the battle of Lexington and Concord. Prince Whipple was one of George Washington’s oarsmen as they crossed the Delaware. William Lee, a slave of George Washington, fought next to his master throughout the war.

Approximately 15 per cent of the Continental Army was Black. Washington called his army a “mixed multitude” (Buckley 21). It would be the last integrated army until the Korean War. The only all Black regiment in the Continental Army was the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island and Massachusetts’. This all-black unit was called the Bucks of America, under the only black commissioned officer in the Continental Army, Samuel Middleton. The

1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island consisted of former slaves who were freed to fight in the Revolution. They fought in the Battle of Rhode Island on August 29, 1778. They prevented the British from invading the American line. They also fought in the Siege of Yorktown only about five hundred fifty (550) yards from the British lines (Buckley 26). James Armistead Lafayette, a slave, served as a double agent during the American Revolution. James volunteered for the Continental Army without the promise of freedom. He was stationed at Williamsburg, Virginia under the command of General Marquis de Lafayette. General Lafayette asked him to spy for the Continental Army. He was assigned to serve as a waiter in General Cornwallis' tent. He overheard all the British plans, which he would tell to other trusted slaves who dispatched this information to General Lafayette and later General Washington. When he was asked to spy for General Cornwallis, he gave wrong information. He told the general that he should wait before moving his army because the Continental Army was too strong; actually, only General Lafayette's troops were in place. When the rest of the Continental Army reached the area, Lafayette told him it was time for him to move his troops. The British army was trapped at Yorktown, General Washington and General Lafayette's forces were on land, the French fleet was along the coast of Virginia; thus General Cornwallis couldn't move. Lafayette's outstanding efforts, the Virginia council bought his freedom from his master William Armistead. James Armistead changed his name to James Lafayette because he greatly admired General Marquis de Lafayette.

Union officials found valuable sources of information from slaves who were freed once the area came under Union control. Many of the slaves served as spies and gave useful information to the officials in the area. Many of the spies held menial jobs in confederate camps and were ignored by the confederate officers. The slaves would carefully listen to plans made by the Confederates and relay them to Union officials. George Scott provided useful information to General Benjamin Butler about the troops' movement on the Virginia peninsula. Allan Pinkerton had all new slaves brought to him to find out useful information about the movement of southern troops. His best-known agent was John Scobell, who served as a food vendor, cook, or laborer. W. H. Ringgold was impressed into service by Virginia to help move troops and supplies along the Virginia peninsula. After a storm damaged his riverboat, he was permitted to travel North by way of Maryland's Eastern Shore. In Baltimore he looked for Union Army leaders and gave them information about Virginia movement of supplies and troops to Pinkerton.

Mary Touvestre, a freed slave working in Norfolk, Virginia, stole a set of plans for transforming the USS Merrimac into the Confederates' first ironclad warship and headed to Washington, D. C. The plans and intelligence she obtained about the movement of southern troops helped to speed up The Union production on their ironclad, the Monitor. Charlie Wright gave the Union needed information about the movement of troops northward. "While many reasons can be cited for Lee's defeat at Gettysburg, there can be no doubt that the ground held by the Union forces played a significant role in the victory. This was Charlie Wright's contribution. He had provided the intelligence that eventually enabled Union forces to get to Gettysburg first and seize the best ground." (Rose). There

were many other slaves who served as spies. A few of them were William A. Jackson, Mary Elizabeth Bowser, Harriet Tubman, and Mr. and Mrs. Dabney, who developed a clothes line telegraph, perhaps one of the most interesting stories of the Civil War (Rose).

In May, 1862, Robert Smalls, a slave, waited until the crew and captain of the Planter—a confederate ship from Charleston, South Carolina—had gone ashore. Then he, with the help of other slaves and some family members navigated it out of the harbor by posing as the captain, and immediately surrendered it to Union hands. They were rewarded by the US Government shortly thereafter for their efforts (Rose). The ship sailed again with Robert Smalls as captain under the Union flag. After the Civil War, Robert Smalls became a Congressman (Stull 40).

### **UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE – SLAVES AND MASTERS**

From 1793 until 1836, both slaves and freedmen could obtain patents for their inventions. In 1836 the law was changed to prevent slaves and masters from obtaining a patent for the slave's inventions. The United States Patent office refused to grant slaves patents for their inventions because slaves were not considered as citizens. The slave owners were also prevented from receiving a patent (*A Brief History of Patent Laws of the United States*). The first African American to obtain a patent was Thomas Jennings, on March 8, 1826, for a dry cleaning process called "dry scouring."

Henry Boyd, a slave living in Cincinnati, Ohio, invented a bed where the wooden rail screwed into both the headboard and the footboard. He used his skills as a carpenter and his invention to buy his freedom in 1826. Within ten years, he opened his own company. Boyd stamped his name on all the beds he made.

Benjamin Bradley, a slave working in the Annapolis Naval Academy, developed a steam engine for warships in the 1840's. Because he was unable to receive a patent for his invention, he sold it. He bought his freedom with the money he made from the sale of the steam engine. He spent the first money he made on legal fees to buy his family's freedom.

Oscar J. E. Stuart, a white Mississippi planter, wanted to receive a patent for his slave Ned's invention of the cotton scraper. After being denied the patent, he wrote a letter to Secretary of Interior Jacob Thompson, on August 25, 1858, telling him that the invention was his because it was the product of Ned's labor, both intellectual and manual. The federal government did not change the ruling and made it a written official policy in 1858.

In the case of Benjamin Montgomery, a slave of Joseph Davis, brother of Jefferson Davis, he invented an angled blade propeller that allowed steamboats to move in shallow water around the plantation. Joseph Davis tried to obtain a patent for Montgomery's invention, and he was denied a patent as well. When Jefferson Davis became President

of the Confederate States of America, he had the confederate congress pass a law permitting slave owners to obtain a patent for the inventions of their slaves.

Cyrus McCormick gave Joe Anderson, his slave, credit for the idea of the mechanical grain reaper. However, McCormick filed and received the patent for this invention. He continued to receive a patent for the improvement of it. He also opened factories that produced the reapers.

James Derham was the first African American slave to receive training as a doctor by his master Dr. John Kearsley, Jr. He learned how to mix and administer medicines to Kearsley patients. During the American Revolution, Kearsley was arrested for being a Tory and died in prison. Derham was sold to a British officer and doctored soldiers during the war. After the war, he became the property of Dr. Robert Dove of New Orleans, Louisiana. Dr. Dove looked upon him as being an assistant and later freed him. Derham continued his practice and served both the black and white populations of New Orleans, Louisiana. Many slaves used herbs to cure various illnesses, and many of them brought this knowledge from Africa and were considered to be some of the best herbal healers.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Urban**

Most African American slaves that lived in the cities were either domestics or maritime workers. Most domestics were female slaves. Slave women also served as cooks, seamstresses, laundresses, spinners, weavers, and shopkeepers. Other male slaves in the urban setting were coachmen, gardeners, or tradesmen. Urban settings did not provide for the family unit. Many of the owners only owned one or two slaves. Most of these slaves lived in the loft areas within the kitchens, stables, or laundries. These slaves often had more freedom of movement, were better dressed, and often served as messengers between the other slaves and the masters.

As early as 1638, slaves were employed in the maritime industry. During the early days in the colonies there were never enough workers in this industry. The maritime workers worked on and around the docks in the cities and towns in America. Without slaves (most working as shipwrights, lightermen, caulkers, sailmakers, boatmen, riggers, coopers, mariners, and pilots), it would have been difficult to load, unload, and transport goods both within the United States and to other countries throughout the world. Workers in the maritime industries were skilled laborers and worked alongside the free white workers. Sometimes the sailors were allowed to make trips to distant places. Black sailors played a part in the American Revolution. One of them was Crispus Attucks, a runaway slave, who was killed in the Boston Massacre. Attucks, along with others slaves, demonstrated in support of colonial freedom.

Before the American Revolution, maritime slaves were the most common male occupations in urban areas. Slaves negotiated with their masters the right to be hired on voyages. This money was used to support the slave family and also to buy their freedom. In some communities churches for slaves received some of the money as well. After the Revolution more jobs were created. Maritime workers provided wages and allowed the slaves to communicate with the outside world as well. Many workers helped to provide escape routes and helped escaping slaves. Their boats, uniforms, and certificates were all used to help the runaway slaves. They served as “conductors,” and “station operators,” on the Underground Railroad. Frederick Douglass worked as a caulker in the Baltimore shipyard in the 1830’s and used a sailor certificate and uniform to escape to freedom.

New York City, New York depended on slavery from 1629 – 1827. Slavery affected the lives of African Americans living there until the end of the Civil War. Many runaway slaves lived in New York; as a result, it became increasingly difficult for runaways to live there in peace following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. Just like the South, Manhattan relied on slave labor for the day-to-day survival and the economic life of the people living in the North. The slave population was about the same as that of Maryland and Virginia at that time. By the eighteenth century, New York’s slave population was exceeded only by that of Charleston, South Carolina and New Orleans, Louisiana. Many of the slaves were engaged in maritime work.

### **United States Government and Seamen**

Between 1740 and 1865 seafaring was one of the most significant occupations for black men both enslaved and free. In order to protect the African American seamen, the federal government (1796), issued the Seamen’s Protection Certificate to keep free black sailors from being taken into slavery. In this order, blacks were defined as citizens of the United States. Defining the seamen as citizens was one of the points argued for all blacks being declared as citizens of the United States. Some slaves ran away and became seamen, and when their masters came to claim them, they would claim that they were free. These slaves would use the Seamen’s Protection Certificate for their benefit, thus remaining free. Prince, a slave, deserted his ship in Maryland. A sailor passed him a Certificate for his freedom. When Frederick Douglass made his escape for freedom, he was dressed in a sailor uniform and had a certificate with him (Foley).

Inshore waterways or lowland transportation depended heavily, if not entirely, on slave labor. They manned the ferries, canoes, lighters, and river barges moving plantation goods to market, ferrying, and guiding people from one landing to another. Most of the hauling of goods to market was done by slaves, as well as the building of canals, roads, and boats that carried persons to ship harbors (also driven by slaves) (Foley).

Although maritime slaves were far outnumbered by bound agricultural workers, as skilled and informed men they might have had a disproportionate influence on their communities. While never specifically addressing maritime slaves While slavery

clearly limited the opportunities of bondsmen to acquire skills, the fact remains that over 25 percent were managers, professionals, craftsmen, and semiskilled workers . . . It was out of this class of skilled workers that many of the leaders of the slave community arose . . . This upper occupational stratum may have provided, as a number of historians have argued, a disproportionately large share of the leaders of protests, desertions, insurrections and rebellions (Foley).

By the 1850's the urban slave population was about 20 percent in Austin, Galveston, and Houston, Texas. The skilled slave population helped to build these cities. Urban slaves in most cases lived in houses of their owners or in adjacent houses. Sometimes the hired out slaves lived in separate slave-rented quarters. Slaves struggled for the privilege of living out in separate areas because of the freedom they were allowed.

### **Plantation**

In 1860 only about 5 percent of the slaves lived in the cities throughout the United States. Slavery was overwhelmingly rural, about fifty (50) percent of the slaves lived on plantations that had ten (10) to forty nine (49) slaves; twenty five (25) percent of the slaves lived on plantations with one (1) to nine (9) slaves; twenty five (25) percent lived on plantations of over fifty (50) or more slaves. Large numbers of these slaves were field hands harvesting the cotton, rice, tobacco, wheat, corn, hemp, and sugar. On small plantations most of the hands were field hands with children and the elderly providing household duties. It was only on the large plantations that slaves were in specialized occupations.

Slaves that lived in the rural areas worked on plantations. The plantations in most cases were self-sufficient. The slaves provided variety of labor from household domestics to skilled labor. The size of the plantation would determine the number of skilled, unskilled, and semi-skilled laborers. These laborers were blacksmiths, dressmakers, coopers, tailors, masons, wheelwrights, and cooks. On the Varner-Hogg Plantation located in Brazoria County, Texas slaves not only worked in the fields growing cotton and sugarcane but were carpenters, brick masons, hunters, fishers, tanners, and carvers. "As tragic as it was that people were enslaved during the plantation era, it was the slaves that made the plantation flourish and provided the economic backbone of Texas we know today" (Northcott).

Most of the slaves in Texas came with their owners from what is now the southeastern part of the United States or the Deep South or the Old South. However, at least two thousand (2,000) were brought to Texas illegally from Africa. Some of the slaves who were brought to Texas illegally were found on the Levi Jordan Plantation. Evidence collected by Dr. Kenneth Brown who completed excavations of the slave quarters can be found in the bone and shell craver's cabin along with other artifacts. The meaning of some of the artifacts recovered are of West African origin, expressing the power of the African religion that was practiced by the slaves. Most of the largest

plantations in Texas were located along the Brazos and Colorado rivers and most of the slaves lived in the following counties: Brazoria, Matagorda, Fort Bend, Wharton and Colorado. Plantations were found all over East Texas, Southeast Texas and Northeast Texas.

How did the life of urban slaves differ from that of rural slaves? Were there any similarities or differences between the two? In most cases the urban slave had more freedom than the rural slave and was able to earn money to buy his freedom. Many urban slaves would help various antislavery groups hide or help escaping slaves. Many of the boatmen used their boats to move runaway slaves.

Both urban and plantation slaves engaged in backbreaking hard work. In the maritime industry, many of the slaves were longshoremen. As longshoremen, they loaded and unloaded the ships that engaged in commerce within the United States and throughout the world. Many people are familiar with the role of the field hand in the plantation system. The field hands' jobs were to plow, plant, tend, and harvest the crop. In some cases, the slave would have to pull the plow or where there was no plow they would have to till the soil without one. In addition, the slaves had to cut and carry firewood, fix fences, or any other job that was required of them.

The southern slave owners provided basic care for the slaves. The quality of care varied from plantation to plantation. All plantations provided food, clothing, housing, and occasionally medical attention. The slaves would receive rations of pork and corn, which were supplemented by vegetables raised in the slave garden or fish and small animals that were caught in traps. Although the diet was not that good, it did provide enough to keep the slave working. An area where the slave was lacking sufficient care was medical attention. The large plantation owners occasionally sent for physicians to care for sick slaves, but for the most part slaves did not receive medical attention. A study of the remains of slaves at Utopia provided evidence of changing in the teeth and bones were caused by long periods of infectious diseases or by nutritional deficiencies. A large number of children died in infancy or childhood and only three of the twelve adults lived to become over 35 years of age. On Carter's Grove Plantation many of the slaves had rotten or poor teeth and a physician came to extract the most difficult ones. Although some physicians were occasionally called to come to the slave quarter, evidence has shown that the slaves were not given enough medical attention (Walsh). Lack of medical attention for slaves was common in plantations throughout the South. Most of the planters spent between 20 and 38 dollars per year on each slave.

In the urban centers of Charleston, South Carolina, Mobile, Alabama, New Orleans, Louisiana, Savannah, Georgia, and Norfolk, Virginia, masters used copper neck tags to identify hired out part-time slave laborers. These 1.5 square inch copper medallions, with the inscribed city, number, occupation, and year, were worn by the hired out slaves. These badges hung from their necks for the calendar year(s) that the slave was hired and were for identification purposes only. A copy of such a medallion is found in the

Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Some of these medallions are found in private collections. Around one hundred of these badges or tags are found in museums around the country. In Charleston, South Carolina, these badges were issued by the city treasurer's office with a fee according to the category and the skill of the laborer. Tags have been found for porters, furniture makers, fishermen, fruit vendors and silversmiths.

In New Orleans, Louisiana many slaves were employed as ironworkers and completed much of the decorative ironworks throughout the city. The white supervisors contracted for the jobs while many of the slaves who brought their iron-working skills from West Africa completed the jobs.

Slaves, whether urban or plantation, exhibited signs of muscle tears and spinal fractures, commonly associated with excessive strains and heavy loading. In some instances, they appeared to be worked to death. Examination of the bones of slaves in the African Burial Ground showed the hardship the Africans faced in America. Some of the bones showed evidence of trauma or injury to the bones, including broken neck bones. This was a result of the work they were forced to do. Africans enslaved as children showed signs of malnutrition.

They have been able to determine what the health conditions of the people were at the time of death by analyzing the teeth. They have learned what treacherous and hard labor the enslaved people had to endure. The spines are compressed from heavy and continuous lifting, muscle ligaments are torn, etc (Geary).

Slavery was necessary to build the United States into the great nation it is today. Without slave labor it would have been impossible to provide the needed labor to complete the jobs necessary for building this country. When given the opportunity to fight for the United States the slave took advantage of it and fought for freedom even though they were often denied freedom once the war was won. Following the American Revolution, the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island Regiment was not given a pension for services in the American Revolution.

## **REASON AND METHOD OF TEACHING**

Most of my students are African Americans and will gain greater insight about their history. It will help them to become more prideful and increase their sense of self worth. Many times they want to learn about their contributions to the history of the United States and the world in which we live, but do not have the resources in which to find out this information. This unit will be developed in the hope that it will alleviate this problem among African American students.

I plan to teach this unit using primary and secondary sources. My students will research biographical sketches on African American slaves. They will examine primary

resources such as narratives, diaries, or quotations. An excellent source of quotations about the enslaved and their feeling about slavery is *To Be A Slave* by Julius Lester. There are many biographies and slave narratives found on the Internet. My students will use the Internet to find available information on selected topics. We will visit and tour a plantation in Brazoria County. Group and/or individual projects will be used in the completion of this unit. If it is an individual project, students will make/design an *ABC Book of African American Leaders and Occupations*. If group projects are used, students will investigate different aspects of slave life. Some of the groups will explore music and dance while others view and investigate various jobs slaves engaged in on and off the plantation. Students will be grouped to construct a model of a plantation including “Slave Row” displaying slaves doing daily tasks. An example of a layout of a plantation is found in *Daily Life on A Southern Plantation* by Paul Erickson pages 10 and 11.

There were three categories of occupations – unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled. No matter what job a person performed it was in one of these categories. The teacher will define maritime industry and explain its importance to the world economy. Without this industry it would have been impossible for the United States to grow. Within this industry there were a variety of jobs. Slaves also loaded, hauled, and unloaded goods along the waterways of this country. They built many of the roads, cleared the forest, built many of the cities, and worked on the plantations. Skilled workers were blacksmiths, coopers, tailors, seamstresses, brick masons, etc. Without skilled workers it would have been impossible to perform the many tasks that were needed.

Not only did slaves help to build this country, they explored it as well. Some of the slaves were Esteban, James Beckwourth, and York. African Americans have participated in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. Some of the slaves made outstanding contributions to the war effort. At Yorktown, without the service of James Lafayette, the Americans would not have won this battle that led to the surrender of the British. In the Civil War many African Americans served as spies. Since many African American spies held menial jobs, they were ignored by the Confederate officers as they made their war plans. As soon as possible the slave would give this information to the Union officers. Many African Americans fought in the Civil War. Many of the runaway slaves wanted their freedom and to end slavery as well.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson Plan 1: Role of African American Slaves in the Civil War (90 Min.)**

#### ***Objectives***

Summarize the important events and significant individuals that shaped the Civil War.  
Summarize the important events that affected the outcome of the Civil War.

### ***Introduction and Overview of Lesson***

African Americans made outstanding contributions to the Civil War. They participated in many battles, served as guides, spies, ship captains, and provided many services necessary in the war. Abraham Lincoln did not want African Americans to participate in the war. However, he changed his mind and organized the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment as well as the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Many Union officers found the information the slaves or former slaves provided was necessary to winning the war. In this lesson my students will discuss: 1. the contributions of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment and its assault on Fort Wagner; 2. African Americans who helped the Union in winning the war.

Many Union officers found the information provided by slaves essential. Allan Pinkerton would question new slaves that were brought to him to find out information on the movement of confederate troops. Most of the information provided was given by slaves who had menial jobs in officers' tents such as waiters, cooks, or laundresses. Students will read copies of biographies of the following people and be able to discuss their contributions to the Civil War: John Scobell, W. H. Ringgold, Mary Touvestre, William A. Jackson, Mary Elizebeth Bowser, and Harriet Tubman. The slave spies were often ignored because of the occupations they held. Read *A Clothesline Telegraph An African American Spy Story* about Mr. and Mrs. Dabney.

### ***Summary: The Clothesline Telegraph***

Mr. and Mrs. Dabney developed a code to show the movement of the Confederate troops located at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Mr. Dabney was a cook in the Union camp at Fredericksburg and Mrs. Dabney was a laundress in the Confederate camp at Fredericksburg. Her cabin in which she did laundry for the Confederate officers was located where the cabin and clothesline could be seen from the Union side. As the Confederate leaders would move the troops she would move her laundry. The gray shirt represented General Longstreet, white shirt General Hill, and the red shirt represented General Stonewall Jackson. As Mrs. Dabney collected and returned the laundry she would listen to the plans and hang out the laundry according. Example: If General Longstreet was moving his troops to Richmond, Virginia, Mrs Dabney would take the gray shirt off of the clothesline. Mrs. Dabney's information proved to be accurate.

### ***Follow Up***

Finish classwork at home. Pretend you are a spy for the Union Army; develop a code for a particular battle. Example Battle of Gettysburg, in which you are relaying information to your husband or wife. You must know the names of the leaders for each side, the movement of each side, and the outcome of the battle.

## **Lesson Plan 2: Slave Contributions in the American Revolution (90 min.)**

### ***Objective***

S.S. 8.4.b History

Describe significant events of the American Revolution and the roles important individuals played in those events.

### ***Background***

Although the primary focus of this lesson is African American slaves' or former slaves' contributions to winning the American Revolution at Yorktown, the lesson will be centered around the contributions of African Americans in the American Revolution. Crispus Attucks, a runaway slave who worked as a maritime worker, was the first person to die in the Boston Massacre. Many slaves were promised their freedom if they fought in the revolution, others were freed to fight, while others fought in their masters' places. Slaves fought along side their master at Lexington and Concord, one of them was Prince Estabrook. Salem Poor and other African Americans fought in the battle of Bunker Hill. Prince Whipple, a slave, and Oliver Cromwell, a freed man, were Washington's oarsmen as they crossed the Delaware. William Lee, one of George Washington's slaves, fought next to him during the entire revolution. Massachusetts all black unit "Bucks of America" had the only commissioned black officer in the American Revolution, Samuel Middleton. Washington called his army "mixed multitude" because most of the units were integrated. After the American Revolution there would not be integrated units until the Korean War.

Lord Dunmore (John Murray), the British Governor stationed at Williamsburg, Virginia, issued a proclamation in which he promised the slaves freedom if they fought for the British during the war. Most of the slaves did not fight for the British, but for the Americans.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island was the only all black regiment in the American Revolution and consisted of former slaves who were freed to fight in the American Revolution. This regiment prevented a successful invasion of the British into Rhode Island. They were sent to Yorktown and were stationed only five hundred fifty (550) yards from the British during seize. James Armistead Lafayette was a slave of William Armistead. He was stationed at Williamsburg, Virginia. He fought in the revolution without the promise of freedom. Armistead served as double agent during the war. He was asked by the Americans and later the British to spy on the other side. He was assigned as a waiter in General Cornwallis' tent. Armistead overheard most of the British plans and would pass this information to other slaves, who would pass it to General Marquis Lafayette and later General Washington. When asked to spy on the Americans, Armistead would give wrong information. Cornwallis asked Armistead if it was the right time to attack the American forces. Armistead told him that the Americans were too strong and he should wait. Actually, only General Lafayette's troops were in place. After General Washington's troops and the French fleet were there, Armistead told Cornwallis it was time to attack. He slipped through the British line and fought in the Battle of Yorktown, which led to the British surrendering. Following the war, the state of Virginia purchased James Armistead's freedom for his outstanding service to his country during the war. He

changed his name from James Armistead to James Lafayette because of his admiration for General Marquis Lafayette.

### ***Activity***

1. Students will write and perform a skit about the contribution of an outstanding slave during the revolution. 2. Lord Dunmore issued a proclamation freeing all the slaves who fought for the British during the revolution. You are a slave that learned about the proclamation. Write a paper telling why you would or would not accept Lord Dunmore's Proclamation. 3. Students will make, design and illustrate an A B C Booklet of the American Revolution. Use each letter of the alphabet to identify, illustrate, or describe a person, place, or event of the American Revolution. Use only one alphabet letter per page, along with a picture and two to four sentences per page.

## **Lesson Plan 3: Occupations of Urban and Plantation Slaves**

### ***Objective***

At the end of this lesson students will be able to: discuss slave occupations in urban and rural areas.

### ***Introduction and Overview***

All occupations were divided into three categories: unskilled, semiskilled, and skilled. Define each category. Urban slaves lived in the town or cities in America. Plantation slaves lived on the farms within America. Most of the female slaves were domestics, seamstresses, laundresses, cooks, spinners, weavers, and shopkeepers. In the urban areas most of the men worked in the maritime industry. Some enslaved men held jobs as coachmen, gardeners, and shopkeeper. The teacher will lecture on the importance of the maritime industry and the importance of slave occupations to the construction of the United States into the great country that it is today.

Students will define the following occupations: boatmen, lightermen, caulkers, sailmakers, coopers, mariners, pilots, ropemakers, and longshoremen. After the students have completed the exercise and studied it they will be given a matching exercise consisting of matching the term with the definition and picture.

The goal of the owner of the plantation was to become self-sufficient. The slave occupations were divided into three categories of unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled. On the large plantations, slaves' occupations were divided into these categories. There were a variety of jobs on the plantation: blacksmith, gardeners, coachmen, coopers, stablehands, field hands, and cooks.

### ***Activities***

1. Students will make an A B C Book of Slave Occupations. Students will make a booklet using the alphabet to identify, illustrate, and describe the occupations of slaves. There will only be one letter on each page with the term defined and a picture of the occupation.

The description should contain two to four sentences. 2. Group Activity: Students will review copies of history books to build a plantation including the big house or mansion, slave row, barn, stable, blacksmith, fields, etc. In the paper accompanying the project, students will discuss the importance of each building or fields in the operation of the plantation and the role of the slave.

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