



Glossary

Abettors

People who support or provide assistance to others, often in the committing of a crime.

Agency

The ability to exert power over one's own life.

Arraigned

To be called in front of a criminal court to hear and respond to a charge made against you.

Artisans

People who are skilled at making something by hand. Often used synonymously with tradesmen.

Birch Pass

A combination permission slip and ticket issued by the British Army to approximately 3,000 people of African descent who sought freedom and British protection that allowed them to board a British ship out of New York Harbor at the end of the Revolutionary War. Called a Birch Pass after British Army Brigadier General Samuel Birch, who organized their departure.

Census

An official count of all the people in a specific location. Information collected may include various combinations of names, ages, occupations, races or ethnicities, genders, places of birth, property owned, or other categories of data.

Chain of Custody

The movement of materials from one person or institution to another over time. In ideal circumstances, the transition from one place or person to the next is well-documented.

Colonial Assembly

The local governing body for a colony in British North America. Not all colonies began with a colonial assembly, but by the time of the American Revolution, most operated under one, alongside a governor who was typically appointed by the King.

Condemnation

Having been condemned, blamed, or judged negatively, often used in a moral or legal sense.

Cooper

A person who makes wooden barrels and similar containers.

Correspondence

Communication, often through letters.

Creole

A language that is formed from the mixture of words, expressions, and grammar of other languages, often created in a place where people from different cultures often mix together. The word can also apply to the culture that arises from this mixing of other distinct cultures.

Demographics

The characteristics of a group of people within a geographic or other community, such as their ages, races, sexes, religious beliefs, incomes, or education levels.

Desert / Deserting

Choosing to leave or quit military service without permission.

Destabilize

To make unstable.

Dramatized

Shaped into a cohesive story and made more dramatic. The *Finding Freedom* stories have been dramatized based on primary sources from the lives of Andrew, Deborah, Eve, Jack, and London and primary and secondary sources connected to people like them. *Finding Freedom* reflects what was *likely* to have happened based on current understandings of the world in which they lived.

Emancipate

To set free. Generally used in the case of larger numbers of enslaved people, whereas manumission generally applies to an individual or a small group of enslaved people.

Embark / Embarkations

The act of leaving or starting a journey, often by boarding a form of transportation, such as a ship.

Enlisting

Formally or informally signing people up, or signing oneself up, for some sort of service, often military.

Enslaved

Owned by another person. Saying “enslaved person” rather than “slave” can remind people of the humanity of the person who is in the condition of being owned by another person.

Epidemic

A rapidly-spreading disease that impacts a disproportionately large number of people within a population.

Estate Inventory

A list of the belongings owned by a deceased person at the time of their death. This document was (and is) often used alongside a will to understand how the deceased person’s debts will be paid and how remaining belongings will be distributed.

Evacuate

To leave or help others to leave during emergency circumstances.

Feloniously

In the manner of a felon or criminal.

Freedom Seekers

People of African descent who left their enslavement without the permission of their owners. They are often referred to as “runaways,” but this language prioritizes the places and people they ran away from and their status as property. We have chosen, in many cases, to use “freedom-seekers” instead, to reference what they ran towards.

Frontier

The outer edge of a society or community that is often sparsely populated. Sometimes a frontier borders another society or community and becomes a site of conflict or warfare.

Gallows

The wooden frame from which a person sentenced to hanging would be hung from.

Guinea

A gold British coin worth 21 shillings. As an example of its value, James Madison purchased a medical book in Philadelphia in 1781 for a guinea. Named after the West African region from which the British acquired much of their gold.

Heir

The person who will legally inherit the titles, estate, and other property of another individual when that individual dies. In Europe and European colonies in the 1700s, this would generally be the oldest son of the head-of-household.

Hessian

A general term used to refer to people from six different principalities of German-speaking Europe who participated in the Revolutionary War, primarily as allies of the British. The vast majority came from Hesse-Kassel and Hesse-Hanau. The other four regions represented were Anspach-Bayreuth, Anhalt-Zerbst, Brunswick, and Waldeck.

Hierarchy

A social structure that ranks certain people or groups above others based on one or more characteristics.

Homogeneous

The same throughout; uniform.

Horseler

Perhaps meant to be “hostler,” meaning one who takes care of horses, such as a groom or stableman.

Importation

The act of bringing in goods from a foreign or external location. In the British North American colonies, goods included men, women, and children being transported against their will.

Imprimis

Misspelling of “imprimis.” Latin word meaning “in the first place,” and often used to begin a list.

Indented / Indentured Servants

Individuals who have a contract to serve as laborers for a specific amount of time before receiving their freedom. These contracts were often entered into willingly by British subjects who wanted passage across the Atlantic Ocean to the British colonies but could not afford it themselves or by those — Europeans, free people of African descent — who needed food, shelter, and clothing and the opportunity to learn a skill. Sometimes British subjects were sentenced to indentured servitude as punishment for a crime or because they could not pay their debts.

Inherit

To receive objects, money, land, or other property from a person or their estate once that person has died.

Iniquitous

Unjust, wicked or sinful.

Inoculate

To introduce a disease into a person in order to stimulate their body to fight against it, with the hope of never contracting the disease again. During the Revolutionary Era, many people were inoculated against smallpox. One technique involved having a thread that had first been passed through an open wound of a smallpox victim then passed through an open cut on the body of the person being inoculated. Similar methods had been practiced for many years in West Africa and this method was introduced to the city of Boston by an enslaved man named Onesimus, who was likely a member of the Akan nation in what is now Ghana.

Insolence

Disrespectful behavior.

Instant

Day or month, when used as part of a description of a date.

Liege

A ruler to whom allegiance or service is owed.

Likely

A description of an enslaved person that roughly meant suitable, strong, valuable, or capable.

Loyalist

An American colonist who continued to support the British Empire and Army during the American Revolution.

Manumission

The act of freeing an individual enslaved person or a small number of enslaved people. A similar word, emancipation, generally applies to larger numbers of enslaved people.

Maroon

An enslaved person of African descent who sought their own freedom, often by venturing into wilderness spaces that slave catchers found too difficult or too scary to enter. This term was often used specifically in the Caribbean in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Memoir

A collection of selected memories, reflections, or stories written by a person about their life. Memoirs are generally less comprehensive than autobiographies and may revolve around one or a set of specific themes.

Militia

An armed group of people gathered and trained at the local level for the defense of that community. Militias are typically regulated by local governments.

Negroes

A term that was widely used in the 18th Century to refer to people of African descent, whether they were born in Africa, the British colonies, or elsewhere in the world. It is now seen by many people of

African descent as offensive and is no longer acceptable for use.

New Brunswick

A province of Canada directly north of Maine (which was still a part of Massachusetts during the Revolutionary War). New Brunswick was formed out of the British colony of Nova Scotia as Loyalist refugees arrived during and after the end of the Revolutionary War.

Nova Scotia

A province of Canada just north of Maine (which was still a part of Massachusetts during the Revolutionary War). It became a British colony after British victory in the French and Indian War, and many Loyalist refugees were evacuated there after the Revolutionary War.

Occupy / Occupied

The military takeover of a location by an enemy army or administration.

Overseer

The person responsible for the day-to-day management of the enslaved workers on a large farm or plantation. This person was often white but could occasionally be a free person of African descent who was trusted by his owner.

Paternalism

A form of governing that treats those who are being governed as though they are children rather than adults. When this word is used, it suggests that the ruler or government it describes behaves in a "father knows best" manner, often disregarding the wants and ideas of those being governed.

Pension

Money paid out to veterans of the military in recognition of their service.

People of African Descent

A phrase that encompasses both African-born men, women, and children, and those who were born in the British North American colonies or elsewhere but who had African ancestors.

Pernicious

Destructive, or the cause of great harm.

Pestilence

Terrible or fatal disease(s).

Petition

A plea or a written document expressing complaints and desired actions, signed by one or multiple members of a community.

Plantation

A large farm or other plot of land that uses enslaved (and sometimes free) laborers to grow and harvest goods for sale beyond the immediate needs of the household and community.

Proclamation

A formal announcement, often made by a representative of a government.

Provisions

Supplies or belongings, often including food and clothing.

Rations

The specific portions of food provided by an army to its soldiers and noncombatants. Officers often received larger rations than

soldiers, who received more than the women and children camp followers.

Rats-Bane

A rat poison that contains arsenic.

Reformation

A change in behavior from bad to good, often the result of seeing the error of one's ways.

Reprieve

A delay of punishment.

Requite / Requiring

To return in exchange for something else.

Revoke

To take away, undo, or make invalid.

Ritual Scarification

The practice of purposefully creating scars in specific patterns on a person's face or body that is part of the culture of some African communities. Depending on the cultural group, these scars might have spiritual meaning, recognize a person's transition from one phase of life to another (childhood to adulthood, for example), signal one's membership in a special society or one's social rank, or simply be meant to make a person look more attractive. In the British North American colonies, the scars seen on the bodies of people of African descent were often referred to as "country marks."

Runaway Ad

An advertisement placed in a newspaper in which a slaveowner described an enslaved person, apprentice, or indentured servant

who had run away. An ad usually mentioned the reward offered to anyone who captured or returned the person.

Sabotage

To damage or cause trouble to. Often used in relation to work or projects involving labor.

Semiannually

Occurring twice a year, once in each half of the year.

Siege

The process by which a military takes up a position outside of an enemy fortification with the goal of cutting off supplies until the enemy can no longer function and declares defeat.

Smallpox

A highly contagious and often deadly disease marked by fever, headaches, and eventually the outbreak of a rash across the body that left pockmarks if and when it cleared. It could be spread through physical contact, contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals or handling of their clothing or bedsheets. Outbreaks were frequent in the colonies.

Sundry

Many, a variety.

Superintend

To oversee or be in charge of the administration of a place, situation or group of people.

Testify

To make statements under oath in court.

Toiling

Working hard under very difficult circumstances.

Tradesman

A person who is skilled in a specific trade, such as blacksmithing, coopering, tinsmithing, or printing.

Uncultivated

Not prepared for use for farming.

Unordained

Unlicensed as a minister or preacher.

Villainy

Evil or bad behavior.

Virginia Tidewater

A region of eastern Virginia between the Appalachian Mountains and the Chesapeake Bay. It was marked by the presence of many rivers, including the York, the James, the Potomac, and the Rappahannock, and was the site of Virginia's earliest settlements.

Wallet

A simple cloth bag used to carry various materials.

Will

A legal document that a person creates to specify what will happen to their property when they die.

Yorktown

A small Virginia town on the York River, near the Chesapeake Bay and easily accessible from the Atlantic Ocean. The site of the Siege of Yorktown, the last major battle of the Revolutionary War, and the surrender of British General Lord Cornwallis's army.