

# THE ARCHITECTURE OF ATLANTIC CAPITAL AND CAPTIVITY

---

Commercial Evolution, Merchant Trade Expansion, and Enslavement across Eight  
Maritime Nodes (1520–1770)

# THE BROAD TRANSATLANTIC THESIS

---

The expansion of global mercantile markets between **1520 and 1770** was a highly integrated, violently extractive network.

Capital accumulation in Western Europe was structurally dependent on the forced migration and exploitation of African and Indigenous labor.

This presentation systematically contrasts **eight key colonial maritime nodes** to demonstrate the diverse pathways and shared mechanisms of imperial wealth accumulation and human captivity.



## THE EIGHT URBAN NODES

**Iberian Anchors:** Veracruz & Havana

**Logistical Engine:** Liverpool

**Inland Fur Outpost:** Montreal

**Provisioning Hubs:** Philadelphia & Manhattan

**Staple Plantocracies:** Charleston & Richmond

# THE TRIANGULAR DYNAMIC

---



## STAGE 1: MANUFACTURED GOODS

European states exported textiles, firearms, metals, and alcohol to West African trade ports in exchange for captured human beings.



## STAGE 2: THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

An estimated **10 to 12 million** Africans were shipped across the Atlantic under brutal conditions to feed plantation complexes.



## STAGE 3: STAPLE RAW MATERIALS

Enslaved labor produced highly profitable raw materials (sugar, tobacco, silver) that were sent back to fuel European industrialization.

# IMPERIAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

---

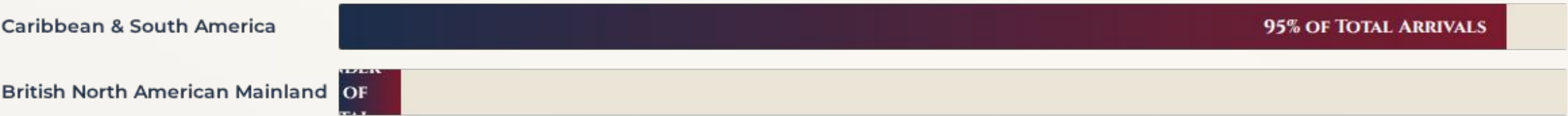
- ◆ **Asiento de Negros:** The Spanish Crown's lucrative, highly-restricted monopoly lease granted to foreign powers to control the flow of African slaves into South and Central American territories.
- ◆ **The British Navigation Acts:** Legislation designed to restrict colonial trade strictly to British shipping, ensuring wealth was kept inside the English domestic financial orbit.
- ◆ **French Code Noir & Intendant Ordonnances:** Comprehensive legal systems governing racial lines, defining the parameters of lifelong enslavement, and codifying the legal status of both African and Indigenous captives.

# COMPARING ECONOMIC PARADIGMS

| IMPERIAL REGIME    | REPRESENTATIVE PORTS                | STAPLE COMMODITIES                    | PRIMARY LABOR DYNAMIC                                           |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spanish Empire     | Veracruz, Havana                    | Silver, Cochineal, Tobacco, Sugar     | Top-down Asiento monopoly, early intensive importations         |
| British Metropolis | Liverpool                           | Shipping finance, metalware, textiles | Trafficking orchestration; negligible local slave populace      |
| French Canada      | Montreal                            | Beaver furs, provisions               | Small-scale domestic, heavy Indigenous captivity (Panis)        |
| British Mainland   | Manhattan, Philadelphia, Charleston | Rice, Indigo, Tobacco, Cereal grains  | Decentralized provisioning, merchant autonomy, regional markets |

# TRANSATLANTIC DEMOGRAPHICS (1520-1770)

---



*While North America received less than 5% of direct transatlantic shipments, its merchant networks evolved distinct structural models that fueled localized economic booms.*

# THE FUEL OF EMPIRE: PRIMARY COMMODITIES

---



## IBERIAN BULLION

Veracruz processed and shipped vast silver cargoes from Zacatecas mines, functioning as the monetary bedrock of global trade.



## TROPICAL CASH CROPS

Sugar (Havana) and Rice/Indigo (Charleston) commanded intense, high-mortality plantation labor regimes with unmatched margins.



## PROVISIONS & FURS

Montreal's beaver skins and Philadelphia/Manhattan's grain sustained secondary imperial structures and fed Caribbean workforces.

# VERACRUZ

---

*The Gateway to New Spain and early African provenance  
(1520–1770)*

# VERACRUZ: GATEWAY AND SILVER PORT

---

Founded by Cortés in 1519, Veracruz was the sole legal Atlantic port for the vast Viceroyalty of New Spain.

Its early trade was organized around **\*\*state-centralized wealth extraction\*\***—the shipment of American silver and cochineal back to Seville through Spain's strictly regulated treasure fleets.

As epidemics devastated local Indigenous populations, Veracruz became New Spain's central entry point for transatlantic captive labor.

## VITALS

**Empire:** Spain

**Primary Exports:** Silver, Cochineal, Hides

**Regulatory Hub:** Casa de Contratación

# THE GOLDEN AGE OF IMPORTATION (1595–1640)

---

110K

ENSLAVED AFRICAN ARRIVALS AT VERACRUZ (1595–1640)

COINCIDING WITH THE PEAK OF EARLY MEXICAN SILVER MINING.

Under the unified Iberian Union, Portuguese slave traders flooded Veracruz with captives. This massive early wave established Mexico City and the Veracruz hinterlands as some of the most concentrated African-descended populations in the Americas during the 17th century.

# HISTORIC MAP: VERACRUZ TRADE DEMOGRAPHICS

---



PLAN DE LA VILLE DE LA VERA-CRUZ, COLONIAL MEXICO

**63.3%**

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICAN PROVENANCE (ANGOLA ZONE)

**<500/YR**

ANNUAL ARRIVALS AFTER 1700 (DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT TO  
INDIGENOUS/CASTA LABOR)

# LABOR REALITIES IN NEW SPAIN

---



## SILVER MINING

Enslaved Africans worked the dangerous high-altitude mines of Zacatecas and Guanajuato, providing critical labor alongside indigenous drafts.



## RANCHING & SUGAR

Coastal estates and inland sugar plantations (\*trapiches\*) utilized imported laborers to build colonial agricultural infrastructure.



## URBAN CENTERS

Enslaved people worked as skilled artisans and domestic servants, supporting the lavish lifestyles of colonial administrators.

# RESISTANCE: GASPAR YANGA (1609)

---

"A STRUCTURAL LIMIT TO SPANISH COLONIAL CONTROL ON THE GULF COAST."

The early density of the slave trade through Veracruz led to robust resistance. In 1609, self-liberated Maroon communities (\*palenques\*) under leader **Gaspar Yanga** forced the Spanish Crown to grant them legal autonomy and establish the free town of San Lorenzo de los Negros.

# HAVANA

---

*From strategic guard post to sugar plantation frontier  
(1520–1770)*

# HAVANA: CENTER OF THE FLOTA SYSTEM

---

Havana's geography at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico made it the natural assembly point for Spain's transatlantic fleets.

For two centuries, the city's economy revolved around servicing these massive fleets, building heavy harbor fortifications, and exporting tobacco and hides.

Before 1762, the scale of enslavement remained small compared to its later peak, bound strictly by Spanish Asiento monopoly contracts.

## VITALS

**Empire:** Spain

**Strategic Asset:** El Morro Fortification

**Early Economy:** Tobacco, Cattle Hides, Shipbuilding

# THE EARLY ASIENTO PHASE IN HAVANA

---

- ◆ **Monopoly Control:** Importations were managed in small batches by state-approved operators, including the British South Sea Company.
- ◆ **Steady but Constrained Volume:** Legal imports averaged between \*\*500 and 800 captives per year\*\* prior to 1760.
- ◆ **Urban Integration:** Captive labor was highly integrated into public works, naval shipbuilding, and urban domestic services.

# HISTORIC MAP: HAVANA TRADE & DEMOGRAPHICS



THE PORT AND CITY OF HAVANA, COLONIAL CUBA

*La Porte des Espagnols en Cuba  
ville de la Ville de Havanne en Amerique*

**500 - 800**

PRE-1760 LEGAL ARRIVALS PER YEAR (MONOPOLIZED BY ASIENTO)

**4,000+**

ARRIVALS IN JUST 11 MONTHS UNDER BRITISH OCCUPATION (1762)

# THE 1762 INFLECTION POINT

---

## 11 Mo

BRITISH MILITARY OCCUPATION OF HAVANA (1762–1763)

DISMANTLING OLD TRADE BARRIERS & INTRODUCING MASSIVE LABOR SUPPLIES.

During the Seven Years' War, British forces captured Havana. British merchants immediately bypassed old Spanish restrictions and imported more than 4,000 enslaved Africans in less than a year, permanently reshaping Cuba's economic trajectory.

# TRANSITION TO SUGAR MONOCULTURE

---

When Havana was restored to Spain in 1763, the Spanish Crown realized the massive economic potential of a modernized sugar model.

Under the Bourbon Reforms, Spain permanently lowered duties on slave imports, beginning Cuba's transformation into a specialized, high-volume sugar monoculture.

## POST-1763 POLICY

**Tax Reductions:** Liberalized import fees

**Technology:** Industrial sugar mills (\*ingenios\*)

**Demographics:** Rapidly expanding slave population

# LIVERPOOL

---

*The financial and logistical engine of the transatlantic slave trade  
(1660–1770)*

# LIVERPOOL: LOGISTICAL MASTERMIND

---

In 1660, Liverpool was a minor regional port. By 1770, it had become the undisputed financial capital of the Atlantic slave trade.

Liverpool merchants did not import slaves locally; instead, they financed, built, and cleared the ships that drove the Triangular Trade.

By 1770, Liverpool controlled over 80% of the British trade and 40% of the entire European market.

## VITALS

**Empire:** Great Britain

**Primary Function:** Finance and Shipping Logistics

**Industrial Tie:** Lancashire Cotton and Birmingham Metals

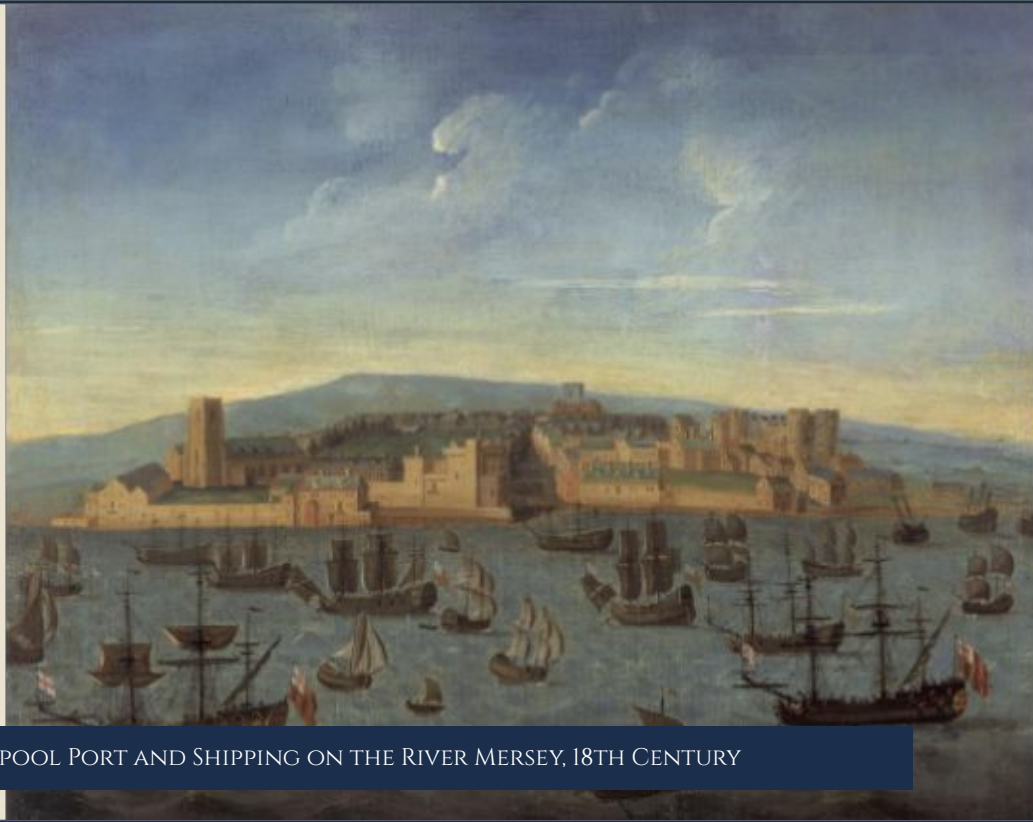
# THE LOGISTICS OF WET DOCKS & MANUFACTURES

---

- ◆ **Thomas Steers Wet Dock (1715):** The world's first commercial wet dock, drastically cutting turnaround times and allowing continuous loading regardless of tides.
- ◆ **Proximity to Heavy Industry:** Ships were packed with Lancashire textiles, Welsh copper, and Birmingham weapons to trade for captives in Africa.
- ◆ **Decentralized Merchant Class:** Unlike London's corporate monopolies, Liverpool allowed small syndicates to buy shares in slaving voyages, spreading financial risk.

# HISTORIC VIEW: LIVERPOOL HARBOR AND SHIPYARDS

---



LIVERPOOL PORT AND SHIPPING ON THE RIVER MERSEY, 18TH CENTURY

**1.5 MILLION**

CAPTIVES TRANSPORTED ON LIVERPOOL SHIPS (1700–1807)

**<500**

ENSLAVED INDIVIDUALS RESIDING IN LIVERPOOL IN 1770

# TRAFFICKING PROFITS & INDUSTRIAL CAPITAL

---

"TRAFFICKING FUELED BRITISH INDUSTRIALIZATION."

The massive profits extracted from the shipping pipelines did not stay at sea. They were reinvested directly in the northwest of England—funding canals, local banks, and early coal and steam textile factories that birthed the Industrial Revolution.

# MONTREAL

---

*The continental outpost of New France  
(1660–1770)*

# MONTREAL: DEEP CONTINENTAL OUTPOST

---

Located at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, Montreal was the logistical center of New France's fur trade.

Its economy was focused on beaver skins and European trade goods, operating far from standard Atlantic maritime circuits.

Yet, slavery was legal and highly integrated into Montreal's elite urban merchant class.

## VITALS

**Empire:** France (to 1760), Great Britain (post-1760)

**Primary Trade:** Beaver Pelts, Trade Blankets, Spirits

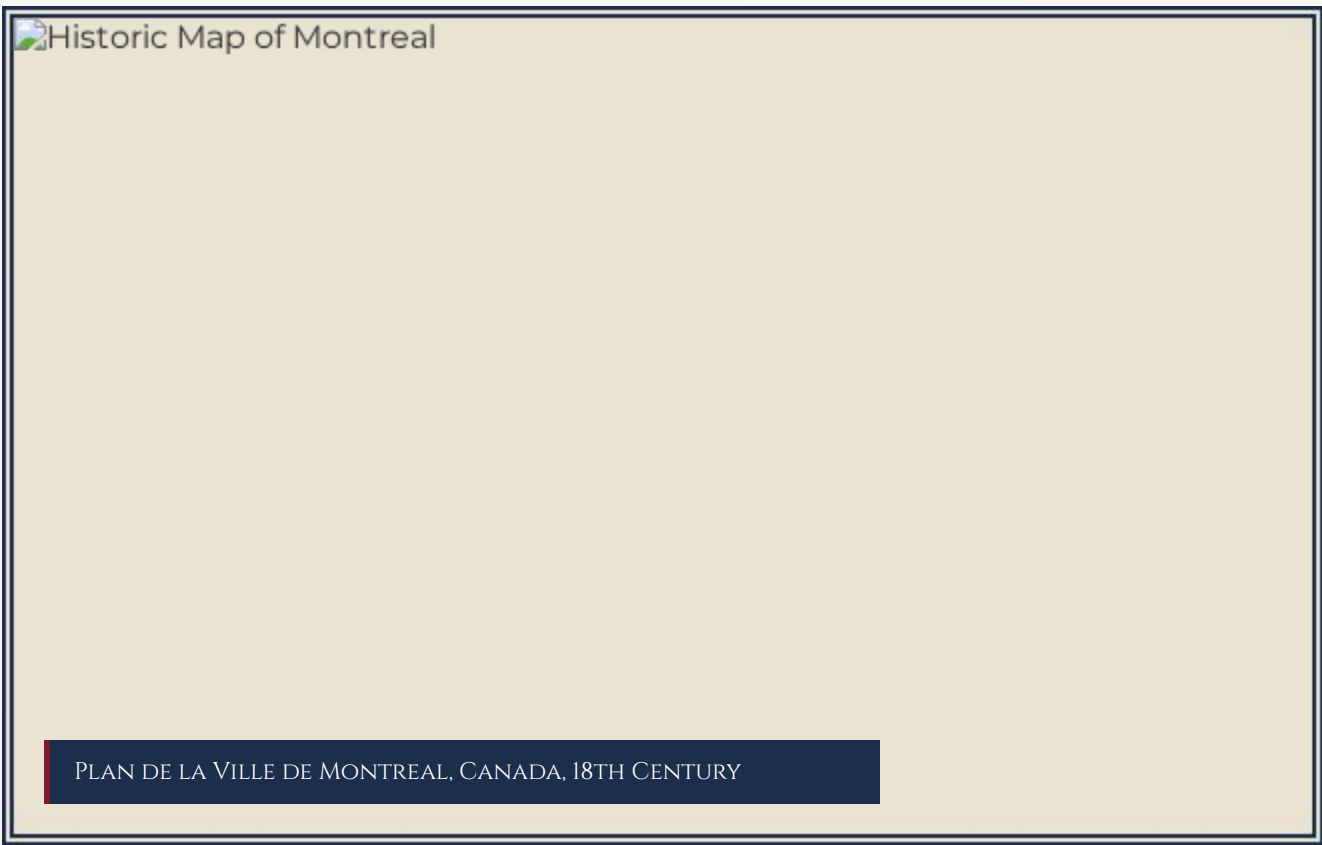
**Captive Base:** Heavy proportion of Indigenous captives (\*Panis\*)

# LEGAL ORDINANCES IN NEW FRANCE

---

- ◆ **Royal Approvals (1689):** Louis XIV officially authorized the introduction of African captives to Montreal to solve labor shortages.
- ◆ **Intendant Raudot Ordinance (1709):** Explicitly codified the absolute legal ownership of both African and Indigenous captives.
- ◆ **Articles of Capitulation (1760):** French merchants secured written guarantees from the British military to protect their human property intact.

# HISTORIC MAP: MONTREAL FUR TRADE & CAPTIVITY



65%

PROPORTION OF INDIGENOUS CAPTIVES (\*PANIS\*) IN MONTREAL

35%

PROPORTION OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS (EXPENSIVE LUXURY ASSETS)

# URBAN SLAVERY & MERCHANT STATUS SYMBOLS

---

50%

OF PROMINENT MERCHANT HOUSEHOLDS ALONG SAINT-PAUL STREET OWNED SLAVES BY 1770.

Instead of plantation fields, Montreal's captives worked as domestic servants, cooks, clerks, and dock laborers. Owning a captive was a major status symbol, showcasing that a merchant had turned fur profits into permanent colonial prestige.

# MANHATTAN

---

*From New Amsterdam frontier to British provisioning gateway  
(1660–1770)*

# MANHATTAN: COMMERCIAL GATEWAY

---

Following the 1664 transfer from Dutch to British rule, Manhattan evolved into a critical Atlantic maritime hub.

Rather than growing luxury crops, Manhattan merchants accumulated capital by coordinating the transport of grain, livestock, and lumber to feed sugar islands.

This provisioning trade created a highly active, secondary slave market within Manhattan.

## VITALS

**Empire:** Great Britain

**Primary Trade:** Bread, Lumber, Caribbean Contraband

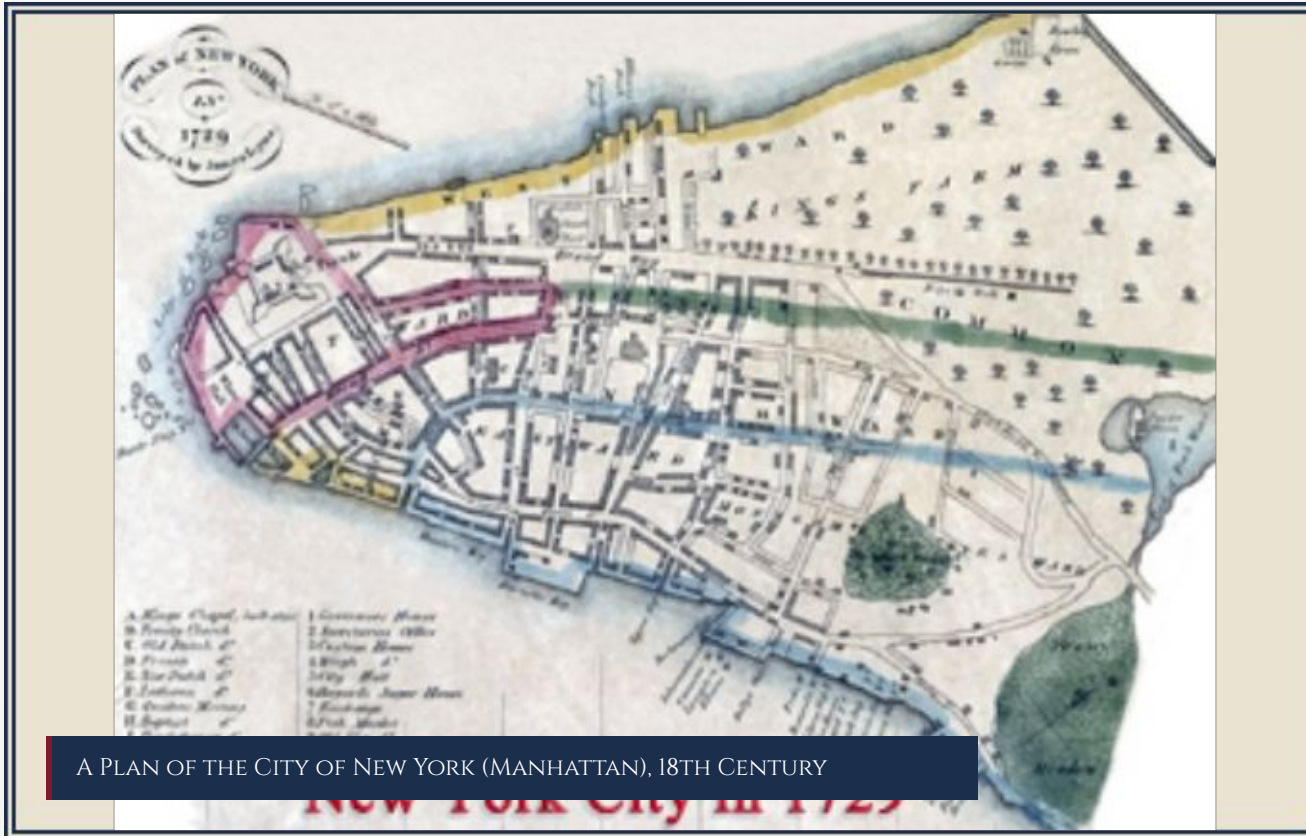
**Labor Dynamic:** High density of urban and maritime slaves

# THE CRUCIAL PROVISIONING TRADE

---

- ◆ **Feeding Sugar Plantations:** Lacking direct cash-crops, New York merchants shipped vital foodstuffs to keep Caribbean slaves alive.
- ◆ **Re-export Loop:** Ships returned laden with sugar, molasses, and small parcels of seasoned slaves to sell locally.
- ◆ **Merchant Families:** Families like the Livingstons leveraged this trade to become major political and economic powerbrokers.

# HISTORIC MAP: MANHATTAN TRADE & SLAVERY



**15% - 20%**

### PROPORTION OF MANHATTAN'S POPULATION HELD IN SLAVERY (BY 1740)

1711

YEAR OFFICIAL WALL STREET SLAVE MARKET WAS ESTABLISHED

# THE WALL STREET MARKET AND INSURRECTIONS

---

1741

CONSPIRACY PANIC IN MANHATTAN

RESULTING IN THE BRUTAL EXECUTION AND EXILE OF DOZENS OF BLACK RESIDENTS.

Enslaved New Yorkers worked as skilled dockhands, shipwrights, and household laborers. This high concentration in a crowded urban space bred colonial anxieties, sparking brutal crackdowns like the 1712 rebellion and the 1741 conspiracy panic.

# PHILADELPHIA

---

*Breadbasket of the Atlantic and the Quaker Paradox  
(1680–1770)*

# PHILADELPHIA: CEREAL POWERHOUSE

---

Founded by William Penn in 1682, Philadelphia became the fastest-growing and wealthiest port in British North America.

Its merchant elite built an export empire on grain, flour, and lumber shipped to Caribbean sugar islands.

This breadbasket trade created immense domestic wealth, while raising deep moral and institutional contradictions.

## VITALS

**Empire:** Great Britain

**Primary Export:** Cereal flour, Cooperage, Lumber

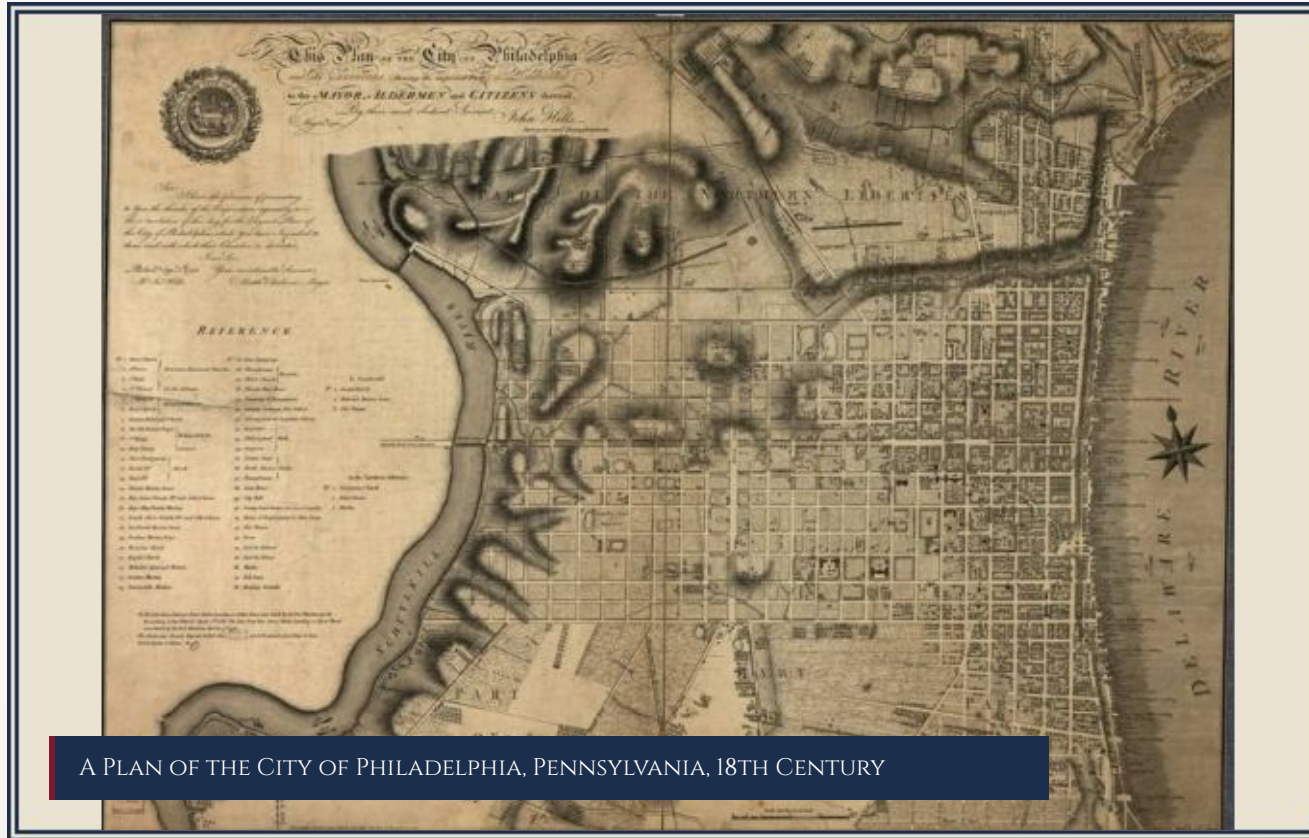
**Moral Split:** Quaker anti-slavery stance vs. merchant profits

# THE SHIFT TO INDENTURED LABOR

---

- ◆ **Early Infrastructure:** In 1720, enslaved labor made up roughly 10% of Philadelphia's labor force.
- ◆ **German and Irish Influx:** By the 1740s, thousands of European indentured servants arrived, offering a cheaper alternative to lifelong slave labor.
- ◆ **Local Decline:** Visible local slave presence dropped below 4% of the population by 1770.

# HISTORIC MAP: PHILADELPHIA GRAIN & PROVISIONING



**1758**

YEAR THE QUAKER YEARLY MEETING PROHIBITED MEMBERS FROM TRADING SLAVES

**<4%**

LOCAL SLAVE POPULATION BY 1770 DUE TO INDENTURED WHITE LABOR

# THE QUAKER PARADOX

---

"SLAVERY BUILT THE WEALTH THAT FINANCED QUAKER MORALS."

While Philadelphia Quakers banned direct involvement in human trafficking by 1758, the city's merchant class remained structurally dependent on slave-labor economies. Philadelphia's banks, insurance houses, and merchant shipping thrived because they fed Caribbean slave societies.

# CHARLESTON

---

*Lowcountry monocultures and the foundation of the plantocracy  
(1670–1770)*

# CHARLESTON: DEEP SOUTH PLANTOCRACY

---

Founded by Barbadian planters in 1670, Charleston was designed from day one to be an intensive slave-labor economy.

The marshy Lowcountry proved highly suited for rice and indigo, leading to unmatched agricultural wealth and massive importation rates.

Charleston was the sole North American port to act as a major direct destination for the transatlantic slave trade.

## VITALS

**Empire:** Great Britain

**Primary Staples:** Rice, Indigo

**Demographic Unique:** The only mainland colony with an African majority

# RICE, INDIGO, AND WEST AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE

---

- ◆ **Specialized Expertise:** Lowcountry planters sought out captives specifically from the "Rice Coast" of West Africa for their engineering and agricultural knowledge.
- ◆ **Severe Plantation Regimes:** Rice swamps were hotbeds for diseases, resulting in high mortality rates that mirrored the Caribbean labor model.
- ◆ **Planter Wealth:** High-yield exports generated massive fortunes, making South Carolina planters the wealthiest group on the continent.

# HISTORIC MAP: CHARLESTON SLAVE TRADE & DEMOGRAPHICS



A PLAN OF CHARLES TOWN, SOUTH CAROLINA, 18TH CENTURY

**~100K**

TRANSATLANTIC ARRIVALS AT SULLIVAN'S ISLAND  
QUARANTINE STATION

**60%+**

PROPORTION OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA POPULATION  
HELD IN SLAVERY (BY 1740)

# THE GULLAH GENESIS & STONO REBELLION

---

# 1739

## THE STONO REBELLION

THE LARGEST SLAVE UPRISING IN THE MAINLAND COLONIES, RESHAPING SECURITY AND RACIAL LAWS.

The massive concentration of West African captives allowed communities in rural plantations to retain deep cultural and linguistic roots, forming the distinct Gullah-Geechee culture. However, this demographic isolation bred severe racial fears, culminating in Stono and the subsequent Negro Act of 1740.

# RICHMOND

---

*The fall line of the James River and the Chesapeake tobacco pipelines  
(1660–1770)*

# RICHMOND: FALL LINE TOBACCO HUB

---

Incorporated in 1742 at the fall line of the James River, Richmond was the ultimate shipping limit for transatlantic vessels.

It quickly grew into a vital collection node for the tobacco produced in the Piedmont interior.

As the regional economy matured, Richmond transformed into a domestic redistribution market for enslaved labor.

## VITALS

**Empire:** Great Britain

**Primary Staple:** Tobacco

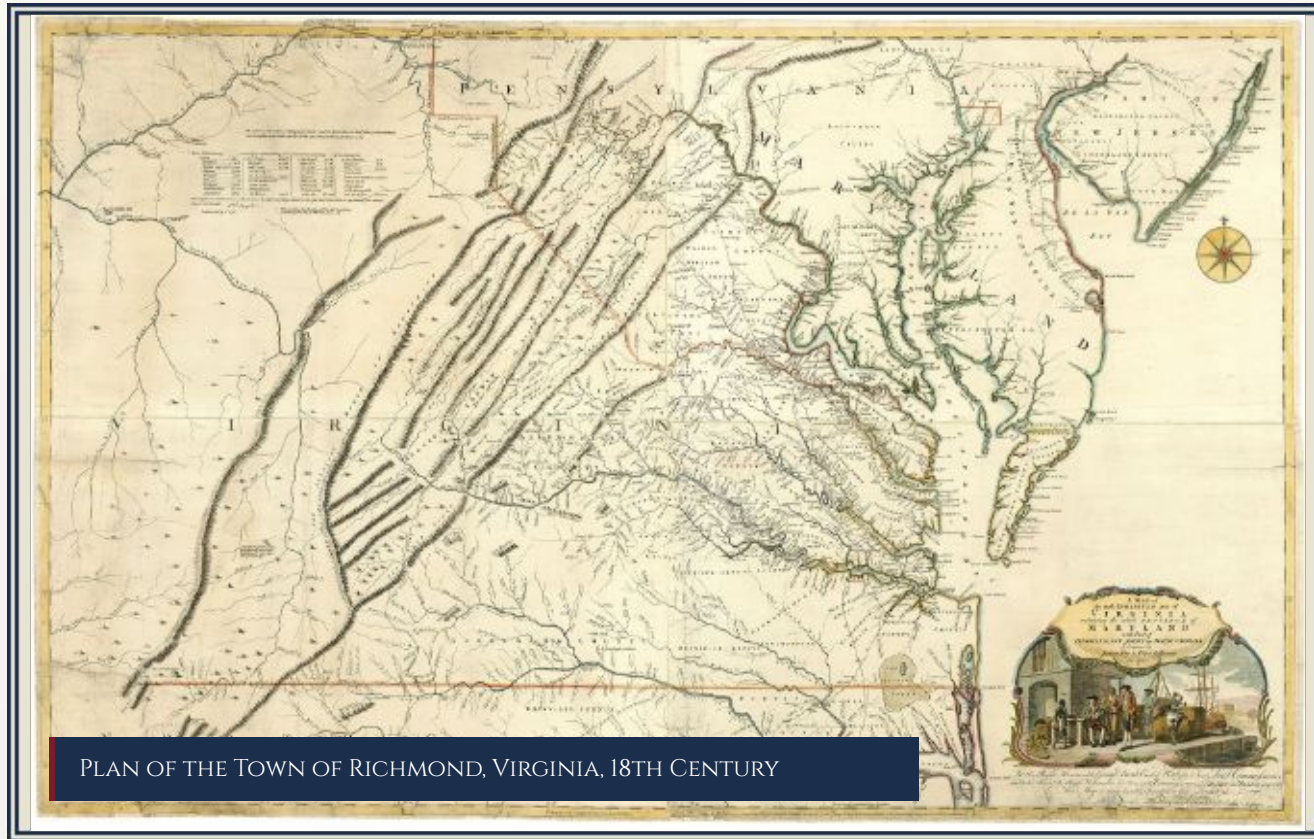
**Distribution Model:** Transitioning from direct consignment to factor retail stores

# CONSIGNMENT VS. SCOTTISH FACTORS

---

- ◆ **The Old Consignment System:** Wealthy coastal Tidewater planters shipped tobacco directly to London merchant houses on credit.
- ◆ **The Factor System:** Scottish merchant houses placed permanent agents (factors) along Richmond's fall line to buy directly from smaller inland farmers.
- ◆ **Centralizing Trade:** This shift centralized interior commercial transactions, cementing Richmond's status as an urban center.

# HISTORIC MAP: RICHMOND TOBACCO & SLAVERY



PLAN OF THE TOWN OF RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, 18TH CENTURY

**1742**

YEAR RICHMOND WAS INCORPORATED, ACCELERATING  
INLAND TOBACCO COLLECTIONS

**NATURAL**

DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH OF VIRGINIA'S ENSLAVED  
POPULATION BY 1750

# THE DOMESTIC LABOR TRANSITION

---

## INTERNAL

### REDISTRIBUTION PIPELINE

**AS TIDEWATER SOILS DEPLETED, RICHMOND ORGANIZED THE DOMESTIC SALE OF CAPTIVES DEEPER INTO THE SOUTH.**

Unlike South Carolina and Havana, Virginia's enslaved population experienced natural growth by 1750. Richmond capitalized on this demographic shift, transitioning from a direct importer of African captives to the largest domestic slave-trading market in the Upper South.

# SYNTHESIS

---

*Comparing Capital, Captivity, and Legacies  
(1520–1770)*

# THE ATLANTIC SCALE MATRIX (1520-1770)

| LOCATION     | ECONOMIC ROLE                | SLAVERY DEMOGRAPHIC PEAK            | PRIMARY LABOR DYNAMIC                              |
|--------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Veracruz     | Imperial Silver Gateway      | 110,000 arrivals (1595-1640)        | Mining, domestic, ranching; early peak             |
| Havana       | Fleet Assembly & Plantations | Transformed post-1763               | Intensive sugar monoculture; late explosion        |
| Liverpool    | Capital & Shipping Hub       | Orchestrated 1.5M Middle Passages   | Local slave populace remained negligible           |
| Montreal     | Continental Fur Hub          | 65% Indigenous (*Panis*)            | Urban domestic, status indicators                  |
| Manhattan    | Provisioning Center          | 15-20% Urban population (1740)      | Skilled trades, maritime labor, Wall Street market |
| Philadelphia | Middle Colonies Breadbasket  | Declined to <4% locally by 1770     | Profits derived via Caribbean provisions export    |
| Charleston   | Staple Monoculture           | 60%+ Slave majority (1740)          | Rice/Indigo engineering; extreme field labor       |
| Richmond     | Tobacco Fall Line Hub        | Natural population growth post-1750 | Domestic trade market to the Southern interior     |

# QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

## *The Legacies of Capital & Captivity in the Atlantic World*

---

The diverse structural frameworks across these eight nodes reveal that early modern capital accumulation was intrinsically, systematically bound to human exploitation. No single port operated in isolation from the broader Atlantic cycle of captivity.

# IMAGE SOURCES

---



[https://tile.loc.gov/image-services/iiif/service:gdc:gdcwdl:wdl\\_:00:50:3:wdl\\_00503:4289/full/pct:25/0/default.jpg](https://tile.loc.gov/image-services/iiif/service:gdc:gdcwdl:wdl_:00:50:3:wdl_00503:4289/full/pct:25/0/default.jpg)

Source: [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

---



[https://cdn20.pamono.com/p/s/2/2/2290721\\_5jmb08i3vp/optical-view-of-havana-cuba-1770-print.jpg](https://cdn20.pamono.com/p/s/2/2/2290721_5jmb08i3vp/optical-view-of-havana-cuba-1770-print.jpg)

Source: [www.pamono.eu](http://www.pamono.eu)

---



<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/sites/default/files/inline-images/MM-Liverpool-in-1680-unknown-artist.jpg>

Source: [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

---



<https://image.invaluable.com/housePhotos/KavanaghAuctions/43/756343/H15891-L348576272.jpg>

Source: [www.invaluable.com](http://www.invaluable.com)

---



<https://www.geographicguide.com/united-states/nyc/antique/18th-century/images/map-nyc-18th-century.jpg>

Source: [www.geographicguide.com](http://www.geographicguide.com)

---



<https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Slide1.jpg>

Source: [philadelphiaencyclopedia.org](http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org)

# IMAGE SOURCES

---



<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/CharlestonSC1733.jpg>

Source: [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)



<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/fry-jefferson-map.jpg>

Source: [encyclopediavirginia.org](https://encyclopediavirginia.org)