

**CONNECTICUT LEGISLATION PERTAINING TO "NEGROES," INDIANS,  
SERVANTS & SLAVES**

1637 **An Act for the recapture of runaway servants.**

It is also ordered that when any Servants shall run from their Masters, or any other inhabitants shall privately go away with the suspicion of ill intentions, It shall be lawful for the next Magistrate, or the Constable and two of the chiefest inhabitants, where no Magistrate is, to press men and boats or pinnaces, at the public charge, to pursue such persons by sea or land, and bring them back by force of arms." (*Public Rec. 1636-63, p. 530*)

1642 **An Act prohibiting living with the Indians.**

'Whereas diverse persons depart from amongst us, and take up their abode with the Indians, in a profane course of life; for the preventing whereof, It is ordered that whatsoever person or persons that now inhabiteth . . . and shall depart from us and settle and join with the Indians, that they shall suffer three years imprisonment at least, in the House of Correction, and undergo such further censure, by fine or corporal punishment, as the particular Court shall meet to inflict in such cases." ---also legislated places of trade with Indians and prohibited repair, sales, barter or transportation of weapons with the Indians. (*Public Records 1636-63, p. 530*)

1644 **An Act Prohibiting the sale or gift of items by servants or slaves.**

" . . . no servant either man or maid, shall either give, sell or truck, any commodity whatsoever, without license from their master, during the time of their service, under pain of fine or corporal punishments at the discretion of the Court, as the offense shall deserve." (*Public Rec. 1636-63, p. 539*)

Also authorized magistrates and sheriffs to pursue any runaway servants, slaves, or apprentices. Specified that recaptured servants & apprentices were required to serve three times the period of their absence. (*Also part of the Code of Laws est. by General Court, May, 1650, Public Rec. 1636-63, p. 539*)

1646 **An Act authorizing the exchange of imprisoned Indians for Negroes.**

Regarding Indians that are imprisoned: "if they should escape they are like to prove more insolent and dangerous after, It (sic) was thought fit that upon such seizure, the delinquent or satisfaction be again demanded of the Sagamore or plantation of Indians guilty or accessory as before; and if it be denied, that then the Magistrates of the Jurisdiction deliver up the Indian seized to the party or parties endammaged, either to serve or to be shipped out and **exchanged for neagers (sic)**, as the case will bear." (*Public Records 1636-63, p. 532*)

1649 **An Act providing for conveying "the light & knowledge of God to the Indians.**

"this Court, judging it necessary that some means should be used to convey the light and knowledge of God and his Word to the Indians and Natives amongst us, do order that one of the teaching Elders of the Churches in this jurisdiction . . . shall be desired, twice at least in every year to go among the neighboring Indians and endeavor to make known to them the Counsels of the Lord, and thereby to draw and stir them up to direct and order all their ways and conversations according to the rule of his Word. . . ." (*Public Records 1636-63, p. 531*)

1660 **An Act exempting Indian & Negro servants from training.**

"It is ordered by this Court, that neither Indian nor negar(sic) servants shall be required to train, watch or ward in this Colony." (*Public Records of Connecticut 1636-63, p. 349*)

- 1664 **An Act punishing runaway servants & apprentices.**  
 "Whereas many stubborn, refractory and discontented servants and apprentices withdraw themselves from their masters services, to improve their time to their own advantage, it is ordered that whatsoever servant or apprentices shall hereafter offend in that kind, before their covenants or term of service are expired, shall serve their said Masters, as they shall be apprehended or retained the treble term, or threefold time of their absence in such kind." (*Public Records of Connecticut 1636-63, p. 105*)
- 1687 **An Act punishing servants or slaves who provide Indians with strong drink.**  
 "as an addition to the law prohibiting the supplying Indians with strong drink, this Court orders that every servant or slave, male or female, that shall supply any Indian or Indians with any sort of strong drink contrary to law, they shall suffer corporal punishment for the same, according to the nature of their offence, at the discretion of the Court where they have their trial, unless the masters or governors of said servants or slaves will pay a fine for them according to foresaid law." (*Public Rec. 1678-89, p. 228*)
- 1690 **An Act requiring Negroes to carry passes.**  
 "Whereas many persons of this Colony do for their necessary use purchase Negro (sic) servants, , and often times the said servants run away to the great wrong, damage, and disappointment of their masters and owners, for the prevention of which for the future, as much as may be, it is ordered by this Court that whatever Negro or Negroes shall hereafter, at any time, be found wandering out of the town bounds or place to which they do belong, without a ticket or pass from the authority or their masters or owners, shall be stopped and secured by any of the inhabitants, or such as shall meet with them, and brought before the next authority to be examined and returned to their owners, who shall satisfy for the charge if any be and all ferrymen within this Colony ate hereby required not to suffer any Negro without such certificate, to pass over their ferry by assisting them therein, upon the penalty of twenty shillings, to be paid as a fine to the county treasury, and to be levied upon their estates for non-payments in way of distress by warrant from any one Assistant or Commander. This order to be observed as to vagrant and suspected persons found wandering from town to town, having no passes; such to be seized for examination and farther (sic) dispose by the authority; and if any such Negroes are free and for themselves travelling without such ticket or certificate, they to bear the charge themselves of their taking up." (*Public Records 1689-1706, p. 40*)
- 1690 **An Act punishing desertion from the army, including servants**  
 "That every soldier or soldiers deserting the army without leave, or flying (sic) from the colors, shall lose and forfeit the full half of their wages from their first listing; and if a servant then to make reparation to his said master by longer and farther service." (*Public Rec. 1689-1706, p. 41*)
- 1702 **An Act for Negro and Mulatto Servants to be maintained by their masters**  
 "Whereas it is observed that some persons in the Colony having purchased Negro or Malta (sic) Servants or Slaves, after they have spent the principal part of their time and strength in their masters service, do set them at liberty, and the said slaves not being able to provide necessaries for themselves may become a charge and burden to the towns where they have served: for prevention whereof, It is ordered and enacted by this Court and the authority thereof: That every person in this Colony that now is or hereafter shall be owner of a Negro or mulatto servant or slave, and after some time of his or her being taken into employment in his or her service, shall set such servant or slave at liberty to provide for him or herself, if afterward such servant or slave shall come to want, every such servant shall be relieved at the only cost and charge of the person in whose service he or she was last retained or taken, and by whom set at liberty, or at the only cost and charge of his or her heirs, executors or administrators, any law, usage or customs to the contrary notwithstanding." (*Public Records, 1689-1706, 375-76*)

- 1708 **An Act punishing parties involved in purchase or receipt of goods from Indian, mulatto, or Negro servants or slaves.**  
 "That every free person whomsoever, which shall presume either openly or privately to buy or receive of or from any Indian, mulatto or Negro servant or slave, any goods, money, merchandise, wares, or provisions, without order from the master or mistress of such servant or slave, every person so offending and being thereof convicted, shall be sentenced to restore all such money, goods, wares, merchandizes or provisions, unto the party injured, in specie, (if not altered) and also forfeit to the party double the value thereof over and above, or treble the value where the same are disposed of or made away. And if the person so offending be unable, or shall not make restitution as awarded, then to be openly whipt (sic) with so many stripes (not exceeding twenty), as the court or justices that have cognizance of such offence shall order, or make satisfaction by service. And the Indian, Negro, or mulatto servant or slave, of or from whom such goods, money, wares, merchandizes or provisions shall be received or bought, if it appears to be stolen, or that shall steal any money, goods, or chattels, and be thereof convicted, although the buyer or receiver, although the buyer not be found, shall be punished by whipping not exceeding thirty stripes, and the money, goods or chattels shall be restored to the party injured, if it be found." (*Public Rec. 1706-16, p. 52*)
- An Act punishing Negro and mulatto servants or slaves who disturb the peace or threaten harm to any white persons.**  
 "And whereas Negro and mulatto servants or slaves are become numerous in some parts of this Colony and are very apt to be turbulent, and often quarrelling with white people to the great disturbance of the peace: It is therefore ordered . . . That if any Negro or mulatto servant or slave disturb the peace, or shall offer to strike any white person, and be thereof convicted, such Negro or mulatto servant or slave shall be punished by whipping, at the discretion of the courts, assistant, or justice of the peace that shall have cognizance thereof, not exceeding thirty stripes for one offense." (*Public Rec. 1706-16, pp.52-53*)
- 1709 **An Act prohibiting congregation of persons "under the governance of parents or masters" on specified days.**  
 "That if any single persons being borders or sojourners, or any young persons whatsoever, under the government of parents or masters, within this Colony, shall convene or meet together in company or companies, in the street or elsewhere, on the evening after the Sabbath, or any public day of fast, or any lecture day, and be thereof duly convicted before any one assistant or justice of the peace, every such person shall pay a fine of five shillings to the treasury of the county wherein the offence shall be committed, or be set in the stocks not exceeding two hours for every offence." (*Public Rec. 1706-16, p.130*)
- 1711 **An Act Requiring former masters to support their freed slaves if they "come to want."**  
 ". . . all slaves set at liberty by their owners, and all Negro, mulatto, or Spanish Indians, who are servants to masters for time, in case they come to want, after they shall be so set at liberty, or the time of their said service be expired, shall be relieved by such owners or masters respectively, their heirs, executors, or administrators; and upon their refusal so to do, the said slaves and servants shall be relieved by the selectmen of the towns to which they belong, and the said selectmen shall recover of the said owners or masters, their heirs, executors, or administrators, all the charge and cost they were at for such relief, in the usual manner as in the case of any other debts." (*Public Rec. 1706-16, p.233*)
- 1712 **An Act prohibiting tavern owners from permitting borders, sojourners, young persons, etc. from convening in their homes and establishments.**  
 "if any inn-holder or tavern-keeper within this Colony shall, after publication hereof, allow or suffer any single persons being borders or sojourners, or any young persons or other inhabitants whatsoever under the government of parents or masters, to convene or meet together in company or companies in his or her house, . . . and be duly convicted thereof . . . shall pay a fine of fifty shillings cash to the treasury of the county in which such offence shall be committed, . . ." (*Public Rec. 1706-16, p. 317*)

1715 **An Act prohibiting the importation of Indian slaves.**

“ . . . considering that several persons have lately transported to and sold, or otherwise disposed of in this Colony a considerable number of Carolina Indians, as they are commonly called, that is to say, Indians of those nations in and about South Carolina, which are in open hostility against his Majesties subjects there, and have committed many cruel and bloody outrages upon them; and that unless speedy care be taken to prevent it, there is danger that greater numbers of them may be imported, whereby our Indians may be tempted to draw off to those enemies, and many other great mischiefs may ensue thereon, to the great hurt both of this and other Majesties Colonies upon this continent. . . it is hereby resolved, that a prohibition shall be published against the importation of any Indian slaves whatsoever.” (*Public Rec., 1706-16, p. 516*)

~~1717(?)~~ **Act requiring free Negroes & Mulattos to obtain consent of Selectmen before dwelling in a town.**

“Whereas in diverse towns in this Colony Negroes & Malattos do under Pretence of being Free and sett at Liberty, Purchase Lands and Settlements in Such Towns and prove disorderly prophane, irreligious & greatly disturb the peace of Such Towns—It is therefore Enacted by the Governor That No Negro or Malatto So Sett at Liberty or free or any other (Servants & Slaves onoly[?] excepted) Shall be allowed to dwell and inhabit in any Town in this Colony, nor purchase or any other ways obtain any lands, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ in any Such Towns without Liberty first had and obtained of Such Town and is further Enacted, that all Land purchased heretofore & hereafter to be made Contrary to this act and now declared Null & void and the Selectmen[?] have forever to Compell[?] such Negro & Malato to depart and Leave Such Town, who if they refuse they shall be proceeded with according to the Law touching Towns admitting Inhabitants.” “[no date]” (*CSL Archives Miscellaneous papers 1635-1789 First series II, Doc. 42*) [Note: Pierson, *Black Yankees*, p. 47 comments that this law was enacted in response to New London's refusal to permit Robert Jacklin, “free man of color” to purchase land in New London, but that the statute was seldom enforced. Neither the law nor its repeal is included in any of the printed Public Acts volumes although it is mentioned in some of the secondary sources.

1723 **An Act establishing a 9 o'clock p.m. curfew for Negro & Indian servants or slaves.**

“ . . . if any Negro or Indian servant or slave shall be found abroad from home in the night season, after nine of the clock, without special order from his or their master or mistress, it shall be lawful for any person or persons to apprehend and secure such Negro or Indian servant or slave so offending, and him or them bring before the next assistant or justice of peace; which assistant or justice of peace shall have full power to pass sentence upon such Negro or Indian servant or slave so offending, and order him or them to be publicly whipt on his or their naked body, not exceeding ten stripes, and pay cost of court, except his or their master or mistress shall redeem them by paying a fine not exceeding twenty shillings. (*Public Rec. 1717-25, pp. 390-91*)

**An Act punishing householders who entertain Negro or Indian servants or slaves after 9 o'clock p.m.**

“ . . . That if any such Negro or Indian servant or slave as abovesaid shall have entertainment in any house after nine of the clock as aforesaid, except to do any business they may be sent upon, the head of the family that entertaineth or tolerates them in his or their house, or any the dependencies thereof, and being convicted thereof before any one assistant or justice of the peace, who shall have power to hear and determine the same, shall forfeit the sum of twenty shillings, one-half to the complainer and the other half to the treasury of the town where the offense is committed; . . . And that it shall be the duty of the several grand-jurors and constables and tything-men, to make diligent enquiry into and present of all breaches of this act.” (*Public Rec. 1717-25, p. 391*)

1730 **An Act punishing slander by Negro, Indian or Mulatto slaves but permitting rights of legal defense.**

"...that if any Negro, Indian or Mulatto slave shall utter, publish and speak such words of any person that would by law be actionable if the same were uttered, published or spoken by any free person of an other, such Negro, Indian or Mulatto slave, being thereof convicted before any one assistant or justice of the peace . . . shall be punished by whipping, at the discretion of the assistant or judge before whom the trial is, (respect being had to the circumstances of the case,) not exceeding forty stripes. And the said slave, so convict, shall be sold to defray all charges arising thereby, unless the same be by his or their master or mistress paid and answered.

*Provided nevertheless*, That such Negro, Indian, or Mulatto slave be not debarred from making such pleas, and offering such evidences in his or their defense or justification on such trial, as any other person might make use of, being sued in an action of defamation, so far as relates to the trial before justice; anything above to the contrary notwithstanding." (*Public Rec. 1726-35, p. 290*)

1774 **An Act prohibiting the importation of slaves to be left or sold. . .**

"Whereas the increase of slaves in this Colony is injurious to the poor and inconvenient: *Be it enacted* . . . That no Indian, Negro or mulatto slave shall at any time hereafter be brought or imported into this Colony, by sea or land from any place or places whatsoever, to be disposed of, left or sold within this Colony.

**. . . and setting a 100 pound fine for every slave imported, received, or purchased in violation of this act.**

*Be it further enacted* . . . That any person or persons who shall hereafter, contrary to the intent of this act, import or bring any Indian, Negro or mulatto slave or slaves into this Colony, to be disposed of, left or sold within the same, or who knowing such slave or slaves to be so imported and brought into this Colony shall receive or purchase them, or any of them, shall forfeit and pay to the Treasurer of this Colony the sum of one hundred pounds, lawful money, for every slave so imported, brought into this Colony, received or purchased, to be recovered by bill, plaint or information, in a any court of record proper to try the same; and that it shall be the duty of all constables and grand-jurors to inquire after and make presentment of all breaches of this act." (*Public Records 1772-75, p. 329*)

*Violations occurred and were brought before the court and General Assembly, e.g., In March, 1775, a complaint was brought before the Assembly alleging that Jonah a freeman of Cape de Verde Islands was sold by Robert Old of Branford to Ebenezer Lindsey of Branford as a slave. A committee was appointed to investigate and William Gould was assigned to protect Jonah until the Assembly ruled. (Public Records, 1772-76, p. 391)*

## CONNECTICUT EMANCIPATION LEGISLATION

- 1774 "No Indian, Negro, or Molatto Slave, shall at any time hereafter be brought or imported into this Colony, by Sea or Land from any Place or places whatsoever, to be disposed of, left, or sold within this Colony. Violators were fined L100 per slave.  
This was in response to economic pressure. Importation deemed to be "injurious to the poor."
- 1777 "Owners of emancipated slaves freed from charge, on certificate being procured from selectmen, that they may probably support themselves." (*Public Statute Laws, Bk. I, Hudson & Goodwin, 1808, p. 79*)
- 1777, 1779, & 1780 Assembly defeats various emancipation bills. (*McManus, Black Bondage in the North, p.170 states that this showed the abolitionists that emancipation would not occur in CT without concessions*)
- 1784 Gradual Emancipation begun. "And whereas sound policy requires that the abolition of slavery should be effected as soon as may be, consistent with the rights of individuals, and the public safety and welfare, therefore, be it enacted, That no negro or mulatto child, that shall, after the first day of March, 1784 be born within this state, shall be held in servitude, longer than until they arrive to the age of twenty-five years, . . . ." (*Public Statute Laws of the State of Connecticut, Bk. I, Hudson & Goodwin, p.625.*) This was passed as an amendment (clause #13) to the general statute which codified the colonial "Black Codes" and does not appear in the Hoadley, *Public Acts* volumes. *McManus, Black Bondage in the North, p.123, quotes Arthur Zilversmith, The First Emancipations as speculating that some legislators might not even have been aware that they were voting for emancipation.*)
- 1788 Prohibited importation of African slaves. Fine of L50 for each African taken on board a vessel & L500 for every vessel engaged in slave trade. Also fine of L100 for forcibly removing a free Negro, mulatto or Indian from Connecticut. However, residents could move and take their slaves with them or send their slaves out of the colony on business.  
  
Those owning children to be freed according to the 1784 Gradual Emancipation act required to give in their names and the names of such children to the town clerks within 6 months of this ruling or 6 months from the birth of the child. (*Acts & Laws of the State of Connecticut, Hudson & Goodwin, 1796*)
- 1792 Manumissions limited to those 25-45 years of age and certified by civil authority or selectmen. Upon receipt of such certificate the slave owner, heirs, & executors discharged from any costs of supporting "the slave made free." (*Acts & Laws of the State of Connecticut, Hudson & Goodwin, 1796*)  
  
No inhabitant of Connecticut shall transport or aid and abet in the transportation out of this state for the purpose of selling into any other state or country either directly or indirectly any Negro, Mulatto, Slave or Servant, for years. (*Acts & Laws of the State of Connecticut, Hudson & Goodwin, 1796*)
- 1797 In May, amended the 1784 gradual emancipation law to free those born after August 1, 1797 when they reach 21 years of age.  
  
In October, amended the 1784 law to repeal the Black codes. (*The Public Statute Laws of the State of Connecticut, Bk. I, Hudson & Goodwin, 1808.*)
- 1814 First written Connecticut Constitution restricts right to vote to white males.  
(prior to 1814, the general consensus excluded persons of color from voting, although some towns, e.g. Wallingford & Cheshire, may have allowed non-white males to vote.)
- 1818 Guaranteed jury trial for those accused of being fugitive slaves & forbade state officials from participating in fugitive slave cases. (*Kirschner, Miles Jonathan, The Shame of the North: The Black Suffrage Issue in Connecticut 1814-1876, thesis, 1996.*)

- 1819 December 13, Wethersfield Town Meeting unanimously votes to instruct Congressional Representatives "to oppose the admission of any new State into the Union but on condition that slavery shall be altogether and entirely disallowed by the laws of such state."
- 1821 Resident slaveholders forbidden to send their slaves out of Connecticut for any reason..(*McManus, Black Bondage in the North, p. 183*)
- 1833 Legislation bans the formation of Black schools unless the majority of civil authorities in the locality in question approved. Law was justified by the idea that an influx of Blacks into the state was not good for Connecticut. (*Kirschner, The Shame of the North: The Black Suffrage Issue in Connecticut 1814-1876, (1996) CSL*)
- 1838 Abolition of 1833 Black Law (*Kirschner, Miles Jonathan, The Shame of the North: The Black Suffrage Issue in Connecticut 1814-1876, (1996) CSL*)
- 1838 "An act obstructing the operation of the U.S. Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 was passed [giving] the accused Negro the right to trial by jury & obliged the claimant to pay costs & damages in case of failure to prove his claim." (*Weld, Ralph Foster, Slavery in Connecticut, 1935, p. 29*)
- 1847 Towns defeat amendment which would extend the vote to non-white property holding males. (*Kirschner, Miles Jonathan, The Shame of the North: The Black Suffrage Issue in Connecticut 1814-1876, (1996) CSL*)
- 1848 Total abolition of slavery in Connecticut except for those aged 64 years or older. Only 6 slaves in this category in CT. Specified that no slave be brought into Connecticut.
- 1854 Personal Liberty Act set a \$5000 fine & 5 years in prison for falsely representing a free person to be a slave & required testimony of two credible witnesses to prove ownership of a Negro. This act defied Federal Fugitive Slave policy.
- 1857 Any slave not a fugitive from another state "coming into this State, or being therein, shall forthwith become and be free." This was direct response to the Dred Scott decision.
- 1857 Slavery ends in Connecticut with the death, in Windsor, of the last Connecticut slave, Nancy Toney

## EMANCIPATION LEGISLATION IN THE NORTH

- 1777 Vermont Constitution declares slavery a violation of "natural, inherent and inalienable rights."  
 No one "ought to be holden by law to serve any person as servant slave or apprentice after he arrives at the age of 21." (*McManus, Black Bondage in the North, p. 160*)
- 1780 Massachusetts Constitution declares all men free & equal by birth. A judicial decision in 1783 interprets this clause as having the force of abolishing slavery. "All men are born free and equal and have the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberty." (*McManus, Black Bondage in the North, p. 164*)
- 1780 Pennsylvania adopts gradual emancipation, freeing children of all slaves born after Nov. 1, 1780 at their 28<sup>th</sup> birthday. This was the first state to pass a gradual emancipation law. It required that every slaveholder register his slaves by November. All slaves unregistered after this time would go free. The law permitted free African-Americans to testify against whites and repealed the prohibition against interracial marriage. (*McManus, Black Bondage in the North, p. 161-162*)
- 1783 New Hampshire Constitution declared all men to be free & equal. "There is no judicial record that explains how the courts interpreted this law. In 1784 slaves still taxed as property. In 1789 slaves were removed from the roles of taxable property. By 1800 8 slaves remained in New Hampshire. (*McManus, Black Bondage in the North, p. 167 & Melish, Disowning Slavery, p. 66*)
- 1784 Rhode Island passes gradual emancipation legislation.
- 1784 Connecticut passes gradual emancipation.
- 1797 Ordinance forbids extension of slavery in Northwest Territory
- 1799 New York passes gradual emancipation laws.
- 1804 New Jersey adopts policy of gradual emancipation
- 1838 Slavery abolished in all British colonies
- 1865 Slavery abolished in U.S. as result of 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment & end of Civil War