



## Investigate a Slavery Timeline Overview

*Please note: Most points on the timeline have images as well as text.*

### **1634 Mathias de Sousa arrives in Maryland aboard the Ark.**

- Mathias de Sousa was an indentured servant. He completes his service and then sets out on his own. As a free man, he captains a boat and trades goods with others.
- Why is this important?** Historians believe Mathias de Sousa was the first person of African descent to arrive in Maryland. Over the next few years, other people believed to be of African descent also arrived in the colony. We know their names ("Francisco," "John Price," and "Dina,") from other colonial records.
- Find out more:** Historic St. Mary's City - A Virtual Exhibit

### **1638 The word "slave" appears in official Maryland documents.**

- A bill includes the word "slave" for the first time. Historians think it refers to enslaved Native Americans, but they're not sure.
- Why is this important?** This bill never became a law. But it shows us that Maryland had slaves as early as 1638.
- Find out more:** An Act Limiting the times of Servants

### **1638 A bill of rights excludes slaves.**

- This bill defined the rights of people living in Maryland. But it did not cover slaves.
- Why is this important?** This suggests that slaves did not have the same rights as other people in Maryland. This bill, which never became a law, does not identify slaves by a certain skin color.
- Find out more:** An Act for the Liberties of the People

### **1640 Trend: Some blacks are indentured servants while others are considered slaves.**

- Historians believe that some blacks were still treated the same way as white indentured servants. Other blacks were considered slaves. Many of the black indentured servants probably lived in England before coming to Maryland. Because they were English, they were seen as less different than blacks who arrived from Africa. They probably shared the same language and religion as other English people.
- Why is this important?** African blacks are thought of as a different race.
- Find out more:** See "Slavery Comes to Early Maryland: A Brief Look" for more information on the difference between slaves and indentured servants.

### **1642 Mathias de Sousa becomes a member of the Maryland Assembly.**

- Mathias de Sousa, a "mulatto," went to an Assembly meeting. All freemen in the colony were expected to attend. This means that he probably voted in the Assembly.
- Why is this important?** Historians believe that not all people of color were slaves.



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### 1650 Trend: Tobacco farming draws people to Maryland.

- Why is this important?** Farmers in Maryland were making a lot of money selling tobacco.
- These farmers needed workers to help them grow more tobacco. They soon realized that slaves were the best way to keep up with the demand for tobacco and make more money.

### 1658 Simon Overzee found innocent of murder.

- A plantation owner, Simon Overzee, punished "Toney, a Negro...slave," for not working. Toney was tied to a tree and whipped. Next, Overzee poured scolding hot lard on Toney's wounds.
- Overzee then tied him by the wrists and suspended him in mid-air to dangle for several hours.
- Toney died later that day. The Court decided that Overzee's brutal actions were legal. He was acquitted or released because of limited proof. No one could prove that he had punished Toney more than he was allowed.

- Why is this important?** This event shows us that the law favored white plantation owners over Negro slaves.

- Find out more:** Read the details of this case in the Provincial Court Proceedings of 1658

### 1662 Laws for servants and slaves become stricter.

- Maryland law states that no servant can travel more than two miles from his or her master's house without a pass.

- Why is this important?** This law helps us understand that servants and slaves often tried to escape. They were probably running away from bad conditions and cruel masters.

- Find out more:** An Act touching runaways

### 1663 Maryland punishes English servants who run away with slaves.

- A Maryland law states that any English servant who runs away with "Negroes or other slaves," has to pay a fine to the slaves' owners. The earliest runaway laws made runaways serve extra time once they were caught.

- Why is this important?** This law shows us that Africans are already servants for life (or "slaves"). Because Africans are already serving for life, it is impossible to punish them by adding time to their length of service. Thus, to protect the interests of the masters, the English servants who run away with African servants, but are not considered servants for life, are punished with additional time.

- Find out more:** An Act concerning English Servants that run away in Company of Colonial Enslaved Negroes or other Slaves

### 1664 Slavery is legalized in Maryland.

- The Assembly separates slaves from everyone else in the colony. Laws make it clear who will serve as slaves in Maryland:
- (1) "Negroes" (meaning people of African descent) and other enslaved people (probably meaning Native Americans) already in Maryland will serve for their entire lives;
- (2) all children of "Negroes" and other enslaved men will be slaves for life;
- (3) any free woman who marries an enslaved man will serve her husband's master during her husband's life;
- (4) children of free women and enslaved men will be slaves for their entire lives
- (5) children of free women and enslaved "Negro" men born before this law was enacted must serve their father's master until age 30.



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### 1664 Slavery is legalized in Maryland. (continued)

- Why is this important?** While other colonies (Massachusetts in 1641, Virginia in 1662) have previously given sanction to slavery, Maryland was the first colony to mandate slavery for blacks by law.
- Find out more:** An Act Concerning Negroes & other Slaves

### 1665 Some blacks are still free.

- Anthony Johnson owns some land in Maryland and in Virginia. A Virginia jury decides he does not have rights to his land in Virginia because he is a "negroe and by consequence an alien."
- Why is this important?** A black person can still have rights as a free landowner in Maryland. But Virginia takes his land rights away because he is black.

### 1671 Maryland law says slaves must remain slaves even if they become Christians.

- Before this law was enacted, Christians could not be enslaved. Some slaves who converted to Christianity were set free.
- Why is this important?** This law makes it harder for a slave to become free.
- Find out more:** An Act for the Encourageing the Importation of Negros and Slaves into this Province

### 1672 King of England creates the Royal African Company.

- The King of England creates a shipping company to bring the loads of slaves the New World.
- Why is this important?** More slaves arrive in Maryland.

### 1676 A black indentured servant named Thomas Hagleton is set free.

- Thomas Hagleton was born in Africa. He lived and worked in England for a while and then came to Maryland. Once in Maryland he signed a contract to work for Thomas Truman. But Hagleton is one of only a few Africans with work contracts or indentures. Most Africans are enslaved for life. When Hagleton's indenture expired, Truman tried to keep him against his will. Hagleton sued his master for his freedom.
- Why is this important?** Maryland law still allows some blacks to be free.
- Find out more:** Read the details of this case in the Provincial Court Proceedings of 1676

### 1680 Trend: There are fewer European indentured servants.

- The number of enslaved Africans working on plantations increases.
- Why is this important?** The success of the Maryland colony relies more and more on an slaves.

### 1681 "Irish Nell" is set free.

- The Assembly made changes to 1664's An Act Concerning Negroes & other Slaves to help "Irish Nell," a white servant who married an enslaved African man. The earlier law said that free women marrying enslaved men would be enslaved themselves. The new law stated that any indentured servant woman who married an enslaved man would immediately become free. Her children would also be free. The law was enacted in time to benefit Irish Nell.



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### **1681 "Irish Nell" is set free. (continued)**

- Why is this important?** This law makes it clear that lifelong slavery was not meant for white women or their children.
- Find out more:** An Act concerning Negroes & Slaves

### **1684 Maryland runaway laws treat Indians the same as Englishmen**

- Why is this important?** This law probably helped define Africans and their descendants (not Europeans, not Native Americans) as slaves for life.
- Find out more:** Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, 1684

### **1690 Trend: The number of African slaves brought to Maryland increases rapidly.**

- The number of European indentured servants decreases.
- Why is this important?** African slaves become the main kind of worker in the colony.

### **1692 New law protects slaves from cruel treatment.**

- Maryland law says that servants and slaves should be set free if they are starved or mistreated by their masters. This law was created after a St. Mary's County master named Thomas Courtney harmed his mulatto servant girl.
- Why is this important?** This law acknowledges that mistreating slaves is wrong.
- Find out more:** An Act Relating to Servants and Slaves

### **1695 A 'parcel' of 160 blacks lands in Maryland.**

- The next year, the ship Society sails into Annapolis with 175 slaves.
- Why is this important?** The number of slaves coming into the colony is going up. That means that slavery in Maryland is becoming more common.

### **1698 Parliament opens the slave trade to all merchants.**

- Why is this important?** More English ships can now bring slaves to Maryland. The Governor of Maryland reports that 470 slaves arrived in the summer of 1698. Another 352 slaves arrive in Maryland between May and August of 1699.