

LESSON R

FREE AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN DELAWARE

Standards: History Standard One: Students will employ chronological concepts in analyzing historical phenomena.

History Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data.

Geography Standard Four: Students will develop an understanding of the character and use of regions and the connections between and among them.

Objectives: 1) Using census material found in the Beers Atlas, the students will create a graph showing the changing population of slaves versus free African-Americans in Delaware from 1790 to 1860.

2) Students will draw information from the Beers Atlas and the Wilmington City Directories to answer questions about the lives of free African-Americans in Delaware

Materials: 1) *Lesson R, Delaware Public Archives, Beers Atlas Population Tables*

2) *Lesson R, Delaware Public Archives, Manumission, Slave Papers*
[backed with]

Lesson R, Delaware Public Archives, 1857 Wilmington City Directory, Series Number 9215.1

3) Graph paper

4) Worksheet with questions drawn from the material on the Beers Atlas, and the City Directory.

Procedures: DAY ONE

1) Divide class into groups of two.

2) Review the Abolitionist Movement. (See The Abolitionist Movement, Lesson P) Pass out the manumission/city directory to the groups. Explain what a manumission is and why it was so important. Ask for a volunteer to read the manumission aloud. Many slaveowners began manumitting their slaves in the late 18th and early 19th century. After reading the document, ask students the following questions:

- Were all three slaves in this manumission freed immediately? (No, many manumissions stated that the slave would have to serve a set number of years before he was free.)
- Why were they freeing their slaves? (many thought it was wrong and oppressive)
- Do you think the pressure of the Quakers and other religious groups had an effect on the slaveowners? (Yes)

3) Inform the students that they will carry out an exercise comparing the Delaware slave population to the free African-American population from the time after the American Revolution until the Civil War. Pass out the Beers Atlas document. Give the students several minutes to familiarize themselves with the material. The students need to look under the area entitled "Tables Showing the Movement of Population in the State from 1790 up to 1860." Point out the columns they will need to complete their task: Under each census year 1790, 1800, etc. there are four column headings. These headings are Counties, Whites, Colored, and Aggregate. The students will need to work with the column entitled Colored. The totals under Colored for "free" and "slaves" will be the numbers that are important for this exercise. Although the students are in groups of two, each student should complete a graph.

4) Inform the students that these numbers come from the United States Census. What is the Census? (The United States Constitution states that the country's population will be taken every ten years. This population count is called the census. The first year of the census was 1790 and it has been taken every ten years since. The next census will be in the year 2020.) We will be looking at the years 1790 through 1860. Explain that each group will be using a vertical double bar graph as the method of comparing the number of slaves to free African-Americans. Review the steps involved with creating a bar graph. Tell students to label the vertical, or y axis, "Census Population" and scale it in increments of 2000. Label the horizontal, or x axis, "Census Years" and scale it every 10 years starting with 1790 and ending with 1860. The crayon colors used to represent each group (slave, free African-American) will be determined by each student group, but a key and a title will be needed on each graph to inform the reader how the graph should be read. (See graph attached to this lesson.)

- 5) This activity will probably extend to the end of class time. Collect all the graphs at the end of the period. Inform the class that tomorrow's class will examine the information that can be drawn from the graphs.

DAY TWO

- 1) Instruct the class to reform their groups. Redistribute the graphs to the groups.
- 2) Briefly review the information presented in yesterday's lesson concerning manumissions and the census information on the Beers Atlas. This should give the students some time to reacquaint themselves with the graphs.
- 3) Ask the following questions:
 - What do the graphs tell us about the number of slaves compared to free African-Americans? (The number of slaves decreased from 1790 to 1860 while the number of free African-Americans increased.)
 - What were some of the occupations of free African- Americans? Pass out the manumission/Wilmington City Directory document and the Beers Atlas document again. Give the students some time to review the documents.
- 4) Pass out the worksheet "Free African-Americans in Delaware" to each student. The worksheet will have questions that pertain to the Beers Atlas and the Wilmington City Directory. The worksheet will ask questions that will require some research with the Beers Atlas document and the Wilmington City Directory. The students may continue to work in pairs but a worksheet must be completed by each student.
- 5) To summarize the lesson, have students respond to the following prompt:
What effects do you think the rise in the free African-American population and the decline in the slave population had on rural and urban communities in Delaware?

TRANSCRIPTION OF MANUMISSION

Whereas I Richard Fisher of Kent County in the Delaware State do think it wrong and

oppressive to keep Negroes in Bondage do therefore by these presents manseparte (emancipate) and absolutely set free the following Negroes that are in Bondage to me (Viz) Negro man named Frank and a Negro Woman Named Sue or Susanna to be free and at their Liberty, from the state of these Presents as also a Negro boy called Isaac about three years old to be free and at his liberty when he arrives to the age of Twenty one years, and I do hereby warrent and defend the freedom of the aforesaid Negroes against me my Heirs Executors and Administrators and from every other Person claiming by from or under me or them or any of them.

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my Seal this 10th day of June 1789.

Signed Sealed & Delivered Richard Fisher

in the Presence of

Thomas White

his

James Regester

mark

BACKGROUND

Although slavery existed in Delaware until 1865, many free African-Americans had lived in the state since the early days of colonization. With the sharp increase of manumissions following the American Revolution, the number of free blacks rose accordingly. By 1800 over half of all African-Americans in Delaware were free. By 1840 nine out of ten were free. However, the "freedom" enjoyed by these people did not translate into the free and equal society they may have envisioned.

Unfortunately, the state government put numerous restrictions on free African-Americans. Along with this sharp increase in free blacks in the late 18th century, the Delaware General Assembly imposed laws that severely limited the ability of African-Americans to rise economically, socially, and politically. The State Constitution of 1792 did not give free blacks (or women) the right to vote. Free African-Americans could not testify in court against whites unless certain circumstances prevailed. In 1832, following the hysteria that accompanied Nat Turner's slave revolt the previous year, the Delaware General Assembly banned African-Americans from owning or possessing any type of weapon, including guns and swords. However, those individuals who depended on hunting for food were exempt from this law. In 1832 another restrictive law was passed stating that free blacks were not allowed to meet in groups of more than twelve or hold meetings that lasted past 10:00 p.m. unless "three respectable white men" were in attendance. During the early 19th century a free African-American could not leave the state for more than two years and still maintain state resident status. By 1863 the time had been reduced to five days. Although one may logically conclude that it would be easier to simply move to another state - the reality was that other states had similar restrictions.

Concerning employment opportunities the avenues for free African-Americans was very limited. While many free blacks lived in rural areas and worked as tenant farmers, laborers, and domestic servants, others were able to save enough money to buy their own land for farming or move to the expanding industrial areas of Wilmington or Philadelphia. However, the increasing racism of the urban areas limited this migration. Many of those who moved to the cities found work as waiters, brickyard workers,

porters, wagon drivers, barbers, teachers, artisans, tailors, and clergymen. In Sussex County there were many free African-Americans who were sailors.

A new law enacted in 1849 added to the economic burden of many free blacks. This law stated that individuals who could not prove their ability to support themselves financially could be arrested, brought into court and deemed "idle" by the Justice of the Peace. If this occurred the individual would be hired out as a servant until January first of the following year. When released on January first, the person had thirty days to find employment. If unable to secure a job, they would then repeat the process of being hired out by the court until the next January. Since Delaware was dominated by an agricultural economy, finding employment in the dead of winter was a very difficult task.

The education system in Delaware during the early 19th century presented few opportunities for free African-Americans. Those schools that did exist were set up by free Blacks, Quakers, Abolitionists, and churches. The Delaware General Assembly refused to supply money to help educate this segment of the population.

For relief from their daily struggles, many free African-Americans turned to the church. Like many whites in Delaware during the late 18th century, free blacks turned to Methodism for their spiritual needs. At first, blacks and whites attended the same services. However, this arrangement soon found the African-Americans being treated as less than equal members. Such individuals as Peter Spencer and Richard Allen, both ex-slaves, led other disillusioned black Methodists in forming new black led churches. Spencer founded the African Union Church while Allen started the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church.

In conclusion, many freed slaves wanted the opportunity to succeed and become equals in Delaware society. However, many of the laws enacted in Delaware between the American Revolution and the Civil War continued to hold them down and restrict their ability to move up the social, political, and economic ladder. Many white Delawareans were simply not ready to view African-Americans as equals.

DOCUMENT BACKGROUND

1868 BEERS ATLAS OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Published in 1868, this atlas was the first statewide map showing individual houses and property owners. Other landmarks such as roads, schoolhouses, and churches are also represented. Along with the maps of the state, this atlas includes Delaware history, census information, and agricultural and manufacturing production statistics.

MANUMISSION

A manumission is a legal document stating that a slaveowner would free his/her slaves - either immediately or at a some point in the future. This manumission states that Richard Fisher of Kent County will free two slaves immediately and free the third slave when he reaches the age of twenty one. Although this manumission is part of the Slavery Papers Collection, many manumissions are found in the deed records.

WILMINGTON CITY DIRECTORY 1857

First created in 1814, City of Wilmington Directories includes the names of residents, businesses, advertising, and information about the city and the government.

This 1857 Directory lists residents with their address and occupation. City and State Directories are easily accessed on microfilm at the Archives (Series Number 9215.1)

Free African-Americans in Delaware

How many African-Americans were free in 1790? 3,899

How many African-Americans were free in 1860? 19,829

Which County held the most free African-Americans in 1800? Sussex

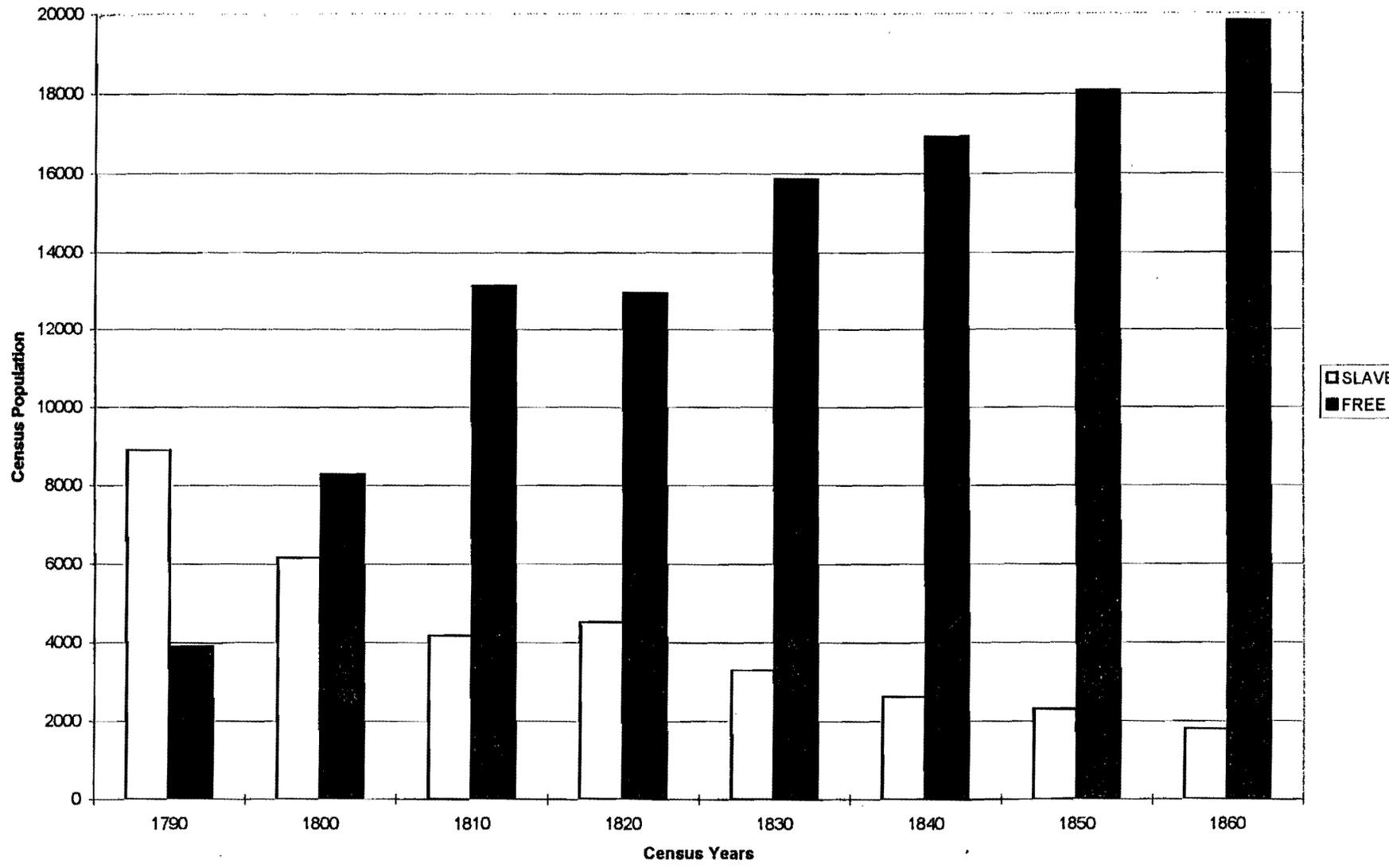
Which County held the most slaves in 1860? Sussex

Which County held the fewest slaves in 1820? Kent

Find the following individuals in the 1857 Wilmington City Directory. Match the letter of their occupation with their name.

John Blake <u>b.</u>	a. waterman
John Bishop <u>a.</u>	b. barber
Richard Blackson <u>c.</u>	c. laborer
Elijah Blake <u>h.</u>	d. waiter
William Blake <u>e.</u>	e. grain measurer
William Boardley <u>f.</u>	f. brickmaker
William H. Bostick <u>d.</u>	g. laborer
Lewis Boweling <u>g.</u>	h. wood sawyer
Absalom Black <u>i.</u>	i. labor

African-American Population Movement in Delaware from 1790 thru 1860



Graph Answer Key

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Free African-Americans in Delaware

How many African-Americans were free in 1790? _____

How many African-Americans were free in 1860? _____

Which County held the most free African-Americans in 1800? _____

Which County held the most slaves in 1860? _____

Which County held the fewest slaves in 1820? _____

Find the following individuals in the 1857 Wilmington City Directory. Match the letter of their occupation with their name.

John Blake _____	a. waterman
John Bishop _____	b. barber
Richard Blackson _____	c. laborer
Elijah Blake _____	d. waiter
William Blake _____	e. grain measurer
William Boardley _____	f. brickmaker
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Lewis Boweling _____	h. wood sawyer
Absalom Black _____	i. labor