IBERTY UNIVERSITY

Manumission, Willed, or Buying Their Freedom From the May 6, 1782, to December 18, 1865 **Patrick Burghardt**

Abstract and/or Background

On May 6, 1782, an act of the Virginia General Assembly enabled the voluntary manumission (freeing) of thousands of slaves in the 80 years prior to the Emancipation Proclamation and 83 years prior to the 13th Amendment. The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime) is declared ratified by three-quarters of the states of the United States. The motivation of each slave holder to free their slaves varied from individual to individual and many of the "freedom documents" give some indication as to their thoughts, beliefs, and intentions. Though it is an unfortunate historical reality that slaves were treated as chattel property, this led to a documentation process in the court system that preserved these documents for future study.

In 2022, Stephen Andrew Langland of the Helm School of Government completed his dissertation on five counties directly around Lynchburg, Virginia. After his dissertation, the Helm School expanded the project to include the entire state of Virginia. As an intern to the Helm School, and representing the History Department, there are now sixteen counties completed with about forty others in various stages of completion.

Introduction and/or Research Question

With the documentation and cataloging of sixteen counties around and near Lynchburg, Virginia, a comparison of the manumitted, willed, or paid to free themselves and things going on in history at that time. The information, once compiled, will tell us the ratios of slaves freed based on the categories and a ratio between each type of release. With this paper the questions now to be asked are:

- Will there be a concentration of freedoms by year and a correlation to things going on in history at that time?
- Were slaves given their freedom more through wills, by manumission by the owner of the slave(s), or by purchases of freedom?

Methods

Through the continuation of data collection and compilation of raw data into the Manumission Database, the data will be taken and formatted to address the questions raised above. To collect the data, the continuing use of multiple sources such as the "Free Negro Registry," usually compiled by county, will be used. The collection of raw data continues to lead us to new sources of raw data that will also be used in an attempt to have a more complete database for future generations.

Results and/or Conclusions

With a compilation of the data of the completed counties the hope is to understand the ratio of manumissions, wills, or of the ones that bought their freedom. Also, there will be a comparison of dates to understand which years were the years of the most manumissions, wills, or buying of freedom.

It is this project's belief that there will be a correlation between freedoms and the events of history between 1782 and the civil war. With the ratio of slaves that were freed by the passing of a slave owner compared to slaves given their freedom during the life of the slave owner, or by the purchase of their freedom the data will be able to give the answers to the raised questions.

With a continuation of the project there is the hope that the completion of the state of Virginia will bring about a better understanding of the mindset of the individuals that owned slaves. Further questions can also then be looked at such as "was there a religious, political, personal, or maybe even a moral motivation or obligation with each release."

Conclusions

After a tabulation and comparison of the numbers available the following conclusions were made:

- There ultimately was no found correlation between Manumissions and historical events
- The two largest Manumissions within these years were both from wills.
- The number of freedoms from Manumissions verses the number from Wills was close to even. (Only 216 more freedoms from Wills were registered then from regular Manumissions)
- Total Purchase of Their Freedom was 78, which was expected to be lower. While some Purchase of Freedoms were small amounts i.e., \$1, \$5, there were also a range from \$100 to \$1200, with the largest being \$4000 in Lynchburg City, as it was called then.

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6, 1782 – General Assembly of Virginia enacted a law

llowed slaveholders to manumit their slav

he House of Burgesses in Virginia grants freedom to slaves who served in the Continental Army.

7 - Delegates begin to convene in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for a Constitutional Convention intended to amend t

Articles of Confederation. However, a new Constitution for the United States is eventually produced.

789 - A national Thanksgiving Day is observed in the United States as recommended by President George

per 15, 1791 - Ratification by the states of the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution is completed, creating

2, 1793 - The Fugitive Slave Act is passed by Congress as the first of the federal fugitive slave laws under the U.S.

ederal crime to write, publish, or utter false or malicious statements about the United States governme

ust 4, 1800 - The 2nd United States Census is conducted. It finds 5,308,483 people living in the U.S. of which 893,602 are

t 30, 1800 - Gabriel Prosser's slave revolt in Richmond, Virginia is postponed due to weather. Word of his plan reaches

4, 1801 - Thomas Jefferson is sworn in as the third president of the United States, and Aaron Burr is sworn in as the third

- The U.S. Congress passes the "Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves "with the intention to prohibit th

importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States from any foreign

808 - The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves (1807) comes into effect: The importation of slaves into the United

24, 1814 - The Treaty of Ghent is signed, officially ending the war. The treaty is later ratified by the Americans on

815 - Even though the Treaty of Ghent has been signed American forces under General Andrew Jackson defeat

in what will be the last land battle between the Americans and British in the War of 1812. The British hal

States is banned; this is also the earliest day under the United States Constitution that an amendment can

- The Virginia General Assembly adopts the Report of 1800, a resolution drafted by James Madison arguing for

the sovereignty of the individual states under the United States Constitution and against the Alien and Sedition

Virginia's governor, James Monroe, who calls in the state militia. Gabriel is later captured and hanged on

ntaine, is signed between France and the United States of

, 1787 - The United States Constitution is adopted by the Constitutional Convention in Philadelph

er 25, 1789 - Ratification of the United States Bill of Rights in congress, sent to the states for ratification.

789 - George Washington is unanimously elected the first president of the United States

Washington and approved by Congress

er 3, 1792 - George Washington is re-elected President of the United States.

ber 2, 1796 - John Adams elected the Second President of the United States

1798 - Quasi-War: The United States Congress rescinds treaties with France,

1798 – The Alien and Sedition Acts become United States law, making it a

er 14, 1799 - Former President George Washington dies at his home in Mount Vernon, Virginia.

ber 20, 1803 - The Senate ratifies the Louisiana Purchase Treaty, doubling the size of the United States.

1808 - James Madison defeats Charles C. Pinckney in the U.S. presidential election.

mber 5, 1812 - James Madison Wins election for President of the United States.

12 - U.S. President James Madison enacts a 90-day embargo on trade with the United Kingdom

J.S. President James Madison asks the U.S. Congress to declare war on Great Britair

their advance two days later when informed of the Treaty of Ghent.

1816 - James Monroe Wins the election for President of the United States.

ust 28, 1814 – As part of the War of 1812 Alexandria, Virginia offers surrender to the British fleet without a fight.

per 3, 1804 - Thomas Jefferson elected to his second term as President of the United States.

, 1790 - The first United States Census is taken.

the United States Bill of Rights.

October 10 along with 23 other slaves.

America, ending the Quasi-War.

0. 1803 – The Louisiana Purchase is made by the United States from France

3 - The Louisiana Purchase is announced to the American people

30, 1800 – The Convention of 1800, or Treaty of

be made restricting slavery

February 16, 1815

Manumissions By Year

Key Moments in History Between 1782 and 1865

July 11, 1818 - The Bank of the United States reverses its policy of expanding credit and sends notices to its borr nationwide demanding immediate repayment of balances due; the defaults during the next six month will trigger the Panic of 1819. (Niles 1824) January 2, 1819 - The Panic of 1819, the first major financial crisis in the United States, begins 15, 1819 - The United States House of Representatives agrees to the Tallmadge Amendment barring slaves from the new state of Missouri (the opening vote in a controversy that leads to the Missouri ber 3, 1783 - The Treaty of Paris is signed by the United States and Great Britain officially ending the Revolutionary War. 1784 - The Continental Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris officially establishing the United States as an independent

• February 6, 1820 - 86 free African American colonists sail from New York City to Freetown, Sierra Leone. • March 3-6, 1820 - The Missouri Compromise becomes law. It admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state and declared a policy of prohibiting slavery in the remaining Louisiana Purchase lands north of the 36°30' parallel. (Hammond 2019) December 3, 1820 - James Monroe win re-election as President of the United States 1822 - Denmark Vesey, a free Black and community leader in Charleston, South Carolina, who was accused and convicted of planning a major slave revolt, is hanged in Charleston, South Carolina. (O'Neil Spady 2011)

February 9, 1825 - After no presidential candidate receives a majority of U.S. Electoral College votes, the United States House of Representatives elects John Quincy Adams as President of the United States in contingent election. • December 3, 1828 – Andrew Jackson beats incumbent John Quincy Adams and is elected President of the United August 21, 1831 - Outbreak of Nat Turner's slave rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia. Approximately 55 white are stabbed, shot and clubbed to death. (Schwarz 2006)

- In Southampton County, Virginia, escaped slave Nat Turner is captured and arrested for leading the bloodiest slave revolt in United States history. (Schwarz 2006 • November 5, 1831 - Slave leader Nat Turner is tried, convicted, and sentenced to death in Virginia for inciting violent slave uprising. (Schwarz 2006) November 11, 1831 - In Jerusalem, Virginia, Nat Turner is hanged December 3, 1832 - Andrew Jackson win re-election for President of the United States

• August 1, 1836 - Abolition Riot of 1836 in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court: Two fugitive slave women are freed from the courtroom by spectators.(Beshara 2009) • December 7, 1836 - Martin Van Buren wins election for President of the United States

July 7-10, 1834 - Anti-abolitionist riots happen in New York City. (Jentz 1981

May 10, 1837 – Panic of 1837: New York City banks fail, and unemployment reaches record levels. November 7, 1837 - In Alton, Illinois, abolitionist printer Elijah P. Lovejoy is shot and killed by a pro-slavery mob while he attempts to protect his printing shop from being destroyed a fourth time. (Rabban 199 November 7, 1840 - William Henry Harrison win election for President of the United States.

A - Amistad: The Supreme Court of the United States rules in the case that the Africans who seized control of the ship had been taken into slavery illegally. • April 4, 1841 - President William Henry Harrison dies of pneumonia, becoming the first president of the United State to die in office and at one month, the president with the shortest term served. He is succeeded by Vice President John Tyler, who becomes the tenth president of the United States. 11, 1841 - Frederick Douglass speaks at the Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society Convention ber 4, 1844 - James K. Polk wins election as President of the United States

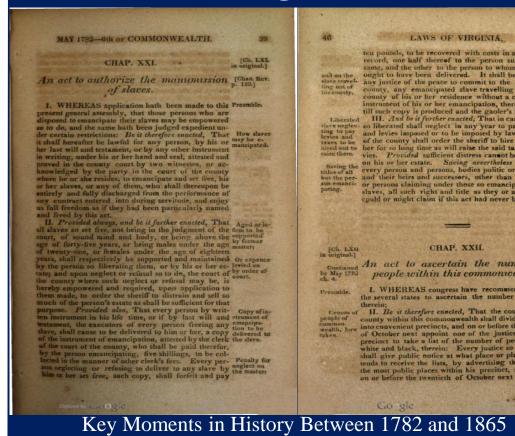
• May 14, 1846 – Mexican American War: The United States declares war on Mexico. February 2, 1848 - Mexican American War: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is signed, ending the war and ceding to the U.S. virtually all of what becomes the southwestern United States.

November 7, 1848 - Zachary Taylor wins election as President of the United States. • September 17, 1849 – Harriet Tubman emancipates herself. (Larson 2004) January 29, 1850 - Henry Clay introduces the Compromise of 1850 to Congress. The Compromise of 1850 was

package of five separate bills passed by the United States Congress in September 1850 that temporarily defused tensions between slave and free states in the years leading up to the American Civil War. (Clay 1850) 1815 - Even though the Treaty of Ghent has been signed British forces capture Fort Bowyer near Mobile, Alabama • March 7, 1850 - United States Senator Daniel Webster gives his "Seventh of March" speech, in which he endorses the Compromise of 1850, to prevent a possible civil war. • June 1, 1850 – The 1850 United States census shows that 11.2% of the population classed as "Negro" are of mixed race • July 9, 1850 - President Zachary Taylor dies in office; Vice President Millard Fillmore becomes the 13th president of the United States

• September 18, 1850 - The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 is passed by the U.S. Congress. Harriet Tubman became an

Manumission Law of Virginia



- Frederick Douglass delivers his famous speech on "The Hypocrisy of American Slavery" in Rochester, New York. (McFeely 1991 November 2, 1852 – Franklin Pierce wins election as President of th United States. January 4, 1854 – Senator Stephen Douglas introduces a bill to form the Nebraska Territory. The bill sparked major debates related to slavery issues and evolved i the Kansas-Nebraska Act. (Nevins 1947) • March 20, 1854 - Anti-slavery activists of the Kansas-Nebraska Act meeting at the Little White Schoolhouse in Ripon, sconsin form the Republican Party May 24, 1854 – Slave Runaway Anthony Burns is arrested in Bo MA. (Linder 2019) June 2, 1854 – Slave Runaway Anthony Burns is shipped back to Virginia-back into a life of slavery. Abolitionists of the Jorth are infuriated. (Linder 2019 - Henry David Thoreau delivers his fierce speech Slavery in Massachusetts in Framingham, MA, harpin on American politicians and journalists, all the whil

1854 - Abraham Lincoln, in his "Peoria speech

States. (Neely 1982)

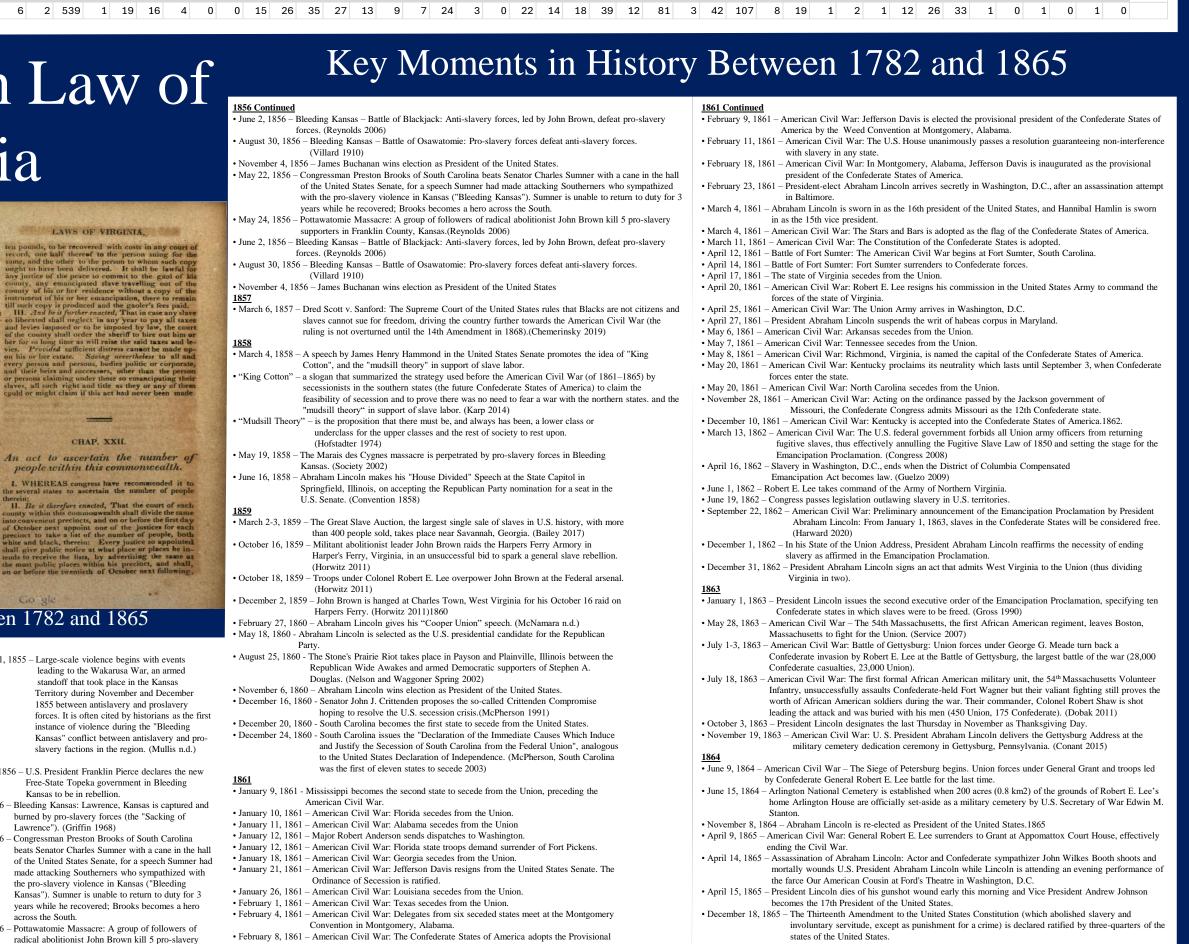
expresses opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act

Popular Sovereignty, and slavery in the Unite

calling for action against the injustice of slavery within

supporters in Franklin County, Kansas.

(Reynolds 2006)



Constitution of the Confederate States.

Future Work

The Manumission project is an ongoing project that is many years from completion. Using students looking for CSER hours, internships through Helm School of Government and the History Department her at Liberty University, and all volunteer work that come in freely will help bring this project to its conclusion.

It is also the hope of the project that the information gathered can help us understand the thinking and desires of the individuals during this timeframe.

