

The atlantic slave trade history essay



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What is the slave Trade. When did it occur. The Atlantic Slave Trade which can be also called the Transatlantic Slave Trade took place across the Atlantic Ocean from the 16th -19th centuries. The majority of slaves transported to the New World were Africans from the Central and Western parts of the continent, sold by Africans to European slave traders who then took them to the colonies in North and South America. The numbers were so great that Africans who came by way of the slave trade became most members of the Old-World immigrants in North and South America before the late 18th century. The South Atlantic Economic System was making goods and clothing to sell in Europe and the large number of African slaves brought to the New World. This was important to those European countries which, in the late 17th and 18th centuries, were creating overseas empires.

The Atlantic Slave Trade happen because Trade contacts were first made between the continents of the Old World such as (Europe, Africa, and Asia) and those of the “ New World” such as (North America and South America). For many years, tidal currents made travel really hard for the boats that were available, and also there had been very little contact between the people living in these continents. In the 15th century New European developed technologies that made ships better equipped to deal with the problem of tidal currents, and could begin traveling across the Atlantic Ocean. Between 1600 and 1800, approximately 300, 000 sailors engaged in the slave trade visited West Africa.

In doing so, they came into contact with societies living along the West African coast and in the Americas which they had never experienced.

Cape Coast Castle, Inner Courtyard, Ghana, 1986

Most historians believe that Cape Coast Castle was built as a small trading lodge which was added to and enlarged until it became a fortification. In 1637 the lodge was occupied by the Dutch. Then, in 1652, it was captured by the Swedes, who named it Fort Carolusburg. For a time, both the local people and various European powers fought for and gained possession of the fort. Finally, in 1664, after a four-day battle, the fort was captured by the British and re-named Cape Coast Castle. The Castle served as the seat of the British administration in the then Gold Coast (Ghana) until the administration was moved to Christiansburg Castle in Accra on March 19, 1877.

Slaves were kept at Cape Coast Castle in dungeons while waiting to the new world. Around 1000 male slaves and 500 female slaves occupied the castle at any one time in separate dungeons. Each slave would be locked up for 6 to 12 weeks, waiting for their turn to board one of the ships. The dungeons must have been unbearable with hundreds of slaves crammed in together and no toilet facilities. There were only a few windows to let in fresh air, and a channel down the middle to carry away urine and feces which completely covered the floor of the dungeons.

The nearby Elmina Castle, also a major European slave trade fort, was established 155 years earlier than Cape Coast Castle. The Portuguese built the castle of São Jorge Da Mina in 1482, in a region rich in gold and ivory resources. Da Mina means ‘ of the mine’ in

Portuguese. The Castle is one of West Africa’s oldest standing buildings; it was the first permanent structure south of the Sahara built by the Europeans.

Cape Coast Castle, Ghana, Door of No Return...

When the ships arrived at Cape Coast Castle, the slaves would be chained and taken through the ‘ door of no return’ leading to the waterfront. The slaves had little idea what would happen to them; some people thought they were being transported to another land where they would be eaten by the white men. Many of them (10-15%, or more) would die of infections or illness during the sea voyage, which typically lasted five to eight weeks with good winds and calm seas, or sometimes up to three months with bad weather. The men were packed into the ships’ holds in very tight quarters with no toilet facilities, chained together, and infrequently would be allowed to come up to the top deck to get some fresh air and exercise. The women were often allowed more freedom to move about the ship, where they were subjected to sexual abuse by the crew.

Conclusion

What I learned about the slave trade was that slaves taken to the New World were Africans from the Central and Western parts of the continent, sold by Africans to European slave traders who then took them to the colonies in North and South America. I also learned that the slave trade happened because trade contacts were first made between the continents of the Old World such as (Europe, Africa, and Asia) and those of the “ New World” such as (North America and South America). I did not know they had the Cape Coast Castle for slaves to stay in dungeons for weeks with no toilet and they only had a little fresh air until they were boarded on the ship. I also learned that the men slaves did not have a lot of freedom like the women did because the women were sexually abused by the crew. Only the men can have freedom so they can get some air and exercise.

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