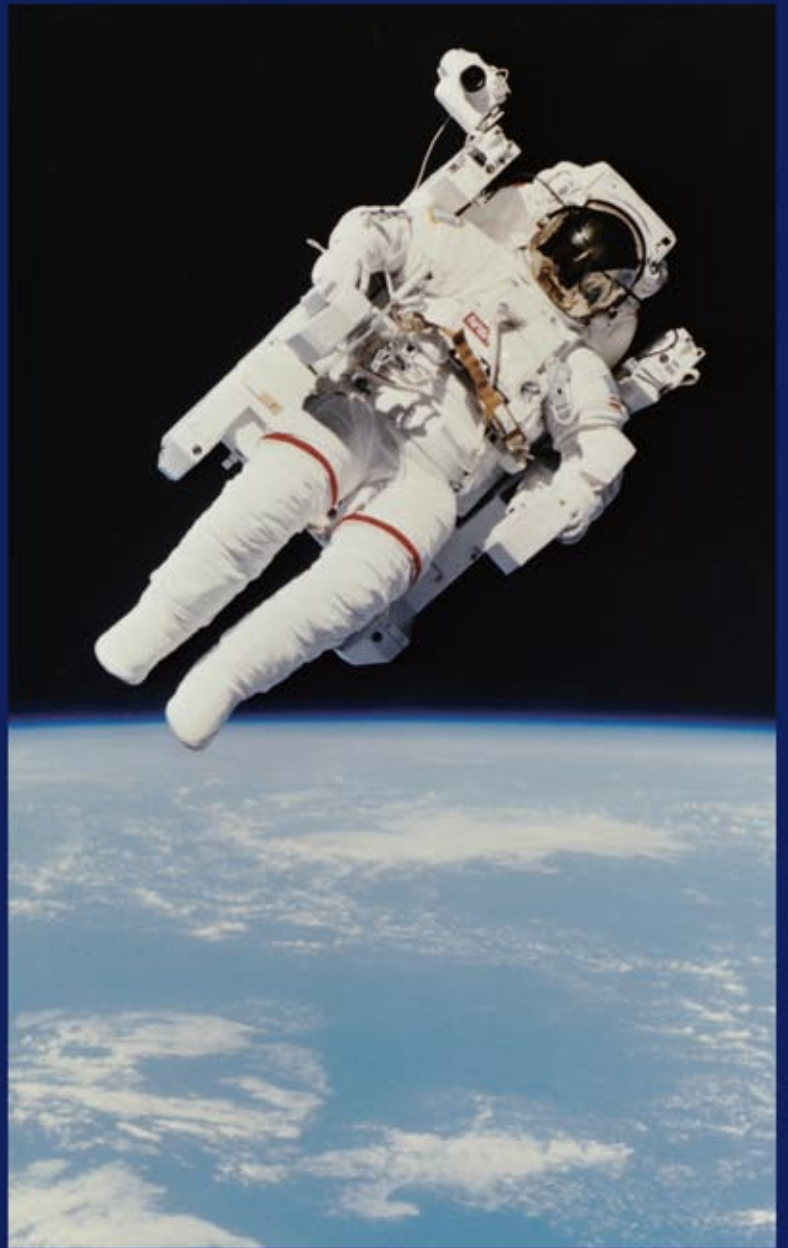


FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

THE LANDMARK HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

From Charleston to the Moon

Volume II



By Daniel J. Boorstin with Ruth F. Boorstin

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The United States had always experienced regional differences. For its first 80 years of existence, few if any people would have thought of the United States as a “country.” Your “state” was your “country.” The United States was simply a legal structure that let the different member countries or states work out their differences and cooperate on matters that were of concern to all of them together. In 1860, however, differences between the member countries—or states—grew so big, that they wound up fighting each other in what has become known as the Civil War. States in the north retained the name *United States*. States in the south agreed to fight together as the *Confederate States*. Here, soldiers from the northern states (wearing blue uniforms) fight soldiers from the south (wearing gray uniforms).

Part 1

The Rocky Road to Union

The United States spread across the continent. But the nation did not grow all in the same way or at the same pace. Some cities—Chicago, Omaha, Denver, and San Francisco—grew fast and prospered. Others were left behind; they became ghost towns. And still others disappeared without a trace. Some people dreamed of gold and found it. Others found only rocks and disappointment. Some tried to raise crops that the soil would not feed or where the rain did not come.

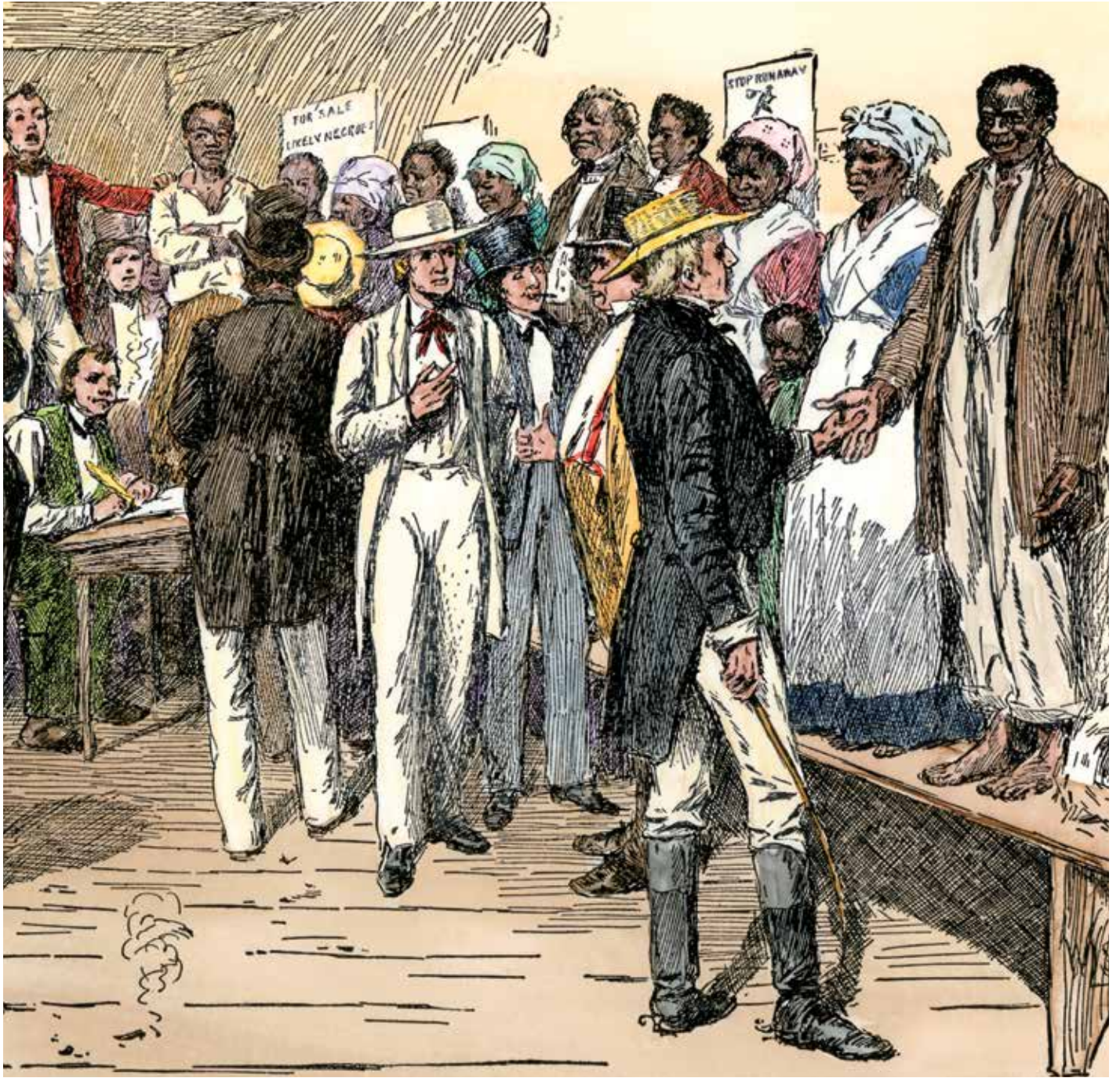
By the mid-1800s, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia had universities, libraries, and museums. Charleston and New Orleans boasted elegant town houses. Virginia had its old planters' mansions. But life in these cities was nothing like life in crude mining camps like Dead Man's

Gulch, Colorado, and Virginia City, Nevada. The differences were like those between life in Great Britain and life in the American colonies a hundred years before.

The Republic of Texas was a completely separate nation from 1836 to 1845. California, too, was briefly independent. The lonely wheat farmer or cattleman of the Great Plains in Nebraska or Iowa was well aware of how different his life was compared to the lively crowds of Pittsburgh, Chicago, Milwaukee, or Omaha.

There were many different American ways.

Could the Constitution that 13 states on the Atlantic coast had created now bind a continent? Was it possible for a whole nation to be dedicated to the idea that all men are created equal?



Slaves on an auction block.

Every state north of the Ohio River and the Mason–Dixon Line passes laws that severely restrict or abolish slavery. In the region as a whole, however, slavery is abolished only gradually. New Hampshire and New Jersey restrict but do not abolish slavery until the federal government forces the issue in 1865.

1777–1804

Northwest Ordinance forbids slavery northwest of the Ohio River for all future territories and states in the region.

1787

Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin.

1793

Cotton reigns as an economic “king” throughout the South and makes slavery economically attractive to plantation owners.

1795–1865

Britain abolishes the slave trade everywhere within its empire.

1807

Importation of slaves into the United States is prohibited.

1808

1775

1785

1795

1805

1815

Chapter 1

Slavery Conquers the South

The Civil War was both the simplest and the most complicated event in American history. It was the simplest, because we can summarize the issue in one word: slavery. But it was the most complicated because, as Southerners still say, it was a “War Between the States.”

The 11 seceding states, which made up the Confederate States of America, contained nine million people. On both sides there were many different kinds of people and many ways of life. In the North, many did not want to abolish slavery. And in the South, many did. In the North, many people did not care about slavery one way or another. And in the South, many people did not own slaves and did not make their money from slavery.

The Declaration of Independence said that “all men are created equal.” If Americans truly believed that, then you would think slavery had no place in the United States. The puzzle, then, is how slavery became strong, and how some white Southern Americans (even if they did not own slaves) came to believe it was the very foundation of their life. If we can understand this, then we may understand why there had to be a war against slavery in order to save the Union.

In ancient times slavery was found everywhere. When one people defeated another in war, instead of massacring the losers, the winners would often enslave them. They would make the losers serve the winners. Even as late as the Middle Ages, slavery of this type was widespread among Europeans. Beginning in the 1500s and 1600s, however, this kind of slavery slowly disappeared.

But while slavery declined in Europe, it grew elsewhere. Beginning in the 1400s, Europeans began to

invade Africa. And they enslaved the people they found there. When Columbus discovered the New World, he and those who followed him did the same thing: they enslaved the people they found.

By the time the Pilgrim Fathers sailed, you could find both African and Native American slaves in the New World. So while America meant a new freedom for many white Europeans, for many others—especially for blacks brought from Africa—America meant slavery.

The first unwilling African immigrants were brought to Virginia from Africa in 1619. And Massachusetts Puritans began buying and selling Indian slaves by 1637. Indeed, they itched to acquire black slaves. As one wrote to the governor of Massachusetts, 20 African slaves would be “cheaper than one English servant.”

Under the old system of empires, the European mother countries wanted from their colonies the things they could not produce themselves. In addition to gold and silver, they wanted products like tobacco, rice, cotton, sugar cane, and indigo (a pea plant that makes a deep blue dye). All of these crops grow only in warm climates.

The climates of the new colonies in South America and the Caribbean were perfect for these kinds of crops. These crops also require lots of labor. Hard work in the hot sun did not appeal to the men who had left Europe for a better life.

It was not easy to find workers. The Portuguese in Brazil, the Spanish in Latin America, and the English in North America first tried to solve their problem by enslaving the native Americans—the Indians. But there were not enough Indians. Harsh treatment, exhausting

Britain abolishes slavery.

1834

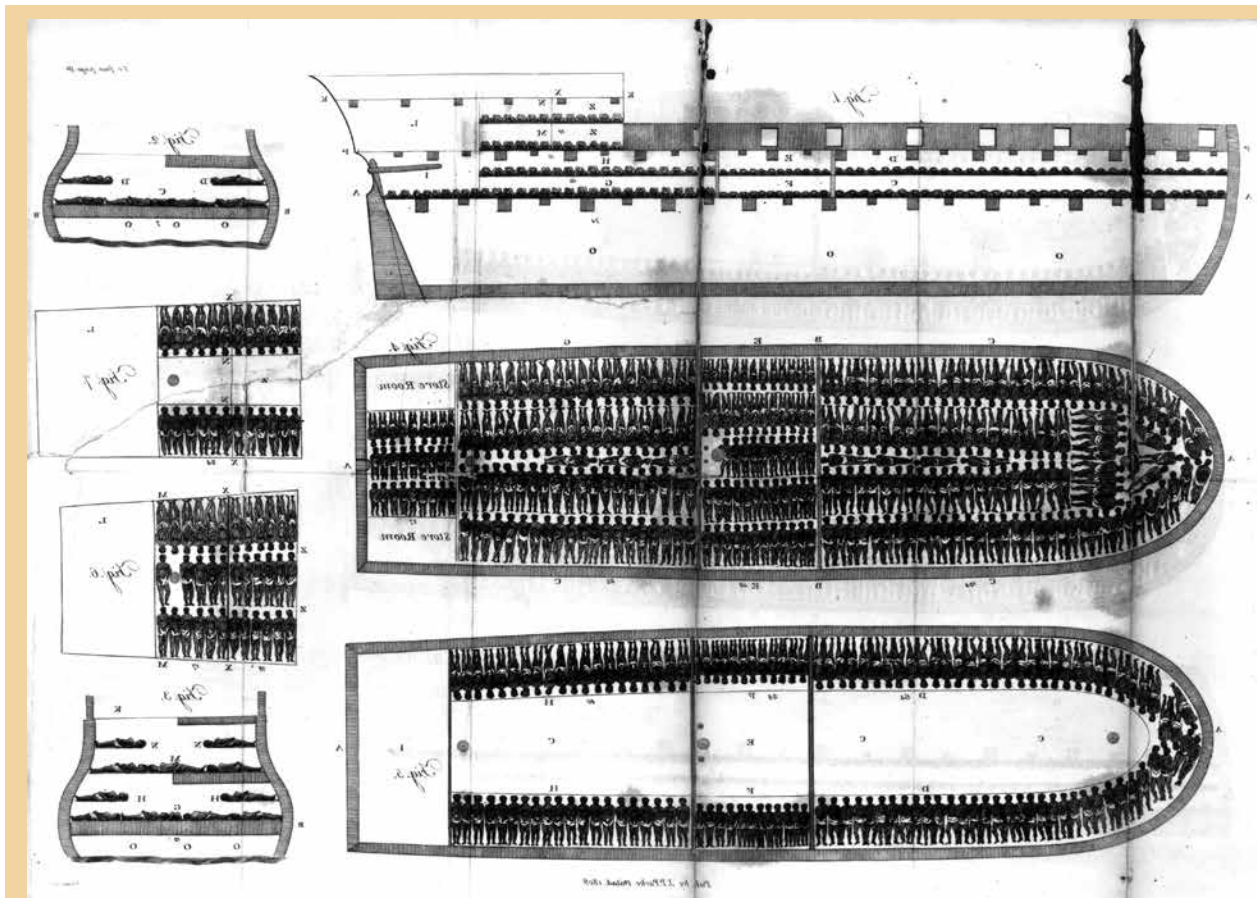
1835

1845

1855

1865

1875



A set of illustrations from *Case of The Vigilante, A Ship Employed in the Slave-Trade* published by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in London in 1823. The authors wrote concerning this illustration, "The slaves, at the time of the capture of the vessel, were found in the wretched condition as exhibited in this plate: some lying on their backs, others sitting on the bottom of the ships . . . [Some of those who were sitting were] in the posture in which they are here shown, and others with their legs bent under them, resting upon the soles of their feet. . . They were chained to each other by the arms and legs. Iron collars were round their necks. . ."

- Breadth of the men's room (the larger room): 22'4". Length of the room: 37'0".
- Height between decks from deck to deck: 4'8".
- Breadth of the platform in the men's room: 5'3".
- Number of slaves stowed in the men's room: 227.

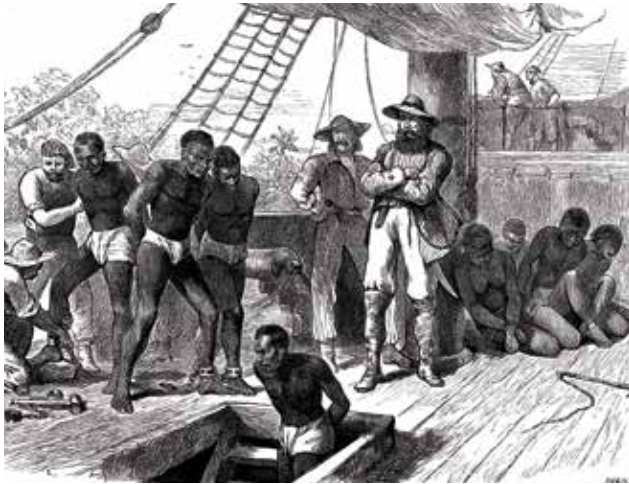
work, and diseases the invaders brought from Europe killed off too many of them.

So the Portuguese looked for other sources of labor. They began importing people from Africa. African tribal chiefs often sold their neighbors into slavery. Or white slave catchers would capture them. These newly enslaved people were then stowed like livestock in ships and brought across the Atlantic. We can hardly imagine their misery. But since profits were high, the slave traders brought these prisoners to the Americas by the

thousands. A hundred years before Captain John Smith landed at Jamestown in Virginia, parts of Brazil had 20 black slaves for every white worker.

By the early 1700s, Virginia plantation owners were importing black slaves by the thousands. Year by year slavery was becoming more important in the life of the colony.

Thoughtful Southerners began to worry. Thomas Jefferson made up a list of George III's crimes against humanity for the Declaration of Independence. The

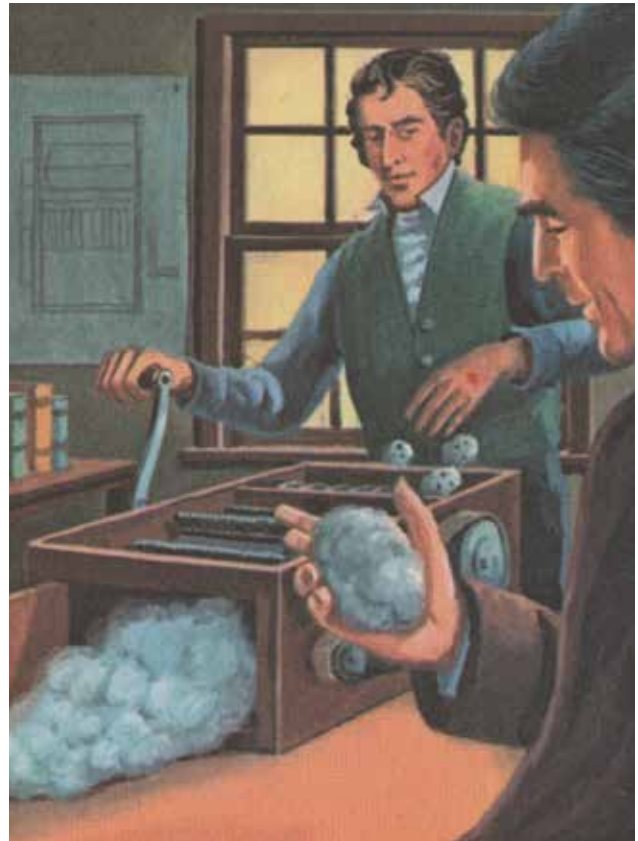


A fierce but sanitized view of how captured Africans were loaded for delivery to their future masters . . . in Brazil, the West Indies, the United States, or Europe.

final item Jefferson included in his list was that the king had encouraged the slave trade. “He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty,” Jefferson wrote. Part of the crime, said Jefferson, was the fact that the king did this against “distant people who never offended him.” He captured and carried them into “slavery in another hemisphere.” He caused them to suffer “miserable death in their transportation” to the new land.

Jefferson himself owned slaves, so you know he was writing a kind of indictment against himself, too. After all, he himself was enjoying the benefit of this crime with which he was charging the king. But the Congress did not want to hurt the feelings of other slave owners or slave traders (most of whom were from Massachusetts and New York City). So they removed these words about slavery before they adopted the Declaration.

Jefferson worried about what slavery did to the slaveholder. He explained in his *Notes on Virginia* (1783) that every slaveholder became a tyrant, and his children learned bad habits. “The parent storms, the child looks on. . . . [The child then] puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves [and] gives loose to the worst of passions. [And so he is] exercised in tyranny.” In Virginia, Jefferson said, he saw “an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by . . . slavery among us.”



Eli Whitney and his cotton gin.

Eli Whitney invented a machine that separated the cotton fuzz from the cotton seeds. That was in 1793. And within just a few years, cotton became the great crop of the South. Slavery became more important as soon as cotton became more important. Cotton growers used slaves to plant, cultivate, and pick cotton. And they used slaves to work the cotton gins. And the most enterprising planters bought as many slaves as they could. That way they could grow and sell more cotton. And when they sold more cotton, they bought more slaves. Slaves became a key to wealth.

Southerners soon began to say, “Cotton is King.” But Cotton was a very unpredictable king! The price of cotton depended not only on the weather and the size of the crop, it also depended on how much the cotton-cloth manufacturers in Birmingham, England, and in Lowell, Massachusetts, were willing to pay.

People in the South came to the place where they could not imagine a world without cotton. And it