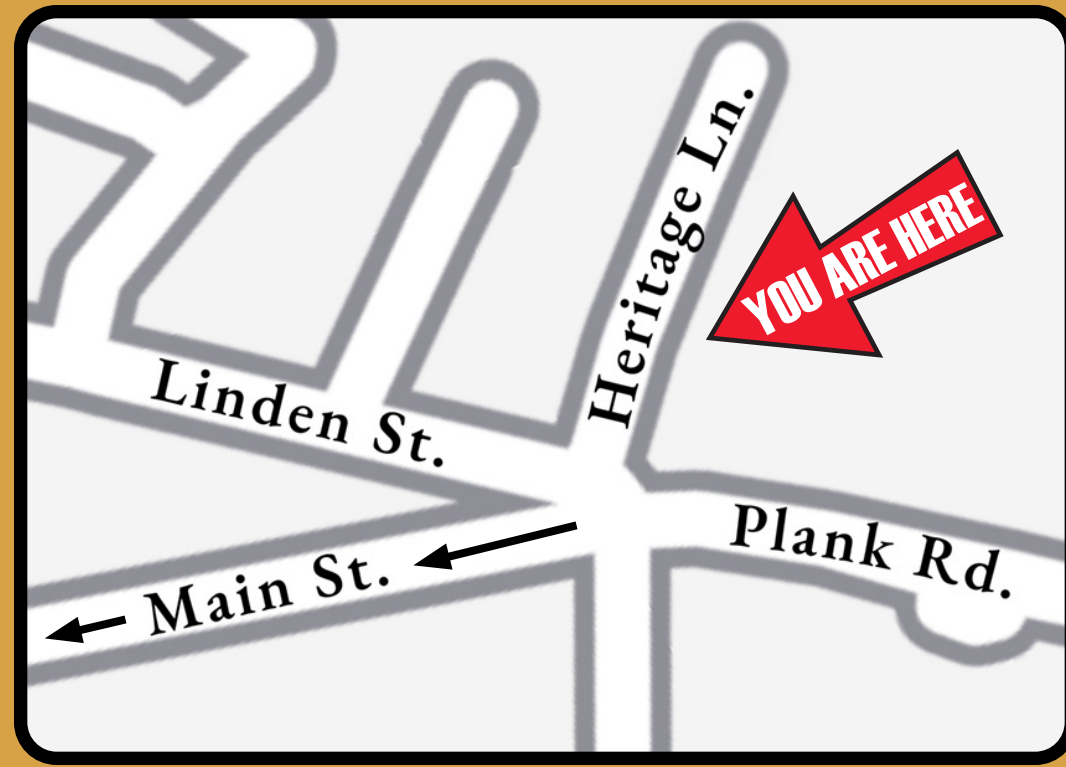


# Slavery's Roots

## DEFINING AFRICANS' ENSLAVEMENT



NAT  
TURNER  
TRAIL

1831  
Southampton  
Insurrection

The first documented Africans to arrive in Virginia landed at Old Point Comfort in August 1619. From Angola, they were captured from a Portuguese slave ship near Veracruz, Mexico, by the Dutch privateers *Treasurer* and *White Lion*. The legal status of these 20 Africans is uncertain. England had no laws concerning slavery when the Virginia colony was established. These Africans came under duress and were traded for supplies. They surely suffered prejudice and discrimination, including racism, segregation, work status, and language barriers. These circumstances and the need for an inexpensive labor force eventually resulted in the codification of slavery.

### Status Defined: 1619-1654

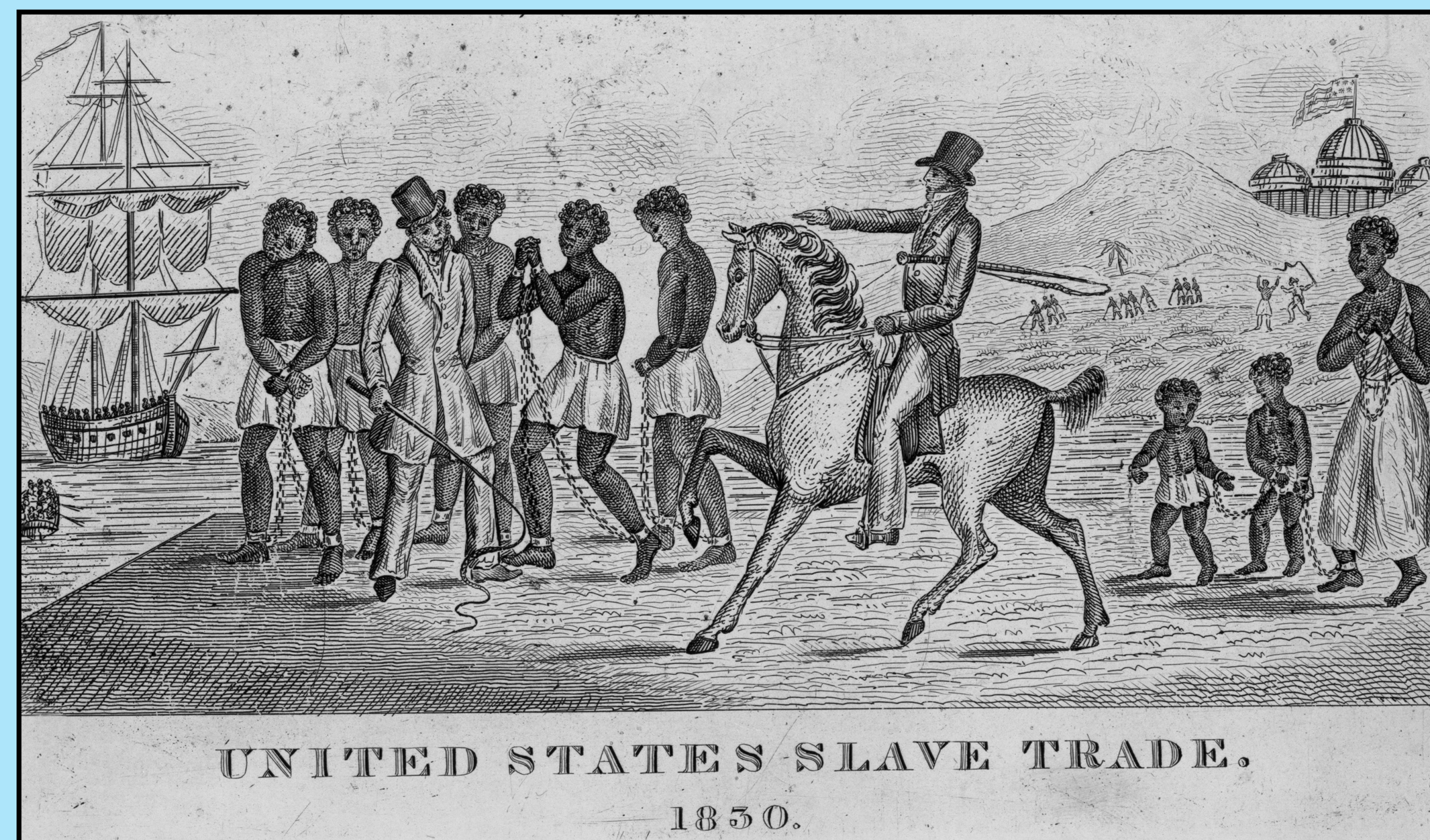
Many of the first Africans arriving in Virginia were treated as “servants for life.” Laws segregating the races were also established. On September 17, 1630, an act prohibiting the interbreeding and intermarriage between the races was passed. Not all Africans arriving during this era were kept as lifelong servants. Anthony (Antonio) Johnson gained his release from servitude in 1623; he moved to Northampton County, Virginia. By 1651, Johnson owned land and held five servants. Johnson sued when one of his African servants, John Castor, attempted to gain his release. In 1654, Castor was considered Anthony Johnson’s “servant for life.”

Design: naturegraphicsdisplays.com

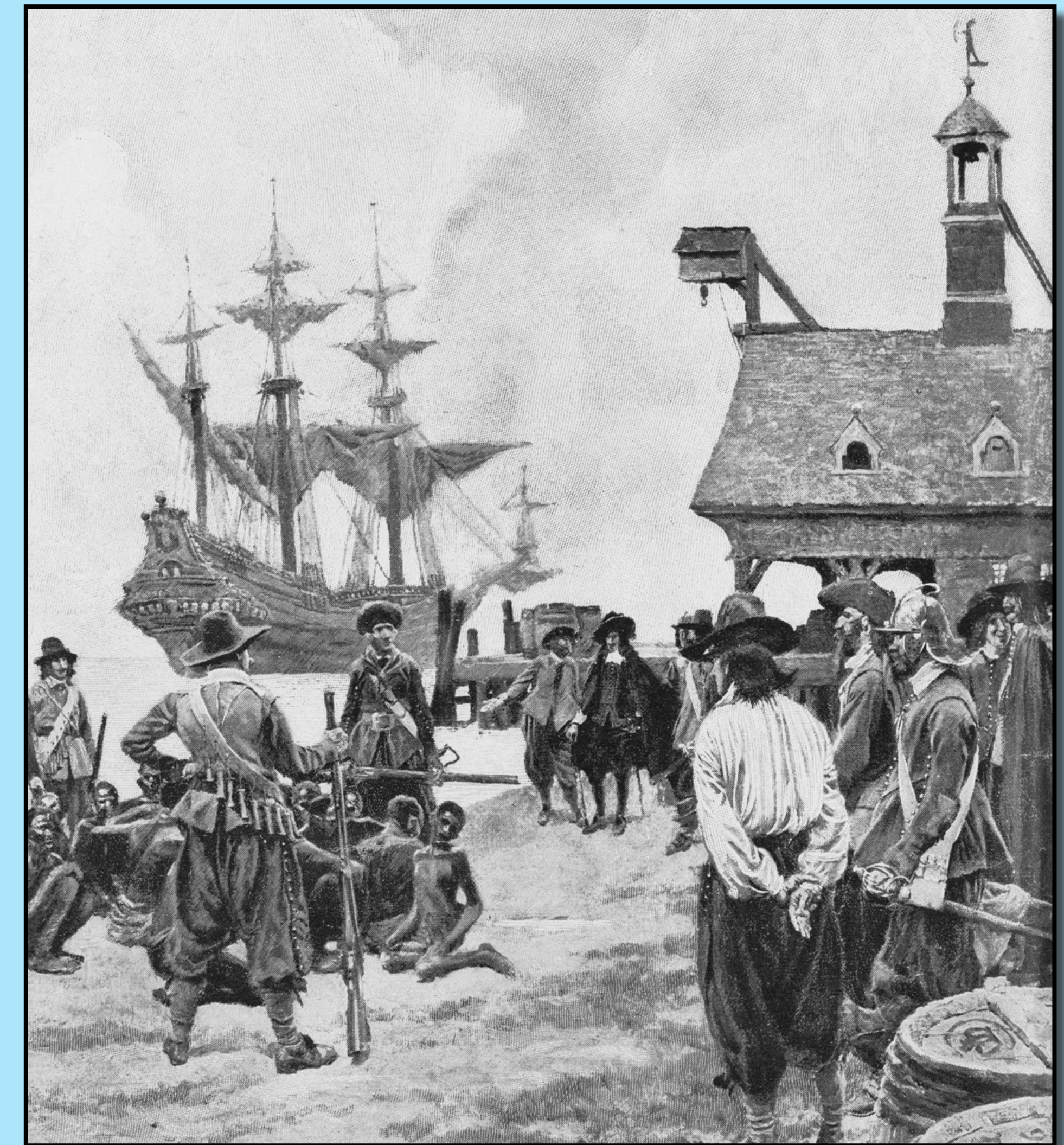
### Slave Laws

Johnson’s court case is one of the first documented enslavements of an African servant. Virginia’s 1661 Act followed, making the mother’s legal status determine whether a child was free or enslaved. More acts followed. The intensive labor requirements of cash crop

agriculture prompted the desire for a secure workforce and the trade of Africans prospered. In 1650, an estimated 300 persons of African descent were in Virginia (one percent of the total population). By 1782, this number was 48 percent (270,762 out of the total 567,614).



*Abolitionist print, possibly engraved in 1830, represents a scene in the interstate slave trade.*



*“Landing Negroes at Jamestown from Dutch man-of-war, 1619.” Harper’s Monthly, January 1901.*

Courtesy of Library of Congress

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