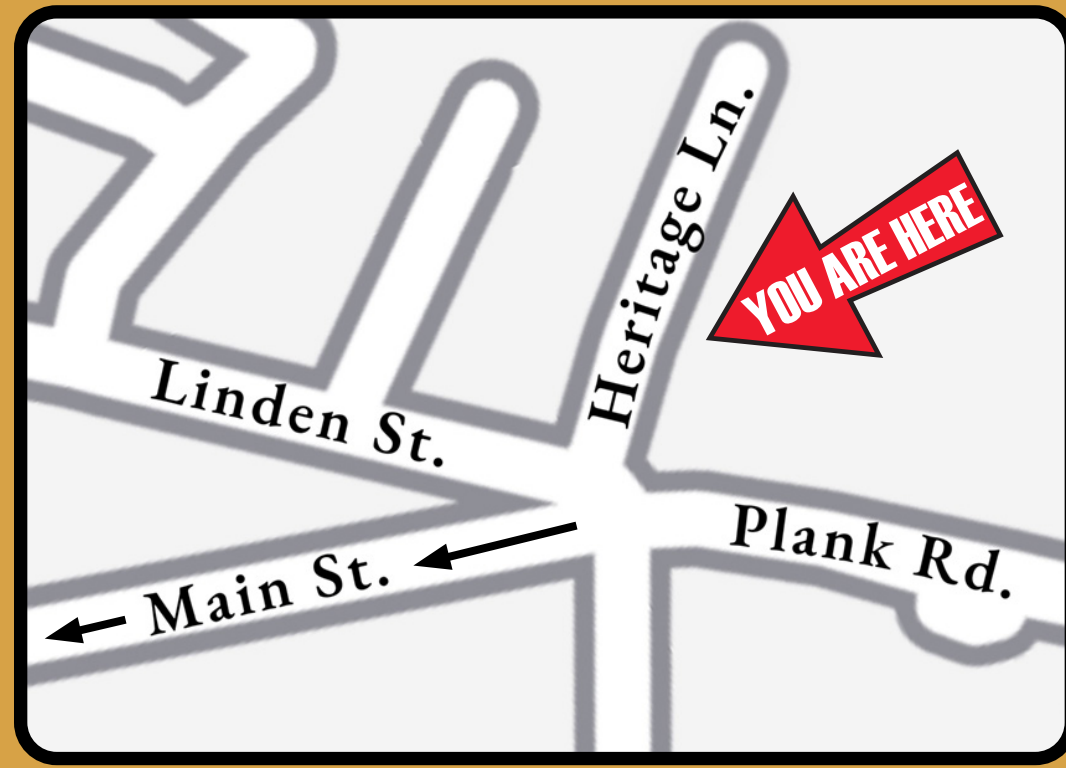


Conditions of Slavery

“A PECULIAR INSTITUTION”



NAT
TURNER
TRAIL

1831
Southampton
Insurrection

By 1800, slavery was primarily practiced in the South, providing most of the labor force and enabling the expansion of cash crop agriculture. Enslaved people were found everywhere — on small farms and large plantations, in cities and towns, in industry and transportation. They worked in rural areas planting and harvesting crops, clearing land, repairing buildings, and performing other agricultural duties. They worked as domestics, carpenters, factory workers, and in various trades in cities.

Treatment of Enslaved People

Slavery was based on the fact that those in bondage were chattel property due to their race. Their status was often reinforced by physical, mental, and emotional violence. Laws limited enslaved people's movement, literacy, and legal rights. Enslavers

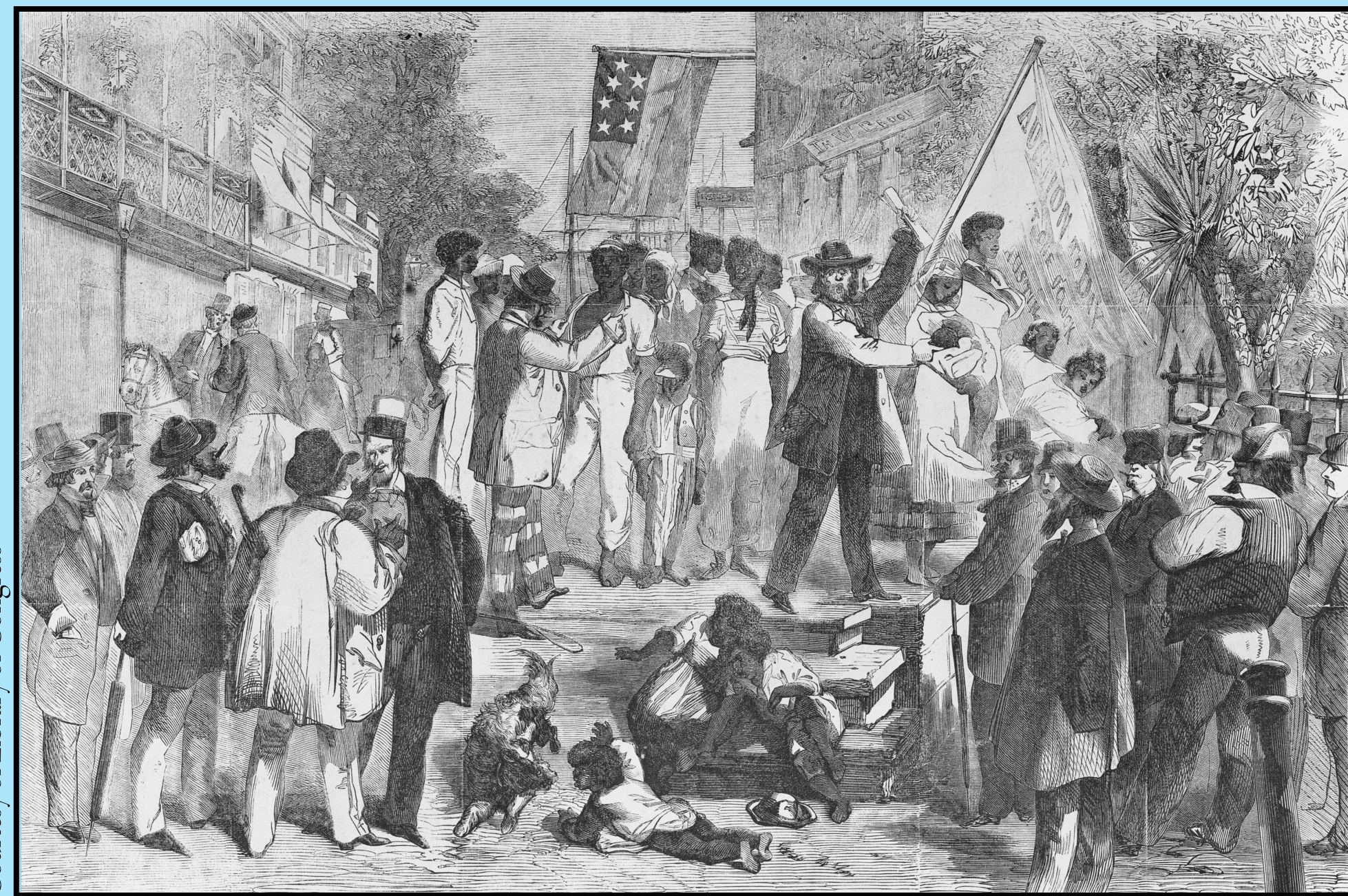
enforced discipline as they pleased. Punishments included whipping, mutilation, and sale. Slavery was dehumanizing, cruel, and filled with difficult and forced labor.

The lives of most bondsmen were intolerable. Diets were insufficient for their heavy workload. Poor clothing, sanitation, and housing conditions prompted illness. Many enslaved people lived in fear of sexual exploitation, having no recourse but to submit to the desires of their enslavers. One of the most tragic aspects of slavery was the separation of families and severing of long-term relationships by their sale. These conditions fostered powerful resentment.

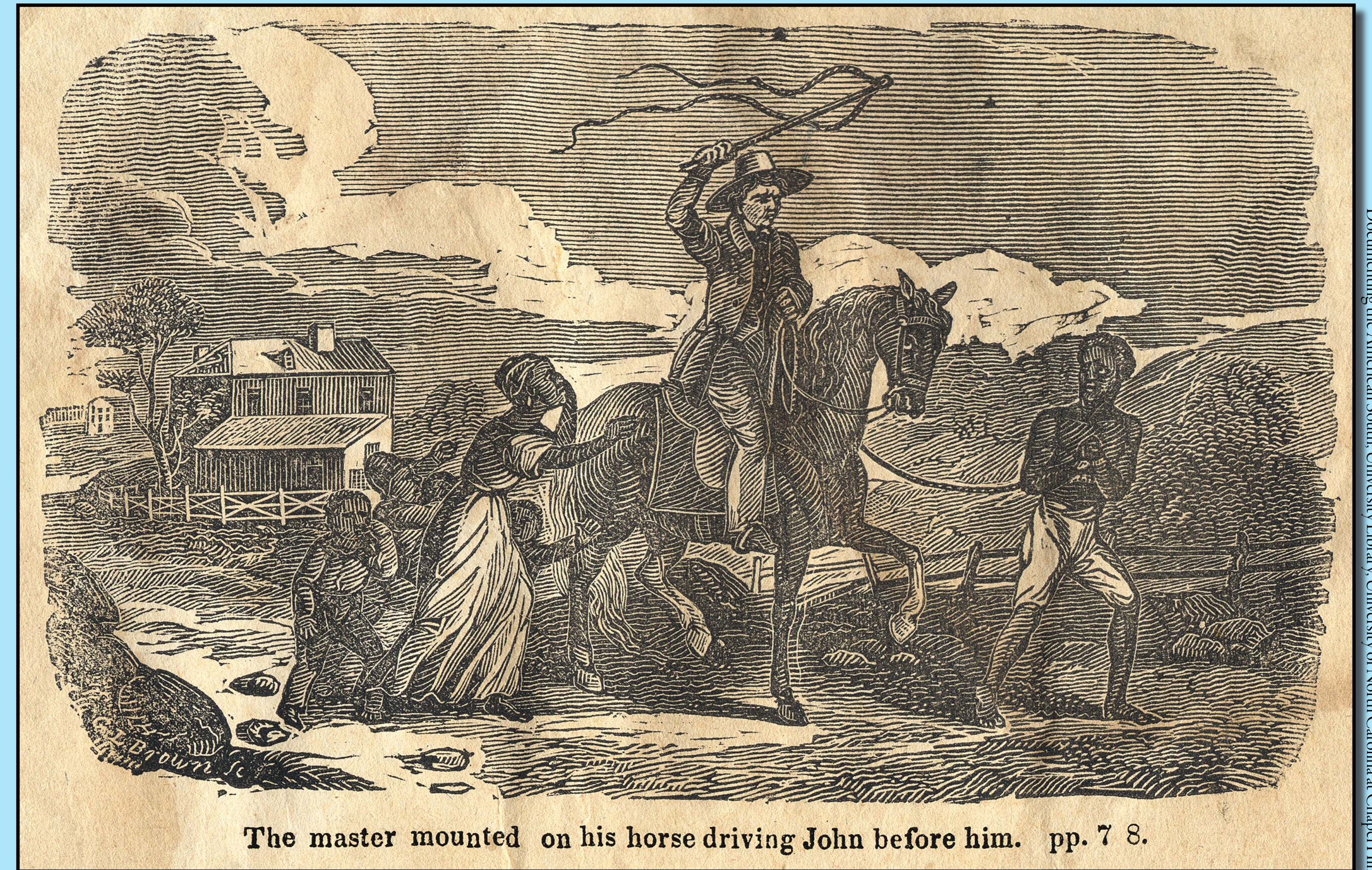
Retaliation

Some enslaved people resisted their servitude by slowing their work pace, damaging equipment, stealing food and livestock, faking illness, running away, purchasing their freedom, and illicitly learning to read. Others violently rebelled against slavery.

“Slavery was an institution of power, designed to create profit for the enslavers and break the will of the enslaved. It was a relentless quest for profit abetted by racism.” — *Learning for Justice* (formerly *Teaching Tolerance*), Southern Poverty Law Center



“A slave auction at the South.” From an original sketch by Theodore R. Davis. Harper’s Weekly, July 13, 1861.



The master mounted on his horse driving John before him. pp. 7 8.

Narrative of the Life of Thomas Cooper, Frontispiece.
Published by Isaac T. Hopper, New York, 1832.