

## **SLAVERY – Overall history in Slavery**

Slavery was part of the way of life for Stafford County. It is known that slaves worked on Brent's Island (now known as Government Island) quarrying stone from 1694 to 1791. Sandstone, called Freestone or Aquia Stone, was used throughout Colonial America for architectural trim, making grave markers, and foundations. In December of 1791, Pierre L'Enfant purchased the island for the United States Government. From 1791-1825, slave labor quarried the stone which would be used in making the President's House (White House) and the United States Capitol. Other quarries, throughout Stafford County (Robertson's, Cooke and Brent's, Edrington and Moncure, Rock Rimmon, etc.), used slave labor. Plantations with tobacco crops also depended upon slave labor.

Large homes, like Chatham (built in 1771) had around 100 slaves to help run the household and fields. Chatham was a self contained village with slaves taking care of every aspect of the plantation upon the 1,280 acres of land.

James Hunter of Falmouth used slaves for his plantation and large forge (See Revolutionary War – Hunter's Iron Works.) Between his home and forge he owned 260 slaves, the largest single slave owner in Stafford's history.

The 1860 census, prior to the Civil War, shows that the population of 8,633 was small and surprisingly quite evenly split between whites and blacks (4,018 whites and 3,715 blacks). The black population included 321 free blacks and about ten times as many slaves, numbering 3,394. Slavery, however, was not as prevalent as the figures indicate, for out of 1,022 heads of white households in the county, 39% owned slaves. Most of those households owned fewer than five slaves. There were only two plantations owners with around 100 slaves each. Those were J. Horace Lacy of the Lacy House (Chatham) and Gustavus B. Wallace of Little Whim.

See Civil War – Union Occupation – Trail to Freedom to see how the slaves realized they could be free once the Union soldiers came to Falmouth. They escaped through Stafford and out of Aquia Landing, "Gateway to Freedom."