

Letters of 1712 Slave Revolt

A Letter from Governor Robert Hunter, June 23, 1712

I must now give your Lordships an account of a bloody conspiracy of some of the slaves of this place, to destroy as many of the inhabitants as they could.... They had resolved to revenge themselves, for some hard usage they apprehended to have received from their masters (for I can find no other cause).... Slave to one Vantiburgh set fire to [a shed] of his masters.... the fire spreading through the town, the people began to flock to it. Upon the approach of several, the slaves fired and killed them.... nine Christians were killed, and about five or six wounded.... [I] ordered sentries the next day in the most proper place on the Island [Manhattan] to prevent their escape.... We found all that put the design in execution, six of these having first laid violent hands upon themselves [committed suicide], the rest were forthwith brought to their trial before ye Justices of this place, who are authorized by Act of the Assembly to hold a court in such cases. In that court were twenty seven condemned, whereof twenty one were executed.... Some were burnt, others handed, one broke on the wheel, and one hung alive in chains in the town, so that there has been the most exemplary punishment inflicted that could be possibly thought of [E. B. Callaghan, ed. (1885) *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York. Vol. V, p.341-345*].

Governor Hunter to the Lords of trade (1712)

.... The Negro Act which though much mitigated in its severities by Council's amendments, I am apt to believe, your Lordships will still think too severe.... After the late barbarous attempt of some of their slaves nothing less could please the people [E. B. O'Callaghan, ed. (1856). *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York: Procured in Holland, England and France*. Albany, NY: Weeds. Parsons, v. 5 p. 356-357].

Restricting Night Time Movement

Order's a law be prepared to prohibit Negro and Indian slaves above the Age of fourteen years from going in the Streets of this City after night without a lantern and a lighted candle therein under the penalty of Eight shillings to be disposed of to the Person or persons that shall Apprehend any such Negro or Indian slaves... [Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, February 28, 1713, vol III, 28].

Law for Regulating Negro & Indian Slaves in the Night Time

.... No Negro or Indian slave above the Age of fourteen Years do presume to be or Appear in any of the Streets of this City on the south side of the Fresh water in the Night time above an hour after sun sett And that if any such Negro or Indian slave or slaves as Aforesaid Shall be found in any of the Streets of this City within the Stockades or Fortifications or in any Other place on the south side of the fresh water in the Night time above one hours after sun sett

without A Lanthorn and lighted Candle in it as Aforesaid so as the light thereof may be plainly seen.... Be It Further Ordained by the Authority Aforesaid that Every slave or slaves that shall be Convicted of the offence Aforesaid before he or they be discharged shall be whipped at the publick whipping post forty lashes save one if desired by the master or Owner of such slave or slaves any thing before in this Law Contained to the Contrary hereof in any wise Notwithstanding [Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, March 14, 1713, vol. III, 30-31]