

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
FREE BLACKS
AND
PEOPLE OF COLOR
IN THE AMERICAS

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Important agents of this expansion were African-American women, often overlooked or omitted from official A.M.E. records. One example is Jarena Lee. She was adrift personally and spiritually when she heard Allen preach in 1811. Impressed, she felt called to preach herself, but Allen was reluctant. Lee took advantage of a preacher's silence one Sunday and assumed the pulpit. Allen was duly impressed and supported Lee against some opposition, even caring for her son while she traveled the circuit. Allen not only supported her in writing but preached alongside her at meetings and revivals. Lee traveled far and wide, drawing new followers to the fold. Despite this, after Allen's death in 1831, the A.M.E. increasingly sought respectability by marginalizing Lee and other female ministers. Bishop DANIEL A. PAYNE, among others, encouraged them to tend to hearth and home rather than leadership positions in the church. Though Amanda Smith Berry was ordained as the first female minister of the A.M.E. in 1885, her ordination was rescinded two years later.

By 1830, the A.M.E. spread from Philadelphia to the Ohio Valley. Bishop Allen had sent a church elder across the Alleghenies in 1823, and the church had grown to more than 10,000 members by 1826. In 1822, the A.M.E. church in Charleston, South Carolina, was only exceeded by Mother Bethel in Philadelphia. In the aftermath of the DENMARK VESEY slave conspiracy, this Charleston church was targeted by local white authorities and shut down. The Reverend Morris Brown was able to escape from Charleston to Philadelphia, where he was welcomed by Bishop Allen. Brown preached alongside Allen and was eventually sent to Indiana. He would become the second bishop of the A.M.E. Church. Throughout the 1820s, the A.M.E. Church continued to expand, sending missionaries to Haiti and organizing congregations in Canada. Many notable African Americans were members, including DAVID WALKER and HARRIET TUBMAN.

Daniel Payne, who would become the sixth bishop of the A.M.E., was of mixed European, African, and Native American ancestry. He was born in Charleston in 1811 and joined the church in Philadelphia 30 years later. In his time, he would be a minister, a historian, the founder and president of the first A.M.E. college, and, after 1852, bishop. Payne emphasized order and structure in a desire for recognition and respectability. He demanded better education, especially for ministers, and downplayed the emotional worship and nontraditional music that were hallmarks of the early A.M.E. Under his auspices, the A.M.E. Church also began its own newspaper, the *Christian Recorder*. It was based in Philadelphia and launched in 1856. Payne's efforts allowed the tremendous growth of the A.M.E. By the beginning of the AMERICAN CIVIL WAR in 1861, the A.M.E. had more than 50,000 members. Thirty-five years later, thanks to the AME's tremendous efforts to reach the newly freed people, its membership had increased 10-fold.

As it grew in numbers and strength after the Civil War, the A.M.E. turned its attention across the Atlantic, to Africa.

There were numerous missions to West Africa, specifically LIBERIA, during the antebellum years, but these were by white Protestant churches, including many Methodists. The A.M.E. largely avoided Liberia because of a general opposition to the colonization plan and a lack of funds (*see also* EMIGRATION AND COLONIZATION). Beginning in the 1870s, the A.M.E.'s larger numbers and the end of slavery helped change these conditions, and they sent many missionaries to Liberia, as well as other countries in the area. The A.M.E.'s outreach was not limited to West Africa. They also reached into South Africa, establishing the first A.M.E. church there in 1896. By 1910, the A.M.E. had close to 40,000 members in South Africa alone. The A.M.E. remains a thriving national and international church today, as well as a center of African-American culture and community.

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ALABAMA

Alabama is a state of the United States. It is located in the Southeast, to the west of GEORGIA and of the Appalachian mountain chain. It is mostly flat and well watered, with the exception of the mountainous northern quarter, and the terrain and climate in most parts of the state are suitable for plantation crops, especially cotton. TENNESSEE is to the

north, and MISSISSIPPI is to the west. The state has a short coastline around the city of MOBILE, ALABAMA, and to the east of Mobile lies the panhandle region of FLORIDA. The indigenous inhabitants of Alabama were eastern woodland Indians, who lived in villages and some large towns and practiced agriculture. They were organized in multitown chiefdoms when the first European and African travelers appeared in the region in the early 16th century. The first people of African ancestry to enter the territory that is now Alabama were the companions of Hernando de Soto (ca. 1496–1542), who crossed the state in 1541–42. De Soto took several dozen blacks from Cuba, some of whom were free. None of these conquistadores remained in the area, though.

Blacks were living in Alabama as early as 1707, when a Mobile priest baptized Jean-Baptiste, a Negro slave of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville (1680–1767), governor of French LOUISIANA. At that time, Mobile was a part of Louisiana. After the Spanish took control of Louisiana in 1769, the CODE NOIR IN FRENCH LAW, or black code, was adopted in Spanish Louisiana, including parts of Alabama. This legal code offered some protections to people of color, especially those who were free. These legal rights, and the French and Spanish cultural concepts of race and slavery, affected cultural attitudes in the Mobile region long after the area was under the rule of the United States.

Unlike the Mobile region, which had its roots in French and Spanish culture, the rest of Alabama was settled by Anglo Americans from states to the east and north. Except as noted, this entry generally deals with Anglo Alabama and does not include the coastal counties of Mobile and Baldwin with their predominantly Latin heritage.

The table below tracks the evolution of the black population of the territory while under American rule.

This table is based upon federal census figures, which are not always reliable and sometimes undercounted free nonwhites. Nonetheless, it is clear that the vast majority—more than 99 percent—of African-descended Ala-

bamians in the antebellum period were enslaved. In 1850, about 60 percent of the total free colored population resided in five of the state's counties, and two of those were Mobile and Baldwin. In 1860, 70 percent lived in eight counties, with the greatest number of them residing in Mobile, Baldwin, and Madison, in the mountainous north. Free nonwhites typically lived in the cities and towns of the state, such as Mobile, Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, and Montgomery. Mobile contained about 41 percent of the state's total free black population in 1850. Ten years later, nearly half of the state's total of free nonwhites lived in the same area. Mixed-race people constituted 65 percent of the total free colored population in Anglo Alabama in 1860. If Mobile and Baldwin are included, the total jumps to 78 percent of the total number in the state.

Traditional interpretations regarding southern free people of color suggest that manumissions were the result of sexual liaisons involving white male planters and non-white slaves. This view, however, is not valid for Alabama. In the late 20th century, the historian Gary B. Mills began an extensive study of free people of color in Alabama, identifying more than 5,700 free blacks by examining traditional genealogical sources such as population, agricultural, slave, and manufacturing schedules of federal census records, and wills, deeds, church records, various civil and criminal court records, estate inventories, city directories, and free papers. Only 11 percent of the free black population of Alabama can be attributed to manumissions. Miscegenation accounted for only 32 percent of the manumissions, and the remaining 68 percent can be attributed to several factors including self-purchase. Manumission took a variety of forms. Caesar Kennedy, a free man of color of Huntsville, manumitted his wife and her seven children in 1821, presumably after having ransomed them from another owner. In his will filed in 1832, William Cureton of Henry County emancipated

AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION OF ALABAMA, 1820–1900

Year	Slaves	Free People of Color	Free People of Color as a Percentage of Total Population	Total Population
1820	34,779	569	0.4%	127,901
1830	117,549	1,572	0.5%	309,527
1840	253,532	2,039	0.3%	590,756
1850	342,844	2,265	0.3%	771,623
1860	435,080	2,098	0.2%	964,201
1870		475,510	47.7%	996,992
1880		600,103	47.5%	1,262,505
1890		678,849	44.9%	1,513,017
1900		827,307	45.2%	1,828,697

his slaves Stephen and Suckey. In Montgomery County, Darby, slave of Ann Goldthwaite, mother of the American painter of the same name, purchased his freedom for \$750, probably in the 1850s.

The legislative bodies governing the territory and later the state of Alabama determined the method by which slaves could be freed. In 1805, the Legislative Council and House of Representatives of the Mississippi Territory (which governed present-day Alabama) passed a law on emancipation. It was no longer legal to manumit slaves unless they performed a meritorious act for the owner's benefit or that of the territory. Owners were required to furnish bond and security. The state legislature in 1834 passed an act authorizing the judges of the county courts to manumit slaves. The law required owners to publish in a county newspaper for a minimum of 60 days the name and description of each slave to be emancipated. The legislature stipulated that the newly freed slave was required to leave the state within 12 months after the emancipation and not to return. Failure to comply with this last provision meant the sheriff of the county where the freedman was found could incarcerate the person, who could then be sold into slavery, although this penalty was, in actuality, almost never imposed. Although the Alabama Supreme Court ruled in 1830 that owners could not emancipate slaves by wills, many in the state included such provisions in their wills. Most SLAVE OWNERS did not indicate why they did so, although some masters provided the customary reason that the slaves had performed some type of beneficial service for them.

In the wake of the Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia in 1831, the Alabama legislature, as did some others in the South, enacted restrictive measures regarding nonwhites. Alabama made it unlawful for free people of color to settle within the state after January 1, 1833. Free blacks who did move to the state after this date were given 30 days to leave or suffer 39 lashes. If they remained 20 days after having received this punishment, they could be arrested and sold as slaves for one year. Within 20 days after the end of this year, those free blacks who remained in the state could be sold into slavery.

This law was not enforced as free blacks continued to move to Alabama and even publicly informed officials of their whereabouts. Still, local authorities did nothing. Free blacks such as Peter Brandford of Jefferson County took their free papers verifying their free status outside Alabama for recording to the courthouse after 1833. Before leaving North Carolina in 1834, Lavina Bert obtained a copy of her free paper and presented it to the clerk at the Madison County courthouse the following year. Federal census records also document instances of how the laws were disregarded and demonstrate that free blacks did not avoid public records and public officials who could

have taken steps to have the laws enforced and have them expelled. More than 20 percent of all free nonwhites in Anglo Alabama provided information to the census enumerator in 1850 that showed that they had entered the state illegally. Ten years later two-thirds of these people continued to reside in the state.

Free blacks in the South pursued a variety of economic activities. In Alabama, they were employed in skilled and unskilled positions. Free nonwhites were farmers, carpenters, brick masons, cabinetmakers, bridge builders, tailors, livery stable owners, cooks, butchers, laundry women, stage drivers, cooks, hostlers, and barbers. The state's most prosperous free nonwhites resided in Mobile, Baldwin, Butler, Madison, Montgomery, and Tuscaloosa Counties.

A small number of free blacks in Alabama prospered in the antebellum period. Solomon Perteet of Tuscaloosa County, who was born in Georgia, was a planter. He achieved some economic success as he loaned money, to white men as well as fellow free people of color, and bought and sold land for profit. He made many real estate purchases in Tuscaloosa County, such as the three lots in the city of Tuscaloosa in 1838 and the nearly 120 acres of land that he obtained from the federal government in 1839. He also owned as many as seven slaves. Other elite free blacks in Alabama included John H. Rapier of Lauderdale County and John Robinson of Madison County. Rapier, a prosperous barber in Florence, was born a slave in Albemarle County, VIRGINIA, around 1808 and manumitted in 1829. His successful business allowed him to accumulate about \$7,500 worth of property. His son, James T. Rapier (1837–83), served as an Alabama congressman during Reconstruction (*see also* RECONSTRUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES). Robinson, a livery stable keeper from Virginia, had amassed real estate assessed at \$4,000 and a personal estate at twice that amount. He also had a number of descendants who were active as community leaders, including a son who served in the state legislature in the Reconstruction era. Born a slave in SOUTH CAROLINA, Horace King, a slave owner himself, was a successful bridge builder in Alabama and worked on the Alabama state capitol building. During the AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861–65 he repaired bridges for the Confederacy and later served as a member of the Alabama House of Representatives, 1868–72.

Some Alabama free people of color, as did their counterparts in other regions of the South, owned other nonwhites, some of whom were not family members. At his death, Tom Smith of Dallas County, for example, owned his slave wife and their three children as well as 10 other slaves whom his family did not manumit. Solomon Perteet purchased his wife and her child and had them legally freed. He bought and manumitted other slaves as well, but no evidence has been found to suggest that

he bought slaves for economic reasons. Throughout the antebellum period, other free blacks owned slaves, such as Silas Pope, a farmer born in Georgia, who owned 10 slaves in 1850.

Some studies of southern free nonwhites maintain that they were more likely than whites to be involved in criminal activities. However, few Anglo Alabama free blacks were engaged in such acts. Only 13 such cases among nearly 3,000 free blacks have been located in extant court records of Anglo Alabama's 48 counties. Charges included gambling, trading with slaves, and the worst possible offense a black man could commit: raping a white woman. Defendants in 10 of these cases were convicted; one conviction was overturned on appeal. The state Supreme Court overturned the death penalty imposed upon John Thurman, who was convicted of rape. In a different case the state Supreme Court overturned a legal judgment against a free nonwhite, who was defended by a local white, accused of inciting a slave revolt. The most common civil action for either race was attempts to collect debts. In many cases, whites sued blacks for unpaid debts, but about a third of the total number of interracial cases in Alabama courts in the antebellum years involved free colored plaintiffs with white defendants. Since the southern counties of the state were governed, for some purposes, under the provisions of the French Code Noir, free blacks in those counties had legal rights, including access to the courts, that were not granted to blacks elsewhere in the American South.

In the antebellum South, religion played an important role in the lives of blacks, both slave and free. Free nonwhites in Alabama were accepted as members by most denominations, including Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian, and served as ministers or preachers to others of their race in some cases. For instance, the Alabama Baptist Association purchased Caesar Blackwell, a slave who became an ordained minister (*see also* BAPTISTS AND PIETISTS). Never legally manumitted, Blackwell lived as a free man, obtained a house and lot in Montgomery, and preached to nonwhites and whites (*see also* LIVING "AS FREE"). Nathan Ashby, born a slave in Virginia in 1810, purchased his freedom in 1842 and three years later started preaching. He became the leader of the black Baptist church in Montgomery. Mount Hebron Baptist Church in Leeds (Jefferson County) had two free black members in its congregation between 1819 and 1865. Discipline of its white and black members was an important element within the church, as is evidenced when that church excluded slaves, as well as one free man of color, for drunkenness, lying, or swearing. In the Methodist Church, free blacks were licensed to preach or to act as class leaders. Methodist Church members of both races in Montgomery held their services in

the same building but at different times during the day. By April 1851, the nonwhite Methodist congregation in Montgomery numbered more than 400 members, most of whom were enslaved. Episcopal churches in Tuscaloosa and Montgomery served free blacks as well (*see also* PROTESTANT MAINLINE CHURCHES). The Presbyterian Church purchased the freedom of Harrison W. Ellis, who became an ordained Presbyterian minister in 1846, subsequently traveling to LIBERIA, where he led a Presbyterian congregation.

The onset of the American Civil War in 1861 caused great disruption for all Alabamans. The northern part of the state was occupied by federal forces in fall 1862. The U.S. government also controlled Pensacola, Florida, just across the border from Mobile, from spring 1862 on. Alabama blacks fled slavery by the thousands as soon as the northern armies neared their homes. With the EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION of January 1, 1863, they could be sure that they would find welcome and be given a chance to strike back against their oppressors. A total of 4,969 Alabama men served in the U. S. Colored Troops during the course of the war. An entire division of black soldiers from across the South, about 5,000–6,000 infantrymen and artillerymen, participated in the spring 1865 campaign to liberate Mobile.

After the war, Alabama's small prewar free colored population was able to provide some leadership to the mass of newly freed people. Their role was particularly important in Mobile, where they remained a distinctive community throughout the 19th century.

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ALLEN, RICHARD (1760–1831) *American clergyman*

Richard Allen was born the slave of a Quaker in Pennsylvania in 1760. When the Quakers as a denomination