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GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs
Bermuda National Library
Technical Services

BERMUDA NATIONAL LIBRARY

Bermuda History ~

Mary Prince : a West Indian Slave

~ The first black British spokeswoman
for general emancipation ~



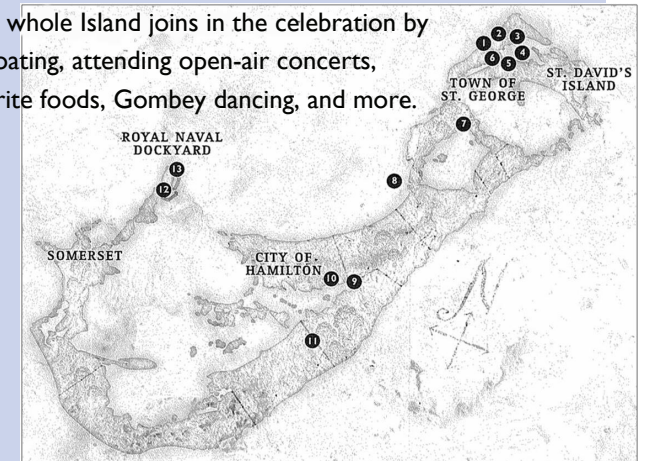
Image from: George Bourne, *Slavery illustrated in its effects upon woman and domestic society* (1837)—Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

At your service, Bermuda!

AFRICAN DIASPORA HERITAGE TRAIL

- 1 St. Peter's Church
- 2 St. George's Post Office
- 3 St. George's Historical Society Museum
- 4 Bermudian Heritage Museum
- 5 Tucker House Museum
- 6 Barber's Alley
- 7 St. John A.M.E. Church
- 8 Gibbet Island
- 9 Crow Lane
- 10 St. Paul's Church
- 11 Cobb's Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church
- 12 Royal Naval Dockyard
- 13 Commissioner's House

Start the African Diaspora Heritage Trail at the slave graveyard at St. Peter's Church in St. George's or, at the other end, at Commissioner's House in Dockyard, with its extensive array of multimedia information tracing the progress of peoples of African descent. You can then explore the trail throughout the Island at your own pace. Important sites are marked with plaques—bringing Bermuda's important role in Black history to life. Slavery officially ended in Bermuda in 1834. We commemorate Emancipation Day each summer during the two-day Cup Match cricket tournament when the whole Island joins in the celebration by going to the Match, boating, attending open-air concerts, indulging in our favourite foods, Gombey dancing, and more.



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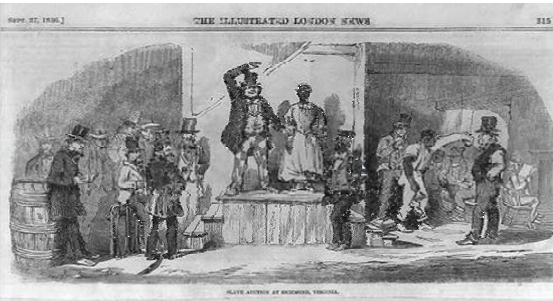
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Passages from Mary Prince's memoir which was dictated to Susanna Strickland in 1829. It was first published in 1831.

Mary Prince was born circa 1788 in an area known as Brackish Pond, on a farm belonging to Mr. Charles Mynors (or Minors). Her mother was a household slave while her father was a sawyer with the shipbuilder Mr. Trimmingham at Crow Lane.

Sometime between 1790 and 1800 Mr. Minors died. Mary and her mother were bought by Captain Darrell and given to Miss Betsey Williams, his granddaughter. By 1800 the household could no longer afford the services of all of their slaves. Mary was hired out to Mrs. Pruden where she took care of the baby, Daniel, and his siblings, Fanny and James. While in the Pruden's employ, Mary was taught the basics of reading by their daughter Fanny.

After Mrs. Williams died, several of the slaves were sold to pay for Mr. Williams's second wedding. Mary, who was around the age of 12 at the time of this sale, was purchased by Captain Ingham of Spanish Point for 57 pounds.



Mary's role in life quickly changed from being a playmate and nurse to that of nurse, scullery maid, farmhand, cook and assistant housekeeper. Unfortunately, Mary was also taught the cruelty of slavery as Mrs. Ingham was known to beat and abuse her slaves for any mishap or mistake. After a fellow slave, Hetty, died, Mary had to take up her tasks as well as continue with her own; milking eleven cows every morning before sunrise.

After suffering through beatings that caused permanent injury to her back, Mary ran away in 1801, only to be rebuked and returned to her master by her father.

She remained in the Ingham household for 5 years until she was sold to Mr. Dill in 1806. This is how, at age 18, Mary is sent to work in the Turks and Caicos where she worked in the salt pans for 10 years.

Mary returned to Bermuda with Mr. Dill in 1816 as a servant for his daughters. In addition to those duties, Mary also worked outdoors, planting and maintaining the sweet potatoes, Indian corn, plantains, bananas, cabbages, pumpkins, and onions. She was busy with the household work, cared for the livestock and attended to errands for the household.

During this time Mary was hired out to work at Cedar Hills where she learned of the Wood's family intent to travel to Antigua. She sought to be purchased by the Wood family and was successful in her attempt after much initial reluctance on Mr. Wood's part. Mary worked for the Woods until 1827.

Mary's main duties were to do the housekeeping as well as taking care of the Wood's child. At this time Mary was afflicted with rheumatism, probably due to the continuous hard work and treatment.

Mary fell ill several times while in the Wood household and could not keep up with the workload. When Mrs. Wood complained of Mary's lack of industry Mr. Wood sent Mary to seek another owner. This happened at least twice during her tenure with the Woods. In 1822, Mr. Wood denied that he had intended to sell Mary after she had found someone who was willing to pay her price.

Mary was able to earn money from her own labours and was able to raise a good amount towards paying for her own freedom. Due to the frequent absences of her master and mistress, Mary had less chores and duties. It was then that she was permitted, and had time, to take in washing and to sell provisions such as yams and coffee.

Mary married freeman Daniel James around Christmas of 1826 at the age of 38. They were married in the Moravian Church. When her owner Mr. Wood challenged Daniel over the marriage he answered: 'Sir, I am a free man, and thought I had a right to choose a wife; but if I had know Moll was not allowed to have a husband, I should not have asked her to marry me.'

Husband and wife were shortly separated as the Wood family took Mary with them when they traveled to England in 1827.

Mary's account of her life with the Woods in England (for 10 months or so in 1827) is an account of her bouts of rheumatism, increasing complaints by Mrs. Wood regarding her work, and further discord in the household. After several arguments with the Woods, Mary was instructed to leave their residence. After staying with friends

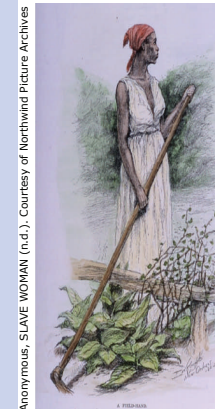
through the winter, Mary was able to take work as a charwoman with a Mrs. Forsyth. Eventually Mary entered service with Mr. and Mrs. Pringle where she was encouraged to dictate her memoirs.

The Slavery Abolition Act (1833) abolished slavery throughout

the British Empire. The slave trade had earlier been banned with the Slave Trade Act in 1807, with £100 per slave levied on British captains found importing slaves. The Emancipation Act was enacted on August 1, 1834.

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery throughout the United States of America.

Our Page One Illustration: The figure of a Black man - or woman - kneeling and in chains became the key image for abolitionist and anti-slavery campaigns both in Britain and America. These images were used on pamphlets and books and incorporated into cameos, bracelets, brooches, snuff boxes and even hair pins.



Anonymous, SLAVE WOMAN (n.d.), Courtesy of Northward Picture Archives