

The Problem Of Slavery In Early Vermont (1777-1810)

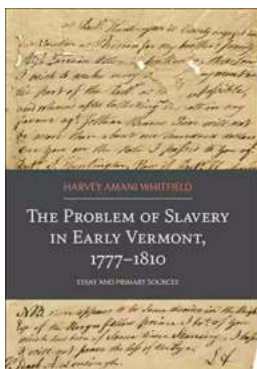
Welcome to a deeper exploration of the lesser-known history of Vermont - a state that often receives accolades for its progressive values and abolitionist stance. However, it is crucial to shed light on its early years when the problem of slavery persisted within its borders, contradicting the state's modern-day reputation as a beacon of freedom.

The Emergence of Slavery in Vermont

Although the Vermont Constitution, adopted in 1777, explicitly abolished slavery, it did not immediately eradicate the institution from within the state. Slavery had its roots in Vermont as early as the mid-1700s when a small number of slaveholders were present, primarily concentrated in the southern parts of the state.

The Legal Dilemma

While the Vermont Constitution held the promise of freedom, its anti-slavery provision lacked the enforcement mechanism necessary to eradicate slavery entirely. This legal contradiction resulted in a complex situation where slavery continued to exist in certain instances.



The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1777-

1810 by Barbara Kerr (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 55564 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 204 pages



Indentured Servitude and Gradual Abolition

One workaround to the legal dilemma was the practice of indentured servitude. Under the guise of labor contracts, enslaved individuals were "leased" to slaveholders for a specific period. This form of servitude resembled slavery and allowed the institution to persist.

Economic Factors Shaping Slavery

The economic landscape of Vermont played a significant role in shaping the problem of slavery. Industries such as farming, logging, and manufacturing relied heavily on labor, including enslaved individuals. The exploitation of these workers ensured the profitability of businesses and hindered the progress of abolitionist movements.

Resistance and Abolitionist Movements

Despite the presence of pro-slavery sentiment and economic interests, Vermont witnessed the growth of abolitionist movements led by individuals committed to combatting slavery. Notably, the Reverend Daniel C. Sanders emerged as a prominent advocate for the abolition of slavery, tirelessly working towards raising awareness and promoting legal change.

The Impact of Vermont's Gradual Abolition Laws

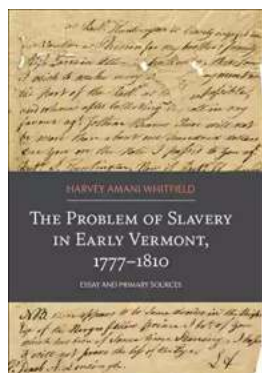
In 1779, Vermont passed a gradual abolition law, making it the first state to do so. This law, enacted to continue the process of abolition set forth in the Constitution,

stipulated that all children born to enslaved parents after July 1, 1780, would be considered free. While a step towards greater freedom, this legislation maintained existing enslaved individuals as property.

The Final Steps Towards Total Abolition

Vermont's journey towards total abolition continued over the following decades. Legislative changes gradually expanded the rights and protections for enslaved individuals, ultimately leading to the complete eradication of slavery in the state by 1810.

The problem of slavery in early Vermont challenges the commonly held perception of the state as always being a progressive haven. By acknowledging and understanding this lesser-known history, we can better appreciate the complex path towards freedom and reflect on the importance of ongoing efforts to address systemic issues in society.



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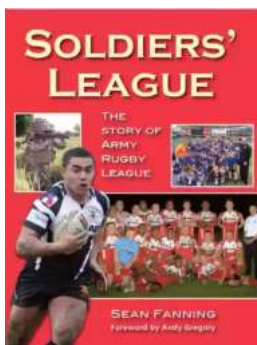
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Vermonters have always been proud that their state was the first to outlaw slavery in its constitution--but is that what really happened?

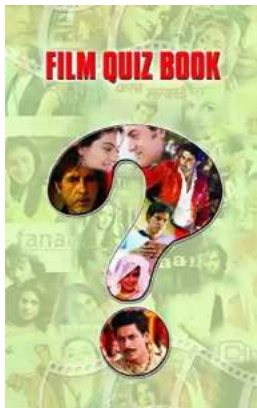
"The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont explodes this myth, demonstrating conclusively that the enslavement of people of color under various guises persisted in the state for another thirty years," attests Joanne Pope Melish, Associate Professor of History, University of Kentucky.

Harvey Amani Whitfield forces us to squarely consider the deepest questions about what freedom actually meant for African Americans in Vermont well into the nineteenth century.



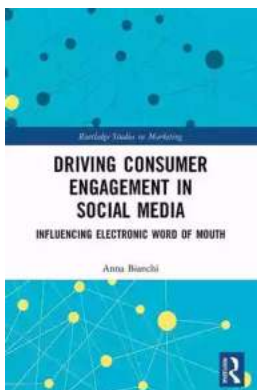
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