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There Were No Innocents: Slavery in the Old Northwest 1700-1860

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There Were No Innocents: Slavery in the Old Northwest 1700-1860

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There Were No Innocents:
Slavery in the Old Northwest 1700-1860

By

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Map of the Old Northwest Territory as it appeared between 1700 and 1860.



From R. Louis Gentilcore. "Vincennes and French Settlement in the Old Northwest." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 47, no. 3 (1957): 286. Adapted by the author.

1628 1st Negro slave brought to Quebec by the English.

1663 French become more aggressive in North American settlement.

1668 Mission at Sault Ste. Marie established.

1671 Fort established at St. Ignace.

1685 Code Noir authorized slavery in the French colonies.

1686 Fort St. Joseph established (near present day Port Huron, MI).

1688 French governor suggests the importation of black slave to remedy the labor shortage.

1691 Fort and Mission station established at St. Joseph (near present day Niles, MI).

1698 Beginning of French settlement in Illinois.

1701 Fort Pontchartrain established at the Straits of Detroit by Cadillac.

1719 Slavery introduced to Illinois by Philip Francis Renault who brought 500 slaves with him from San Domingo via the Mississippi River.

1727 Edict of October specifying that all French colonies should only deal in slave brought in French ships.

1750 Five villages (Cahokia, Fort Chartres, St. Philip, Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher) are said to contain “300 black, and sixty Indian slaves.”

1760 Canada conquered by the British.

1763 Old Northwest ceded to the British by France in the Treaty of Paris. This signaled the end of French involvement in mainland North America.

1766 Descriptions of two mills, most likely grain mills: one at St. Philip owned by the “Captain of the militia” who owned 30 slaves. One at Ste. Geneviève owned by a Frenchman w/ 100 negroes.

1787 Northwest Ordinance passed by U.S. government outlaws slavery in the Old Northwest but it is largely moot because the Old Northwest is still under British control.

1790 British Parliament authorized any US citizen to bring into Canada any Negroes free from duties.

1796 Jay's Treaty is signed and the British evacuate their outposts in the Old Northwest making way for the Americans. Many French and British slaveholders left Vincennes, Detroit and other settlements for fear that the Americans would free their slaves.

1803 Ohio becomes a U.S. state and slavery is abolished by its constitution.

1805-1806 Slaves fled Canada in favor of Detroit (Michigan Territory 1805) to the point that in 1806 a company of black militia was formed employing only these escapees.

1810 Detroit population included 96 nonwhites including Indians and 17 slaves.

1810 Slave population according the U.S. Census. Michigan: 24, Illinois: 168, Indiana: 237.

1816 Indiana becomes a state and slavery is abolished by its constitution in Article I section 1.

1818 Illinois Constitution prohibited slavery in that state in Article VI section 1.

1830 Slave population according the U.S. Census. Michigan: 32, Illinois: 747, Indiana: 3, Ohio: 6.

1835 Michigan Constitution abolishes slavery in the state.

1840 Slave population according the U.S. Census. Michigan: 0, Illinois: 331, Indiana: 3, Ohio: 3, Wisconsin: 11.

1848 Wisconsin became a state and slavery was abolished by its constitution in Article I section 2.

Introduction: American Colonial Slavery under the French and British

There are few time periods in American history that have received more attention than the Civil War era. It has been commonly presented by the public educational system as the bloody and righteous war to end slavery and free enslaved blacks from the awful yoke of bondage that they bore in the antebellum south. This analysis and presentation, while useful in the enculturation of American schoolchildren into the great myth and ethos that is America, has the usual effect of painting the country and the conflict in terms of black and white, good versus evil. But it fails to explain the origins of the Civil War and distorts the real history of slavery in North America. Obviously there was much more to American slavery than what can be explained in those terms. The peculiar institution, slavery, was a nuanced one. It permeated every aspect of American life until abolition and we continue to feel the aftershocks to this day.

Yet, for all of the effort put into gaining a fuller understanding of slavery, one region has, for the most part, gone unexamined. Slavery in the Old Northwest territory, from the early colonial period through the Civil War, was significant to the institution but has largely gone unstudied. The oft-heard claim that the North was free from the stain of slavery has time and time again been disproved. The study of slavery quickly confronts students with the realities of the institution such as its existence in New Amsterdam (modern day New York) which was once home to a larger number of slaves than any other North American city.¹ Of course, the nature of slavery in New Amsterdam and the other Northern coastal colonies is usually assumed to be mild compared to the Southern plantation regime, reassuring those residents of the North that their ancestors did not share in the blame. This complacency takes hold and the gaze of the student rarely looks

at home, to parts of America traditionally thought to be havens of freedom and the abode of only the noble free holding farmer, the perpetually iconic, and to a degree false, image of Old Northwest. Slavery was an institution that, most Americans regard as occurring “back then” or “down there.” This, sadly, was never the case. Slavery, like most American phenomena was not bound by time or geography in the United States until its official end at the conclusion of the Civil War.

During the Civil War itself the Old Northwest, consisting of, as per the Northwest Ordinance, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois was strategically vital to the Union. These breadbasket and industrial states were seen as essential to the strength of the Union and indeed they made significant contributions of supplies and manpower to the Civil War. However, it was less than 20 years earlier that slavery had finally disappeared from those states and territories and had it not been for climate, circumstance and other chance factors, the white citizens of the Old Northwest could quite easily have ended up defending the rights of its citizens to own human property.ⁱⁱ Slavery, with all its concurrent horrors, degradations, and lasting social effects, did exist within the Old Northwest territory from the earliest European settlements through the 1840’s.

In order to understand slavery as it came to the Old Northwest a brief survey of slavery as it existed in Europe and earlier American settlements must be taken. Slavery was an age-old institution. It had been used as a means of punishment and was the plight of many conquered peoples during the age of the classical empires. By the time Europe entered the late medieval period slavery was present there as well. As holdovers from the Romans and the Germanic tribes that conquered them there were still many “white” slaves. At the same there were also African, Moor and other darker skinned slaves. As

time progressed and the era of global European dominance began the African had already been viewed as a slave for many centuries and slavery, for the first time in history, began to develop a color line.ⁱⁱⁱ

When the Europeans first arrived on the shores of Latin America and the Caribbean Islands the form of slavery that they inflicted upon the New World did not, for the most part, take the form of chattel African slavery. Instead, the conquered peoples of the Americas became the workforce of the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors. The labor of the indigenous peoples was exploited thorough the ingenious and destructive system of the *encomienda*. The *encomienda* organized the native peoples under the control of an upper class or noble Iberian, an *encomendero*, who would then be able to exact tribute from the natives while, the Crown hoped, christianizing them. This system worked well at for the Spaniards and the Portuguese who came to America, however, with the demise of vast amounts of the native population due to war, deprivation and disease, all the result of European arrival, the available labor pool used to create tribute quickly dried up. This was especially problematic in many of the Spanish possessions in the Caribbean, where there was little mineral wealth to plunder and agricultural labors, necessary for the survival and profitability of the settlements, were back breaking given the tropical climate and the topography. It was here that the Europeans, copying the model of the Mediterranean sugar islands first began to import black slaves in large numbers.

Due to their insatiable appetite for gold and silver to replenish their constantly overstretched treasury, the Spanish, for the most part, had little interest in large scale farming operations during the early stages of colonization. Mining was their most

important occupation and Indian slaves sufficed their needs, as mining efforts were concentrated on the mainland in the midst of some of the most populous civilizations in the Americas.^{iv} However, with the arrival of the French and the British the focus of the larger European colonial enterprise turned to agriculture and the production of cash crops.

The French exploits in the Americas were focused in the Caribbean, Louisiana and Canada.^v The most profitable of the French endeavors were the on the sugar islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe which were acquired in 1635 and the western third of Hispaniola (later Saint-Dominique or Santo Domingo and now Haiti) in 1697.^{vi} It was here that sugar, introduced from plantations in the Canary islands as early as 1505, became king of the economy and where the French would fine abusive slaveholders, defined here as those who violated the few social constraints placed upon the public treatment of slaves, in sugar rather than Francs, possibly because the value of sugar was more assured than French currency could be.^{vii}

The French in the Caribbean held much less real estate than Spain, yet, due in large part to the high profitability and relatively low overhead of running these plantation outposts it was considered to be an extremely lucrative business for those who could afford to get into it. Indeed, the social mobility that had for so long been lacking in the old countries of Europe became a realizable possibility for the French and Spanish who chose to make their fortunes in the New World. This was true for many individuals who were, in the Spanish case, granted title and for Frenchmen who were able to become a type of colonial nobility, as there were few individuals of title willing to make the journey across the Atlantic to the sugar factories of the Caribbean. All of this European

social mobility resulted, in large part, from the willingness of the Europeans to deprive both native and black slaves of their own mobility.

The geographical bulk of the French presence in the New World was in the upper reaches of North America. It was here that the French had landed and explored the length of the Saint Lawrence River, taking it all the way to the Great Lakes and, through those waters, charting a path to the Mississippi river that they then traced to its mouth at New Orleans. Explorers such as Cartier, Champlain, Brulé, Nicolet, Jolliet, Marquette and Charlevoix are just a few of the individuals who, operating under the authority of the Crown or of a royally chartered company, delved into the depths of the North American continent in a vain search for water routes to Asia and riches similar to those which the Spanish were plundering in New Spain.^{viii} It was also these same explorers who would be the first Europeans to lay eyes on the Old Northwest and to carry with them some of the first slaves that would inhabit that territory.

The next colonial enterprise to be addressed is that of the British in North America and their use of slave labor in the pursuit of royal riches and global prestige. The British had established the colony at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 with the hopes of succeeding where the colonists of Roanoke had failed.^{ix} Although the Dutch brought the first black bondsmen to Jamestown in 1619, in the form of the oft-quoted “twenty Negars” there is little evidence of widespread black or Indian slavery in the colony during its early stages.^x This was largely due to the reliance of the Virginian planters on indentured servants from the British Isles.

Britain had been suffering from a population surplus, which essentially meant that the need for land far outstripped the supply. To alleviate some of the pressure created by

this condition the British shipped as many of the wandering freemen abroad as possible, in the form of soldiers, colonists or indentured servants. Indentured servants were individuals bound to serve the owner of their indenture for a specified period of time, they had some rights, but were by and large slaves to their indentures and subject to their master's needs, wants and whims first and foremost.

Wars and the military were useful in this effort in terms of employing soldiers, but not half as much so as the colony in Virginia, as it employed ever more indentured servants. Indeed, one of the selling points put before the queen by Richard Hakluyt was the ability of a colony to save those poor men who “for trifles may otherwise be devoured by the gallows.”^{xi} In its early stages it was a wonder that the Virginians had the time to do anything but bury the dead. Disease, accentuated by malnutrition, squalid living conditions and arduous work resulted in a high mortality rate. At the same time the ability of the colony to devour the social problems of the motherland were appreciated and the English indentures continued to flow to Virginia. However, problems arose as the mortality rate began to drop towards the end of the 17th century and the problems of using a labor force composed largely of white indentured servants who understood their rights as Englishmen came to a head with Bacon's Rebellion in 1676.^{xii}

Bacon's Rebellion pitted freemen, largely former indentures turned freeholders or landless wanderers, against the landowning elite. It highlighted the problems of filling the colonies with a second class of citizens that would eventually gain their freedom and then go on to press their rights as productive, selfish and armed individuals both within the structures of the colonial government and, when those failed to satisfy them, outside of them. With the falling mortality rates this problem was destined to become worse for the

colonial authorities. At the same time the economic viability of employing slaves for life, chattel slaves with no rights, recourse or prospects of freedom became more appealing. While previously black slaves had been more expensive than servants with a 5 year indenture, neither could be expected to live beyond 4 years in the harsh Virginia climate, the case, as it now stood, meant that black slaves would provide a steadier source of labor while also being more easily controlled and providing a unifying source for the enmity and disdain of whites within the colony. For Virginia's leaders in the late 17th century black slavery was both an economically prudent and socially necessary course to take in fulfilling labor needs.

The British, like the French, had also been long familiar with the idea of black slavery as they had seen it in the Spanish colonies. At the same time, the wholesale prejudice and sentencing of all black and Creole residents of the British colonies to a second-class existence took a while to take hold. Indeed, as T.H. Breen and Stephen Innes explore in their work *Myne Owne Ground* there were some individual black families that rose to positions of prominence and property in the early stages of the Virginia colony, to the point of even owning their own black slaves, similar situations would also arise in the Old Northwest during its formative stages of development. This period was to be short lived and by the mid 18th century their were both legal and social mores which precluded the ascendance of blacks, Creoles or any mixture thereof of rising to any status above, let alone equal to that of white men, once again not unlike the development of the Old Northwest. It has been stated by some, such as Stanley Elkins as he summarized the Tannenbaum thesis, that status of the slave in North America shifted from "the conservative, paternalistic, Catholic, quasi-medieval culture of Spain and

Portugal and their new world colonies” to a new model that was “the liberal, Protestant, secularized, capitalist culture of America.”^{xiii} Rather, despite this explanation, slavery was shaped much more by the circumstances in which it existed rather than by religious mores and nowhere was this truer than in the Old Northwest.

While the Spanish had sought to exploit the New World, first and foremost, in terms of mineral wealth, France and Britain approached the idea of New World exploitation differently. While the Spanish empire was in decline, the French and British possessions in the Americas were growing quickly in both geographic expanse and productivity. In the Caribbean the French were quickly expanding sugar production to the point where the Island of Sainte Domingo as well as Martinique and Guadeloupe were the most valuable pieces of real estate in the empire. Meanwhile, the British outpost at Jamestown, had only received its first black slaves in 1619 and was coming into its own with the beginning of tobacco production. It was these earliest colonies and their dependence upon slave labor for various reasons that would inform their later settlers and countrymen as they made their way into the Old Northwest. The westward migration of slavery and the differing needs and conditions of those more distant settlements would greatly alter its nature; to the point where slavery as it existed in the early French and British plantation societies of Virginia and the Caribbean bore little resemblance to the forms of slavery which would appear in the Old Northwest.

Birth of Slavery in the Old Northwest

The movement of slavery into the Old Northwest was a two faceted process. First, slavery appeared wherever explorers and settlers did, as they enslaved native peoples to fulfill their immediate labor needs. Second, slavery followed settlers in the form of

chattel black slavery, which was more desirable for the Europeans in the long run as they sought to recreate their colonial successes elsewhere.

The progression of native slavery in the Old Northwest came with the European inroads into the area. French settlements sprang up in many areas during the reign of their colonial regime. These settlements, like most of the inland ventures of the French were positioned to facilitate three ends. First, the exploration of New France and the easing of the search for a route to the exotic markets and riches of the Far East was the earliest of these. However, following the failures of every Frenchmen who attempted the feat, this purpose faded into the distance and was replaced by the more pressing needs of increasing the profitability of the French holdings in North America. Once the initial exploratory boom had subsided the French began to attempt to use the Old Northwest as an avenue to link its Canadian cities of Quebec and Montreal with Louisiana, New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. Second, the outposts in areas such as Illinois, Michigan and Indiana also served as trading outposts and points of departure for the French fur traders (*voyageurs*) who would trade with natives and trap on their own. Finally, the string of French settlements served to encircle the British colonies on the Eastern Seaboard and ensure that inland North America and most importantly the Mississippi river remained firmly within French control.

The French had first begun their expansion into Canada in the early 1600's with the expeditions of Champlain and his eventual founding of Quebec in 1608.^{xiv} Twenty years later the first recorded black slave was brought to that city by English traders and was sold for, according to historian William Riddell, a moderate sum.^{xv} Thus began the presence of black slavery in French Canada. Later, in 1688, the Intendant of New France

would write to the French Secretary of State requesting the permission of the King to import black slaves to New France in order to resolve the serious labor shortages that were then plaguing the colony. He received a reply in the affirmative but with an expression of concern that the slaves would be unable to adapt to the harsh climate.^{xvi} The preceding examples make clear the acceptance of slavery and the status of slaves as chattels within the French colonial regime in North America.

Upon reaching the Old Northwest the French began to establish various forts and missions posts strategically located near important waterways and in the midst of the indigenous peoples, viewed as potential converts, trade partners and savage foes.^{xvii} Some of the more important of these settlements were the trading post at Michilimackinac, the mission at St. Joseph and the settlement at Detroit. In all three of these Michigan settlements there are distinct accountings of both black and native slavery existing within the European settlements. As the strategic importance of the Old Northwest became more obvious to the French they began to establish forts and settlements further south, tracing the routes of the strategic waterways. Near the present day Illinois town of East St. Louis, the first such settlement was at Cahokia, in the form of yet another mission station, which appeared in 1698.^{xviii} The other French outposts which would spring up in Illinois, which consisted of Cahokia, Fort Chartres, St. Phillip Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher, followed the Mississippi for the most part and combined, held a population of approximately 1,500 people by 1750.^{xix} The population numbers include French, blacks slaves and natives, who were a mixture of indentures, slaves and free. Taken together these settlements in both Michigan and the Illinois country constituted the bulk of French

settlements within the Old Northwest though slaves were also present in Wisconsin and Ohio in smaller, and sparsely documented numbers.

Legal and Normative Foundations of Slavery

Just as important as the location and population of the individual settlements was the norms and institutions that the settlers, *habitants* in French, explorers and trappers, *voyageurs* in French, soldiers and Jesuits carried with them into the area. Much of this can be seen in the legal status of slaves within France and its empire as well as the official actions and decrees that were handed down concerning statutory bondage. The misapprehension that there were no slaves in France has long been popular amongst the French people. Though it has long since been disproved, it continues to live on within the common French memory. In reality there were slaves in France and no matter how small that number, it has been estimated at a mere 4,000-5,000 during the 18th century, it was a fact that slavery was a part of France's social and economic fabric.^{xx} In addition to their slaves in Europe the reliance of the French colonial endeavor upon slavery necessitated the standardization of the law regarding blacks throughout the empire.^{xxi} The earliest of these laws appeared in The French *Code Noir* or "Black Code," enacted in 1685 during the reign of Louis XIV, which stated, among other things, that black slavery was "necessary and authorized" in the French colonies.^{xxii} This law was designed in response to the need for slaves and the legal authorization of slavery in the French Caribbean holdings.

The *Code Noir* was an immense document and it proscribed proper procedures for all activities regarding the holding of slaves. It required that they be instructed in religion, that they not be given arms and that any assault upon a master, which drew blood, be

punished by death.^{xxiii} Ultimately, the *Code Noir*, the basis for the legal institution of slavery within the French colonial enterprise in America and the primary informer of French views regarding slavery, represented slaves as mere chattel. The *Code Noir* was undoubtedly informed by the long history of experiences between the French and Africans, all of which served to portray Africans as non-human at worst and noble savages at best. The effect that the law, as represented by the *Code Noir* was capable of having on the mindset of the French in the Old Northwest is evident in a broad statement made by William Blackstone, the famed English jurist, who stated “law is the embodiment of the moral sentiment of the people.”^{xxiv} To that end the *Code Noir* represents the feeling of the French towards slavery and slaves. The law legitimized and expanded slavery by informing the mindset of the earliest Europeans who ventured into the American interior and it accounted for the holding of human property in the Old Northwest. Although this was the legal status of slaves, which aptly describes the institution in many ways, there are also more individualized and human experiences that shall be accounted for further on.

With the transition of the Old Northwest to a British possession following the French and Indian War (1754-1763) the French laws regarding slavery were left intact or only altered semantically. The foundation of this ensuring of property rights was laid in 1685 with the Treaty of Peace and Neutrality between France and Britain. Article 10 of this treaty provided for the protection of all personal property, a category in which black and Indian slaves were explicitly included.^{xxv} When the British went on to conquer Canada in 1760 they included in the peace settlement that “Negroes and Panis of both Sexes shall remain in the possession of the French and Canadians to whom they belong;

they shall be at liberty to keep them in their service in the Colony or to sell them.^{xxvi}

This provided for the further codification of slavery as an institution and contributed to the increased security of slaveholders as they expanded their human holdings, both black and Indian (Panis was the vernacular reference for Indians, in order to better their economic and social positions in the far-flung settlements of the Old Northwest despite the tumultuous transitions between the French and British regimes.

The next significant legal transition would not occur until after the American Revolution, when the congress passed the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. This ordinance, more specifically its Article VI, has often been viewed as a bulwark against slavery in the Old Northwest territory, but it was neither a true or effective means of abolition in the Old Northwest. It has even been asserted, by such historians as Paul Finkelman, that the Ordinance was passed at the behest of Southern representatives in the congress after minimal debate in order to strengthen slavery in the South by preventing the spread of Plantation society to the Old Northwest. Even at the time of its passage the Ordinance's prohibition of slavery was little understood.^{xxvii} Regardless, the 1787 Ordinance was largely moot in the territory. In fact even Jay's Treaty of 1794 (effected in 1796) protected the very institution of slavery that the Ordinance had supposedly banned, and slaves were still held until the institution was either abolished outright or gradually by the Constitutions of individual states as they joined the Union, though fewer slaves were brought to the Northern regions after 1787.^{xxviii} Finkelman attributed this lingering of slavery in an area where there was so little economic benefit, mainly because cotton and tobacco cultivation was not viable in most of the North, as being due in large part to the inertia the institution had gained through its continuance through the duration of both the

French and British regimes.^{xxix} Whatever the causes, slavery continued after the passage of the Northwest Ordinance ultimately turning that document, if for no other reason than the precedent set through its being disregarded by so many residents of the Old Northwest, into one of the legal underpinnings of the institution in the region.

Establishment of Indian Slavery

With the establishment of the legal institution of slavery came the problem of actually using slave labor in the Old Northwest. In the early years of the French settlements there were problems in the simple conveyance of slaves to the Old Northwest. It was, for the most part, an arduous journey, and it was rarely as profitable for an individual to make the trek with a few slaves when they could spend their time brokering for the lives of thousands in the Caribbean. It was in this light that the decision was made by many French authorities in the Northern reaches of America to employ Indian slaves in their colonial efforts.

Slavery among the Native American civilizations was comparable to the traditional views of slavery within African society. Slaves were commonly treated as members of the tribe on a functional level and the condition was neither perpetual nor inheritable.^{xxx} This was no longer the case once Indian slaves, commonly referred to as “Panis” by the Europeans, were given unto to European hands, as they too could only be legally accounted for as chattel.^{xxxi} The Indian slaves that became possessions of the Europeans in the Old Northwest were commonly prisoners of war captured during conflicts between the many native societies in the area. However, the authorities of French Canada were wary of the problems of Native slavery, the greatest of which was an individual’s property simply walking away. To this end the Intendant of New France,

Jacques Raudot, suggested in a 1709 ordinance the advantage of holding Panis slaves “whose nation is far removed from this country.”^{xxxii} This ordinance gave the whites of the Old Northwest their greatest weapon against their slaves, separation; the ripping of slaves from their homes and their people and the veritable marooning of slaves within the islands of European civilization in the area. This tactic served to preclude escape and separated slaves, both black and Indian, from the allies they would have needed to make good such a flight.

With the codification of both black and Indian slavery in the Old Northwest slavery’s relevance was both proved and ensured in the long run. It served to ensure that the racism, which had developed towards Indians and blacks and their separate place within colonial society, became permanent.^{xxxiii} The legal institution of slavery, while having been established in the other areas under French control in the Americas, did not proceed into the Northern reaches of New France until it was considered necessary or until it already existed, *de facto*, in those areas. Rather, it was the immediacy of the needs of the *habitants* and *voyageurs*, rather than any precise legal decisions, which made slavery as prevalent as it was in the Old Northwest during the early period.^{xxxiv} Once present, the peculiar institution expanded and the roles of slaves were adapted to the particular needs of the European residents of the Old Northwest.

Developments in Old Northwest Slavery: 1700-1860

The development of slavery within the Old Northwest was a long process. It occurred during the 18th century, the earlier and later time periods being more involved in the beginning and closing of slavery in the region than in its developmental stages. In order to break this down into workable segments the current state boundaries of

Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio are used. It should be noted that these boundaries did not exist until the beginning of American settlement and the dividing of the Old Northwest by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

Slavery in Michigan

Slaves were present at numerous locations throughout Michigan in the 18th century. The settlements at Michilimackinac, St. Joseph and Detroit are among the earliest and together they provide a picture of the nature of slavery in Michigan and in the Old Northwest as a whole. The treatment of slaves and the tasks that slave labor was employed in was a part of this. The other part was made clear in the ways in which slaves were incorporated into the society of the Michigan settlements and the attitudes of the white European population towards the slaves. When looked at together the three settlements are also representative of the development of slavery from an *ad hoc* model at Michilimackinac to a religiously governed model at St. Joseph and finally to a fully institutionalized model at Detroit.

Montreal fur traders established Michilimackinac as an outpost around 1680.^{xxxv} In this capacity it served mainly as a way station for the numerous trappers who journeyed into the interior of the Great Lakes region and was generally populated only by the handful of soldiers in the garrison and the few trading post operators.^{xxxvi}

At Michilimackinac the fur trappers or *voyageurs* were the largest group of slave owners. The slaves held by these frontiersmen existed within a much different situation than slaves elsewhere in the Americas and even those slaves held in other settlements within present day Michigan. Rather than the traditional owner-slave relationship, as is often pictured, the trappers and their slaves operated much more as companions and were

dependent upon one another for survival.^{xxxvii} Rather than cracking the whip over their slaves the fur trappers that operated out of Michilimackinac were forced to treat their slaves in a manner that would allow the two to trust one another within the backwoods as they searched for pelts. To do otherwise would have been capricious and ultimately not in the best interests of the trappers as their slaves had ample opportunities to run off and disappear into the woods or to simply sever the bond of servitude by eliminating the master.

The differences in the relationship between slave and master likely had much to do with the origins of slavery in the area. Rather than being a result of the explicit authorization of the King, slavery in the upper reaches of present day Michigan more likely began, as David Katzman conjectures, when a lone trapper found himself in need of another set of hands and bought a slave from a group of Indians. The origins of slavery in the area were free from the strictures of the state or the law. Rather than being forced to deal with crown officials the slave owners only had to make peace with themselves and with God, whose presence seemed more constant owing to the many mission posts located throughout the area. This most likely encouraged the slave owners to treat their property more caringly and to follow the laws of the Catholic Church regarding slaves, which required religious education and a level of humanity, which exceeded the minimum standards of French statutes, rather than treating them as mere chattels.^{xxxviii} This is not to suggest that Catholicism was the primary mover regarding the treatment of slaves but rather to explain it in terms of situation and conscience both of which facilitated more humane treatment of slaves than was present elsewhere in the Americas.

An example of the more human nature of slavery was visible in the history of Jean Bonga a black and former slave. Bonga had been a slave owned by Daniel Robertson who commanded the British garrison at Michilimackinac between 1782 and 1787. After having gained his freedom following Robertson's death in 1787 Bonga, his wife, also a freed slave and their children became prosperous traders. Their hospitality to guests and their notoriety within the Michigan area was noteworthy. The most interesting and revealing aspect of Bonga's story comes from his apparent ignorance concerning any distinction between the peoples of the Old Northwest other than Indians and white men. Operating under this construction it has been said that Bonga often claimed that he was among "the first white men that ever came into this country."^{xxxix} This ignorance of racial distinctions highlights the differences between the form of slavery that existed at Michilimackinac and what was known in the American South, or even at Detroit or St. Joseph.

Slavery at St. Joseph appeared to have taken a path similar to that of Michilimackinac. Here too slaves were treated according to the laws of the Church first and according to the laws of France second due to religious purpose of the settlement. Though the date of permanent settlement has been put at 1691 the only hard facts include that in 1689 the French King made a land grant to the Jesuit missionaries who were planning to establish a mission station on the St. Joseph River and that Charlevoix visited a mission on the St. Joseph River in 1721 and at this time the Fort had been established for a considerable amount of time.^{xi} In 1780 the population consisted of forty-five French and four native slaves.^{xii} This small population and the religious nature of the settlement contributed to the interesting social dynamics of slavery found there. It provided for the

mixing of peoples and the partial breaking down of some social barriers separating slaves and owners as was necessitated by the taxing labor needs of the settlement. While there is little doubt that slaves were given the more odious tasks there is also little doubt that much of the time they were working side by side with their masters as survival, not pretence was the primary concern of the St. Joseph residents.

The original baptismal record of St. Joseph survived and was translated and reprinted by George Paré and M.M. Quaife. This record contains the following entries regarding slaves, dating from April, 1740 “I the undersigned Jan Baptiste Lamorinie priest of the society of Jesus and missionary at the present time at the mission of the river St Joseph baptized the slave girl of Monsieur Larche of the Panis nation () 13 years old and named Marie Jeanne.”^{xlii} Later, on Holy Saturday of 1742 “I solemnly Baptized a Panis belonging to Mr. de Quindre whom I (believed) sufficiently instructed and who took the name...”^{xliii} From these two entries much can be gleaned. First, both of the Panis slaves appear to be young females (the name is cut off in the second entry but the first two letters were “ma,” lending itself to the conjecture that, after having seen several other listings, this individual was also named Marie Jeanne). This is significant because it displays the more individual nature of slavery in these remote French outposts. These girls were probably part of the household. This is not to say that they were not subjected to abuse, but the fact that they were religiously instructed, even to the minimums necessary for frontier baptism, evinces at least tacit concern for Indian slaves in the Jesuit outposts of the French Northwest.

The final entry regarding slaves in St. Joseph revealed the most, dated March 7, 1773, “by us missionary priest was baptized conditionally Charles Patate born twenty

fourth of november one thousand seven hundred and seventy of an infidel mother and of a father. The mother and Child slaves of Sieur Joseph Caron.^{»xliv} This entry has many implications. Nowhere in the entry, as is seen in others as the case may be, is the child listed as illegitimate. This implies that the union of a Frenchman and presumably a native slave was considered legitimate, suggesting a liberal and pragmatic approach to frontier relationships at St. Joseph. Also, the entry states that both the mother and child are slaves of one Caron but we have no reason to believe that the owner was the father. The fact that the father is not named also implies that he has no stake in the child. Ownership trumped parentage. The father deferred to the owner of both the mother and child rather than including himself in a binding document such as the baptismal register. The owner was the closest thing to a parent actually named, thereby his singular ability to claim ownership was ensured.

The deference to ownership as well as the seeming legitimacy of the child displays the ad hoc nature of frontier settlements. The remote nature of settlements led those who lived there to do what they needed to in order to fulfill their lives. In this case the need for fulfillment appears to have warranted the overlooking of French miscegenation laws. At the same time some trappings of French legal systems and deference were present as well. In this instance it would follow that an episode of this sort, occurring in the more settled areas of the East coast or in the Caribbean, would never had been considered legitimate in the first place and the deference to ownership would have been assumed, to have codified it in the baptismal record would not have been needed. There also would have been a punishment dealt out to the father of the child

for violating the strict social norm associated with such a birth and the doubtlessly, considering the size of the St. Joseph settlement, public nature of the affair.

While the baptismal record displays the ad hoc nature of the settlement at St. Joseph it also highlights some of the religious aspects of the institution as it existed there and throughout the Old Northwest. The entries that were cited above all also contained references to the godparents of the individuals, in these cases slaves, who were being baptized. The individuals named as godparents were always free and always white. Their titles included *voyageur* and “cadet in the troops” and it was these individuals who provided a buffer between the slaves and the unbridled control of the slave owner.^{xlv} Assuming that they took their responsibilities as godparents seriously, and that may be assuming too much, it could be inferred applying the Tannenbaum thesis that the slave had an advocate with them in the community. An individual charged with the preservation and development of the slave on a spiritual level, who most likely took an interest in more temporal matters as well.^{xlvi} However, there is no direct evidence of any greater concern for slaves due to baptism. If there was any difference in treatment it most likely stemmed from the more personal nature of slavery and the fact that owners at St. Joseph had fewer opportunities to replace slaves who were overworked than those who resided on the Eastern Seaboard.

Michilimackinac and St. Joseph are examples of the first two stages of the development of slavery in Michigan. Slavery, in its earliest form in the Old Northwest and as seen at Michilimackinac, was a personal institution and *ad hoc*. Slaves were purchased, but they then became something other than mere slaves, they were companions whom the French trappers were forced, by circumstances, to develop a

codependent relationship with. At St. Joseph the middle stage of slavery was seen. This was marked by the recording and thereby codification of slavery within baptismal records indicating that the slaves were being Christianized. The efforts necessary in conversion work indicate a certain level of concern with, at the least, the spiritual welfare of the slaves as well as the willingness of slave owners to follow Church laws regarding slavery, rather than adopting the strict, property only definition provided by the French and British governments.

Detroit, as the final locale to be dealt with in the tracing of slavery across Michigan, provides the most readily recognizable version of slavery to be found in the area and an example of the final stage of the institution in Michigan. Slavery at Detroit fit much more within the more widely known model that characterized the antebellum south, at the same time Detroit exhibited qualities that, while not identical to those found at Michilimackinac or St. Joseph, still displayed the singular nature of Old Northwest slavery.

The settlement of Detroit is a success story of colonialism. Serving its initial purpose as a defensive fortification well. African slaves, though not present in the city at its outset, did come to Detroit early in its history, having been preceded by Panis slaves who were probably a part of the city on day one. C.M. Burton makes reference to three Indian slaves and two black slaves that were present in early Detroit. According to Burton the first recorded blacks in the city were of "...two of Louis Campau's in 1736."^{xlvi} Campau was the son of a blacksmith and was the predecessor of later traders and merchants; his slaves could have conceivably been employed in any of these three endeavors or simply hired out as laborers to others in need of their toil.

The Indian slaves recorded were present in the city under Cadillac between 1701 and 1710. The city directory lists them as: “Slave (Panis) Jacques. A little slave of Pierre Roy, aged 7 or 8 years.”^{xlvi} “Slave (Panisse). Marie, Jeanne, belonging to Jean Richard, voyageur, aged about 15 years.”^{xlix} “Slave (Panis, Indian) belonging to Mr. Moynier, aged 12 to 14 years, died Nov. 16, 1710.”^l “Slave (Panis, Indian), Joseph, called Esacabia. Belonging to Joseph Parent, aged 21 or 22 years. He died Jan. 21, 1710.”^{li} The detailed nature of these records lends itself to the conclusion that slaves in the early period of settlement, not unlike early Virginian slaves, played major roles in and were valued members of the community. It is likely that, considering their small number, they worked side by side with whites and while legally separated, were functionally on a similar footing with most early Detroiters. While their inclusion in the directory and the small and backwoods nature of the early Detroit settlement lends credence to the idea that slaves were on more equal footing there than would have been the case in a similar city in Virginia, the chattel nature of slave ownership must not be overlooked.

This chattel nature is seen in excerpts from the letter-book of *Phyn and Ellis*, which is found within the collection of the Buffalo Historical Society and deals with a later period, evidenced by the Anglo names of the addressees, than the directory. One example is a letter dated July 7, 1760 and addressed to a Mr. H. Levy. The postscript of this letter reads “Do not fail to purchase the blacks by first opportunity, as the person for whom they are, has contracted to deliver them at Detroit early in the fall.”^{lii} Another letter, addressed to Mr. James Stirling at Detroit and dated August 23, 1760, reads in part:

We have tried all in our power to procure the wenches and negro lads, but it is impossible to get any near your terms. No green negroes are now brought into the

Province. We can purchase negroes from 80 pounds to 90 pounds and wench from 60 pounds to 70 pounds. If such will be acceptable, advise and you shall have them in spring, and perhaps under, if we can meet with Yankees in the winter.^{liii}

The final excerpt of use is from an undated letter to Mr. John Porteous of Detroit:

Dear Sir – We have contracted with a New England gentleman for some green negroes to be delivered here the first of August, and then your wench will be forwarded, together with a negro boy, in case she may sometime there after choose a husband. We apprehend he will be useful to you, or advantageous about the sloop, or you can dispose of him as you find best. The price is 50 pounds each.^{liv}

While the preceding pieces of correspondence suggest that a less personal type of slavery existed at Detroit than at Michilimackinac or St. Joseph that is dispelled by other references to slavery at Detroit which include a 1797 reference in a letter to a Mr. George Sharp of Detroit from one Mr. Harrow, “I learnt that my big Negro Sampson has run off and that he is about Town (Detroit).”^{lv} In a subsequent letter to a friend with whom Mr. Harrow cancelled plans he stated “my Negro Sampson being gone obliges me to assist a little at home.”^{lvi} These letters bear out the singular and personal nature of slavery in Michigan and in the Old Northwest. The time period of the mid to late 1700’s was the apex of slavery in the area. Even at this point, and despite some seeming objectifications of slaves, the peculiar institution was still a very personal one. The contribution of slaves to the economy and to society was more or less on par with whites. This was highlighted by the formation of a militia company was formed entirely of black slaves who had

escaped from Canada in 1806.^{lvii} The arming of blacks, let alone escaped slaves was very taboo at the time and the fact that the Detroiters would do this is an indication of their willingness to deal with blacks and slaves on a more personal and individual level than occurred elsewhere in the Americas. The absence of one slave forced a master to fulfill the labor obligations around his property himself and the military needs of the settlement induced the whites to arm blacks, a distinction usually reserved for whites. The similarity of the duties of masters and slaves suggests that the society of the time, while stratified by birth and wealth, was not inordinately divided according to race, allowing intercourse between whites and blacks who were forced, by their mutual situations, into codependence and constant interaction.

The nature of slavery in Michigan goes beyond the social nature that has thus far been evidenced baptismal registry, the city directory and the correspondence of slave owners and those involved in the slave trade. The numbers of slaves and the dates of the institutions existence also shed light on the topic. Michigan slavery, as has already been stated, began early. While the number of slaves held was generally small their significance was undeniable.

Michigan's slave population fluctuated greatly over time. The earliest figures available come from historian David Katzman and account only for the city of Detroit. He states that 62 slaves were present in 1760, 141 in 1779 and 180 in 1782. Following this United States census data provides some insight. While it states that no slaves were present in Michigan in 1790 and 1800, the period in between representing the transition between the British and American regimes in the area, this is highly unlikely considering that all the treaties concerning the area to that point, the Treaty of Paris of 1783 and Jay's

Treaty of 1794 had protected slavery and because slaves were present both before and after these censuses were taken. Though some drop in the population can be accounted for as loyalists fled to Canada and took their slaves with them. The census data again shows slaves being present in 1810 and numbering 24 and the slave population increased in 1830 to 32. It was in this last decade that the door was closed on slavery in Michigan as the state Constitution outlawed slavery.^{lviii}

The numbers of slaves reveals that their condition was most likely good compared to slaves held in the American south. The small number of slaves and the fact that few individuals owned more than one or two slaves suggests that the slaves were a part of the household, especially in the more settled areas of Michigan. This personal nature ensured that slaves were a part of Michigan's society and not of the scenery. Their participation varied from roaming the woods with trappers to raising crops side by side with French *habitants* and British and American settlers in Detroit. Regardless, the impact on slavery was great in that, for many Americans looking through antebellum glasses it would have been unrecognizable. Slaves were just as much a part of the fabric of early Michigan society as whites. Though they lacked the civil and political rights that would have made this obvious, it was rather through their presence in the first city directory and the fact that their absence forced the master to do their share of the work that the effective equality of whites and slaves within Michigan society and their shared importance to the development of the area was demonstrated.

Slavery in Wisconsin

Data is sparse concerning the presence of slaves in within the boundaries of present-day Wisconsin. Until the British takeover in 1760 there was only one permanent

settlement within Wisconsin. Although there is no evidence presented of it here, it can be inferred from the Michigan examples that slavery in Wisconsin was primarily concerned with Indians and that the nature of it fit within the previously described *ad hoc* model. Most sources don't discuss the presence of slaves in Wisconsin. They do however discuss the commitment of the people of Wisconsin, particularly during the English and early American regimes to the freeholder farmer ideal, an ideal which had little room for slavery.^{lix}

The U.S. census recorded slaves in Wisconsin only in 1840 at which time 11 slaves were accounted for.^{lx} This is partially explained by the fact that parts of present day Wisconsin and Wisconsin as it was defined for the purposes of the census were, during the early American period, part of Michigan and the slaves that were present there have already been accounted for as being present in Michigan. Taken in that light it stands that slavery, as seen in Michigan, most likely also existed in Wisconsin. Slaves probably worked side by side with their masters and aided in the cultivation efforts on family farms.

Slavery in Illinois and Indiana

The present day states of Illinois and Indiana are unique within the context of the Old Northwest. While they were treated as a part of that territory by both the British and United States regimes the French had considered them a part of Louisiana during their tenure in the region. Commonly referred to as the Illinois country by the French (and also here) it was due to its location on the important waterways that fed into the Mississippi river and led through the vital port of New Orleans into the gulf that the area fell under the oversight of the governor of Louisiana.^{lxi}

The growth of the Illinois country and the French settlements in that region was stunted, more than any other factor, by the remote nature of area. Despite the richness of the land, the ability of the Jesuits to begin a milling operation and the steady employment for *voyageurs* as a part of the fur trade, few but the most intrepid missionaries and *habitants* moved into the area and most of these people came from Canada, not from the governmental center in New Orleans. However, the Illinois country, when considered as a part of the Old Northwest fits well within the framework of both the societal influences and norms regarding slavery that characterized the Old Northwest.

Similar to most of the other French settlements in the Old Northwest the forts and villages in the Illinois and Indiana area were a part of the ring within which the French hoped to contain the British. Also, like the other settlements in Michigan, most of the colonies were only minimally concerned with agriculture, though the Jesuit milling operations in the area did produce enough for export, rather the economy was largely supported by the fur trade and the trappers were a common sight among the populations. It was this insatiable demand for furs and the easy and profitable employment that it provided for so many of the French and Canadians that ultimately brought slaves to the area in significant numbers. To the point where by 1752, towards the end of the French suzerainty the population consisted of only 1,536 French with 890 blacks and 147 Indian slaves. This meant that black and Indian slaves constituted approximately 67% of the population within the French settlements in the Illinois country.^{lxii}

The French settlements in the Illinois country were all relatively small. The importance of the waterways and rivers of the area meant that the settlements never strayed too far from those sources of economy and information. The settlements that had

a slave population during the French and British colonial periods included Cahokia, Fort de Chartes, Kaskaskia and Vincennes. The first three settlements were quite closely connected and all three were located along the Mississippi river between the inlets of the Illinois and Kaskaskia rivers on the border between present day Illinois and Missouri. The final locale, Vincennes, was located on the banks of the Wabash River approximately 100 miles overland from Kaskaskia and was located on the Indiana side of the border that state shares with Illinois today. As a group, these four settlements constituted the significant part of French settlement in the area and the numbers and occupations of the slaves that were held there were significant, particularly when looked at in terms of the remoteness of the settlements; even Vincennes, was over 350 miles from Detroit.^{lxiii}

Kaskaskia was the population center of the French in the Illinois country. It even surpassed Detroit in its number of residents during the early colonial period. Kaskaskia, as one of the oldest settlements, received some of the first black slaves in the area with five hundred being brought up from San Domingo by Philip Francis Renault as a part of his mining operation in 1719.^{lxiv} These slaves were dispersed throughout the area following Renault's abandonment of mining in 1742 and they likely ended up in French settlements throughout the Old Northwest. In 1750 there were approximately three hundred blacks (presumably all slaves) and sixty Indian slaves in Kaskaskia and the surrounding villages alone.^{lxv} These black and Indian slaves were likely employed in agriculture but, as is seen in the Renault example, the activities that slaves were used for varied to the point of including mining. The tasks given to slaves varied to the same extent as the activities of the colonists as a whole. Other employs of slaves in the

neighborhood of Kaskaskia were under “the captain of the militia” at Fort Chartres who owned about twenty slaves. At Ste. Geneviève as well there was a grain and lumber mill where the owner kept 100 black slaves constantly employed.^{lxvi} This grain and lumber mill, which was located at a mission station, was most likely operated by the Jesuits in the area.^{lxvii}

The importance of slave labor to the French settlers in the Illinois country was considerable. The fur trade occupied almost all of the fit male labor due to its high profitability; net profits reportedly topped two hundred percent.^{lxviii} This left local manufacturers who wished to exploit the agricultural, mineral and other wealth of the country with few options for labor. They could either pay excessive amounts to white laborers or use slaves. The latter option was, as the large numbers of slaves bore out, often more desirable to the profit minded *habitants* of the area. During the French and Indian war of the late 1750’s and early 1760’s Kaskaskia and the surrounding French settlements reached their peak. Their prosperity was increased by the high demand for their increasing agricultural produce as well as the steady influx of capital that came with the French soldiers who were constantly being moved about the area in order to defend the colony.

The importance of slaves to the economic well being of the French settlers was significant enough that many slaveholders emigrated to the Spanish controlled regions after the British took over the Illinois Country colonies. This draining of the population meant that, by the 1790’s Kaskaskia was reported to be in ruins and the population much smaller than it had been 30 years earlier. The other colonies in the Illinois Country fared no better according to André Michaux who, in 1793 described Kaskaskia as “Nothing is

to be seen but houses in ruin and abandoned.”^{lxi} Even more of the *habitants* left the area later, after the Americans won their independence and finally taken control of the region from the British, amidst “fears that slaves would be freed by the Americans...”^{lxx}

Ultimately, the fears of the French *habitants* were confirmed when Indiana and Illinois gained statehood in 1816 and 1818 respectively and all forms of slavery and bondage were ostensibly prohibited by the states’ constitutions. Despite this apparent demarcation line that separated the history of the Illinois country as slave country from that of the free states, the dismantling of slavery within the states was not at all cut and dry. In both Indiana and Illinois slaves were present through the 1840’s due to both the legal wranglings of politicians and slaveholders as well as the collusive efforts of the State Supreme Courts to ensure that slavery would continue.^{lxxi}

Once the Americans had taken effective control of the Illinois country following the period of British rule they quickly sought to ensure that the property rights of slaves owners were protected. To do this they sought to bypass the prohibition of slavery articulated in Article VI of the Northwest Ordinance and to perpetuate slavery under different titles such as long term indentures, enforcement statutes and rental contracts which created what Paul Finkelman called *de facto* slavery in the Illinois country.^{lxxii} Aside from the simple protection of the richest of their constituents, as slave owning was not the occupation of poor men, there was also the benefit of the 3/5’s clause which allowed both the territorial and state governments in Illinois and Indiana to exploit the added voting power of a black population to which they had no desire to grant citizenship.

The initiatives to preserve and expand slavery in the Illinois country, well explained by Finkelman, were just as insidious as those that would be seen during the period immediately prior to the civil war in the South. Arguably, the residents of the Illinois country were even more clever and blatant in their efforts to circumvent the text of the Northwest Ordinance. This is seen in the arguments that they used in order to justify the maintenance and expansion of slavery in the area. One such tact was to present the argument in humanitarian and philanthropic terms. This included the explanation that slave owners in the area understood that slavery stood in opposition to the values of the Republic which they hoped to become a part of but that immediately freeing slaves would do no one any good. Rather a very gradual sort of emancipation was necessary, with the intervening steps still allowing slavery but calling it by other names. Another argument was that, for the safety of the country as a whole, the importation of slaves into the area should be allowed so as to diffuse the black and slave population and decrease the likelihood of a slave rebellion in the densely populated South, a prevalent *zeitgeist*.^{lxxiii}

The effectiveness of both of the preceding arguments paled in comparison to the economic argument made by the many citizens of the Illinois country who supported slavery. These supporters held that slavery would bring prosperity to the Illinois country, which, after 1800, had been divided into the separate Illinois and Indiana territories, in the form of allowing the production of cash crops and keeping some of the most prominent and largest landholders within the area as well as encouraging the migration of Southern slaveholders to the region.^{lxxiv} Indeed, the plans that many slaveholders had for their property suggested that both mining and industry were a part of the eventual design

of slavery in the region to the point where the Illinois constitution of 1818 was altered specifically to allow for the use of slave labor in the state's salt mines.^{lxxv}

Ultimately, these tactics and pleas were effective; they allowed the slaveholders of the Illinois country to maintain the territories as virtual slave states despite both federal and state prohibitions against such action, much as the area had been run under the French and the British. In the end however, the slaveholders lost their war to maintain the peculiar institution in an area in which the mere mention of slavery's existence seems peculiar to the modern mind. Although the end result wasn't achieved until fifty years after it had been legislated against, Indiana's slave population was still three in 1840, according to the notoriously inaccurate census data of the time, while Illinois' was 331.^{lxxvi} Due to federal pressure, owing in part to the fear that slaves in the region could be recruited by the British and Spanish who still posed a military threat to the area at the time, and the splitting of the pro-slavery lobby after the 1800 division of the territories slavery eventually died in the states of Indiana and Illinois.^{lxxvii}

Socially the history of slavery in the Illinois country was much more like that found in the American South. It can be inferred by the larger number of slaves in the area, as well as their concentrations within particular counties, notably Randolph county in Illinois, which contained the Kaskaskia settlement, lends itself to a more traditional conception of slavery.^{lxxviii} There was likely a fair amount of larger scale agricultural endeavors that employed slave labor in addition to the mining operations and small industries which had existed during the time of the French. Another aspect of the social interactions between slave and free in the Illinois country was that the racist attitudes of the white residents in those areas were much more salient than in Michigan or Wisconsin.

This was due to the high proportion of migrants to the area having originated in the South and having brought their views of slavery and blacks, the views of people acculturated into a slave society, with them when they migrated. This attitude was laid bare in the consistent efforts of the white population to legislate against the migration of free blacks to the states. These efforts included the use of bonds to ensure good behavior and the out and out intolerance of whites towards blacks that were attempting to settle in the area.

The histories of both Indiana and Illinois provide an example of the staying power of slavery. How the institution, once established and accepted by the majority of the populace, was sustained in the face of laws that were designed to bring about its end. Slavery was able to persevere and in expand until a mere twenty years before the civil war. Also significant, was the fact that both Illinois and Indiana, while technically free states long before Michigan, contained slaves until a later date than Michigan. Making them, among the last states outside of the South to allow slavery within their borders.

Slavery in Ohio

The history of slavery in Ohio is both a similar and singular one when looked at in the light of the region on the whole. Like the rest of the Northwest Territory, Ohio was held in turn by first the French, then the British and finally the Americans. What made Ohio a bit different however was the smaller timeframe in which slavery in that state existed. Unlike Michigan and the Illinois country Ohio was home to no waterways considered to be of great strategic importance during the early colonial period under the French, for this reason settlement was limited. However, the richness of the country did become a point of contention between France and Great Britain, ultimately leaving the

Ohio area with some military bases and little else as the two European powers vied for control of Ohio.^{lxxix}

This state of affairs quickly changed with the American takeover of the area following Jay's Treaty. Quickly a flood of migrants from New England and the Middle states headed for the fertile lands of Ohio. These migrants came from areas that were traditionally the province of free holder farmers and not slave owning gentry. This had the effect of limiting the number of slaves in the area to a mere five to six hundred blacks living in Ohio in 1802.^{lxxx} These individuals were largely maintained in a status equivalent to slavery though they were called servants or indentures, a status which was specifically provided for in the 1803 Ohio Constitution. Ultimately, with its early ascension to statehood, Ohio dealt with slavery in a way that would serve as a guide to many states in the Old Northwest. The new state prohibited slavery, but did not deprive those already holding slaves of their property. Above all the new state sought to keep blacks out of Ohio and maintain a white man's state.^{lxxxii}

This willingness to abolish slavery only in its most overt form is evidence of the lack of large-scale commitment to slavery in the Old Northwest, especially in Ohio where profitable cash crops such as tobacco and cotton could have been grown with the use of slave labor. At the same time it was an intense sense of racism, which encouraged the Ohio government to require that all blacks entering the state post a five hundred dollar bond to ensure their good behavior and to defray the costs of their possible dependency upon the state for their welfare.^{lxxxiii} Soon however, Ohio would be free from any significant numbers of slaves and the abolition movement would find an ally in the many Quakers who moved to the area. It was here that the history of slavery in Ohio came to an

effective end, though the census reported six slaves in 1830 and three in 1840, while it would endure in many other areas until the eve of the Civil War.^{lxxxiii}

*Comparing Old Northwest slavery with the greater North American Institution
and Conclusions*

The Old Northwest Territory was, from its first appraisal by Europeans, found to be a land of great wealth and possibility. The two foreign powers in the area viewed the best methods for tapping that wealth much differently. The French saw the area as an endless expanse filled with furs that could easily be had through both trapping and the trade with the Indians. The British, on the other hand, saw the Old Northwest as a land to be settled. Both of these visions resulted in considerable amounts of European intrusion into the area and both sides, whether in order to improve their tactical stance or to increase the profitability of their exploits took slaves in the form of Indians and blacks. These enslaved individuals were subject to many different types of slavery, including the types present at Michilimackinac St. Joseph, Vincennes and other settlements, some of which were unknown in the rest of North America and some of which were all too common. These differences were the result of many factors, including the economic, agriculture and social needs and constraints of the region.

The singular economy of the Old Northwest settlements promoted the use of slavery in unique ways. The first of these was the isolated and independent nature of the early economic activity in the area, specifically fur trapping and trading. These occupations encouraged slaves ownership in that it was ideal for the trapper to have a partner in the wilderness with whom he would not have to share the profits upon his return to areas of European settlement. As an adjunct to this was the fact that these

voyageurs were dealing with the Indians and would trade with them for any number of goods or services which naturally included slavery, a practice which, despite many differences, was in use among both the Indians and the French, and one which was convenient because it dealt in human property, people who could bear a burden rather than being one, and eased the travel over the long distances that separated the traders and trappers from their bases of operation. Another economic cause of slavery in the area was the fact that freemen were hard to employ in the many tasks necessary to the survival of the French and British colonies. This was true throughout the Old Northwest, where freemen could make far more as trappers, in a land brimming over with wealth in natural resources, than they could possibly hope to garner in wages working in another man's fields or mine or manning a station at a mill. In this sense slavery became the only economically viable alternative in the eyes of Europeans in the area who were attempting to make their fortunes and did not have the labor to do so without bondsmen and women.

As time progressed the type of agriculture practiced in the lower Old Northwest of the early Republic had a distinct limiting effect on the development of slavery within the area, especially when looked at in conjunction with the development of the Chesapeake region of Virginia and Maryland and both the same time and later. The primary agricultural activities of the Old Northwest territory involved the production of staple crops (wheat, corn, etc.) these crops, unlike the cash crops of tobacco and cotton grown in other parts of North America, required very little maintenance aside from the planting and the harvesting. This, in many ways, precluded the growth of chattel slavery in the region, as put forward by Carville Earle, because it was not practical for a farmer, or even an estate owner, to buy and support a slave when he could much more easily

recruit some freemen for the few weeks worth of hard labor that he required every year. While the type of agricultural produce that developed in the Old Northwest in some ways prevented the spread of widespread slavery into the area this was almost not so. As discussed earlier there was considerable pressure on the early governments in both Illinois and Indiana to allow slavery in those territories and states due largely to the fact that the cash crops of the south, which required so much care throughout the entire growing process, could also be raised in the southern sections of all three of the southernmost states of the Old Northwest.^{lxxxiv} Had it not been for the preeminence of staple crops that required only brief amounts of seasonal labor (as well as the growth in the population which increased the availability of such labor), due in large part to the origins of the settlers and the climate of the Old Northwest, as well as the desire of Southern planters to maintain their monopoly of the traditional cash crops of tobacco and cotton slavery in the area might have ended up looking much more like that of the Chesapeake.^{lxxxv} As it was this possibility never materialized and slave ownership remained comparatively small and slaves themselves, while significant contributors to social dynamics, were not the fulcrum on which the economy balanced by any stretch of the imagination.

Yet another, and here final, singularity of slavery in the Old Northwest when compared to the more developed sections of North America along the Atlantic seaboard was the social aspect of the institution. It can be inferred from Tannenbaum that in the early period slavery in the Old Northwest was heavily influenced by the rules of the Catholic Church and of the French, who were traditionally observant Catholics. This influence, though insignificant by itself, in conjunction with the isolated nature and the

unique economic and social needs of the settlements had the effect of mitigating some of the harshest effects of slavery. It was not due to Catholicism or any other religious influences but rather because of the more intimate mixing of the white and slave populations as slaves worshiped in the same manner and shared the sacramental duties of god-parents with their masters, purely social activities with regards to slavery. Despite the obviously negative effects of these practices in the destruction of the Native and African cultures that were already present it likely did have a number of effects. First, it bound the slaves and the white community together on a different level than was seen in the Chesapeake where the two populations shared little except geography. Second, the greater amount of time and effort invested in a slave made mass ownership impractical and unwieldy, lessening the desire of slave owners to buy more people than they could afford to support and manage in this time consuming way. Ultimately, the more personal nature of slavery as it existed under the French in the Old Northwest, due in large part to the considerable presence of Jesuits and the inherent adherence to the pretences of a more religious form of slavery, something not seen in French holdings in the Caribbean, contributed to the stunting of slavery's growth.

By the time the English arrived and began to set up shop in their own manner, as revealed in the previously quoted documents, slavery had already been relegated to relative insignificance in economic terms. That, as well as the smaller numbers of slaves present in the Old Northwest due to the increased costs of transport and maintenance within the unique social structure of the region meant that there was little incentive to expend the considerable resources to bring slaves to the area, at great expense, when it was already clear that much of the Old Northwest was not destined to become slave

country, at least not in the terms which the English, and later Americans, had been familiar with along the East Coast.

This is not to downplay the significance of slavery in the Old Northwest. On the contrary it highlights slavery's singular nature in the context of the greater North American colonial and national enterprises within which slavery, as most people know it, existed. Slavery in the Old Northwest was still in many ways similar to the rest of the continent's experience. In that region as elsewhere, human beings were bought and sold as chattel. Just as in other areas, slavery there persisted for far longer than seems reasonable to the modern mind. There too, slavery had an impact of the development of the area both economically and socially as well as having the ultimate effect of branding some peoples as inferior to others. However slavery in the Old Northwest was an institution unto itself during the 18th and early 19th centuries. It was an institution with many different faces, from a companionship basis at Michilimackinac to its pseudo-religious social nature seen at St. Joseph and other missionary settlements. Ultimately, it was this varied nature of the institution that defined it within the Old Northwest. It was adapted to suit the needs and community strictures of the various settlements throughout the region. Rather than the strictly codified and relatively homogenized institution seen in other parts of the Americas, slavery in the Old Northwest varied from locale to locale making it a region for which over generalizations of the day to day nature of the institution become problematic. This however does not preclude the drawing of all general conclusions.

Slavery within the Old Northwest affected the region in many and lasting ways. However, unlike in the American South where these effects were much more universal

and reached a series of apexes like the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, slavery in the Old Northwest was peculiar to each area in which it existed. The effects varied accordingly. States such as Michigan, completely discounted the presence, let alone influence of slavery. Meanwhile Illinois could have easily ended up on the other side of the slavery issue had it not been for relatively late economic developments. Finally, in Indiana race based lynching was still occurring in the 20th century, including the infamous double lynching in Marion, Indiana in August of 1930. While these examples only scratch the surface, suffice it to say that slavery in the Old Northwest was an institution that, though varied, has caused lasting social effects, the most significant of which is the simultaneous existence of racism and a serious denial of culpability regarding slavery and the inbuilt condemnation of the South made by many Northerners. The unique nature of these effects is a direct result of the development of slavery in the region, a development that has can inform us regarding many of the issues stemming from slavery that still exist in the region today.

ⁱ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1998), 51.

ⁱⁱ *Negro Population: 1790-1915* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), 53.

ⁱⁱⁱ Arnold, Sio, "Interpretations of Slavery: The Slave Status in the Americas," in *Articles in American Slavery: Comparative Issues in Slavery vol. 18*, ed. Paul Finkelman (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 389.

^{iv} Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500-c.1800*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 66.

^v Including the Old Northwest, which fell into both the Louisiana and Canadian spheres of French control, the cut off being at about the middle of present day Indiana.

^{vi} Shelby T. McCloy, *The Negro in the French West Indies*, (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), 1.

^{vii} William Renwick Riddell, "Le Code Noir," *The Journal of Negro History* 10, no. 3 (1925): 323. and McCloy, *The Negro in the French West Indies*, 2.

^{viii} William F. Dunbar and George S. May, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 17-21.

^{ix} Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 45.

^x Berlin, 29.

^{xi} Morgan, 31.

^{xii} Morgan, 295-300.

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- xiii Arnold Sio, 387.
- xiv Pierre Goubert, *The Course of French History*, (New York: Routledge, 1998) 112.
- xv Riddell, "Before the Conquest," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no.3 (1920): 263.
- xvi Riddell, *Before the Conquest*, 263.
- xvii See timeline and maps.
- xviii I. Lippincott, "Industry Among the French in the Illinois Country," *The Journal of Political Economy* 18, no.2 (1910): 114.
- xix Lippincott, 115-116.
- xx Samuel Chatman, "There are no Slaves in France: A Re-examination of Slave Laws in Eighteenth Century France," *The Journal of Negro History* 85, no. 3 (2000): 144
- xxi Chatman, 144 and Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.
- xxii Samuel Chatman, 145.
- xxiii William Renwick Riddell, *Le Code Noir*, 322-324.
- xxiv William Blackstone, *Webster's Pocket Quotation Dictionary*, (Sydney: Trident Press International, 2001) 200.
- xxv Riddell, "Before the Conquest," 264-265.
- xxvi Riddell, "Before the Conquest," 268.
- xxvii Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 6. no. 4 (1986): 349.
- xxviii Paul Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance: The Persistence of Bondage in Indiana and Illinois," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9, no. 1 (1989): 21-27. And David M. Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 5.
- xxix Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance," 347.
- xxx John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*, 98-125.
- xxxi Louis Phelps Kellogg, ed., *Early Narratives of the Northwest: 1634-1699* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 241.
- xxxii William Renwick Riddell, "Before the Conquest," 265.
- xxxiii Morgan, 337
- xxxiv David Katzman, "Black Slavery in Michigan," in *Articles in American Slavery: Slavery in the North and in the West vol. 5*, ed. Paul Finkelman (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 162-163.
- xxxv W.J. Eccles, *The French in North America: 1500-1783* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 95-96.
- xxxvi Katzman, in Finkelman, 163.
- xxxvii Katzman, in Finkelman, 163.
- xxxviii Katzman, in Finkelman, 162.
- xxxix Kenneth W. Porter, "Contacts in Other Parts," *The Journal of Negro History* 17, no. 3 (1932): 359-361.
- xl George Pare, "The St. Joseph Mission," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 17, no. 1 (1930): 26-27.
- xli Charles Moore, *The Northwest Under Three Flags: 1635-1796* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900), 258.
- xlii George Paré, ed. and M.M. Quaife, ed., "The St. Joseph Baptismal Register," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13, no.2 (1926): 218.
- xliiii Paré, 219-220.
- xliv Paré, 237.
- xlv George Paré, ed. and M.M. Quaife, ed., "The St. Joseph Baptismal Register," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13, no.2 (1926): 218, 219, 237.
- xlvi Katzman, 162 and Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 88, 108, 111-112.
- xlvii C.M. Burton, *Cadillac's Village* (Detroit: News-Tribune, 1896), 34.
- xlviii C.M. Burton, *Cadillac's Village* (Detroit: News-Tribune, 1896), 34.
- xlix C.M. Burton, *Cadillac's Village* (Detroit: News-Tribune, 1896), 34.
- ¹ C.M. Burton, *Cadillac's Village* (Detroit: News-Tribune, 1896), 34.
- ^{li} C.M. Burton, *Cadillac's Village* (Detroit: News-Tribune, 1896), 34.

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- ^{lii} American Local History Network: Michigan, "Slavery in Detroit," www.geocities.com/michhist/detroitlave.html.
- ^{liii} American Local History Network.
- ^{liv} American Local History Network.
- ^{lv} William Renwick Riddell, "Further Notes on Slavery in Canada," *The Journal of Negro History* 9 no. 1 (1924): 31.
- ^{lvi} Riddell, "Further Notes on Slavery in Canada, 31.
- ^{lvii} William Renwick Riddell, "Upper Canada-Early Period," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 3 (1920): 324.
- ^{lviii} Katzman, 164-166 and Negro Population, 53.
- ^{lix} Robert Nesbit, *Wisconsin: A History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 1-146.
- ^{lx} Negro Census, 53
- ^{lxi} W.J. Eccles, 200.
- ^{lxii} W.J. Eccles, 180-185.
- ^{lxiii} See map. R. Louis Gentilecore, "Vincennes and the French Settlement in the Old Northwest," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 47, no. 3 (1957): 286.
- ^{lxiv} I. Lippincott, "Industry Among the French in the Illinois Country," *The Journal of Political Economy* 18, no. 2 (1910): 116.
- ^{lxv} Lippincott, 116.
- ^{lxvi} Lippincott, 119.
- ^{lxvii} W.J. Eccles, 185.
- ^{lxviii} Lippincott, 125.
- ^{lxix} Lippincott, 115.
- ^{lxx} Gentilecore, 291.
- ^{lxxi} Negro Census, 53. and Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 21.
- ^{lxxii} Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 21.
- ^{lxxiii} Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 31.
- ^{lxxiv} Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 31.
- ^{lxxv} Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 31.
- ^{lxxvi} Negro Census, 53.
- ^{lxxvii} Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 40-43.
- ^{lxxviii} Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 43.
- ^{lxxix} Walter Havighurst, *Ohio: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976), 20-21.
- ^{lxxx} James H. Rodabaugh, "The Negro in Ohio," *The Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 1 (1946): 13.
- ^{lxxxi} Rodabaugh, 14-16.
- ^{lxxxii} Rodabaugh, 15.
- ^{lxxxiii} Negro Population, 53.
- ^{lxxxiv} Carville V. Earle, "A Staple Interpretation of Slavery and Free Labor," *Geographical Review* 68, no. 1 (1978): 52-52.
- ^{lxxxv} Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance," 345.

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