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## Myne owne ground chapter 1 summary

In 1635, in late July, Anthony Johnson claimed 250 acres along the Eastern Shore of the colony of Virginia, a claim granted in recognition of his acquisition of five indentured servants - settlers were given 'headrights' of 50 acres per indenture. 18th century depiction of a tobacco plantation. Johnson himself had started life in Virginia as an indentured servant and, after serving his six or seven years, set up on his own and prospered. Some twenty years later he was still farming and still using indentured servants, but one of them - John Casor - went to work for Johnson's neighbor, claiming that he had served his indenture and was free. Johnson sued the neighbor and won. The court also ruled - though it's not clear why - that John Casor was no longer indentured, but must work for Johnson for the rest of his life. That he was, in fact, a slave. That opinion, issued on March 8, 1654, institutionalized slavery in America for the first time. Until then, no laws regarding slavery existed and most Africans were treated just like indentured servants, eventually creating a class of free black colonists. Curiously, the man who triggered that event - Anthony Johnson - had been kidnapped in Angola and sold to a Virginia planter. He had been 'Antonio, a Negro,' when he arrived in the colonies. Having served his indenture, he became a free black man and called himself Anthony Johnson. Not long after the court case, Johnson and his wife were swindled out of half of their land - what Johnson had called 'myne owne ground.' They moved to Maryland where again Johnson prospered. When he died, he set another sad precedent, which deprived his wife and children of their inheritance: the court ruled that Anthony Johnson was "a negro and by consequence, an alien" and thus his property was forfeit to the state. \*\*\* Many happy returns on his 67th to Mick Jagger - remember when you watch the video that these people are in their early sixties. Maybe they've been cloned somewhere along the way... Ever since its publication twenty-five years ago, "Myne Owne Ground" has challenged readers to rethink much of what is taken for granted about American race relations. During the earliest decades of Virginia history, some men and women who arrived in the New World as slaves achieved freedom and formed a stable community on the Eastern shore. Holding their own with white neighbors for much of the 17th century, these free blacks purchased freedom for family members, amassed property, established plantations, and acquired laborers. T.H. Breen and Stephen Innes reconstruct a community in which ownership of property was as significant as skin color in structuring social relations. Why this model of social interaction in race relations did not survive makes this a critical and urgent work of history. In a new foreword, Breen and Innes reflect on the origins of this book, setting it into the context of Atlantic and particularly African history. ISBN-13: 9780195175370 Publisher: Oxford University Press Publication date: 09/16/2004 Edition description: 25th Anniversary Edition Pages: 176 Product dimensions: 8.20(w) x 5.50(h) x 0.70(d) "This fascinating account proves that for a couple of generations in seventeenth-century Virginia the two races lived fairly comfortably side by side....It is an extraordinary and convincing story."--The New York Review of Books "[Breen and Innes] have pieced together sufficient details relating to the lives of some of these blacks to establish firstly that skin colour was not originally an absolute impediment to social advancement, and secondly that the white immigrant population on Virginia's eastern shore were not averse to accepting as social equals blacks who had recently purchased their freedom from slavery."--The Historical Journal "A thorough exploitation of available sources coupled with a sophisticated understanding of the difficult issues confronting those trying to unravel the complexities of early American race relations....[Breen and Innes] have reminded us of forgotten alternatives in this society's racial odyssey."--The Journal of Southern History From the Publisher Page 2 Preview Preview 1619 Arrival of "20 and odd" Africans in late August 1619, not aboard a Dutch ship as reported by John Rolfe, but an English warship, White Lion, sailing with a letters of marque issued to the English Captain Jope by the Protestant Dutch Prince Maurice, son of William of Orange. A letters of marque legally permitted the White Lion to sail as a privateer attacking any Spanish or Portuguese ships it encountered. The 20 and odd Africans were captives removed from the Portuguese slave ship, San Juan Bautista, following an encounter the ship had with the White Lion and her consort, the Treasurer, another English ship, while attempting to deliver its African prisoners to Mexico. Rolfe's reporting the White Lion as a Dutch warship was a clever ruse to transfer blame away from the English for piracy of the slave ship to the Dutch. 1630's Indication by surviving wills, inventories, deeds and other documents that in some instances it was considered "customary practice to hold some Negroes in a form of life service." It should be noted that by examining these documents it was also found that some blacks were able to hold on to their status of being indentured servants, thus, eventually gaining their freedom. 1639 All persons except Negroes are to be with Arms and Ammunition. 1640 John Punch, a runaway indentured Servant, first documented slave for life. 1662 Slavery was recognized in the statutory law of the colony. Legislation was passed defining the status of mulatto children. Children would be considered the same status as the mother. If the child was born to a slave, the child would be considered a slave. 1667 Baptism does not bring freedom. Until the General Assembly outlawed it, baptism could be the grounds for a black slave to obtain his/her freedom. It was considered for a period of time that it was not proper for a Christian to enslave a fellow Christian. 1670 Blacks or Indians could no longer own white indentured servants. 1680 An act was passed preventing insurrections among slaves. Blacks could not congregate in large numbers for supposed funeral or feasts. Blacks must also obtain written authorization to leave a plantation at any given time. They could not remain at another plantation longer than 4 hours. 1691 First act prohibiting intermarriage. No Negro or Mulatto may be set free by any person unless the pay for the transportation out of the colony within six months or forfeit ten pounds of sterling so that the church wardens might have the Negro transported. 1692 Negroes must give up ownership of horses, cattle or hogs. Separate courts for the trial of slaves charged with a capital crime, thus depriving them of the right of a trial by jury. 1700's Slaves composed half of Virginia's unfree labor force. 1705 Slave laws were codified. SUGGESTED FOR FURTHER READING Billings, Warren M. Ed. The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century - A Documentary History of Virginia, 1606-1689. University of North Carolina Press, 1975 Breen, T.H., and Innes, S. 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