



NC State Capitol | 984.867.8340 | [historicsites.nc.gov/capitol](http://historicsites.nc.gov/capitol)  
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## Uncovering Slavery in the NC State Capitol

### Overview

This lesson addresses slavery and enslaved people at the North Carolina State Capitol, and is designed to fit into discussions of American slavery with tangible, specific examples from North Carolina. It shows what kind of - often limited - information can be found about the enslaved African Americans who constructed the Capitol building in the 1830s using primary sources. By focusing on the individual stories of enslaved men who constructed the Capitol, we hope to emphasize the humanity of enslaved people to students.

### Recommended Grade Level

4th Grade

### NC Essential Standards

- 4.H.1.2 Summarize the changing roles of women, indigenous populations and racial groups throughout the history of North Carolina.
- 4.H.1.3 Explain the ways in which revolution, reform, and resistance have shaped North Carolina.
- 4.H.1.5 Use primary and secondary sources to compare multiple perspectives of various historical events in North Carolina

### Learning Goals

- At the end of this lesson (which could be divided easily into several lessons), students will have context for slavery and individual enslaved people at the State Capitol.
- Students will learn how to draw conclusions about people based on primary source documents that give little information

### Materials

- Slideshow, found [HERE](#)

### Historic Information

#### *Slavery*

Slavery is forcing someone to work for you without pay. The practice has been used throughout history all over the world - including in the United States. Slavery was part of life in North Carolina since the state's first settlement by Europeans. During the colonial period, a lot of North Carolina's population lived in eastern port cities. Wilmington, a town on the Cape Fear River, was an important port for slave ships bringing enslaved Africans from other European colonies. By 1767, almost 40,000 enslaved people lived in North Carolina. A lot of these people worked jobs in agriculture, in domestic work, or in trades like butchering, carpentry, and tanning. Colonial laws tightly controlled the lives and movement of

enslaved people. In 1741, laws were passed in North Carolina preventing enslaved people from raising their own animals as livestock or from carrying guns without permission, even for hunting. There were also strict laws around the freeing of enslaved people. By 1800, there were around 140,000 African Americans living in North Carolina, most of whom were enslaved.

Slavery near the coast often involved huge plantations. Elsewhere in the state, enslaved people might work on smaller farms or in manufacturing. An enslaved person in North Carolina might have been required to have many different skills, working in agriculture or other types of jobs at different times of the year.

#### *Construction of the North Carolina State Capitol*

After the State House of North Carolina burned down in 1831, the North Carolina General Assembly of 1832-1833 ordered a new Capitol be built. Building the Capitol was a difficult project - it lasted for many years (1833-1840) and involved many different people. The work required brick makers, stone masons, quarrymen, carpenters, plaster workers, and general laborers. In the 1830s, many of these jobs were filled by enslaved African Americans. Enslaved people were rented to the Capitol project by their enslavers, and then the enslavers were given money for that work. Enslaved men would work either at the Capitol's construction site or at the state-run quarry about a mile and a half southeast of the construction site.

#### *The Use of Slavery in Construction Projects*

The Capitol using the work of enslaved people was not unusual! During the 1800s, lots of major construction projects used the labor of enslaved African Americans. These projects could be places like schools, universities, civic structures, and other public buildings. [This list](#) includes some famous landmarks that were constructed using the work of enslaved people.

#### **Lesson - Uncovering Slavery in the NC State Capitol**

**Before the lesson, review Historic Information above. This activity focuses on learning about individuals who worked at the Capitol. After the introduction using the historic information, you can use the slideshow provided [HERE](#). There are discussion questions that accompany each person's story; these can be outloud classroom discussions or writing prompts.**

#### **Uncovering Slavery in the NC State Capitol (SLIDE 1):**

This slide shows an exterior view of the North Carolina State Capitol, located in downtown Raleigh, NC.

#### **Introduce key terms for discussion (SLIDE 2):**

- *Enslaved person* - A person who was enslaved through the actions of others. We say "enslaved person" instead of "slave." The use of the term "enslaved person" remembers the person first. This was not just a "slave," this was a person - someone who had dreams, thoughts, fears and

feelings, with likes and dislikes, with family and friends, and favorite foods - who was enslaved by the actions of other people.

- *Primary source document* - an artifact, document, diary, manuscript, autobiography, newspaper, recording, or any other source of information that was created at the time under study

### **Intro to this activity (SLIDE 3):**

These two images show the interior of the North Carolina State Capitol. This building was constructed from 1833 - 1840. The Civil War happened in the 1860s - but what can you tell me about the 1830s? Who was in charge of society in the 1830s, and who were the leaders of our country? White men. This building was constructed to be a space used by white men, because they were those in power. But who constructed it? In the 1830s in the southern United States, most construction projects were completed using the labor of enslaved people. Over 130 enslaved African Americans constructed the North Carolina State Capitol.

Often, retracing the lives of enslaved people can be difficult, and you have to piece together the lives of enslaved people using primary source documents, like this report. **(SLIDES 4 & 5)** *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Superintend the Re-building of the State Capitol* was published in 1834 and lists the full names of workers on the Capitol's construction project. It also shows who on the project was an enslaved person. (If you click the link in **SLIDE 4**, it takes you to the document digitized in the State Archives of North Carolina.)

### **Getting to "Know" Some Individuals that worked at the Capitol (SLIDE 6):**

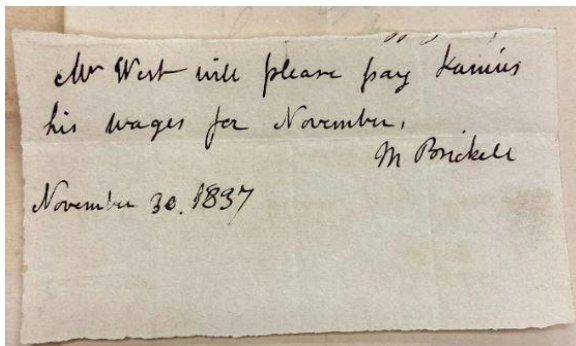
The 1834 document shows us who working on the project was an enslaved person. Besides that, the document specifies what type of work enslaved people were doing - as general "laborers" or "quarrymen" (working at the state rock quarry in southeast Raleigh).

A general "laborer" would have worked at the Capitol's construction site. This was before construction workers had access to electric tools - they would have been doing all work by hand. They might have been doing carpentry work using a wood planing tool that looked like this (reference image of wood plane on **SLIDE 6**).

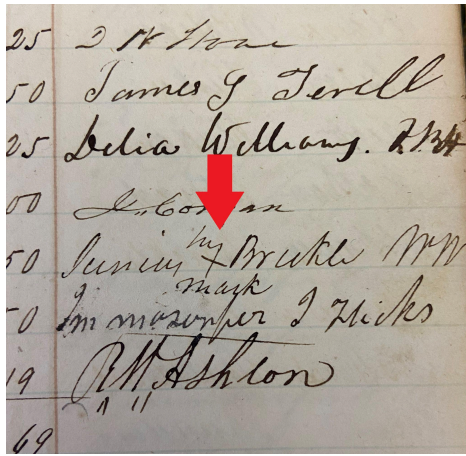


### Junius Brickle (SLIDE 7)

One person who was a laborer at the Capitol was Junius Brickle. Researchers at the Capitol think Junius Brickle was born around 1806 to parents named Bill Holmes and Nancy Brickle. When he was an adult, Junius was enslaved by a woman named Martha Brickell. Martha wrote many notes to the bosses of the Capitol project requesting that - unlike some enslaved people - Junius be able to pick up his wages. Here in a note, she says “will [you] please pay Junius his wages for November.”



Even though in the 1830s in North Carolina it was illegal for enslaved people to know how to read and write, Junius was allowed to sign a record saying he picked up his own payment. Here you can see the “X” Junius made (indicated by the red arrow).



Even though he was picking up the money, we're not sure if Junius was able to keep the money that he made working. It's possible that he kept some, but it's also likely that he had to give money that he made to his enslaver.

*THINK:* How would you feel if you worked all day and then had to give all the money you made away to someone else?

*DISCUSS:* It was a very unfair system. These men were not enslaved by the Capitol or by the state, but officials associated with the project - commissioners who were appointed to oversee the building's construction - rented the work of enslaved people from local enslavers. Enslavers were then given money for the work of their enslaved people.

### **Ned Peck (SLIDE 8)**

Ned Peck was born around 1802. In the 1834 Report, Ned is listed as a "Quarryman," which means he worked at the State Quarry, probably breaking and hauling stone. According to a newspaper at the time, on site you would find "the rock-cutter with his hammer and pick, the rock-setter with his trowel and square, the carpenter with his plane and saw, the blacksmith with his sledge-hammer and file, the hodman with his hod on his shoulder, and [...] a large number of under-labourers performing the various duties required of them." The workday began each morning at 8am. According to newspaper accounts "The workmen (about 100 in number) assemble regularly at 8 o'clock, A.M. at the ringing of the bell, a roll is called, all absentees marked and the loss of time deducted from their wages."

*The City of Raleigh*, like a phoenix, has risen from its ashes, and in one year has completed such durable and elegant improvements, rarely, if ever, excelled by any southern town. The publisher has but lately returned from a visit of a few day's to the city. Instead of beholding the ruins of a once splendid and elegant Capitol, he beheld a much more splendid and spacious one rising up in its stead; the work is of granite of a beautiful texture, which is conveyed by means of a railway up to the capitol, from the State Quarry, about a mile and a quarter from the city. The workmen (about 100 in number) assemble regularly at 8 o'clock, A. M. at the ringing of the bell, a roll is called, all absentees marked and the loss of time deducted from their wages. There you will see the rock-cutter with his hammer and pick, the rock-setter with his trowel and square, the carpenter with his plane and saw, the blacksmith with his sledge-hammer and file, the hodman with his hod on his shoulder, and in short, you behold a large number of under-labourers performing the various duties required of them. There

— "Weariness  
Can snore upon the flint, when restive sloth  
Finds the down pillar hard."

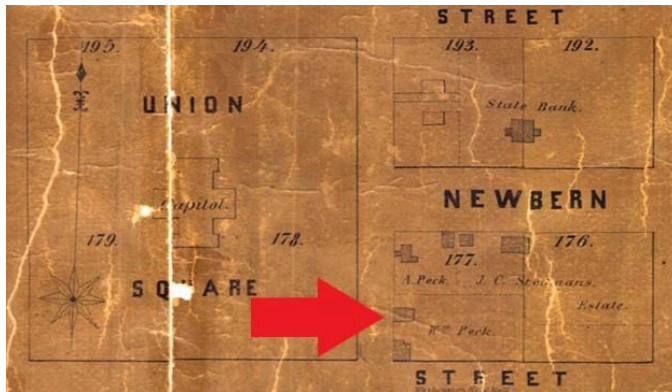
Workers like Ned might have used stone tools that looked like this mallet.



*THINK:* Can you imagine carrying and carting heavy stones all day as part of your job? What's the hardest work you have to do?

*DISCUSS:* It was very hard, intense work. Though we don't know details for sure, it's possible that sometimes enslaved people were injured or hurt performing this kind of intense work with heavy stones.

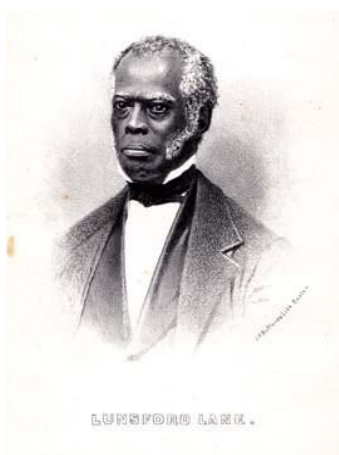
Though Ned worked at the State Quarry several blocks away from the Capitol, he was enslaved by a man named William Peck, and William lived across the street from the Capitol. Though William's house and the house where Ned might have lived isn't standing any longer, the Capitol staff like to look at that street corner and think of Ned. Here you can see how close Ned was on a map of downtown Raleigh from 1847.



Do you see William Peck (Wm Peck) listed as a property owner across the street from the Capitol?

### Lunsford Lane (SLIDE 9)

Lunsford Lane actually worked at the Capitol after it opened. Lunsford was born in Raleigh in 1803. From an early age, Lunsford wanted to be free and worked diligently toward that goal. By 1835, Lunsford had saved enough and was able to purchase his freedom for \$1000. That same year, he traveled to New York and became free because of different state laws in New York. He later returned to Raleigh, where his family was permitted to live with him, though they remained enslaved, and he worked in the Capitol supplying tobacco to the Governor and members of the Assembly. The reason we know so much about Lunsford (including what he looked like!) is because he wrote an autobiography entitled The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, N.C. Embracing an Account of His Early Life, the Redemption by Purchase of Himself and Family from Slavery, and His Banishment from the Place of His Birth for the Crime of Wearing a Colored Skin. Published by Himself.



**THINK:** If you were going to write an autobiography like Lunsford, what three details would you include?

**In Conclusion (SLIDE 10):**

*THINK:* How are the experiences of Junius, Ned, and Lunsford the same or different from other people who were enslaved that you have read or learned about?

*DISCUSS:* Junius, Ned, and Lunsford all lived in a town or urban area. Often when we learn about slavery, we focus a lot on plantation slavery, where dozens or even hundreds of enslaved people lived on a plantation and worked in fields, growing cotton, tobacco, or other large scale crops. Junius and Ned were hired out by their enslavers, which meant they worked away from the homes of their enslavers. Lots of enslavers did this to use their enslaved people as a way to make extra money. This system did allow people like Junius, Ned and Lunsford some independence, which might make their stories a bit different than an enslaved person who lived on a plantation.