

STRUGGLING AGAINST SLAVERY

Most enslaved people came from the present-day countries of Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa. They spoke different languages and had different cultures. The major ethnic groups from Nigeria were the Yoruba (YOH ru bah) and the Hausa (HOW sah). The Fante (FAHN tee) and the Ashanti (uh SHAHN tee) came from Ghana.

To keep them from talking to each other, slave traders and owners separated captives who spoke the same language. As Captain William Smith wrote in 1744, "By having some of every sort on board, there will be no more likelihood of their succeeding in a plot." Still, enslaved people found ways to communicate with each other.

Rebellion

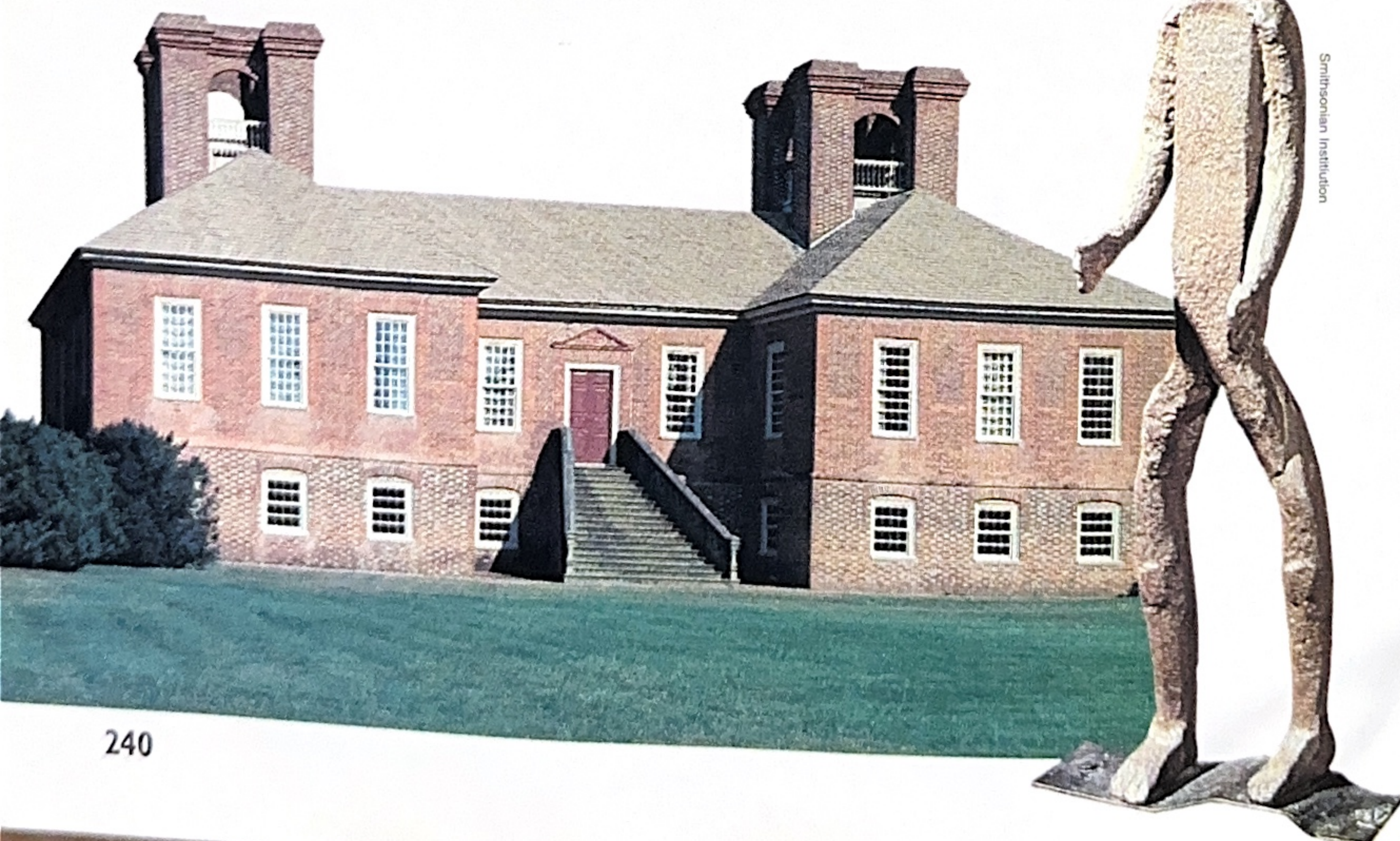
① Captives showed anger toward their slave owners in different ways.

Many enslaved people refused to work. "They often die before they can be conquer'd [forced to work]," wrote one visiting Englishman.

② Other captives worked slowly or purposely broke tools. Still others escaped. These were hunted down. When caught, they were usually beaten and sometimes killed. Even so, many tried to escape.

③ The one thing the slave owners feared most was rebellion. Captives were willing to die for freedom. They rebelled by organizing raids, burning houses, and killing people. Thirty colonists from South Carolina were killed in the Stono Rebellion of 1739. To stop the rebellions by enslaved people, the planters made the slave codes even stronger.

Enslaved Africans helped build Stratford Hall (below left) in Virginia. Most of them had little time to create art like this eighteenth-century sculpture (below).



Smithsonian Institution

The New Jersey Quaker John Woolman visited many of the English colonies as a traveling preacher.



The Family

④ Enslaved family members tried to keep in contact when they were separated. On the one day they did not have to work, parents visited their children. They often walked miles to see those who had been sold away from them.

WHY IT MATTERS

Slave labor played a large part in building much of the South and some of the North. Profits from slavery helped all Southern Colonies become wealthy and successful.

The plantation system denied enslaved people the freedom and opportunity that European colonists enjoyed. One of the few European colonists who spoke out against slavery was **John Woolman**, a Quaker. In 1754 he wrote, “the color of a man [means] nothing in matters of right and [equality].” Woolman made a point to get firsthand knowledge about slavery.

Woolman called upon Quakers who owned slaves to release them. They and some other colonists did.

In 1791 the Virginia slave owner **Robert Carter III** said that slavery was against “the true principles of religion and justice.” He began to free the 500 enslaved people on his plantation. Yet these efforts did not end slavery. The struggle by African Americans to gain the same rights as most Americans continued.

✓ Reviewing Facts and Ideas

SUM IT UP

- Slavery was practiced throughout North America and in the English colonies. But most enslaved people worked on large plantations in the Southern Colonies.
- A plantation was like a small village, where enslaved people did almost all the work.
- African captives rebelled against slavery in many ways.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What kinds of work did enslaved people do on the plantations?
2. Where did most African captives come from? What kind of work did they do?
3. **FOCUS** What was life like for the enslaved people on plantations in the Southern Colonies?
4. **THINKING SKILL** Explain why this sentence is a fact or an opinion: “The overseer was sometimes an enslaved person or often an indentured servant.”
5. **WRITE** Read the words of John Woolman. Write a paragraph to explain what he meant.