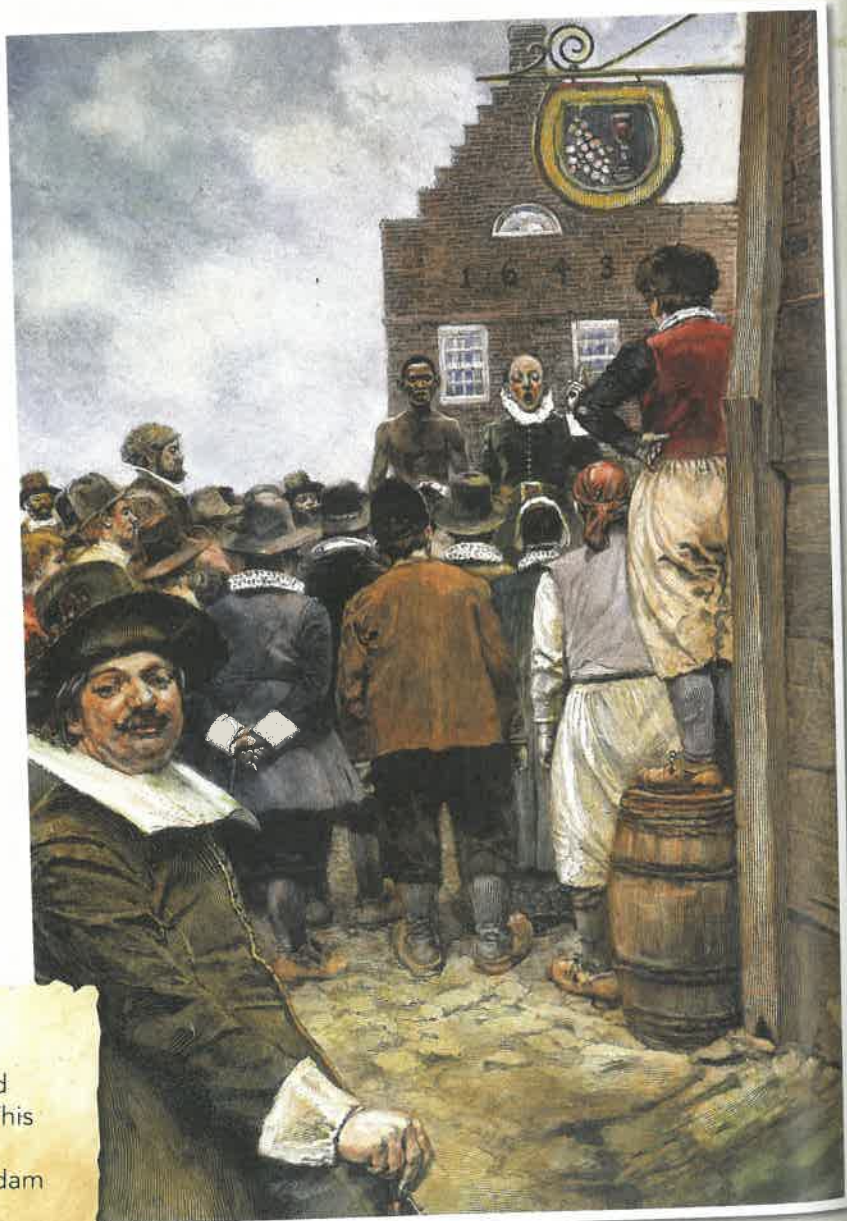


Slavery in New Netherland

The Dutch West India Company allowed slavery in New Netherland. The slaves were captured Africans forced to work in America without pay. Many people died on the brutal, crowded journey across the Atlantic Ocean from Africa. Some slaves were forever torn apart from their families.

The first slaves arrived in New Netherland in 1626. However, slavery was not as common there as it was in some of the British colonies of North America. In the 1640s the Dutch put a system into place called half-freedom. Under this system some slaves were granted partial freedom. They were given their own farms and were allowed to sell their crops. However, they were required to pay an annual tax and perform labor for the Dutch West India Company when needed.

When slaves arrived in America, they were sold to the highest bidder. This painting shows a slave auction in New Amsterdam in 1655.



Slavery in Colonial New York

Once the British took over in 1664, slavery became more common in New York. It is estimated that 41 percent of all households in New York City had slaves during the Colonial period. Only Charles Town, South Carolina, had more slaves.

Slaves in the Southern Colonies labored mainly on farms and plantations. But most slaves in New York worked in homes or businesses. Women and some men worked in homes as servants. Other male slaves were taught a trade or craft, such as carpentry or **silversmithing**. Slaves also performed much of the heavy labor that helped the colony survive. They cut down trees, cleared land for planting, and built roads, hospitals, and churches.

Slaves were treated more harshly when the British took over. The British got rid of the half-freedom system. They also passed strict new laws forbidding slaves from owning property and gathering in groups.

After the Revolutionary War, many people began to think that slavery went against the freedom Americans had fought for. Over time the state of New York even became a center for the **abolitionist** movement. By 1820 about 95 percent of all African-Americans living in New York City were free. By 1827 nearly all blacks in the state were free.



Slaves who worked as servants, maids, cooks inside homes had much better lives than those who labored in fields.

silversmith—a person who makes items out of silver
abolitionist—a person who worked to end slavery