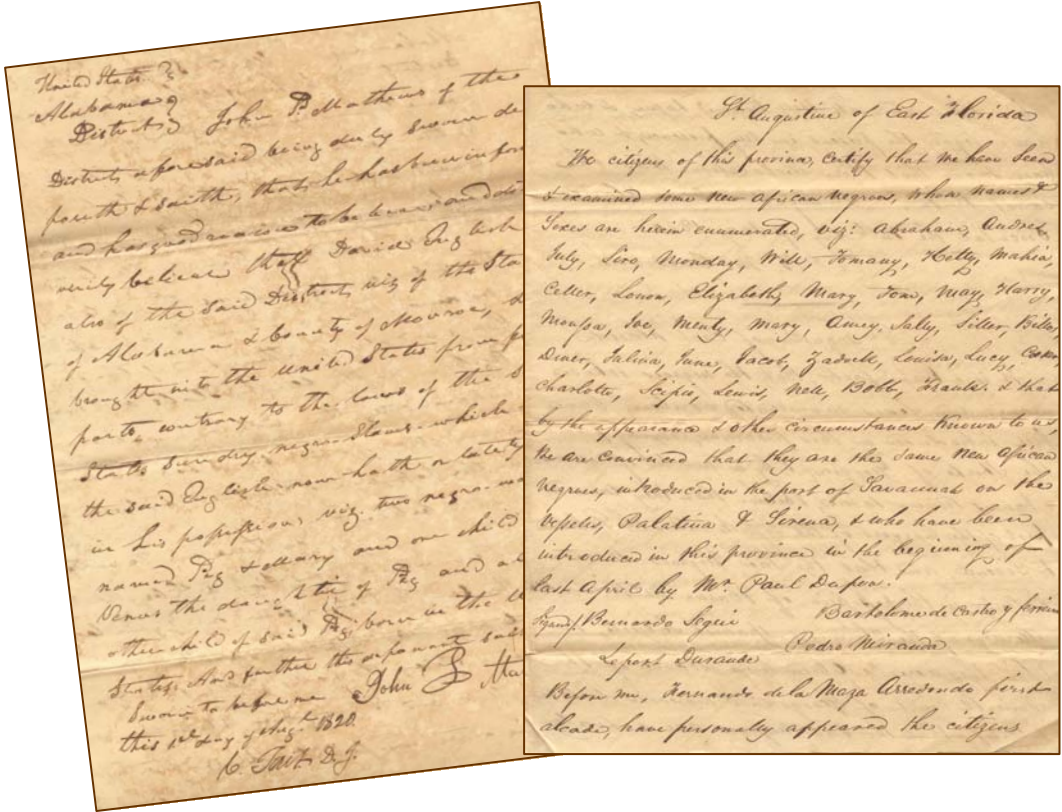




National Archives and Records Administration
Southeast Region, Atlanta

The African Slave Trade

A selection of cases from the Records of the U.S. District Courts in the states of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina



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Introduction

Federal Laws and the Slave Trade

The United States government has had a complicated, and often troubling, relationship with the institution of slavery. Though allowed to survive and even thrive long after the nation was established, federal laws were enacted which prevented the importation of new slaves from Africa and inflicted stiff penalties on those who attempted to do so. Many federal statutes regarding slavery focused mainly on the issue of new slaves brought into the country.

In March of 1794 Congress passed an act prohibiting the transport of slaves from the U.S. to any foreign country as well as making it illegal for American citizens to outfit a ship for purposes of importing slaves. The act did not, however, affect foreign nations and their importation of slaves. In addition, the penalties for Americans convicted under this law were fines and did not include incarceration.

An act passed in 1800 built on the 1794 law by increasing the fines for importation of slaves, as well as making it illegal for American citizens to engage in the slave trade between any nations, regardless if the ship originated in the U.S. or was owned by a U.S. citizen. It also gave U.S. authorities the right to seize slave ships which were caught transporting slaves and confiscate their cargo. Laws like these were not unheard of, even in the Colonial period. The Continental Congress had, in fact, passed a resolution in 1774 to ban slave importation and prohibit Americans from engaging in the trade. It was not until after the turn of the century, however, that Congress began to increase the penalties for violating these laws.

An 1803 act established a penalty of one thousand dollars for each person brought to the U.S. on a ship with the intention of selling them as a slave. This act also placed responsibility on the captain of any vessel transporting slaves. It charged customs and revenue officials in the government with enforcing this law, an indirect warning to those who might be in the best position for aiding illegal slave traders.

The Constitution itself established a way which Congress could ban the importation of slaves, but not until 1808. Congress did exercise this power at its earliest opportunity and as of January 1, 1808 the importation of slaves into the U.S. or its territories was banned. Penalties now included a fine, ranging from five to twenty-thousand dollars, forfeiture of ship and equipment, and imprisonment from five to ten years. The act specifically excluded transportation of slaves within the U.S., since the interstate sale of slaves remained legal.

Over a decade later, Congress would pass legislation in 1819 which considered intercontinental slave trading as piracy, punishable by death. Previously, U.S. ships only held a mandate to patrol the eastern seaboard of North America. Now they would extend their activities as far as the West African coast in order to enforce the law. This enforcement was given an additional boost by the Webster-Asburton Treaty signed with Great Britain in 1842. The treaty established a permanent fleet on the West African coast in the hopes of completely suppressing slave trafficking. Ironically this coincides with the period in which the illegal slave trade reached its height, between 1840 and 1860.

In 1861 President Lincoln signed an executive order turning over all responsibility for enforcing slave trade laws to the Secretary of the Interior. By stringently enforcing existing laws, Lincoln's order spelled the end for the slave trade. The Secretary's office believed that by 1865 it had effectively ended any attempt to outfit a slave ship in any U.S. port. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1862 and the 13th amendment passed in 1865 effectively ended any reason for transporting slaves to the U.S. No longer could any ship use the defense of originating in the U.S. while bound for a U.S. port.

It is estimated that the total number of slaves brought into the U.S. illegally during the first half the 19th century is approximately 1.2 million. Given this figure, it is hard to determine the effect of laws banning importation after 1808. As laws were strengthened and enforcement increased, so did attempts to subvert them.

For More Information

All cases in this document are available for public review in the research room of the National Archives and Records Administration, Southeast Region (Atlanta). Advance notification of your visit is requested. Please call 770-968-2100 to make an appointment. All users must apply for a researcher's card, which requires a photo identification card.

Directions

The Southeast Regional Archives is located at 5780 Jonesboro Road, Morrow, GA 30260, approximately 10 miles south of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

From I-75 (coming from the North)

Take Interstate 75 South to Exit 233 (Jonesboro Road /Morrow/ Highway 54). Turn left. Travel approximately two miles. After you pass Clayton State Boulevard, our building will be the second facility on the right (just pass the Georgia Archives). Turn right into the parking lot. Parking is free.

From I-75 (coming from the South)

Take Interstate 75 North to Exit 233 (Jonesboro Road /Morrow/Highway 54). Turn left. Travel approximately two miles. After you pass Clayton State Boulevard, our building will be the second facility on the right (just past the Georgia Archives). Turn right into the parking lot. Parking is free.

From I-285 (coming from the East)

Take Exit 55 (Jonesboro Road/ Highway 54). Turn left. Travel approximately 4 miles. The National Archives will be on your left, after you pass Harper Drive. Turn left into the parking lot. Parking is free.

From I-285 (coming from the West)

Take Exit 55 (Jonesboro Road/ Highway 54). Turn left. Travel approximately 4 miles. The National Archives will be on your left, after you pass Harper Drive. Turn left into the parking lot. Parking is free.

From I-675 (coming from the North)

Take Exit 5 (Ellenwood Road/ Forest Parkway/ Highway 331) and turn right. Travel approximately 3 miles to the intersection of Jonesboro Road (Highway 54), and turn left. After a little more than 1 mile, the National Archives will be on your left, after you pass Harper Drive. Turn left into the front parking lot. Parking is free.

From I-675 (coming from the South)

Take Exit 5 (Ellenwood Road/ Highway 331) and turn left. Travel approximately 3 miles to the intersection of Jonesboro Road (highway 54), and turn left. After a little more than 1 mile, the Archives will be on your left, after you pass Harper Drive. Turn left into the front parking lot. Parking is free.

From I-85 (coming from the North)

Take Interstate 85 South through downtown Atlanta. Continue on I-75 after I-85 splits off. Take I-75 to Exit 233 (Jonesboro Road/Morrow/Highway 54). Turn left. Travel approximately 2 miles. The Archives is on the corner of Jonesboro Road (Highway 54) and Clayton State Boulevard. After you pass Clayton State Boulevard, turn right into the parking lot.

From I-85 (coming from the South)

Take Interstate 85 North to Interstate 285. Turn East on I-285. Take Exit 55 (Jonesboro Road/ Highway 54). Turn right. Travel less than 4 miles. The Archives will be on your left, after you pass Harper Drive. Turn left into the parking lot.

Public Transportation

You may reach the Archives through C-TRAN (Clayton County Transit Authority). Take MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) to the Airport Station, and transfer to C-TRAN Bus 501 Southbound. Exit the bus at the Clayton State Boulevard/ North Lake Drive stop.

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia (Savannah)

- *Juan Madraso vs Slaves & cargo of Isabellita*, 1821
Box 27

Madraso, a Spanish subject, was charged with transporting slaves aboard his ship, the *Isabellita*, originating in Havana. Slaves held in custody of Baldwin Co. Sheriff. Case was appealed. Some documents in Spanish.

- *Slaves of the Syrena*, 1820
Box 26

The case involved libel for salvage. The *Syrena* was owned by a Spanish subject. The slaves were split up, with several claims to ownership. File contains some Spanish documents.

- *Eugene Kearney vs Ship Elizabeth*, 1798
Box 2

Sailing to Barbados from Africa with slaves, the *Elizabeth*'s captain dies. The crew proceeds to Savannah to sell their cargo.

- *Papers concerning Prohibition of Slavery – Bahama Islands*, 1810
Box 3

These papers concern an act passed to prohibit buying and selling of slaves.

- *U.S. vs Planters Adventure*, 1801
Box 3

The *Planters Adventure*, a schooner, was commanded by William Wyatt. The ship was used to transport slaves. The case mentions violations of the 1800 law.

- *U.S. vs Brig Lady Nelson*, 1803
Box 4

The *Lady Nelson* was discovered to have slaves on board. It originated from Cuba or Africa.

- *U.S. vs Schooner Amelia*, 1803
Box 4

7 slaves were brought aboard the *Amelia*, intended for sale. Sale may not have been illegal at the time if sold from within the U.S.

- *U.S. vs Brig Ida*, 1802
Box 4

The case states: “Libel for carrying slaves to a foreign port.” The *Ida* carried slaves from Africa to Florida.
- *O’Hara vs Brig Chance*, 1804
Box 5

The *Chance* was seized by a French privateer off the U.S. coast. Slaves were found on board.
- *U.S. vs Schooner Paragon*, 1803
Box 5

18 slaves were aboard the *Paragon*, brought for sale.
- *U.S. vs Brig Mary*, 1804
Box 5

Approximately 100 slaves were on board, meant for sale.
- *U.S. vs Ship Rosmond*, 1804
Box 6

Female slave from Jamaica was taken aboard the *Rosmond* from the *Brig Chance*.
- *U.S. vs Ship Flora*, 1807
Box 6

The *Flora* was transporting slaves from Africa. Approximately 280 were left at the Campbell plantation. The case involves the crew suing for wages.
- *U.S. vs Brig Columbia*, 1808
Box 6

The case involves the importation of 80 or more slaves at Little Cumberland. The ship was owned by Nathaniel Wardswell, from Rhode Island.
- *U.S. vs Schooner P.D. or Fauna*, 1811
Box 7

The *P.D.* transported 97 slaves from Africa. The case mentions violation of the importation act.

- *Yankee vs Andalusia*, 1813
Box 15

The ship Yankee captured the cargo of the Andalusia, among which were 90 negroes.

- *U.S. vs Sloop John*, 1813
Box 15

The sloop John carried 2 slaves with intent of selling them. Case mentions violation of the 1808 law.

- *U.S. vs Schooner Nancy & Cargo*, 1815
Box 21

The case mentions violation of the 1808 law. 3 slaves, including 2 females, were taken on board in Havana. Ownership was claimed by Francis Telsien. The ship and its material cargo were seized.

- *U.S. vs Schooner Hal & Cargo*, 1815
Box 21

Two slaves, an adult and a boy, were brought aboard the ship in Havana. The boy was lately from Africa. The file contains an unusual document musing on the horrors of the slave trade by W. Stephens, District Judge.

- *Slaves of the Tentativa/Elton for U.S. vs Tentativa*, 1816
Box 22 & 23

130 slaves were aboard, the Tentativa which was owned by a Spaniard. It was captured by a privateer ship, the Brutus, and brought to port claimed as a prize.

- *John H. Elton vs Slaves of Politina*, 1817
Box 22 & 23

109 slaves were aboard the Politina. The case mentions violation of 1808 importation law. At some point, slaves were ordered to return to the libellant.

- *U.S. vs Sloop Fire Fly*, 1817
Box 23

Case mentions violation of 1808 law. Case involves "11 negroes and one Mulatto." The mulatto was allegedly stolen.

- *U.S. vs The Patty and Sally*, 1817
Box 23

The case mentions violation of the 1808 law. 3 slaves were on board the ships from Baltimore. The documents mention a problem with the manifest.

- *U.S. vs Brig Montserat*, 1817
Box 23

The Montserat was captured by a privateer ship with 235 slaves on board.

- *Miguel de Castro vs African Slaves*, 1819
Box 23

De Castro claims he is the lawful owner of the 95 slaves which were imported to Havana from Africa. Some or all were sold to the Creek Nation in Florida.

- *U.S. vs Brig Neustra Sen. P.P. Thomason commercial*, 1818
Box 24

The case states: "Libel for illegal importation of slaves." 7-8 were perhaps legal slaves. 1 slave on board was illegal.

- *U.S. vs Slaves Politena*, 1820
Box 25

92 slaves were brought aboard the schooner Politena. The slaves were split up and there were multiple claims to ownership.

- *C. Muberg Sp. V.C. vs Slaves of the Antelope (or General Ramirez)*, 1823
Box 25

The case concerns court fees & expenses for the caring of the slaves from the Antelope.

- *U.S. vs Schooner Anna Maria*, 1820
Box 25

2 slaves were intended for sale. The case mentions violation of the 1818 & the 1808 laws.

- *John Jackson & others vs The Hampton John Low Claimant*, 1820
Box 25

The case involves libel for importing slaves aboard Schooner Hampton & outfitting the ship for such purposes.

- *A.S. Bulloch, Collector vs Schooner Freedom*, 1820
Box 25

The case mentions violation of the 1818 law.

- *U.S. vs The General Ramirez*, 1823
Box 28

This case is related to the Antelope case. The slaves were claimed by Spanish subjects.

- *James Johnson vs General Ramirez*, 1829
Box 29

This case is related to the Antelope case. It involves libel for salvage and bounty.

- *U.S. vs McCann*, 1803
Box 37

18 “negroes or people of color” were brought aboard the schooner Paragon from the Bahama islands. McCann forfeited \$1000 for each.

- *U.S. (Love) vs Ashley*, 1818
Box 42

Lodowick Ashley brought 3 slaves illegally into Georgia and forfeited \$1000 for each.

- *U.S. vs Joachim Selvas, Charles Mares, & Geronimo Cassameras*, 1859
Box 54

Geronimo & others attempted to outfit a ship, the Angelita, for transporting slaves.

- *U.S. vs David Martin*, 1861
Box 25

David Martin was charged with “feloniously running away with a vessel,” the Wanderer.

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Alabama (Mobile)

- *U.S. vs Peter Rivirero*, 1837
Case No. 85 Box 4

6 slaves were transported from Havana by a U.S. citizen aboard the schooner Louisa.
- *U.S. vs Henry Veckham & Daniel T. Walden*, 1818
Case No. 86 Box 4

Veckham, from Connecticut & Walden, from NY, received aboard the schooner Constitution 84 slaves in Havana, then transported them to Pensacola.
- *U.S. vs William Robertson*, 1818
Case No. 87 Box 4

The U.S. owned schooner Alerina or Merino, took 19 slaves aboard in Havana, then brought them into port of Mobile.
- *Marshal's audit of negro sales accounts city of Mobile & U.S. vs Sales of negro man, Dick, Woman, Nancy, & 2 children*, 1818
Case No. 89 Box 4

These documents detail the sale of slaves. Court documents are also in the file.
- *U.S. vs Negro Slave*, 1818
Case No. 97 Box 4

A single slave was brought to port of Mobile in violation of the 1808 law.
- *Rafael Jonathans (Two Negro Slaves)*, 1819
Case No. 106 Box 4

The case involves the armed slave ship, Sanford & William. 2 slaves, named Caesar and Pompey, were brought from Africa.
- *U. S. vs John D. Chanford*, 1838
Case No. 197 Box 9

John Sanford, a U.S. citizen, was accused of bringing 10 negroes from Liverpool, England aboard the Napier.

- *U.S. vs Sloop Brothers*, 1822
Case No. 205 Box 9

A British registered vessel, Brothers, was seized by the U.S. ship, the Alabama. 6 slaves were on board. The ship was commanded by William Gibson, and Englishman. The ship was forfeited, and condemned to be sold.

- *U.S. vs the Sloop Friends*, 1822
Case No. 207 Box 9

A British registered ship, Friends, had 7 slaves aboard. The ship was forfeited and sold.

- *U.S. vs Negro Slave Ben*, 1816
Case No. 59 Box 2

The case was heard in Territory court. Ben was captured by authorities, ownership disputed.

- *U.S. vs Schooners Constitution, Merino, Louisa and 84 slaves*, 1818
Case No. 230 Box 10

This case contains a wide variety of documents.

- *U.S. vs J. Martinez*, 1837
Case No. 294 Box 14

Joseph Martinez brought a slave named Francisco from Havana aboard the Montezu to the U.S.

- *U.S. vs Four Negroes*, 1822
Case No. 300 Box 14

2 slaves, Mary, Peggy, and her 3 children were imported (at least one was a daughter, named Venus). They were taken into custody of the marshall. David English claimed they belonged to him in South Carolina.

- *U.S. vs Schooner Orion*, 1823
Case No. 318 Box 15

The U.S. registered and owned Orion imported a slave from Jamaica.

- *U.S. vs W. Culler*, 1821
Case No. 320 Box 15

3 vessels were seized in 1818 for illegal transportation of slaves. The case appears to involve the salvage of these vessels and their cargo.
- *U.S. vs Negro Slave (Molly)*, 1818
Case No. 330 Box 15

Elijah Lloyd claimed lawful purchase of Molly in Washington county, Mississippi Territory. The marshall was commanded to seize all his slave property.
- *U.S. vs 3 negroes – Mary, Peggy, & Venus*, 1824
Case No. 330 Box 15

This case is related to case #300. All of the slaves were designated to be sold at public auction.
- *U.S. vs Brig Fox*, 1822
Case No. 402 Box 18

The case involves transporting a male slave from New York aboard the Fox. Violation of the 1808 law is mentioned. The ship and its tackle were seized.
- *U.S. vs Winifred & Robert Coller*, 1821
Case No. 522 Box 22

The file contains an interrogation about the slaves in Coller's possession.
- *Argate, Spanish Consul vs La Perla y Dolores & Cargo*, 1828
Case No. 401 Box 18

The case involves piracy and may involve the illegal slave trade.. The private vessel Anna attacked the Delores.
- *John Hagan vs William Byrnum & Alexander McDade*
Case No. 687 & 754 Box 26, 27, 28

The case involved restitution payments. The case mentions 3 slaves, with names and ages given.
- *Lewis Waugh vs William Lewis*, 1834
Case No. 1331 Box 39

The case involves slaves used in lieu of money as payment.

- *S.B. Dehart vs William Hadnot*, 1835
Case No. 1360 Box 40

Slave names and ages included. Case involves them being removed from the district of the court.
- *George L. McGehee vs Thomas Williams*, 1835
Case No. 1405 Box 41

The case involves a transaction of 3 slaves, who are named. It may not relate to the illegal slave trade.
- *Parish & Co. vs George Stone*, 1835
Case No. 1468 Box 42

4 slaves were purchased. Their names are given. They may have been used as payment of a debt.
- *U.S. vs Mrs. Jack*, 1836
Case No. 1694-5 Box 46

A young negro boy was brought to Mobile from Texas aboard the schooner Columbus.
- *U.S. vs steamboat Merchant*, 1836
Case No. 1736 Box 46

At least 2 slaves were brought to Mobile from the Florida territory.
- *U.S. vs ship Tuskina*, 1836
Case No. 1745 Box 46

Case involves a female slave, claimed as property, without proper documents.
- *U.S. vs steamboat South Alabama*, 1836
Case No. 1778 Box 46

A single female slave was aboard ship, with no proper documentation. Ownership was claimed by Joseph Moore of Montgomery Co., AL.
- *A.V. Winans & Co. vs McCullough & Stringfellow*, 1836
Case No. 1779 Box 46

2 female slaves, named Matilda and Sarah, who were the property of David McCullough, were surrendered in lieu of debt.

- *U.S. vs Brig Motion*, 1836
Case No. 1820 Box 46

3 slaves were aboard the Motion - Caroline and her 2 children – Robert (5) Ambrose (1). They did not have proper documentation. The ship sailed from Virginia.
- *U.S. vs steamboat Champion*, 1837
Case No. 1964 Box 47

A female slave named Mary was brought aboard the Champion, in Pensacola, without proper documents.
- *U.S. vs steamer Mobile*, 1837
Case No. 2028 Box 48

Single male slave was aboard the Mobile without the proper documents. The owner is named.
- *U.S. vs James Green, Master of Brig Constitution*, 1838
Case No. 2167 Box 51

The case, involves the ships Marino and Louisa, 198 & 46 slaves respectively, in addition to the Constitution.
- *U.S. vs J. D. Jarvis*, 1843
Case No. 2320 Box 55

5 slaves were transported from Pensacola to Mobile aboard the ship Davy Crockett, commanded by J.D. Jarvis. A \$4,000 fine was imposed.
- *U.S. vs John M. Dabney*, 1860
Case No. 2619 Box 66

103 slaves were imported by John M. Dabney.
- *John Hagan vs Thomas J. Faison*, 1835
Box 68

3 slaves were surrendered as payment, a woman and 2 boys, whose names and ages are given.
- *Alexander Gordon vs James Innerarity*, 1836
Box 68

A will leaves money to Pamela Leslie, a female slave, and provides money for education of her children, William and Thomas.

- *Appraisal of Estate of Aaron Cates*, 1816
Box 69

The names and values of 30+ slaves are given in appraisal.

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina (Elizabeth City)

- *The Carolina (Sloop Lucy) vs Slave Sampson*, 1814
Box 1

A slave named Sergant Sampson was taken aboard the private armed schooner Carolina from the British sloop Lucy.

- *U.S. vs 2 Boats and Slaves*, 1814
Box 3

The case involves 7 slaves, whose names and combined values are given. They were aboard the private armed schooner Mary.

- *U.S. vs St. Jose el Dilegente*, 1817
Box 5

5 slaves were brought to Elizabeth City from island of Old Providence. They were owned by Samuel Sifson. The case contains several depositions.

- *U.S. vs Schooner Commerce*, 1810
Box 5

3 slaves were brought to the port of Camden aboard the ship Commerce from the West Indies.

U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina (Charleston)

- *Thomas Atkins vs Brig Mercury*, 1718
Ret. 323 Admiralty Records Vol. A & B Book 2 Page # 302

The case deals with piracy – the sloop Revenge plundered the sloop Francis. 10 slaves are named in a list.

- *(unsure of case name)*, 1718
Ret. 323 Admiralty Records Vol. A & B Book 2 Page# 392

5 Negroes and an Indian are named as cargo aboard the sloop New Yorks Revenge.

- *(unsure of case name)*, 1719
Ret. 323 Admiralty Records Vol. A & B Book 2 Page # 446

Approximately 9 Negroes and Indians are named as slaves aboard the Nuestra Lenora de Candelaria.
- *3 Negro Slaves*, 1737
Ret. Admiralty Records Book 3 Page # 154

A British ship, sailing from Antigua to Charleston, encounters 3 male slaves who stated they were runaways from the Isle of Pines.
- *(unsure of case name)*, 1717
Ret. Admiralty Records

The British ship Ludlow sailed from Britain to Guinea, to Barbados, to Charleston, and sold approximately 100 slaves.
- *Captain Thomas Jordan vs Snow Hardman*, 1759
Ret. 265 Admiralty Records Vol. E & F Book 4 Page # 197 2nd section

The case appears to involve suit for repairs made to a slave ship.
- *Henry Barr Vale vs Six Negroes*, 1813
Ret. 268 Admiralty Journal Book 41 Page # 10 6th section

The case involves libel for salvage. The court heard arguments on behalf of libellants.
- *U.S. vs The American Ship Panther, her tackle & lading*, 1846
Admiralty Minutes Jan. 1843 – Oct. 1857 Book 44 Page # 72 1st section

The document states: “Information for being concerned in the slave trade.”
- *U.S. vs The Schooner Echo & certain goods imported in Schooner Echo*, 1819
Admiralty Journal Aug. 1819 – Oct. 1826 Book 42 Page # 11 1st section
- *In the case of certain negroes, brought in the Brig Globe, and delivered to the Portuguese Consul, C.P.L. Westendorf*, 1820
Admiralty Journal Aug. 1818 – Oct. 1826 Book 42 Page # 66 1st section

A note mentions court action against Alexander England for detaining “one of the negroes.”

- *U.S. vs Schooner Esther*, 1824
Admiralty Journal Aug. 1819 – Oct. 1826 Book 42 Page # 346

The case says “slave act,” no further information.
- *William Yearby vs 195 slaves*, 1806
Admiralty Journal 1795 – 1806 Book 40 Page # 55 last section

The case involves salvage.
- *Joshua Collins Surgeon of the Sloop Claudia of Liverpool vs Sundry Slaves and other property belonging to the owners of said Sloop Claudia*, 1806
Admiralty Journal 1795 – 1806 Book 40 Page # 42 last section

A ship was captured off African coast. The slaves on board were brought to Charleston.
- *John Mills & others vs Sundry Slaves*, 1806
Admiralty Journal 1795 – 1806 Book 40 Page # 39 – 40 last section

The case concerns libel for wages.