

Slavery in Rye

We know that the first West Africans were brought to Strawberry Banke (Portsmouth) against their will in 1645. The northern part of Sandy Beach (Rye) was part of the Banke so it is possible that there were slave holders in Rye in the mid 1600's. While it is true that being a slave in the north was less cruel than life on a plantation in the south, the grim reality of slavery touched Rye at an early date. The first census of Rye in 1773 records twelve male and seven female slaves. In 1775 another census showed "Negroes and Slaves for life – 14." In the Revolutionary War two newly freed blacks, Nimshi and Prince died alongside their former masters. In 1790 another census listed three slaves and "eight other free persons." After the war many slaves in the north were set free either by petition for their freedom or by their owners. Slavery was not officially abolished in New Hampshire until 1857. IN the "History of Rye, NH " Parsons has a one page narrative entitled "Negro Slaves" which different Rye slave owners, what they paid for them and other information.