

## Slave Uprisings

Highlight main events and then answer the question that follows.

The **Haitian Revolution** (1791–1804) was a period of brutal conflict in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, leading to the elimination of slavery and the establishment of Haiti as the first republic ruled by people of African ancestry. Although hundreds of rebellions occurred in the New World during the centuries of slavery, only the revolt on Saint-Domingue, which began in 1791, was successful in achieving permanent independence under a new nation. The Haitian Revolution is regarded as a defining moment in the history of Africans in the New World, and it was a source of inspiration to many Africans who learned of it and fought for their own freedom in other nations.

The **1811 German Coast Uprising** was a slave revolt that took place in parts of the Territory of Orleans on January 8–10, 1811. The revolt took place on the east coast of the Mississippi River in what are now St. John the Baptist and St. Charles parishes, Louisiana. While the slave insurgency was the largest in U.S. history, the rebels killed only two white men. In confrontations with militia and executions after trial, ninety-five slaves were killed. Between 64 and 125 enslaved men marched from sugar plantations near present-day LaPlace on the German Coast toward the city of New Orleans. They collected more men along the way. Some accounts claimed a total of 200-500 slaves participated. During their two-day, twenty-mile march, the slaves burned five plantation houses (three completely), several sugarhouses, and crops. They were armed mostly with hand tools. White men led by officials of the territory formed militia companies to hunt down and kill the insurgent slaves. Over the next two weeks, white planters and officials interrogated, tried and executed an additional 44 slaves who had been captured. Executions were by hanging or decapitation. Whites displayed the bodies as a warning. The heads of some slaves were put on pikes and displayed at plantations.

**George Boxley** (1780-1865) was a white abolitionist and former slaveholder who allegedly tried to coordinate a local slave rebellion on March 6, **1815** while living in Spotsylvania, Virginia. His plan was based on "heaven-sent" orders to free the slaves. He tried to recruit slaves from Orange, Spotsylvania, and Louisa counties to meet at his home with horses, guns, swords and clubs. He planned to attack and take over Fredericksburg and Richmond, Virginia. Lucy, a local slave, informed her owner, and the plot was foiled. Six slaves involved were imprisoned or executed. With his wife's help, Boxley escaped from the Spotsylvania County Jail and, despite a reward, he was never caught. Boxley fled to Ohio and Indiana, where he was joined by his family. He built a cabin in 1830, the first in Adams Township. He helped runaway slaves, taught school, and supported abolitionism

**Denmark Vesey** (1767? – July 2, 1822) was an African American slave brought to the United States from the Caribbean. After purchasing his freedom, he planned what would have been one of the largest slave rebellions in the United States. (planned for **1822**) Word of the plans was leaked, and at Charleston, South Carolina, authorities arrested the plot's leaders before the uprising could begin. Vesey and others were tried, convicted and executed. Many antislavery activists came to regard Vesey as a hero. During the American Civil War, abolitionist Frederick Douglass used Vesey's name as a battle cry to rally African-American regiments, especially the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

**Nathaniel "Nat" Turner** (October 2, 1800 – November 11, 1831) was an American slave who led a slave rebellion in Virginia on August 21, **1831** that resulted in 60 white deaths and at least 100 black deaths, the largest number of fatalities to occur in one uprising prior to the American Civil War in the southern United States. He gathered supporters in Southampton County, Virginia. Turner was convicted, sentenced to death, and hanged. In the aftermath, the state executed 56 blacks accused of being part of Turner's slave rebellion. Two hundred blacks were also beaten and killed by white militias and mobs reacting with violence. Across Virginia and other southern states, state legislators passed new laws prohibiting education of slaves and free blacks, restricting rights of assembly and other civil rights for free blacks, and requiring white ministers to be present at black worship services.

*Alexis de Tocqueville* observed that although democracy in America did not equate to racial or gender equality, it appeared to “work” as very few revolted against their status. Most women, most immigrants, and most slaves all seemed to live within the structure of the society, participating at the level they were able, and were generally very productive and hopeful. “There were times, too, when slaves witnessed the hasty retreat of free blacks to the plantation's safety in order to escape repression by whites during periods of rumored slave uprisings. Elizabeth Jefferson of Mississippi remarked that her grand father let a negro free and gave him a trade. He was a competent brick-mason. Often he came to the plantation for protection, sometimes remaining there for weeks. And this was not all. There was an old . . . [slave] freed by a relative of our family. He was prosperous and finally bought his wife and children. He and his family on several occasions came to Greenwood for protection. (*This Species of Property*, pp. 86-87)

What inspired the Haitian Revolution?

How did the Haitian Revolution inspire others?

To what extent were these efforts to plan and carry out slave rebellions successful in achieving manumission or emancipation of slaves?

Did slave uprising positively or negatively impact free blacks?