

An ACT for registering the Slaves in this Island.

Preamble.

WHEREAS the Legislature of this Colony is desirous to show its sincere disposition to guard against any possible infringement of the laws for abolishing the slave trade: And whereas a general registry of slaves has been considered the most effectual method of accomplishing the said object; We, therefore, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Governor, Council and Assembly of this Your Majesty's Island of Dominica, humbly beseech Your Majesty, that it may be enacted;—

Clause 1st. And be it therefore, and it is hereby enacted and ordained by the Governor, Council and Assembly of the said Island, and by the authority of the same, That between the first day of March and the first day of June next ensuing, every person resident in this Island, who shall be in possession of any slave or slaves within the same, whether as owner, mortgagee, trustee, guardian, executor, receiver, lessee, attorney, manager, or otherwise howsoever, shall deliver in upon oath to the treasurer, or his lawful deputy, of the said Island, such returns, lists, and particulars, in writing, as are hereinbefore mentioned; that is to say, in the first place, the right or character in which the party making such return holds possession of such slave or slaves; and where such slaves are attached to and wrought upon plantations, the name of the plantation to which the said slaves are so attached; and shall proceed to name, describe and enumerate the several slaves then belonging to or held in possession by him her or them, by lists to be made out in manner following; that is to say, the said returns shall be divided into eight perpendicular columns, of sufficient breadth respectively, entitled at the heads thereof, "Number, Names, Sex, Colour, reputed Age, Country, ordinary Employment, Remarks:" in the first of which columns shall be mentioned the numeral order of such slave; in the second column, the usual name of each slave; in the third column (which shall be divided into two smaller columns, to be entitled at the heads thereof, "Male and Female,") the sex of such slave; in the fourth column, the colour of each slave; in the fifth column, the reputed age of each slave; in the sixth column, (which shall be divided into two smaller columns, to be entitled at the heads thereof, "Creole and African,") the country of each slave; in the seventh column, the ordinary employment of each slave; in the eighth column, any other circumstances respecting each slave, which may tend more accurately to identify the individual; such as the said slave being a runaway, and the name of the particular island and country in Africa where the said slave may have been born, or from whence he may have been brought, so far as the same can be ascertained; and for the greater uniformity of such returns of slaves, and that no person may pretend ignorance of the proper forms thereof, an example of such return is contained in a Schedule to this Act annexed, marked (A.) to which all persons are required to conform.

And

Clause 2d. And be it further enacted, That between the first day of March and the first day of June, in every third year after the present year, every person then resident in the said Island, who shall be in possession of any slave or slaves within the same as aforesaid, shall deliver in upon oath to the treasurer of the said Island, such returns, lists, and particulars in writing, as are hereinafter mentioned; that is to say, in the first place, the right or character in which the party making such return holds possession of such slave or slaves, and where such slaves are attached to, or wrought upon plantations, the name of the plantation to which such slaves are so attached, shall, in the next place, state the number of slaves contained in the former return, and shall then proceed to specify the number, names, sexes, colour, reputed age, country, and ordinary employment of each, and every such slave as may have been added to or taken from the said former return, together with the causes of such increase or decrease, whether the said increase shall have arisen from birth, purchase, gifts, succession, reversion, or other lawful acquisition whatsoever, or the said decrease from death, sale, gift, manumission, or other cause whatsoever; and in case of such increase or decrease arising from purchase or sale, the name of the person or persons of or to whom the said slave or slaves may have been purchased or sold, to be specified in the return; and for the greater uniformity of the said triennial returns of slaves, and that no person may plead ignorance of the proper forms thereof, an example of such return is contained in a schedule to this Act annexed, marked B, to which all persons are required to conform.

Clause 3d. And be it further enacted, That every person making the returns as aforesaid, shall at the time of delivering the same, subscribe his name or ordinary mark, and take the following oath, which the said treasurer is hereby empowered and required to administer, under the penalty of three hundred pounds for each neglect; viz.

“ I, *A. B.* [*naming himself*] do Swear, That the List or Return now by me
 “ given in, contains a true and exact account and description, according to
 “ the several particulars therein specified, of all the slaves now attached to
 “ or belonging to the Plantation called _____ in the parish of
 “ _____ [*or, belonging to me, if an owner,*] or belonging to
 “ _____ for whom I am attorney, agent, trustee, or otherwise,
 “ [*as the case may be,*] according to the best of my knowledge, information
 “ and belief, and that no one of the said slaves has been, to my knowledge,
 “ imported into this Island, contrary to the existing laws for abolishing the
 “ slave trade. “ So help me GOD.”

Provided always, That in case any owner of slaves resident in this Island, shall, from sickness or any bodily infirmity, be prevented from attending the said treasurer or his deputy to deliver such return of his or her slave or slaves, it shall and may be lawful for any other person in behalf of such owner, to give in such his or her list or return, such person so giving in for another, at the time of delivering in such list or return, taking the following oath before the treasurer or his deputy, who is hereby authorized and required, under the penalty aforesaid, to administer the same; viz.

“ I, *A. B.* [*naming himself*] do Swear, That the person for whom I am about
 “ to give in a List or Return of Slaves, is prevented from attending in per-
 “ son by illness [*or, bodily infirmity, as the case may be,*] and that the List
 “ or Return now given in by me, was signed by such owner in my presence,
 “ and that the same contains a true and exact number and description of all
 “ the slaves now belonging to the said *C. D.*, according to the best of my
 “ information, knowledge and belief, and that no one of the said slaves has
 “ been to my knowledge, or (as I firmly believe) the knowledge of the said
 “ proprietor, imported into this Island contrary to the existing laws for
 “ abolishing the slave trade.

“ So help me GOD.”

And to the intent that all persons required to deliver in lists or returns of slaves, may be duly apprised, at the proper time of delivering in such returns;— Preamble.

Clause 4th. Be it therefore enacted, That the treasurer or his deputy shall and he is hereby required, as soon as possible after the publication of this Act, to send printed copies of the same to the officers commanding the militia of the respective parishes and districts, who are hereby required to read the same, or cause the same to be read, on their respective parades immediately after calling the rolls, for three successive

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successive meetings after receiving the same; and in like manner the treasurer shall in the month of February in every third year after the present year, send to the said commanding officers of militia, advertisements in writing or print, by him signed, notifying the proper time of delivering in the triennial returns of slaves required by this Act; which advertisements the said commanding officers are hereby required to read, or cause to be read, on their respective parades immediately after calling the rolls, for three successive meetings after receiving the same; and further, that the treasurer or his deputy shall cause to be printed at the public expense, a sufficient number of forms of returns of slaves directed by the first clause of this Act, according to the Schedule marked (A.), and shall transmit the same, along with the printed copies of this Act, to the respective commanding officers of militia, who are hereby required to distribute the said schedules or forms to such persons as shall apply for the same; and in like manner the treasurer or his deputy shall in the month of February in every third year, after the present year, cause to be printed, and send to be distributed as aforesaid, a sufficient number of the forms of triennial returns of slaves directed by the second clause of this Act, according to the schedule marked (B.); and if the said treasurer or his deputy, or officer commanding the Royal St. George's regiment, or any of his independent companies of militia, shall neglect to perform any of the duties by this clause directed, such party so offending shall, for every such neglect, forfeit the sum of two hundred pounds currency.

Clause 5th. And be it further enacted, That if any person shall willfully neglect to give in to the said treasurer or his deputy the list or return of slaves by this Act directed, such person shall forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds current money, for every slave so neglected to be returned; one moiety to be paid to the informer or person suing for the same, and the other moiety to be paid into the treasury of this Island for the public uses of the Colony; and in case the party so offending shall have possession of any slave or slaves so neglected to be returned for registration in the capacity of mortgagee, trustee, guardian, receiver, lessee, attorney, executor, manager, or otherwise, as the representative of any other person or persons, such person shall not only forfeit for every slave so neglected to be returned the aforesaid sum of one hundred pounds, but shall moreover be liable to the civil suits or actions of any person or persons who shall or may sustain any damage or injury by such neglect; and that if any person shall return as a slave or shall hold in his possession as a slave any African who shall have been illegally imported into this Island, knowing the same to have been illegally imported, the attorney general, upon information lodged to that effect, is hereby required to enter a prosecution against such offender in the court of King's Bench and grand sessions held for the said Island; and every offender convicted of holding such African in slavery as aforesaid, shall forfeit any sum not exceeding five hundred pounds currency, and be imprisoned in the common gaol of this Island for any time not exceeding the period of two years; one half of such fine to be paid to the informer, or person suing for the same, and the other half into the public treasury of the said Island; and such African so having been illegally held in slavery shall be entitled to receive from the treasurer the sum of six pounds twelve shillings per annum, for and during his natural life, or so long as he shall remain a resident of the said Island.

Clause 6th. And be it further enacted, That the treasurer or his deputy shall carefully preserve the original lists and returns given in to him, and cause the same, within three months after receiving them, to be copied clearly and distinctly (under the names of the parishes from which such returns are respectively made) into a book strongly bound and duly paged and indexed, to be by him provided and kept in his office, and such book or books are hereby declared public property; and when and so soon as the said lists or returns shall have been duly entered and recorded as aforesaid, the said treasurer or his deputy shall give notice forthwith by advertisements in the public newspaper, that the said book is completed, and the said book shall continue open in the treasurer's office for the inspection (free of all expense,) of such persons as shall have made returns of slaves for the term of three months from the date of such notification, to the intent that all persons interested may be satisfied of the accuracy of said record: Provided always, That if any owner or possessor of slaves in this Island, shall from any accident or unavoidable impediment, have omitted to return full and proper lists or returns as required by this Act, such person may and is hereby authorized to apply by petition to the legislature,

legislature, and upon approval thereof, the treasurer shall receive such omitted or corrected returns, and in like manner that the treasurer or his deputy shall receive and record the triennial returns of slaves required by this Act, in all respects as prescribed with regard to the original returns.

Clause 7th.—And be it further enacted, That if the treasurer or his deputy shall refuse to receive for registration any return which he ought to make, any entry which he ought to make, or shall in the exercise of his said office, refuse or neglect to do any thing which he is herein required to do, such treasurer or his lawful deputy, shall for every such offence incur the penalty of two hundred pounds currency, and shall moreover be liable to the civil suits or actions of such person or persons as may be aggrieved, or sustain any damage or injury by such refusal or neglect.

Clause 8th.—And be it further enacted, That no erasure shall on any pretence whatsoever be permitted in the said books of registry; and if a clerical error be committed, a line of red ink shall be drawn through any word or words so inserted, without effacing the same, and the corrections thereof shall be made by interlining the proper word or words, and if practicable, in the same hand-writing as the rest of the returns so corrected, and the treasurer or his deputy shall write his name at length in the margin opposite to every such interlineation; but after the said books of registry, whether of the original or triennial returns of slaves, shall be completed and certified as hereinafter directed, no interlineation, alteration or correction, shall on any account be made or permitted to be made therein; and that if the said treasurer or his deputy shall wilfully make, or knowingly permit or suffer to be made, by false or fraudulent entry in his books of registry, or either of them, the treasurer or his deputy shall, upon conviction of such offence, forfeit any sum not exceeding five hundred pounds currency, and moreover be declared incapable of holding the office of treasurer; and if any other person or persons shall fraudulently make or procure to be made any false entry or erasure in the said books, or either of them, every such person shall, upon conviction thereof, forfeit any sum not exceeding five hundred pounds currency, and besides be imprisoned in the common gaol for any time not exceeding two years; and the treasurer or his deputy or other person so convicted, shall moreover be liable to the civil suit or action of any person who may have sustained any damage or injury by such erasure or alteration.

Clause 9th. And be it further enacted, That the treasurer or his deputy shall at the expiration of the term of three months, from and after completing the entries of returns of slaves in the original book of registry, and also at the expiration of the like term, after completing the entries of each successive triennial return, finally close and authenticate the said original and triennial registry, by subscribing his name, and affixing his official seal immediately under the last entry, in each of the said books, and shall subjoin an affidavit to the following effect; viz.

“ Before *A. B.* [*inserting the name and title of Governor, or Commander in Chief for the time being,*] personally appeared *C. D.* [*naming himself,*] treasurer of the said Island, and made oath, that he has carefully and minutely examined and compared all the foregoing entries, with the different returns of slaves delivered to him, and that the preceding registry of slaves is in all respects truly, correctly, and faithfully entered.”

Which affidavit having been subscribed by the treasurer or his deputy, shall be sworn to before the said Governor or Commander in Chief, who shall subjoin a certificate under his hand and seal at arms; viz.

“ I, *A. B.* [*inserting the name and title of office,*] do hereby certify, That the above affidavit was this day duly sworn before me. Witness my hand and seal at arms, at government house, this day of in the year one thousand eight hundred and (Signed) “ *A. B.*”

Clause 10th. And be it further enacted, That the said treasurer shall, after the authentication of the said return of slaves, as hereinbefore directed, take and receive out of any public monies in his hands, the sum of three hundred pounds currency, for all the duties required of him by this Act; and also a like sum for every triennial return so completed; and any person or persons requiring a certificate copy or copies, or extract or extracts from said registry, the treasurer is authorized to demand

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for such copies or extracts, at and after the rate that the registrar is allowed by his docket of fees, for copies or extracts of deeds out of his office.

Clause 11th. And be it further enacted, That in all questions respecting the freedom or slavery of any individual, arising in any court, or before any magistrate in this colony, a duly certified copy of the registration of such individual in the books of the said treasurer, or his deputy, shall be received as sufficient *prima facie* evidence of the slavery of such individual: Provided always, that where any dispute shall arise respecting the right or title of any person or persons to any slave or slaves, such registration shall not be deemed evidence of the property of such person or persons as shall be set forth in the said books of registry, as the reputed owner of such slave or slaves.

Clause 12th. And be it further enacted, That all and every the fines, forfeitures, and penalties imposed by this Act, for which the mode of recovery has not been hereinbefore declared, shall be recovered by bill, plaint or information, in any court of record in this Island; and that one moiety of the said fines shall go to the informer or person suing for the same, and the other moiety to be paid into the treasury of the colony, for the public uses thereof.

Clause 13th. And be it further enacted, That if any person or persons shall knowingly and wilfully make any false oath to any of the matters or things by this Act required, or shall corruptly procure or suborn any person or persons to make such false oath, such person or persons so making, or procuring to be made such false oath, as aforesaid, shall be declared guilty of wilful and corrupt perjury, and shall, upon conviction thereof, suffer such punishment as is inflicted for such offences by the laws of England.

Clause 14th. And be it further enacted, That two hundred copies of this Act shall be printed at the public expense, for the use of the members of the legislature, the justices of the peace, the public officers, and the officers commanding the Royal St. George's regiment, and respective independent companies of militia, and that the treasurer do and he is hereby directed to pay for the same.

Passed the House of Assembly, this eleventh day of February one thousand eight hundred and seventeen. *J. A. Garraway*, Acting Clerk of Assembly.
W. Anderson, Speaker.

Passed the Council, this seventh day of March one thousand eight hundred and seventeen. *Joseph Court*, Acting Clerk of the Council.

SCHEDULE (A.)

General RETURN of SLAVES belonging to _____ made this
day of _____ 1817, by _____

Number.	Names.	Sex.		Colour.	Reputed Age.	Country.		Ordinary Employment.	REMARKS.
		Males.	Females.			African.	Creole.		
1.	William -	1	-	Black -	35	1	-	Driver - - -	An Ibbo, pitted with small-pox.
2.	Fusebe -	1	-	Mulatto -	25	-	1	Mason - - -	Creole of Antigua, blind of the right eye.
3.	John - -	1	-	Cabre -	30	-	1	Field Labourer	Ditto, run away since 1st December last.
4.	Thomas -	1	-	Mestiff -	25	-	1	Cooper - - -	Ditto, of this Island, lost his left leg.
5.	George -	1	-	Black -	2	-	1	- - -	Sickly, the child of Ann.
6.	Mary - -	-	1	Cabresse -	35	-	1	Domestic - -	Creole of Barbadoes.
7.	Ann - -	-	1	Black -	20	1	-	Field Labourer	A Congo.
8.	Eliza - -	-	1	Black -	25	1	-	- - Ditto - -	From the Gold Coast.
9.	Jane - -	-	1	Mulatto -	1	-	1	- - -	The child of Mary.
		5	4			3	6		

SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE (B.)

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Triennial RETURN of SLAVES belonging, to
day of 1820, by

made this

Number.	Names.	Sex.		Colour.	Reputed Age.	Country.		Ordinary Employment.	Cause of Increase and Decrease.	REMARKS.
		Male.	Female.			African.	Creole.			
230	per last Return	110	120	- -	-	90	140			
				Increase.						
1	Joseph - -	1	-	Black - -	22	-	1	Carpenter	Purchased of A. B.	Native of Martinique.
2	Thomas - -	1	-	Mulatto - -	30	-	1	Cooper - -	Gift of C. D. - -	Creole of this Island.
3	Harry - -	1	-	Black - -	25	1	-	Field Labourer	Inherited from E. F.	An Ibo.
4	James - -	1	-	Ditto - -	1	-	1	- - -	Born (<i>add date.</i>)	
5	Kitty - -	-	1	Ditto - -	20	1	-	Domestic -	Legacy from G. H.	Mandingo.
6	Nancy - -	-	1	Cabress -	1½	-	1	- - -	Born - - -	The Child of Kitty.
7	Louise - -	-	1	Black - -	½	-	1	-	-	
237	Total Increase	4	3			2	5			
	Total -	114	123			92	145			
				Decrease.						
1	Alexander -	1	-	Cabre - -	18	-	1	Carpenter -	Sold to J. K.	
2	Bob - - -	1	-	Black - -	25	1	-	Domestic -	A Gift to L. M.	
3	Tom - - -	1	-	Ditto - -	50	1	-	Field Labourer	Died.	
4	Sylvia - -	-	1	Mulatto -	30	-	1	Domestic -	Manumitted.	
5	Polly - -	-	1	Black - -	75	1	-	Sick Nurse -	Died	
6	Sophia - -	-	1	Mulatto -	21	-	1	Sempstress -	Sold to N. O.	
		3	3			3	3			
231		111	120			89	142	TOTAL Remaining.		