

Washington, DC/Port of Georgetown Middle Passage Information

U.S. Middle Passage Arrival Site Revised Submission: UNESCO Site of Memory

Having been informed recently that the UNESCO Slave Trade Route Project will consider all documented U. S. Middle Passage arrival locations as eligible for “Site of Memory” designation, the **Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project (MPCPMP)** initially selected eight sites to highlight in detail their significance to U. S., Atlantic world and global history. The remaining locations are included with a more general response to UNESCO’s qualitative criteria. For purposes of fulfilling **MPCPMP**’s mission, each site is directly connected to U.S. Middle Passage history, several containing documented burial grounds.

These remaining arrival sites will be addressed in a general response to the UNESCO Slave Trade Route Project’s qualifying criteria rather than individually since each is a Middle Passage arrival site with supporting ship data.

Originality of the site

Regardless of its geographic location, each one of these sites is a place of first arrival for captive Africans after the Middle Passage. They represent a broad range of colonial (British, French, Spanish), U.S and political influence. It is at these ports and along the coasts that captive African children, women and men were delivered with the intention of enslavement. It is from these, with the exception of Key West, Florida that they were transported to forced labor camps or settings in which their skills, knowledge and physical labor were exploited by a system of violence and terror. Covering a period beginning in 1526 until 1860, a wide variety of financial investors, merchants, pirates, smugglers, farmers, and governments participated in sponsoring their journey from Africa.

These are the original sites of American history related to Africans.

The scientific pertinence of the information on the site and its relation to the theme of slavery

Ship data related to Middle Passage history was obtained from *Voyages: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, David Eltis, Emory University. All these ships were documented as arriving in “North Potomac.”

District of Columbia (Georgetown)

| <u>Ship</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Embarkation Location/# of Captives</u> | <u>Middle Passage Deaths</u> | <u># Disembarked</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------|---|------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Liverpool Merchant</i> | 1732 | Gambia/187> Virginia (95) | | 65 |
| <i>William & Betty</i> | 1732 | Gambia/164> Virginia (51) | | 89 |
| <i>George</i> | 1736 | Africa/271> St. Kitts | | 217 |
| <i>Prince William</i> | 1736 | Gambia/194> Virginia (166) | | 52 |
| <i>George</i> | 1740 | Calabar/271 | 54 | 217 |
| <i>Sarah</i> | 1760 | St. Louis/98> Virginia (73) | | 7 |
| <i>Upton</i> | 1761 | Gambia/168> Virginia (30) | 31 | 107 |

The integration of the sites in a more general inventory/the significance and impact of these sites.

Each one of the above documented Middle Passage arrival sites is a place where the influence of African culture was initiated. As coastal cities and locations they graphically demonstrate where African American history began in the United States of America. A national history can be traced from each location illustrating the social, economic and cultural connections as these captive people and their descendants carried across the North American Continent, into every state and territory, their skills and knowledge that built this nation. All those who share this Middle Passage history have informed the language, the arts, the architecture, the industry, the legal system and economy. There is no facet of U.S. society that has not been impacted by the descendants of the people who arrived at the 50 documented sites.

This nation is just beginning to seriously address the interpretation of the African presence, slavery and African American contributions. Up until now the history of the nation has been focused upon European conquest and domination by Euro-Americans. Scholars are now presenting a more inclusive story of the country's development and foundations – Africans and their descendants are a part of that general narrative of "making America."

The preservation and promotion of the sites

The installed markers insure that the Middle Passage history is known. They are accessible and placed in prominent locations. Fortunately, government and community organizations "own" the markers and maintain them as points of interest to promote the history of place. In most instances, they are incorporated into an existing established history trail or tour initiative emphasizing general or more specifically African American history. On-going efforts also connect the Middle Passage history into local celebrations, events, and educational activities such as Emancipation Day, Juneteenth, and Black History Month. Ancestral commemorations are encouraged and scheduled annually at many of the arrival locations.