

Lecture Series Fall 2011

# Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society



## The long Forgotten History of Slavery and Plantations in Colonial Long Island

A fascinating look into the tangled history of slavery and plantation life on Long Island, a too-much neglected and often forgotten reality of northern Colonial life.

**Sunday, November 20 4 pm**

**By Dr. Carol Bleser**

In 1626, officials of the Dutch West India Company in New Amsterdam purchased eleven Africans to be used by the company to work on public projects. With this purchase, the institution of slavery in what would later be known as New York was born. Beginning with the original 11 black slaves in 1626, the number of slaves in New York grew to almost 20,000 on the eve of the Revolutionary War a century and a half later, and more than half of them lived on Long Island. In fact, Long Island had the largest slave population of any rural or urban area in the north for most of the colonial era.

Slavery spread throughout the Island among all types of people, even ministers and Quakers held them as personal servants or as laborers on their farms. Early on, slaves on Long Island were widely scattered about the thinly populated countryside, and although a wealthy 18th Century landowner like William Floyd in Mastic might have a dozen or so slaves, one or two was more common. Farmers also employed indentured workers as well as available casual labor, and when it came time to work the crops, all of them might be found in the fields, working side by side.

By the middle of the 18th Century, as population and development increased, Long Island was no longer a rural backwater. However, at the eve of the Revolutionary War as the colonial period came to an end, slavery still remained a potent force on Long Island. At that time there were only faint stirrings of distaste for the slavery system on Long Island. It would take a revolution, the formation of a new state government and the rising of abolitionist sentiment before New York State, the largest slave state in the North, would give up its peculiar institution in 1827.

Carol K. Bleser is Distinguished Professor of History Emerita at Clemson University and former president of the Southern Historical Association and the Southern Association of Women Historians. Her books include *The Hammonds of Redcliffe*, *Tokens of Affection*, *Secret and Sacred*, and *In Joy and In Sorrow*

**Full series of four: \$50 Single tickets at door: \$15**

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