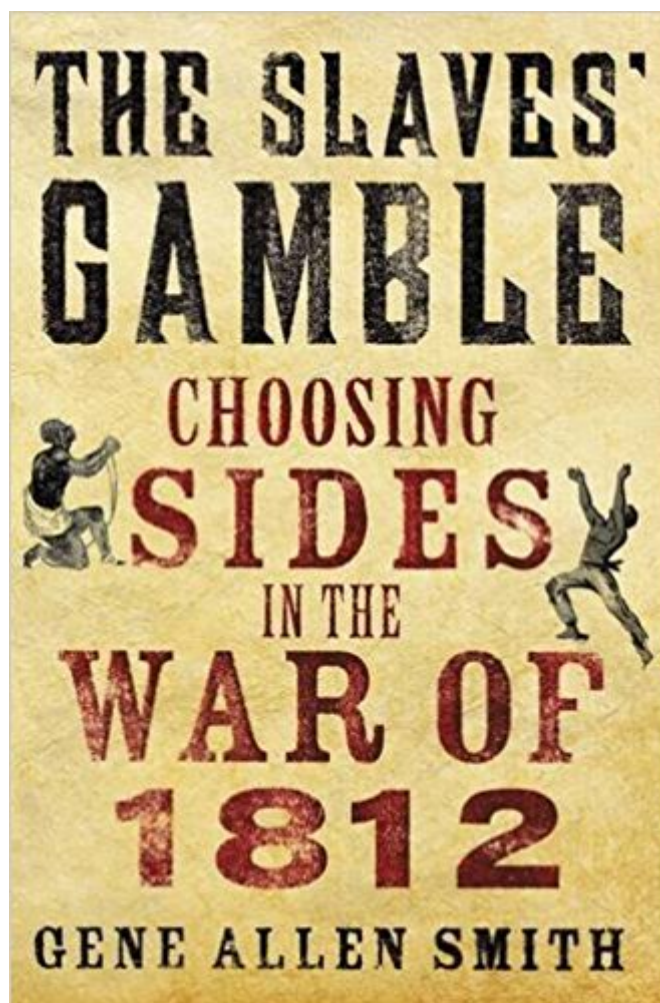


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The Slaves' Gamble: Choosing Sides In The War Of 1812



Synopsis

Images of American slavery conjure up cotton plantations and African American slaves locked in bondage until the Civil War. Yet early on in the nineteenth century the state of slavery was very different, and the political vicissitudes of the young nation offered diverse possibilities to slaves. In the century's first two decades, the nation waged war against Britain, Spain, and various Indian tribes. Slaves played a role in the military operations, and the different sides viewed them as a potential source of manpower. While surprising numbers did assist the Americans, the wars created opportunities for slaves to find freedom among the Redcoats, the Spaniards, or the Indians. Author Gene Smith draws on a decade of original research and his curatorial work at the Fort Worth Museum in this fascinating and original narrative history. The way the young nation responded sealed the fate of slaves for the next half century until the Civil War. This drama sheds light on an extraordinary yet little known chapter in the dark saga of American history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Impressively researched.” —The Christian Science

Monitor “Thoroughly researched” —fills in some much-needed background to the complicated relations that mixed racism, fear and anger on one side with a unquenchable yearning for freedom on the other. —The Washington

Times “Engrossing” —Smith's exhaustive research reveals that black sailors played a significant if unheralded role in virtually all of the U.S. Navy's successes —an important, lucid, often startling work of scholarship. —The Dallas Morning News “Smith's long

years of research and wide knowledge of this conflict has enabled him to focus on some of the remarkable stories of men and their families—illustrates clearly the plight of American slaves as they desperately struggled to gain their freedom and the lies, deception and deviousness their owners used to deny it. — Kirkus Reviews “Crisply told...Smith’s first-rate study is a gripping tale of the evolution of race relations in early America.”

— Publishers Weekly “The history of black servicemen long antedates the Civil War. In the Anglo-American War of 1812, both sides recruited black Americans as soldiers; the British offered freedom to American slaves who would fight for them. Gene Allen Smith’s account, scrupulously researched in both British and U.S. sources, sheds new light on many aspects of that conflict, including the little-known ‘Patriot War’ in Florida. Personal narratives of heroic individuals add to the story a sense of immediacy. Scholars, military history buffs, and students of the black experience will all find a reading of interest here.” — Daniel Walker Howe, Pulitzer-Prize winning author of *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*. “Gene Smith’s new book sheds considerable light on the role of blacks, slave and free alike, during the War of 1812. This is essential reading for all students of the war as well as for anyone interested in American race relations or U.S. military history.” — Don Hickey, author of *The War of 1812* “In *The Slaves’ Gamble*, Gene Allen Smith richly details the lives of enslaved people struggling for freedom through an array of strategies in a complex war. Thoroughly researched and wide-ranging, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian frontier, and from the sunny Caribbean to dank Dartmoor Prison, this superb book illuminates the plight, courage, and resourcefulness of African Americans in the early republic.” — Alan Taylor, author of *The Civil War of 1812* “Gene Allen Smith captures with scholarly thoroughness the dilemma of patriotism that enslaved African-Americans struggled with during the War of 1812 and the range of their responses.” — Elizabeth Dowling Taylor, author of *A Slave in the White House: Paul Jennings and the Madisons*

Gene Allen Smith is a professor of History and the director of the Center for Texas Studies at TCU in Fort Worth, Texas. The author of numerous books, he is also the curator of History at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. Smith has received research awards from TCU and Montana State University-Billings, as well as fellowships from the Henry E. Huntington Library, the Virginia Historical Society, the US Department of the Navy, the US Military Academy at West Point, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He lives in Fort Worth, Texas.

I was made aware of the details concerning the complicated lives and difficult choices that slaves and free blacks experienced during the war of 1812. It was surprising how many choices mirrored options that slaves had during and after the American Revolution. It is a sad commentary that fairness and justice were most often displayed by the British, Spaniards, and French than by Americans. The book is very revealing and impressively written.

Very informative as to the slaves' role in the War of 1812 but also in the Revolution. I didn't know that many stayed on in the military as it paid better than what they were used to earning

This is a great book. If you are looking to get into the mind of slaves and freemen during this period, thirty some odd years after the "American War of Independence" this is a great book to read. When independence was won during the revolution it was only for white Americans the blood shed by persons of African decent during the revolution was for naught. Only the Brits kept the promises they made to free the slaves. I wish someone would write a book with the background where England won the War of 1812 and freed all the slaves that were in bondage at the time and see how the this country would have developed in a land with no slave labor, now that would be a great book.

It came quickly and in good condition. I would recommend it. It was well written. It is a story that was not taught in school.

Excellent resource for this time period.

Well written and researched.

Timely.

The war of 1812 is considered much less significant and is not as well taught in schools as the Revolution. In other words this war seems something as an after thought. Dr. Smith brings this part of American history more to light. Dr. Smith is a history professor at Texas Christian University and a history curator at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. He was a speaker at this Fort Worth museum, spoke about his book, signed and autographed copies. He has also spoken about other eras in American History at the museum. An interesting fact which I never knew is that many

slaves were leaving Canada to go to the northern states where there was no slavery at that time and place. This is one of many interesting facts. White Carolinians used blacks to defeat Native Americans in the past, then provided Indians with ammunition, guns, and ways to capture escaped slaves, thereby turning one disenfranchised group against another. This is another interesting fact of history and well documented. The northern states abolished slavery, the south did not. Slaves fled to the north to get away from slavery. Blacks served in almost all battles. There were black regiments, few gained notoriety, few served as officers. There were free black communities in large cities, run away slaves fled to these cities and also blended into maroon communities, assimilated with Native Americans, enlisted in the British Navy, did many ways to get away from being slaves. Surprisingly the British offered slaves a way to become free by joining up with British forces. Slave owners would lease their slaves to those needing help, then keep the slaves salaries. The book begins with black soldiers in North America, then goes on to fighting in the north, politics, politicians and the rights of slaves and free blacks, then goes on to the war in Florida. One chapter of the book contains how Florida became part of the United States and was taken from Spain. Slaves moved to Florida to become free when this state was part of Spain. The book contains seven chapters and goes into much concerning slavery and the war all over the eastern part of the United States, from the north, mid-west, the cities and counties between the north and south, then continues into the deep south. There is the growth of slavery among the newly opened southern states. Cotton is grown and slaves are needed to harvest and work the land. This is the history of slaves leaving the United States to become free. British colonies were a popular option. Spanish colonies were another choice. There is much to read, much to learn about the War of 1812 and the fate of slaves, slavery and those wanting to free themselves and their families. This is an interesting read especially for history buffs. There are facts that are not well known and have been lost in the long years from then until now.

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