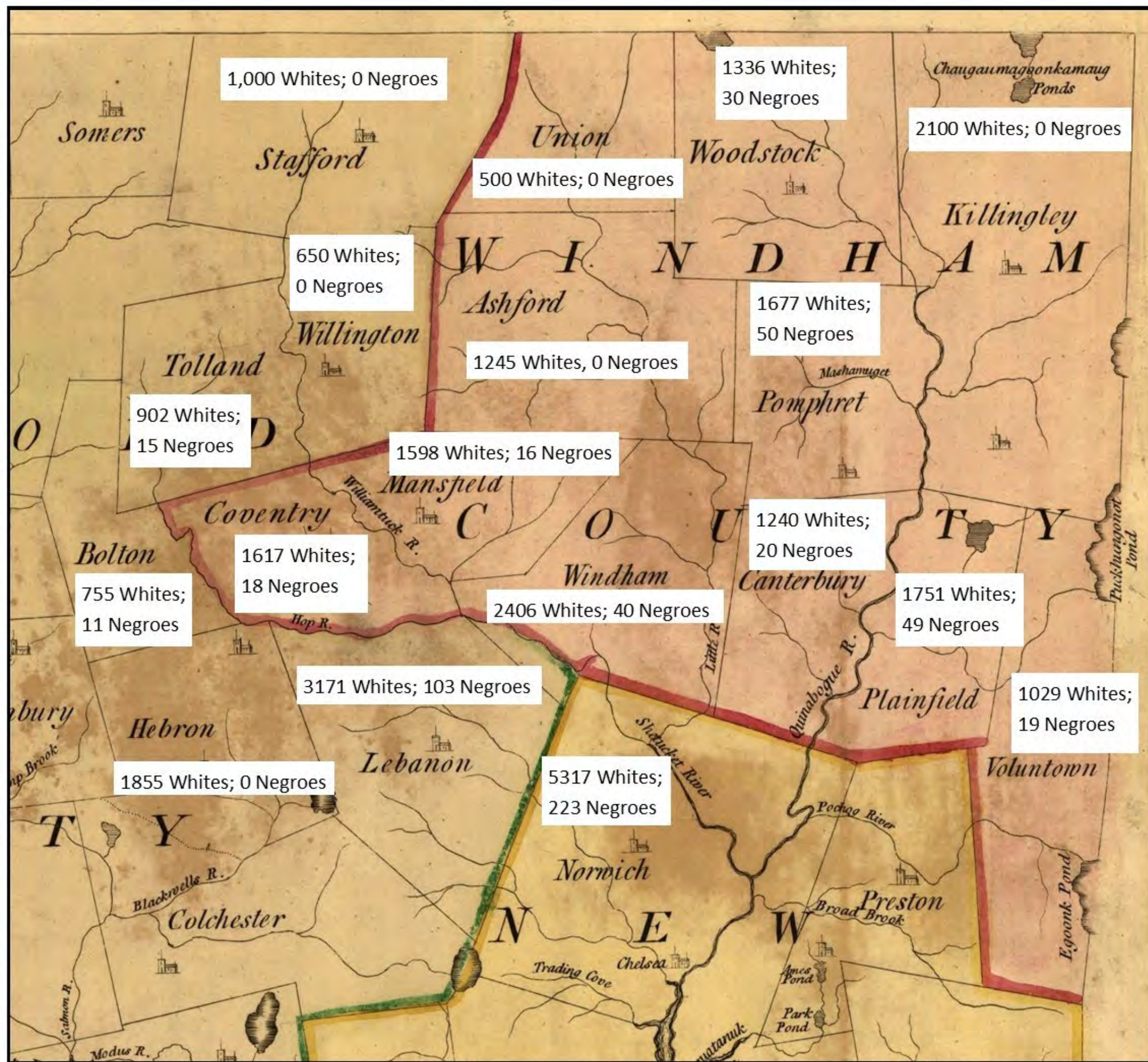# ENSLAVEMENT



### NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT IN 1756 (ABOVE)

In 1756 the Board of Trade in London asked Connecticut to conduct a census of the colony's inhabitants, showing the number of "Whites," "Negroes," and "Indians." Although more accurate than earlier colonial censuses, it nevertheless "whitewashed" the colony by undercounting both the Black and the indigenous populations. Notice that the numbers (superimposed above on a 1766 map of Connecticut) show no indigenous people at all, and that several towns reported no Blacks, even though it is almost certain that some Black people lived there. Notice also that most of the towns that reported no Blacks also reported the number of Whites in round numbers, indicating that they may have been fabrications or rough estimates.

Source: Charles J. Hoadley, *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from May, 1751, to February, 1757, Inclusive, Transcribed and Edited in Accordance with a Resolution of the General Assembly.* (Hartford: Case, Lockwood, and Brainard, 1877)

### NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT 1774 (BELOW)

In 1774, on the eve of the American Revolution, slavery reached its high point in northeastern Connecticut — and in the rest of the then-colony but soon-to-be state. The 1774 census was a more accurate count than 1756, with less "whitewashing." As in 1756, the census was supposed to count the number of "Whites," "Negroes," and "Indians" living in each town, but no indigenous peoples were recorded. The census did not differentiate between free and enslaved Blacks, but most of the "Negroes" were probably enslaved. The late 19th-century historian Ellen Larned, a resident of Windham County, thought that some indigenous people may have been included among the "Negroes." As with the 1756 census, it is best to consider these numbers to be estimates.

Source: *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut* [1636-1776], v. 14 (Hartford: Lockhart and Brainard, 1850)



The maps above are constructed from details taken from Moses Park, *Plan of the Colony of Connecticut in North America*, Nov. 14, 1766. The original is in the Library of Congress.

Black people first came to Connecticut because they were enslaved and brought here against their will. Although many people today don't realize it, Connecticut has a long history of slavery. The first African or Afro-West Indian slaves in Connecticut probably arrived in 1638, when white colonists enslaved Pequots captured in the Pequot War and transported them to the West Indies to exchange for enslaved Africans or Afro-West Indians. Enslaved people are mentioned as living in Hartford as early as 1639 and in New Haven as early as 1644. The number of enslaved people living in Connecticut grew slowly during the 1600s, but rapidly in the 1700s, peaking around 1780, at the time of the American Revolution. "In 1790," write Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jennifer Frank in *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Benefitted from Slavery* (New York: Ballentine Books, 2006), "most prosperous merchants in Connecticut owned at least one slave, as did 50 percent of the ministers." There were more enslaved people in Connecticut in the 1700s than in any of the other New England colonies, in part because Connecticut had a larger middle class, and thus more people who could afford to purchase a slave. Slavery did not end legally in Connecticut until 1848, and did not end in fact until 1857, just before the Civil War. Connecticut's 1638-1848 era of legal slavery lasted for 210 years, and ended only 175 years ago.

### SLAVERY IN CONNECTICUT

| Year | Total Population | Black Population | Enslaved Population | Free Black Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1756 | 128,212 | 3,587(a)(b) | | |
| 1774 | 197,856 | 6,464(a) | | |
| 1790 | 237,655 | 5,419 | 2,648 | 2,771 |
| 1810 | 261,942 | 6,763 | 310 | 6,453 |
| 1820 | 275,248 | 7,967 | 97 | 7,870 |
| 1830 | 297,675 | 8,072 | 25 | 8,047 |
| 1840 | 309,978 | 8,159 | 54 | 8,105 |

(a) The colonial censuses did not differentiate between free and enslaved African Americans. The majority, however, were enslaved. The colonial censuses were less accurate than the later United States censuses.
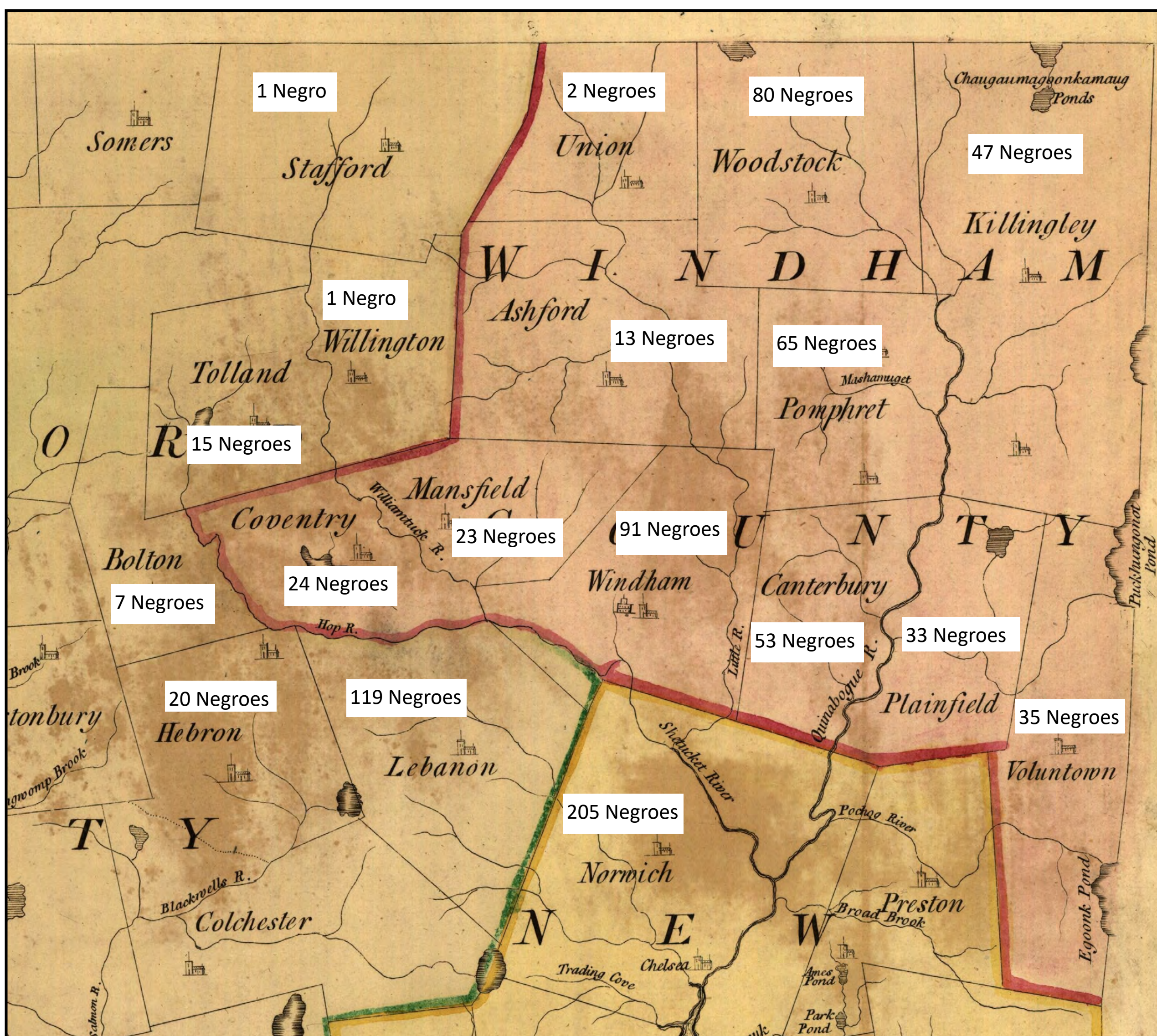
(b) These are the numbers reported to the Board of Trade in London by Connecticut Governor Fitch. The actual numbers from the census itself were 126,976 Whites and 3,019 Negroes. Fitch added to both categories, probably because he believed there had been undercounts.

Sources: *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut* [1636-1776], v. 14 (Hartford: Lockhart and Brainard, 1850); Charles J. Hoadley, *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from May, 1751, to February, 1757, Inclusive, Transcribed and Edited in Accordance with a Resolution of the General Assembly.* (Hartford: Case, Lockwood, and Brainard, 1877); United States Census, 1790-1840

### THINKING ABOUT HISTORY: A LATE 19th-CENTURY HISTORY WRITES ABOUT SLAVERY IN WINDHAM IN THE 1700s

Historians sometimes get history wrong. One mistake is to interpret history through the lens of our own times. In 1874 — only nine years after the end of the Civil War — Ellen Larned published the first history of Connecticut's Windham County. In her chapter on the town of Windham during the American Revolution, she wrote:

"Social life in Windham was still characterized by exuberant hilarity. 'Jaunting and junketing,' feasting and merry-making were more and more in vogue. A very fine and generous style of living had been adopted by the upper circle, rivaling that of the leading families in the larger towns. Windham's relations with Norwich were especially close and cordial, were marked by continual interchange of hospitalities and festivities. **Entertainment was made easy by the great number of negroes. Nearly every household owned its servants, generally a man and wife, with a great brood of children. They were a careless, happy set,** fond of joking and fiddling, and added much to the general jollity. Colonel Dyer's body-servant Jack, the son of an African prince, was chief among these negroes, he accompanied his master upon many public missions, and was distinguished for gentlemanly demeanor. Colonel Dyer had a houseful of negroes, great and small, and entertained much company in fine style. Pictures and rarities brought from abroad adorned his handsome residence." (Ellen D. Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, vol. 1 [1874]).

What do you think about Larned's interpretation of slavery in Windham in the 1770s? Do you think it is overly positive, making slavery sound like it was not so bad? Why do you think Larned avoided using words like *slave, slavery,* and *enslaved*? Do you think that enslaved people in Windham were really "a careless, happy set"? Based on the statistics found in the colonial censuses, do you think it was true that "nearly every household owned its servants, generally a man and wife, with a great brood of children"? Remember, the Civil War had just ended. Were their reasons that white people in Connecticut like Larned might want to cast blame on the South and convince themselves that slavery here in the North had not been so bad?

### A DOCUMENT

This advertisement appeared as a broadside (printed poster), in Woodstock, CT, May 16, 1803 — 19 years after the Connecticut General Assembly passed the state's gradual abolition law in 1784. The original is in the collections of the Connecticut Historical Society.

#### Ten Dollars Reward!

Ran away from the Subscriber, on the night of the 15th instant, a Negro Boy, named *Caesar*, 18 years old, nearly 6 feet high, stout and well made, walks pretty erect, speaks fluently: He wore away a light colored sailor jacket, a mixed green and black swandown vest, a pair of blue overalls, a Holland shirt, a pair of gray socks, a pair of thick shoes, a brown home-made great coat, and a large old Hat; has a small scar on his left cheek. He has lately been guilty of theft, and made his escape through fear of punishment. Whoever will return said Negro, or secure him so that his master may get him again, shall receive the above reward, and all reasonable charges. — All persons are forbid harboring, trusting or employing said Negro, on penalty of the Law.

SAMUEL M'CLELLAN
*Woodstock*, Connecticut, May 16, 1803.