



Slavery and Crime in Missouri, 1773-1865

Harriet Frazier

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Slavery and its lasting effects have long been an issue in America, with the scars inflicted running deep. This study examines crimes such as stealing, burglary, arson, rape and murder committed against and by slaves, with most of the author's information coming from handwritten court records and newspapers. These documents show the death penalty rarely applied when a slave killed another slave, but that it always applied when a slave killed a white person. Despite Missouri's grim criminal justice system, the state's best lawyers were called upon to represent slaves in court on serious criminal charges, and federal law applied to all persons, granting slaves in Missouri protection that few other slave states had. By 1860, Missouri's population was only 10 percent slave, the smallest percentage of any slave state in America.



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