Unrequited Toil

Written as a narrative history of slavery within the United States, *Unrequited Toil* details how an institution that seemed to be disappearing at the end of the American Revolution rose to become the most contested and valuable economic interest in the nation by 1850. Calvin Schermerhorn charts changes in the family lives of enslaved Americans, exploring the broader processes of nation-building in the United States, the growth and intensification of national and international markets, the institutionalization of chattel slavery, and the growing relevance of race in the politics and society of the republic. In chapters organized chronologically, Schermerhorn argues that American economic development relied upon African Americans’ social reproduction while simultaneously destroying their intergenerational cultural continuity. He explores the personal narratives of enslaved people and develops themes such as politics, economics, labor, literature, rebellion, and social conditions.

Cambridge Essential Histories

Cambridge Essential Histories is devoted to introducing critical events, periods, or individuals in history to students. Volumes in this series emphasize narrative as a means of familiarizing students with historical analysis. In this series, leading scholars focus on topics in European, American, Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern, African, and World History through thesis-driven, concise volumes designed for survey and upper-division undergraduate history courses. The books contain an introduction that acquaints readers with the historical event and reveals the book's thesis; narrative chapters that cover the chronology of the event or problem; and a concluding summary that provides the historical interpretation and analysis.

General Editor
Donald T. Critchlow, Arizona State University

Other Books in the Series
Michael G. Kort, The Vietnam War Reexamined
Maura Jane Farrelly, Anti-Catholicism in America, 1620–1860
David M. Wrobel, America's West: A History, 1890–1950
Mark E. Neely Jr., Lincoln and the Democrats: The Politics of Opposition in the Civil War
Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, Radicals in America: The U.S. Left since the Second World War
W. J. Rorabaugh, American Hippies
Sean P. Cunningham, American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt
Jason Scott Smith, A Concise History of the New Deal
Stanley G. Payne, The Spanish Civil War
J. C. A. Stagg, The War of 1812
Ian Dowbiggin, The Quest for Mental Health: A Tale of Science, Medicine, Scandal, Sorrow, and Mass Society
Wilson D. Miscamble, The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan
Edward D. Berkowitz, Mass Appeal: The Formative Age of the Movies, Radio, and TV
Charles H. Parker, Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400–1800
James H. Hutson, Church and State in America: The First Two Centuries
Maury Klein, The Genesis of Industrial America, 1870–1920
John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, Early Cold War Spies: The Espionage Trials That Shaped American Politics
Unrequited Toil

A History of United States Slavery

CALVIN SCHERMERHORN

Arizona State University
For Eva and Marion
Contents

Acknowledgments  page viii

Introduction  1
1 Counterrevolutionaries  12
2 Slow Death for Slavery?  21
3 Cotton Empire  34
4 Black Insurgency  47
5 Financial Chains  74
6 Life in the Quotidian  92
7 Landscape of Sexual Violence  111
8 Industrial Discipline  127
9 Narrative  149
10 Geopolitics  165
11 Abolition War  189
12 No Justice, No Peace  210
Conclusion  240

Index  248

vii
Acknowledgments

This book was made possible by a fellowship at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities in Charlottesville, the generosity of its then-president Robert C. Vaughan III, and the enthusiastic support of William W. Freehling, along with the input and suggestions of my fellow fellows in 2013–14. Since graduate school, Joseph C. Miller has shaped my understandings of slavery as history, and I’m also indebted for the input and guidance of scholars including Edward L. Ayers, Edward E. Baptist, Sven Beckert, Richard James Bell, Daina Ramey Berry, Christopher Bonner, Kathryn Boody, Paul Finkelman, Alexandra Finley, Alan Gallay, Jerome S. Handler, Kelly M. Kennington, John Majewski, W. Caleb McDaniel, Maurie J. McInnis, Keri Leigh Merritt, Susan Eva O’Donovan, Damian Alan Pargas, Heather Cox Richardson, Seth Rockman, Caitlin Rosenthal, and Joshua D. Rothman. I’m grateful to John Ulrich at Harvard Student Resources for his assistance and to Leslie C. Doyle at Arizona State University for her fantastic work. Donald T. Critchlow and Steven Deyle provided deft editorial guidance, and thanks also to Kristina Deusch and Deborah Gershenowitz at Cambridge University Press. Arizona State University supported this book in many ways, and I wish to thank Matthew F. Delmont and Matthew J. Garcia especially. Google Books and the University of North Carolina’s Documenting the American South project made so many hard-to-find volumes accessible. Thanks to Nick Brandt for supporting a preview of this work, to Clint and Eileen Merritt for lively conversations, and to Ronnie Broadfoot and Nell Carlson for warm
Acknowledgments

hospitality while I worked at the Harvard Business School’s Baker Library. This book would not have been possible without the loving and patient support of my wife, Margaret, and I reserve a special note of gratitude to Marion and Eva for tirelessly asking, *Daddy, tell us what you’re writing about.*