**Who Benefited from the Slave Trade?**

**The Slave Trade Business**

*Northern businesses participated in the slave trade in a variety of ways.*

Slave traders like the DeWolfs took part in what is known as the “Triangle Trade,” which, in the case of the U.S. trade, included New England, Africa, and slave markets in North America and the Caribbean. New England traders would send ships loaded with rum and other goods to the coast of Africa, to trade for enslaved Africans. Those ships would then take their human cargos across the “Middle Passage” to ports in Caribbean islands or the southern U.S. states. There, they would sell the slaves and often buy cargos of sugar cane, molasses, and other goods produced with slave labor, to bring north to markets in New England. Distillers in the northeast would then make rum from the sugar cane, which in turn could be sold in Africa for more slaves.

The slave trade helped to build the growing economies of northern seaports like Bristol, and supported the economies of many towns along the New England coast or further inland. Slave traders paid shipbuilders, insurers, blacksmiths, and a wide variety of other tradesmen, merchants, and farmers. Almost every business and industry in the region traded or did business with merchants or shippers whose wealth was made by slavery. In addition, those who invested in slaving voyages came from almost all walks of life: while wealthy families such as the DeWolfs were often significant investors, smaller shares in voyages would be owned by ordinary tradesmen and artisans, such as blacksmiths, masons, bakers, rope-makers, painters, and those engaged in various forms of manual labor.

Traces of the Trade A Story from the Deep North

Source: <http://www.tracesofthetrade.org/>

**Outfitting the Slave Ship Sally in 1764, Providence, Rhode Island**

*In 1764, a one-hundred ton ship called the Sally left Providence, Rhode Island, heading to West Africa on a slaving voyage.*

While a few Rhode Island families made a lot of money in the African slave trade, the real story of the Rhode Island slave trade is not of a few great fortunes but of all the people who participated and profited. Historians have identified some seven hundred eighteenth-century Rhode Islanders who owned or captained slave ships. Some merchants even sold shares in slaving voyages, much as we today buy and sell stocks.

Even those who did not invest directly in the slave trade often depended on it for their livelihoods. Preparing and equipping a slave ship for the long trip to Africa took weeks and needed the help of an entire community. Local sail lofts and ropewalks prepared canvas and rigging. Caulkers and smiths sealed and sheathed hulls (sealed cracks and made the ship airtight). Distilleries (business that made liquor) churned out the high-proof New England rum for which Rhode Island ships were famous on the African coast. Farmers supplied flour, beef, tobacco, and onions. Bakers supplied bread. Even the local apothecary (someone who makes medicine) contributed, supplying a variety of ointments and elixirs for the ship's medicine chest.

By early September, 1764, the fitting out was finished. Esek Hopkins, the Sally's captain, produced a detailed inventory of everything aboard the ship, down to the exact number of gallons in each hogshead (a large barrel) of rum. According to the ship's bill of lading (a list of the goods being shipped), the Sally carried 17,274 gallons of rum when she sailed, as well as 1,800 bunches of onions, thirty boxes of spermaceti candles (whale oil candles manufactured at the Brown family's Providence candle works), and other supplies and trade goods. It also carried seven swivel guns, an assortment of small arms, "40 hand Cufs & 40 Shakels," chains, cutlasses, and other items needed to control the intended cargo.

Slavery and Justice Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice

<http://brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/documents/SlaveryAndJustice.pdf>