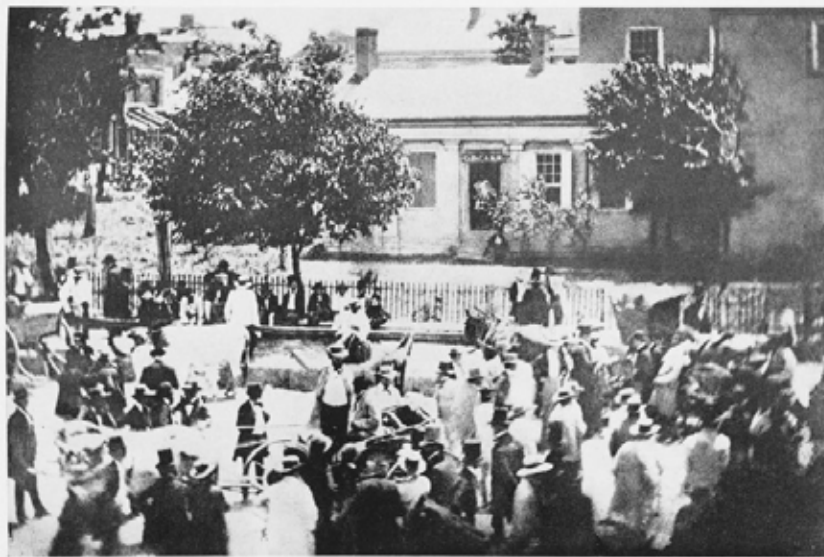


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CIVIL WAR TO CIVIL RIGHTS: CHEAPSIDE SLAVE AUCTION BLOCK



SLAVE AUCTION ON CHEAPSIDE, LEXINGTON

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LEXINGTON — Lexington was the capital of Kentucky's antebellum slave trade. Located in the heart of the Bluegrass region — where slaves were most prevalent — traders found a good market for sales, and because it was far from the Ohio River, it was difficult for slaves to escape. Cheapside Auction Block was the town's primary slave trade location.

Many of the sales at Cheapside resulted from estate settlements. When a slave owner passed away

and his wife or children did not inherit his slaves, they were sold at public auction by court commissioners and the proceeds split among the heirs. These sales usually occurred on court days, when the public concentrated near the Fayette County Courthouse on Cheapside Street to buy, sell and trade goods and services.

To most Lexington citizens, slave sales were a common observation. To some people, however, slave trading brought a sense of indignation and disdain for the dealers. Illinois Sen. Orville H. Browning, a former Kentuckian, remarked in 1854 how his attitude toward slave sales had changed since leaving the Commonwealth.

"Although I am not sensible of any change in my views upon the abstract question of slavery, many of its features that are no longer familiar make a more vivid impression of wrong than they did before I lived away from the influence of the institution." Ultimately, thousands of slaves were sold at Cheapside, including children who were separated from their parents.

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