

Vassa's Life Events

Vassa's Middle Passage

- c. 1742** born in Essaka, in Igboland, now southeastern Nigeria, although in *The Interesting Narrative* he states he was born in “that part of Africa, known by the name of Guinea” in 1745
- 1753** kidnapped, sold to the coast, probably at Bonny in the Niger delta
- 1754** (early March) leaves Bight of Biafra for Middle Passage on *Ogden*
- 1754** (9 May) arrives in Bridgetown, Barbados
- 1754** (21 May–13 June) trans-shipped to Virginia on *Nancy*
- 1754** (early summer) purchased by tobacco planter Mr. Campbell
- 1754** (summer) bought by British naval officer, Michael Henry Pascal, Captain of the *Industrious Bee*
- 1754-1763** slave to Pascal
- 1754** (September) sails for England with Pascal
- 1754** (December) arrives in Falmouth, England, after 13 week voyage
- 1754** befriends Pascal’s servant, Richard Baker, son of Pascal’s landlady in Virginia; remains several months on the island of Guernsey

The Seven Years War (1755-1762)

- 1755-1762** aboard Royal Navy vessels before and during Seven Years War
- 1755** (August) Pascal’s servant aboard the *HMS Roebuck*
- 1756** (14 December) leaves the *HMS Roebuck*
- 1757** Pascal’s servant on the *HMS Savage* and the *HMS Preston*
- 1757** (January- November) recovers from chilblains and smallpox at St. George’s Hospital, London
- 1758** (12 January) Pascal’s servant on the *HMS Royal George*
- 1758** (27 January) transferred to the *HMS Namur*
- 1758** (2 June to 25 July) siege and battle of Louisbourg on Cape Breton; Admiral Edward Boscawen on board; Captain Matthew Buckle. Pascal is junior officer
- 1759** (9 February) baptized at St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster, London (Godparents Elizabeth Martha and Maynard Guerin)
- 1759** (spring) returns to sea on the *HMS Namur*, patrolling the Mediterranean
- 1759** (August) Pascal’s servant on the *HMS Aetna*
- 1760-1761** (fall and winter) lives in England
- 1761** (March) serves on the *HMS Aetna* during attack on Belle-Île-en-Mer
- 1762** (29 September) promoted by Pascal to rating of able seaman

Vassa's Travels (1762-1772)

- 1762** sold to James Doran, captain of the *Charming Sally*
- 1762** (30 December) *Charming Sally* sets sail from England
- 1763** (13 February) arrives at Montserrat
- 1763** (mid-May) sold to Robert King in Montserrat
- 1763-1766** slave to Robert King
- 1763** (end of) works for Thomas Farmer who captains one of King’s ships
- 1765** (11 February) hears George Whitefield preach in Savannah, Georgia
- 1765** (to early 1766) in Philadelphia; Robert King sets Vassa’s emancipation at £40
- 1766** (beginning of) in Savannah, Georgia
- 1766** (May) reaches Charleston, South Carolina

- 1766 (11 July) purchases his freedom; continues to work for Robert King
- 1766 (August) sails aboard the *Nancy*
- 1767 (29 January) the *Nancy* sails to Georgia
- 1767 shipwrecked in the Bahamas
- 1767 (late spring) books passage to Montserrat from Savannah on the *Speedwell*
- 1767 meets James Ramsey in St. Kitts
- 1767 (26 July) leaves Montserrat for London on the *Andromache*
- 1767 (September) the *Andromache* arrives at Cherry-Garden Stairs, south bank of the Thames
- 1767-1768 (September 1767–February 1768) trains under a hairdresser in Coventry Court, Haymarket; pays neighbor to teach him to play French horn; learns arithmetic
- 1768 (February) hired as hairdresser by Dr. Charles Irving
- 1768 (July) works for John Jolly on *Delaware*; travels to Villefranche-sur-Mer, Nice, Livorno on the Tuscany coast; and Smyrna [Isna] in the Ottoman Porte
- 1769 (May) in Porto, Portugal, during carnival
- 1769 (September) at Genoa
- 1769 (December) at Smyrna [Isna] for the second time
- 1770 (March) returns to England
- 1771 (April) hired by William Robertson on the *Grenada Planter*, bound for Madeira, Barbados, and Grenada
- 1772 (early) hired by Captain David Watt on the *Jamaica*, bound for Nevis and Jamaica
- 1772 (22 June) Lord Mansfield's verdict in the case of James Somerset
- 1772 (August) in London; assistant to Dr. Charles Irving in development of apparatus to distill sea water into drinking water

Arctic Expedition (1773)

- 1773 (17 May) assistant to Dr. Charles Irving on *HMS Racehorse* Arctic expedition of Constantine John Phipps (later Lord Mulgrave)
- 1773 (11 June) Arctic expedition reaches the Shetland Islands; (15 June) passes latitude 60° north and reaches southern coast of Spitsbergen at latitude 78° north
- 1773 Stuck in ice in Arctic
- 1773 (30 September) *HMS Racehorse* and *HMS Carcass* reach Deptford, ending Arctic voyage

Mediterranean (1773-1775)

- 1773 (October) in London, working as hairdresser
- 1774 Annis affair; meets Granville Sharp
- 1774 (early) hired by Captain John Hughes on *Anglicana* destined for Smyrna [Isna]
- 1774 (September) hired by Captain Richard Strange on the *Hope* destined for Cádiz
- 1774 (6 October) undergoes conversion to Methodism of the Huntingdonian Connexion
- 1774 (December) returns to London
- 1775 (March) sails onboard the *Hope* to Cádiz, Gibraltar, and Málaga on the *Costa del Sol*
- 1775 (late May–June) sails to Cádiz and then to England

Mosquito Shore (1775-1776)

- 1775 (November) hired by Dr. Charles Irving and Alexander Blair to establish a plantation on the Mosquito Shore
- 1775 (13 November) sets sail for Jamaica on *Morning Star* (co-owned by Irving and Blair) under command of David Miller
- 1776 (mid-January) the *Morning Star* reaches Jamaica to purchase slaves
- 1776 (30 April) *Morning Star* seized by Spanish *guardacostas* at Black River (Rio Tinto)
- 1776 (mid-June) leaves Mosquito Shore for Jamaica via Costa Rica coast

1776 (14 October) the *Indian Queen* reaches Jamaica
1777 (7 January) reaches Plymouth on board the *Squirrel*

Vassa in England (1777-1789)

1779 (early) hired by deposed acting governor of Province of Senegambia, Matthias McNamara
1779 (11 March) lives on Hedge Lane, Charing Cross, Westminster
1779 (March) seeks appointment as missionary to Africa from Robert Lowth, Lord Bishop of London; McNamara and Wallace write letters in support of his application
1779 leaves McNamara's employ
1780-1782 works for George Pitt, 1st Baron Rivers, Colonel, Dorset Militia at Coxheath, Kent
1783 (19 March) informs abolitionist Granville Sharp of the *Zong* massacre (1781)
1783 tours Shropshire and eight counties in Wales
1784 hired as steward on the *London* commanded by Martin Hopkins, destined for New York
1785 (January) returns to England on the *London*
1785 (March) sails with Hopkins to Philadelphia
1785 (August) returns to London
1786 (March) employed on *Harmony* under Captain John Willett, bound for Philadelphia
1786 (3 August) the *Harmony* reaches Gravesend; Vassa returns to London
1786 (November) appointed Commissary for the Black Poor by the Committee for Relief of Black Poor in London for Sierra Leone expedition
1787 (21 March) Vassa dismissed as Commissary for the Sierra Leone expedition
1787 associated with "Sons of Africa" letters to newspapers against slavery
1787 (22 May) the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (SEAST) is formed
1788 lives in Baldwin's Gardens, Holborn
1788 (21 March) presents anti-slave trade petition to Queen Charlotte
1788 Dolben Act to limit number of slaves on board ship
1788 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Slave Trade announced
1788 writes his autobiography
1789 (24 March) *The Interesting Narrative* published in London, registered at Stationers' Hall
1789 (24 March) lists his address as Union-Street, Mary-le-bone
1789 (summer) volunteers to go to Africa under the sponsorship of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa
1789-1792 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Slave Trade

Book Tour and Last Years (1789-1797)

1789 (9 July) book tour in Cambridge with introduction from Thomas Clarkson
1789 (July) likely meets Susannah Cullen while in Cambridge
1790 (fall) resides with Thomas Hardy, founder of the London Corresponding Society, and Hardy's wife, Lydia, at No. 4 Taylor's Buildings, St. Martin's-Lane
1791 (March) in Nottingham and Halifax
1791 (December) befriends political radical Samuel Nielson
1792 (end of January) sails from London to Scotland
1792 (February) returns to London; lives again with Thomas and Lydia Hardy at No. 4 Taylor's Buildings
1792 (7 April) marries Susannah Cullen of Soham, Cambridgeshire
1792 (10 April) Vassa and Susannah arrive in Scotland; travel to Paisley and Glasgow
1792 (early May) Vassa and Susannah in Edinburgh
1792 (summer) visits Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth
1792 (October) in Durham on his way south

1792 (November) in Hull
1793 (late August–early September) travels to Bristol via Devizes back to London
1793 (16 October) Anna Maria Vassa is born in Soham
1794 (February to spring) in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Essex; much of this tour in Norwich
1794 (13 February) attends meeting of Tusculun School (a Norwich debating society)
1794 (7 March) attends Tusculun School debate for the second time
1794 in Lynn and Ipswich gathering subscribers for ninth edition of *The Interesting Narrative*
1794 (May) Thomas Hardy arrested for high treason
1794 (November) subscribes to Carl Bernhard Wadstrom's *An Essay on Colonization, particularly applied to the West Coast of Africa* (London: Darton and Harvey)
1795 (11 April) Joanna Vassa is born in Soham
1796 (20 February) Susannah dies in Soham
1796 (28 May) writes his will and last testament at Plaisterers' Hall in London
1796 (summer/early fall) lives on John Street, off Tottenham Court Road in Middlesex, London
1797 (31 March) dies in London
1797 Buried at Whitefield Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Rd., London
1797 (21 July) Anna Maria Vassa dies, aged four
1807 (25 March) passage of British Abolition of the Slave Trade
1857 (10 March) Joanna Vassa dies, aged sixty-one

The document was last updated on 15 June 2020 by Paul Lovejoy