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Minnesota's Transition as a Free State

The transition of Minnesota from a slave territory to a free territory took place through a series of legislation. It is interesting to note that at first the territory of Minnesota prohibited slavery and a series of legislation affirmed this prohibition till 1857 (Lehman 186). The turning point of Minnesota legalizing slavery came from the US Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision which legalized slavery in all federal territories which also included Minnesota (Lehman 186). This decision was short lived and when Minnesota became a state it joined the union as a free state in 1858. However, even as a free state Minnesota did pass bills that legalized slavery for tourism. The passing of the Thirteenth Amendment and the cut-off from slaveholders of the Confederate states during the Civil War marked Minnesota's complete transition to a slave-free state (Lehman 186).

Minnesota like many states which got rid of slavery still was not free from the issues of race and discrimination. A lot of Minnesota's wealth even though it was marked as a free state did come from the investment of various enslavers most notably the University of Minnesota (Lehman 180). When Minnesota finally abolished slavery many former slaves still worked for their enslavers as domestic servants and farm laborers with better working conditions nonetheless (Lehman 181). African Americans in Minnesota faced challenges, including racial prejudice, limited economic opportunities, and social segregation. While Minnesota may have been free by

law, the struggle for true racial equality and justice persisted long after the legal transition, reflecting broader national dynamics during the post-Civil War Reconstruction era.

References

Lehman, Christopher P. *Slavery's Reach: Southern Slaveholders in the North Star State*. Saint Paul, MN Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2019.