

The Network

An Enslaving Virginia Publication
June 24, 1999

The seventh issue of "The Network" contains the deeds of emancipation from George Wythe to two his enslaved men, Ben and James, in 1797.

This issue also has transcriptions of four nineteenth-century documents. The first is a September 1833 letter from Thomas O. Cogbill, the Clerk of James City County Court, to James E. Heath, Esquire, the Auditor of Public Accounts. Cogbill informed Heath that none of the free people of color in James City County wanted to be transported to Africa. The lists of Williamsburg's free blacks and mulattos that James Lee recorded in 1833 and 1834 follow Cogbill's letter. Lee's records provide details about family relationships and the occupations of free people of color in Williamsburg. A comparison of Lee's 1834 list with the 1834 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List (the four nineteenth-century document in this issue of "The Network") indicates that the majority of the women who headed the city's free black households did not appear on the personal property tax list because they did not have a slave twelve years of age or older, a horse, or a riding vehicle in Williamsburg.

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George Wythe emancipated two slave men, Ben and James, in January 1797. Both of the emancipations were recorded in Henrico County in February of the same year. Ben was Wythe's coachman in the 1760s and 1770s when he received tips from Thomas Jefferson. James, also known as Jimmy, was the son of Rachel. Wythe taught Jimmy to write in 1791. See the section on "The Wythe House," pp. 420-429 in the Enslaving Virginia Resource Book for additional information about Ben and James (Jimmy).

Know all men by these presents, signed and sealed this twenty fifth day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and ninety seven, that I George Wythe of the City of Richmond do set free my man Slave named Ben who is more than forty five years old.

G: Wythe

Witnesses

Wilson Allan

Peter P Blagrove

Reynolds Chapman

At a court held for Henrico County, at the Courthouse, the sixth of February 1797. This Deed of Emancipation was proved by the Oaths of Peter P Blagrove and Reynolds Chapman witnesses thereto and ordered to be Recorded
Examined

Teste

Adam Craig C C

Source: Henrico County Deeds (5) 201, dated 25 January 1797 and recorded 6 February 1797.

Know all men by these presents, signed and sealed this twenty fifth day of January in the year of our Lord, One thousand seven hundred and ninety seven, that I George Wythe of the City of Richmond do set free my man Slave named James who is more than twenty one but not forty five years old.

G: Wythe

Witnesses

Wilson Allan

Peter P Blagrove

Reynolds Chapman

At a court held for Henrico county, at the Courthouse, the sixth of February 1797. This Deed of Emancipation was proved by the Oaths of Peter P Blagrove and Reynolds Chapman witnesses thereto and ordered to be Recorded
Examined

Teste

Adam Craig C C

Source: Henrico County Deeds (5) 202, dated 25 January 1797 and recorded 6 February 1797.

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September 18, 1833—Letter from Thomas O. Cogbill, clerk of James City County Court, to James E. Heath, Esquire Auditor of Public Accounts

After Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion, several Virginia legislators, including Thomas J. Randolph, Thomas Jefferson's grandson, proposed plans for the emancipation of the state's slaves. The emancipationist legislators were able to force agreement from many of their opponents that slavery was a dangerous institution that ideally should be eliminated. Yet they shared with the defenders of slavery the conviction that Africans could not coexist with Europeans in a state of equality, without society collapsing into crime, anarchy, and race war. Overwhelmingly, therefore, Virginia's emancipationists returned to the plan of colonization, arguing that freed slaves should be returned to Africa at state expense. In March 1833, the General Assembly passed a bill that appropriated funds to transport free people of color to Africa. Six months later, in September 1833, Thomas O. Cogbill informed the Auditor of Public Accounts that no free black man, woman, or child from James City County wanted to leave the county.

Williamsburg Septemr. 18th 1833

Sir:

Agreeably to a request made some time since, the County Court of James City made an order appointing several gentlemen to enquire among the free persons of colour in said County, and, to ascertain if any of them were willing to accept of the provisions of the act of assembly passed on the 4th: of March 1833 making appropriations for the removal of free persons of color &c.... Those Gentlemen have made no report to the Court, but from what I have been able to learn from a majority of them, there is not one free person of colour in the County of James City that is willing to accept of the provisions of the said act of Assembly. I should have attended to this matter sooner, but have been prevented by the negligence of those persons appointed by the Court to make the necessary enquiries among the free persons of colour.

Your obedient servant

Th: O. Cogbill Clerk
of James City County Court

Source: Auditor of Public Accounts, Miscellaneous Microfilm 1320-1322, Library of Virginia.

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1833—"A list of free negroes and mulattoes, within the city of Williamsburg"

This list contains the names of seventy-nine free blacks and mulattoes who lived in Williamsburg in 1833.

A list of free negroes and mulattoes, within the city of Williamsburg, their names, sexes, places of abode, and their particular trades, occupations or callings, taken by James Lee commissioner of the revenue, in said City, for the year 1833.

Henry Cook, farmer, children, Robert, Richard, James, Caroline & Lucy	6
Robert Jordan, m, carpenter, Beverley Rowsey, m, shoemaker	2
Ann Rolison, m, midwife, child Rocktilda & grand children Berryann and Robert G. Jacquelin Lightfoot, m, plasterer	5
Hannah Banks, washer, child Henry. George Mason, painter	3
Nancy Jasper, old and infirm. Judy Reigensburg, washer, children Sally and William. William Yates, m, Barber	5
George Webb, old and infirm. William Bassett, m, shoemaker	2

John Minor, farmer, wife Mary. Renderson N. Scott, m, shoemaker	3
John Cassady, m, shoemaker, wife Jane, children William, John, James, Anderson and Augustine. Tener, day labourer	8
William Debress, m, shoemaker, wife Sophia, children, Henry & Adelaide	4
Patsey Fordice, washer. Patsey Preston at labour with Mrs. Carr	2
Peggy Smith, m, seamstress, children Margaretta and Sarah	3
Zizi, baker of cakes &c. Sally Bates, washer	2
Daniel Roberts, m, oysterman, wife Nelly, child Richard	3
Judy Page, m, washer, children William and Sarah	3
Nelly Bolling, m, seamstress, child Mary. Suckey Nanton, m	3
Jeffery Barrett, Ditcher, wife, Sally, m, child Simeon	3
Philea Magnorton, m, washer, Charlotte. Isabella Lightfoot, m, washer	3
Sally Page, m, washer, child, Judy. Mary Rolison, m, seamstress	3
Nancy, m, seamstress, children, Caroline & Elizabeth, at Mrs. Murdaughs	3
Christiana, m, washer, children, Peter and Martha Ann	3
Sally, m, seamstress, children, Alexander, John, Mary, Elizabeth, & Jas Henry	5
Benjamin White, m, shoemaker. Sally Murray, m, washer	2
Free Lucy, washer. Ashy, washer, resides at the Lodge	2
Patsey White, m, seamstress	<u>1</u>
Jas. Lee C C C W	79

Note. In the above list, the mulattoes are distinguished from the free negroes, by the former having m subjoined to their names.

Source: Auditor of Public Accounts, Miscellaneous Microfilm 1320-1322, Library of Virginia.

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1834—"A list of free negroes and mulattoes, within the city of Williamsburg"

This list contains the names of eighty free blacks and mulattos who lived in Williamsburg in 1834. The brackets indicate parts of words that are torn on the original document.

A list of free negroes and mulattoes, within the city of Williamsburg, their names, sexes, places of abode, and their particular trades, occupations or callings; taken by James Lee commission[er] [o]f the revenue, in the said city, for the year 1834

William Debress, shoemaker, wife, Sophia, children Henry, Adelaid & Catharine	5
William Yates, Barber. Robert Jordan, carpenter, wife Clara	3
Jeffery Barrett, Ditcher, wife Sally, son Simeon	3
Aphilea Magnorton, washer, child Charlotte	2
Henry, with Mrs. Reigensburg. Jacquelin Lightfoot, plasterer.	2
Hannah Banks, washer, children, Henry, Maria and Nelly	4
Benjamin White, shoemaker. John Staves, carpenter, child William	3
Ann Rolison, midwife. Rocktilda Rolison, washer, children Berry Ann & Ro. G.	4
Mary Rolison, seamstress. Judy Carter, washer, children, William and Sally	4
Mary Gayles, washer, children, Charles, Anna, William Henry & Thomas Edward	5
[Sa]lly Murray, washer, child Mary. Sucky Nanton washer	3
[Sa]lly Page, washer, child Lucy. William Bassett, shoemaker	3
[Isa]bella Lightfoot, washer, child William. Patsy Preston, with Mrs. Carr	3
[B]everley Rowsey, shoemaker. Nelly Bolling, seamstress, child Mary	3
[Pa]tsy White, washer. Thomas Lyons, oysterman, wife Polly children Polly & Kitty	5
Dandridge Macon, oysterman. John Minor, farmer, wife Polly	3

John Cassady, shoemaker, wife Jane, children, William, John, James, Andrew, Augustine and Joseph	8
Peggy Smith, seamstress, children, Sarah and Margareta	3
Renderson Scott, shoemaker. James Wallace, shoemaker	2
George Webb, old and infirm. George Mason, painter	2
Zizi, cake maker. Ashy, washer. Free Lucy, washer	3
B[rid]get, at service with Mr. G. Jackson, children, James, Peter, & Sarah Ann	4
Christiana, seamstress, children, Martha Ann and Robert	<u>3</u>
Total	80

Jas. Lee C. R. C. W.

Source: Auditor of Public Accounts, Miscellaneous Microfilm 1320-1322, Library of Virginia.

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1834—Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List

This list of 167 households includes just one household headed by a free black woman named Zizi and nineteen free persons of color.

1834

Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List

Name	White Males Over 16	Free Black Males Over 16	Slaves Over 16	Slaves Between 12 and 16	Horses, Mules, Mares & Colts	Riding Carriages
Allen Elizabeth L	0	0	2	0	0	0
Anderson Leroy	1	0	1	1	0	0
Anderson Robert	1	0	7	1	3	2
Andrews John	1	0	1	0	0	0
Angel Thomas	1	0	1	0	0	0
Armstead Robert H	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bailey Alexander	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ball Farley	1	0	0	0	1	0
Barlow John H	1	0	1	0	0	0
Barrett Jeffery	0	2	0	0	0	0
Bassett Richard	1	0	1	0	0	0
Bassett William	0	1	1	0	0	0
Bingley George W	2	0	4	0	1	0
Bishop Benjamin	1	0	1	3	3	1
Bolt Elizabeth S	0	0	1	0	1	0
Booker Richard T	2	0	4	0	0	0
Boulton Edward	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bowden Mildred	1	0	4	0	1	0
Bowers Moreau	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bowry James T	1	0	1	1	0	0
Bowry Thomas	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bright Samuel F	1	0	4	0	1	0
Brooks Archer	1	0	0	0	2	0
Brooks Richardson	1	0	0	0	0	0
Brooks William	1	0	0	0	0	0
Browne Dabney	1	0	3	0	0	0
Bucktrout Benjamin E	1	0	1	0	1	1
Bucktrout Richard M	2	0	3	0	1	0
Byrd Addison L	1	0	6	0	1	0
Byrd Sally W	0	0	4	0	1	0
Cabaniss James	1	0	4	1	2	0
Cary Jane B	0	0	2	0	0	0
Cary Lucious	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cassady John	0	1	0	0	0	0
Cheminant Frances	0	0	5	0	0	0
Chewning Albert G	3	0	7	0	2	1
Christian John A	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cogbill Thomas O	1	0	0	0	0	0
Coke Richard Jur	1	0	5	1	2	1
Cole Jesse	1	0	10	1	4	2
Cole Matthew W	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cole Roscow	1	0	8	0	2	2
Coleman Thomas	1	0	6	2	3	0
Craig Nancy	0	0	1	0	0	0
Davis James	1	0	2	0	0	0
Debress William	0	1	1	0	0	0
Delk William H	1	0	2	1	0	0
Deneufville John A	1	0	1	1	1	0

1834

Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List

Name	White Males Over 16	Free Black Males Over 16	Slaves Over 16	Slaves Between 12 and 16	Horses, Mules, Mares & Colts	Riding Carriages
Deneufville John A Jur	2	0	1	0	0	0
Deneufville Robert J	1	0	1	0	0	0
Dew Thomas R	1	0	1	0	0	0
Dodd William	1	0	0	0	0	0
Donnelly Eleanor E	0	0	2	0	0	0
Durfey & Edloe	0	0	1	0	2	1
Edloe Henry	1	0	8	3	4	1
Edloe William	1	0	7	3	12	3
Fitzhugh Mary est	0	0	2	0	0	0
Foster Frances	2	0	1	1	0	0
Galt Alexander D	1	0	8	1	3	1
Galt Dickie	1	0	2	0	0	0
Galt Mary A	0	0	1	0	0	0
Garrett Richard R	1	0	0	0	0	0
Garrett Robert M	1	0	3	1	4	2
Graves Joseph A	1	0	0	0	0	0
Gregory John M	1	0	0	0	1	0
Griffin Samuel S	3	0	4	1	2	3
Guthrie James	1	0	3	0	1	1
Hansford Charles	1	0	1	0	0	0
Hatton Washington	1	0	0	0	0	0
Henley Harriet T	1	0	7	1	1	1
Hermonson Matthew T	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hubbard Augustine C	1	0	1	0	1	0
Hubbard Richardson	1	0	4	1	1	0
Hubbard Walker	1	0	1	0	1	0
Hutchings John W	1	0	1	1	0	0
Jackson George W	1	0	0	0	0	0
Jackson William	1	0	1	0	0	0
Jenkins Elias	1	0	0	0	0	0
Johnson William D	1	0	0	1	0	0
Jones Scervant	0	0	3	0	0	0
Jordan Robert	0	1	0	0	1	0
Lark Robert	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lawson James S	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lee Higginson W	2	0	1	0	0	0
Lee James	2	0	3	1	0	0
Lee William H	2	0	1	1	0	0
Lightfoot Jacquelin	0	1	1	0	0	0
Lindsey Edward B	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lindsey Thomas	1	0	0	1	0	0
Lively Charles	1	0	1	0	1	0
Lucas Thomas C est	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lyons Thomas	0	1	0	0	0	0
Macon Dandridge	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mahone James M	1	0	1	1	0	0
Martin John D	2	0	0	1	1	0
Mason David	4	0	4	2	3	0

1834

Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List

Name	White Males Over 16	Free Black Males Over 16	Slaves Over 16	Slaves Between 12 and 16	Horses, Mules, Mares & Colts	Riding Carriages
Mason George	0	1	0	0	0	0
Maupin John M	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mccalester Alexander	1	0	0	0	0	0
McCandlish George W	1	0	3	1	1	0
McCandlish Robert	1	0	10	0	3	0
McGill Martha	0	0	5	2	0	0
Miller Ann	0	0	2	0	0	0
Minor John	0	1	0	0	1	0
Moody William M	1	0	2	1	0	0
Moore Summersett	1	0	0	0	0	0
Moore Susan	0	0	0	1	0	0
Morrison George est	0	0	3	0	2	1
Morrison George F	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mounfortt Sally	0	0	2	0	0	0
Murdaugh Lucy B	0	0	2	0	0	0
Page John	1	0	3	0	1	1
Palmer Delilah	0	0	1	0	0	0
Pamplin William	1	0	0	0	0	0
Peachy Mary M	0	0	15	1	3	1
Peachy Thomas G	1	0	5	1	1	1
Pettis Madison	1	0	2	0	2	1
Pierce Edward J	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pierce Henry W	1	0	0	0	0	0
Provoo Clara	0	0	2	1	0	0
Provoo Diana	0	0	2	0	0	0
Reiginsburg Mary	0	0	1	0	0	0
Repiton Eliza	0	0	1	0	0	0
Richardson Robert G	2	0	10	0	2	0
Roper Nancy	0	0	1	0	0	0
Rowsey Beverley	0	1	3	1	0	0
Sands Johnson	3	0	2	0	1	0
Sands Thomas	1	0	1	0	0	2
Saunders Robert	1	0	5	0	2	1
Saunders Robert Jr	1	0	2	0	1	0
Scellen Margaret	0	0	2	0	0	0
Scott Renderson N	0	1	0	0	0	0
Semple James Snr	1	0	6	3	4	2
Shelburn Robert	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sheldon & Maupin	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sheldon Jacob C	1	0	6	0	1	1
Shield Mary	0	0	4	1	1	1
Smith Peggy	0	0	1	0	0	0
Southall Albert	1	0	6	0	0	0
Southall George W	1	0	0	0	1	0
Spencer Hannah M	0	0	2	0	0	0
Staves John	0	2	0	0	0	0
Stewart Ferdinand S	0	0	1	0	0	0
Stores William H	2	0	2	0	1	1

1834

Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List

Name	White Males Over 16	Free Black Males Over 16	Slaves Over 16	Slaves Between 12 and 16	Horses, Mules, Mares & Colts	Riding Carriages
Sweeney Mary E	0	0	1	0	0	0
Tabb Robert	3	0	2	1	2	1
Taylor Henley	1	0	7	2	4	0
Taylor Robert R	1	0	1	0	0	0
Travis John D	2	0	2	1	1	1
Tucker Lelia	0	0	6	0	2	2
Turner Lawrance	1	0	0	0	0	0
Vaiden Robert J	1	0	0	0	0	0
Vest William W	1	0	4	0	0	0
Wallace James	0	1	0	0	0	0
Waller Benjamin	1	0	3	1	2	1
Waller Littleton T	1	0	4	1	1	0
Waller Robert P	1	0	8	0	7	2
Waller William	1	0	7	1	3	1
Ware Leigh	1	0	0	1	1	0
Webb George	0	1	0	0	0	0
White Benjamin	0	1	1	0	0	0
Wicker William	1	0	1	0	0	0
Williamson John G	1	0	0	0	0	0
Wilmer William P	1	0	0	0	0	0
Wilson Elizabeth	0	0	1	0	0	0
Yates William	0	1	1	1	2	0
Zizi (a free woman of colour)	0	0	3	0	2	0
TOTAL	138	19	350	56	127	44