

Summary of Research Progress

Penn did not sell slaves to stay solvent, nor were there auctions of enslaved people behind the Provost's house. But the University of Pennsylvania and the institution of slavery were profoundly connected. The study of Penn's historic ties to slavery exposes the expansive reality of chattel slavery in the United States. Slavery was an inherently national institution; there was no colony, state, or commonwealth buffered from its reaches. Penn's story, then, is a national story. It is a story of great importance, especially on the eve of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans to Colonial America.

The connections between Penn and slavery were diverse. Penn's first provost, William Smith, owned at least one slave and personally engaged in fundraising efforts targeting elite southern slaveowners.¹ George Whitefield, a prominent religious leader and close friend of Benjamin Franklin, was instrumental in Penn's founding and was also a slave owner. Penn faculty, alumni, and donors were instrumental in ensuring that the Three-Fifths Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Clause were enshrined into the Constitution.² Another early donor was the largest slave trader in Jamaica.³ The medical school in particular had deep connections and financial ties with colonial and antebellum southern elite. It employed and/or graduated among the most infamous names in southern slavery and racist science, including Samuel Cartwright, Samuel Morton, Josiah Nott, William Walker (the Nicaragua filibuster), James Emerson (the owner of Dred Scott) and James Norcom (the owner of Harriet Jacobs.) Penn's trustees hired an enslaved man (paying his owner for his labor) for thirteen years to work in the college's first dormitory.

Any attempt to label the connections "direct" or "indirect," or assess them through quantification misses the point. Slavery was everywhere in the colonial era and early national period; Penn's prominence ensured that it depended on the institution for its sustenance and success. Building on archival research conducted by Prof. Kathleen Brown and a group of undergraduates, and work done by Mark Lloyd and Jim Duffin in the University Archives, I have conducted primary and secondary research over the past three months.

Here, in brief overview, is what we know now:

First, Penn's medical school was the foremost site for the education of southern doctors and the proliferation and professionalization of racist science. Theories of biological racial difference that were conceived of and disseminated at Penn served initially to bolster the institution of slavery, and later undergirded Jim Crow and the continued subjugation of people of color. Individual Penn alumni and faculty not only owned slaves, but conducted medical experiments on enslaved people, and served as Confederate hospital directors.

Second, enslaved people lived and labored in, around, and on Penn's campus. Slavery was fully legal in Pennsylvania for the first several decades of Penn's existence. The gradual

¹ "1 Negro" 1769 Prov. Tax, South Ward, p. 191; See UARC spreadsheet, https://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1700s/smith_wm.html

² Hugh Williamson, see Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson* (M.E. Sharpe, n.d.). 17-22. Eckhard Spring 2018 Report. Charles Pinckney (add cite to donors list)

³ Thomas Hibbert (add cite to donors list from Trustees minutes)

abolition act passed in 1780 ensured that slaves lived and worked in Pennsylvania for another generation.⁴ The influence of Quakers and abolitionists in the state did not change the fact that Philadelphia was a major port city which was deeply enmeshed in the slave trade. About one-quarter of Philadelphia households held slaves in the 1760s, and chattel slavery was “extensively woven in to the fabric of city life.”⁵

Third, financial backing for the University was funneled through slaveholding trustees, donors and the profits made off of slave-produced goods. The circulation of money in an economy in which enslaved people and slave labor constituted a significant portion of the nation’s wealth implicates nearly all institutions where money and power were concentrated. Yet Penn actively and knowingly recruited, solicited, and supported slaveholder wealth. Over two thirds of Penn’s 18th century trustees owned slaves.⁶ William Smith, the first Provost of the university—a position we would now refer to as President—owned a slave during his tenure as Provost. The Trustees solicited large donations from slaveowners. They went where the money was (the slave South and the Caribbean); they targeted slaveowner wealth purposefully and systematically.

Here, in preliminary form, are our future research questions:

How many early faculty members owned slaves? What labor did these men and women perform and how did that labor contribute to the functioning of the university—and the intellectual output of its faculty? How many of the 19th century trustees owned slaves? How many trustees continued to hold property in slave/boarder states after slavery was gradually abolished in Pennsylvania?

It is possible (arguably even probable) that some of the southern medical students brought slaves with them to Penn to serve as personal attendants. I have compiled a list of the southern graduates, and many of them (as members of the South’s most prominent families) have family papers held at libraries and universities across the South. One way to determine whether or not students brought enslaved people with them to Penn would be to examine these private family papers for any mention of this occurrence.

Penn’s collection of medical specimens was valued at \$53,000 dollars in 1853. How were Horner (the medical school Dean) and his associates acquiring cadavers and medical specimens? There are many body parts and skeletons of “negro” men, women, and children listed in the collection. How were these acquired?

What about the medical school’s curriculum—courses and lectures that promoted biological concepts of race? Where there connections between the curriculum and the recruitment of southerners to the school?

To what extent did the significant donations from slaveholders translate to a southern/slave owning influence on the school and how did this influence manifest?

⁴ ["1780: AN ACT FOR THE GRADUAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY"](#), Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania

⁵ Nash, WM, 243

⁶ Initial research done by Caitlin Doolittle, VanJessica Gladney, Dillon Kersh, Brooke Krancer, Matthew Palczynski, Carson Eckhard. Full spreadsheet compiled by Jim Duffin.

Were there publications of Penn medical graduates that explicitly cite experiments conducted on enslaved people? We know that there were many publications of Penn medical graduates and faculty that supported biological concepts of race, but more work needs to be done to fully investigate this.

Even a preliminary examination into the collective biographies of Penn medical grads has yielded infamous men (Harriet Jacobs' owner, Dred Scott's owner). We must continue to examine the biographies of the medical school alumni. Both noteworthy stories (like those mentioned above) and unknown

Penn trustees had business interests and ties to Jamaica. It also appears that Penn had ties to the manufacturing and sale of southern slave-produced goods. The treasurer of the Washington Manufacturing Company of Philadelphia, a major manufacturer of southern slave-produced cotton, was a Penn trustee and medical school alum. In what other ways was slave-produced wealth circulating through Penn's account books and underwriting trustee donations?

Did slave-produced goods themselves serve as donations to the college?

What were the conditions at the medical school when the first African American student, Nathan Mossell, matriculated?

Expanded Research Summaries:

Medical School

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, UPenn *was* its medical school. The college was very small by comparison. Penn's medical school was the premier, and primary, place for the training of southern doctors. Medical education was a key site for the proliferation of ideas about race, the intellectual inferiority of non-white people, and the scientific justification for the continued enslavement and subjugation of people of African descent.⁷

Samuel Morton, a Penn alum, is thought of by many as the father of scientific racism.⁸ Morton argued that white people and black people were different species, and used scientific "evidence" (bolstered by credibility garnered by his Penn degree) to argue for a medically sanctified racial hierarchy which positioned white people at the top and blacks at the bottom. The originator of craniology, Morton argued that skull size correlated to intelligence. Morton claimed that people of African descent had the smallest brains and Caucasians the largest (Indians were somewhere in the middle.) One of the most influential scientists and physicians of his era, upon his death, a

⁷ Christopher D. Willoughby; "His Native, Hot Country": Racial Science and Environment in Antebellum American Medical Thought, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Volume 72, Issue 3, 1 July 2017, Pages 328–35.

⁸ Fredrickson, George M. (1972). *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on African-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914*

columnist for the *Charleston Medical Journal* wrote "We of the South should consider [Morton] as our benefactor for aiding most materially in giving to the negro his true position as an inferior race."⁹

Influenced by Samuel Morton's work, Josiah Nott argued that people of African descent were a distinct creation, occupying a rank between chimpanzees and Greeks.¹⁰ Nott, a Penn graduate, native of South Carolina, and noted pro-slavery thinker, argued that "the negro achieves his greatest perfection, physical and moral, and also greatest longevity, in a state of slavery." Nott went on to found a medical school in Mobile, Alabama and serve as a Confederate surgeon, staff officer, and director of the Confederate General Army Hospital.

Samuel Cartwright, another influential Penn alum, also argued that people of African descent were a subhuman species. He attributed the inferiority of the black race to their nervous systems, respiration, and blood, arguing that "defective hematosis...is the true cause of that debasement of mind which has rendered the people of Africa unable to take care of themselves."

Cartwright penned what was basically a "medical handbook for slave owners."¹¹ He identified "drapetomania" (the disease of running away) and "dysthesia Ethiopica" (called "rascality" by overseers) as two diseases that afflicted slaves. This medical discourse, originated by Penn graduates including Cartwright, influenced the southern legal system of slave codes, and affected how slaves were treated in court cases.¹²

Alexander Stephens, the Vice President of the Confederacy, in his infamous "Cornerstone Speech" lauded the Confederate project as one based on "the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man."¹³ In the speech, Stephens deployed medicalized language on black inferiority which was undoubtedly influenced by the medical racism that originated at the University of Pennsylvania.¹⁴

Penn's medical school trained so many prominent proslavery scientists and thinkers in part because the student body was overwhelmingly southern. This was no coincidence. William Horner, the long serving dean of the medical school during the antebellum period, was himself a Virginian. He ensured that Penn advertised in Southern newspapers to recruit future students.¹⁵ He was also responsible for developing the valuable collection of anatomical specimens that bolstered Penn's reputation as the most prestigious medical school closest to the Mason-Dixon line.

We know that Horner himself disinterred the body of a Cherokee man who had died in Virginia, and that he prepared the skeleton for transportation to the Anatomical Museum of the University

⁹ R.W. Gibbs, "Obituary for Morton, 1851.

¹⁰ Indigenous races of the earth, Nott, Josiah Clark, 1804-1873, [from old catalog] ed; Gliddon, George Robins, 1809-1857, [from old catalog] joint ed; Maury, Louis Ferdinand Alfred, 1817-1892. [from old catalog]; Pulszky, Ferencz Aurelius. [from old catalog]; Meigs, James Aitken, 1829-1879. [from old catalog]

¹¹ Ariella Gross, *Double Character*, 87.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Alexander Stephens, "Cornerstone Address" March 21, 1861.

¹⁴ Carson Eckhard made this insightful observation in her report.

¹⁵ Ibid.

of Pennsylvania.¹⁶ Dr. William Shippen, Jr., a UPenn faculty member (who gave the first anatomy lecture in the colonies), was accused of grave robbing.¹⁷

In the period spanning 1806-1850 the percentages of southern students in the med school ranged from about 50% to 70%. In 1810, 69% of the student body came from slaveholding states—one third of the class was from Virginia alone. In fact, in that year, 136 students were from Virginia compared to 84 from Pennsylvania.

The men who attended Penn were from the most prominent slave owning families in the South. Many are household names in the study of slavery. Penn medical school graduates did not all achieve the notoriety of Morton, Nott, or Cartwright, but the vast majority went back home to the South to set up hospitals, medical colleges, perform experimental surgeries on slaves, and continue to disseminate teachings of biological racism that they learned at Penn.

Financial Ties/Trustees/Fundraising

As the work of undergraduates working under Prof. Brown has found, many of Penn's early trustees were slave owners. Mark Lloyd and Jim Duffin compiled further research which found that 68% of the 18th century trustees owned slaves. (This is likely a low estimate, as tax records could not be located for 10 of the 121 trustees.) Trustees paid to place advertisements selling slaves as well as notices of runaway slaves in Benjamin Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette*. They had sex with enslaved women whom they owned, and then owned their own children as a result, thereby increasing their capital.¹⁸

Benjamin Chew, a trustee from 1757-1791, owned three plantations and at least fifty enslaved people. Tax records indicate that fourteen enslaved people labored in his Philadelphia home as well.^B William Masters, one of the founders of the university as well as a trustee, owned thirty four enslaved people. These men profited from owning, buying, selling, and hiring out slaves. They then donated substantial portions of these slave-produced profits to found and fund the University of Pennsylvania.

Fundraising in the Slave South and Caribbean

In 1771, William Smith (the Provost) embarked on a fundraising trip to South Carolina. In 1772, Dr. John Morgan (who himself owned at least one slave and has a building named for him on campus) was sent by the trustees to fundraise in the Caribbean. Morgan and Smith recruited almost four hundred individual donors on those trips and raised more money from those trips than from local donations in the same time period. For some sense of scale, they raised almost £ 2000 on those trips, and the Provost's (president's) salary was £ 350 pounds a year. This fundraising would have accounted for approximately 14% of the school's financial worth.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kislak Center Horner Papers

¹⁷ Daina Ramey Berry, *A Price for Their Pound of Flesh*, 158.

¹⁸ Trustee wills freeing mulatto slaves, add archival sites, VanJessica Gladney report.

^B Caitlin's initial research, Leahy "invisible hands" paper.

¹⁹ My estimate is that the capital held by the school during this period was £ 14,000. Add relevant UARC cites.

The importance of these fundraising trips, which courted large-scale slaveowners by design, was significant. In 1761, the cost of operating the school was £700 more than its annual income. By the 1770's, the dormitories were operating at a loss.²⁰

Morgan spent an entire year fundraising in Jamaica. He was explicitly instructed by the trustees to solicit donations from Jamaica's plantation owners.²¹ Morgan (on behalf of the University) imported a large quantity of slave-produced rum from Jamaica to Philadelphia. It is possible that they received some donations in the form of slave-produced goods or they attempted to offset the expense of the journey by purchasing slave-produced goods and trading them in Pennsylvania.

The donors recruited by Smith and Morgan were among the most prominent slave owners in the Atlantic world. Among them were the Manigaults, the Grimkes, and Charles Pinckney, a future governor of South Carolina who introduced the Fugitive Slave Clause into the Constitution. It is possible that many slaveowners chose to donate to Penn (and send their sons to the school) because they expected that its curriculum would educate doctors who could increase the profitability of slave trading, slave breeding, and ownership.²²

Labor of enslaved people

In 1767, approximately 1,400 enslaved people lived and labored in Philadelphia (about 9% of the population). An estimated one in four families owned at least one slave.²³ The trustees and professors of the University of Pennsylvania were almost certainly overrepresented in this group.

Penn hired professor Ebenezer Kinnersley to operate the first dorm for the college which was opened in 1764 (on 4th street). Kinnersley owned one enslaved person, a man likely named Caesar.²⁴ The University of Pennsylvania hired this slave from Kinnersley. They paid Kinnersley for Caesar's work for thirteen years, labor which included building fires to keep Penn students warm in the winter, and ringing the bell which alerted them it was time for class.

Building construction

The Carpenter's Company of Philadelphia was contracted to construct Penn's early campus. Enslaved labor was almost certainly used in the construction of these buildings. The architect of the early campus, Robert Smith, owned at least two slave himself, and Carpenter's Company

²⁰ Add cites to UArch trustees minutes etc

²¹ Morgan is actually instructed to fundraise in Jamaica, Barbadoes, St. Christophers, Antigua "and such of the other Caribbean Islands, as you may think you have any change of obtaining money from; and, in each of these Islands you are to make your applications general, not confining yourself to the towns, but likewise calling upon the different planters at their places of abode in the country."

²² Cite to Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage*

²³ Gary Nash, WM quarterly article

²⁴ Dillon Kersh unearthed this important detail, Dillon Kersh Spring paper.

bylaws outlined compensation for the hiring out of enslaved workers.²⁵ (Enslaved people themselves were typically not compensated, rather their owners were paid for their labor.)
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Civil War/Confederacy

The records of the alumni/faculty who served in the Civil War further underscores the southern orientation of Penn's medical school. From the medical school students, 633 fought for the United States, and 553 for the Confederate States of America. In the College, 399 fought for the Union, and 32 for the Confederacy. Because of Penn's prominence as a site for training southern doctors, many Penn alumni occupied leadership positions in Confederate hospitals, and many were officers.

George Whitefield statue and other namesake statues and buildings on campus

Whitefield solicited the first donations to Penn's library. Whitfield also operated a charitable orphanage in South Carolina. Convinced that enslaved labor was essential to fund the orphanage, Whitefield successfully campaigned the colony's leaders to overturn Georgia's ban of slavery.²⁶ There is a statue to Whitefield in the Quad.²⁷

There are at least ten buildings on the campus named for slave owners.²⁸

²⁵ E. Carson Eckhard Spring 2018 Report, Articles of the Carpenters' Company, Philadelphia.
<https://diglib.amphilsoc.org/islandora/object/text:148093#page/21/mode/2up>

²⁶ John B. Boles, *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870* (University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

²⁷ https://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/vis_obj/statues/whitefield_geo.html

²⁸ Insert Appendix to list compiled by VanJessica Gladney