

Penn & Slavery Project Fall 2018 Research Report

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During the Fall 2018 Semester of the Penn & Slavery project, the team looked to expand on the previous year's research into the University of Pennsylvania's "proximity" to slavery. As the University did not own any enslaved people, we have chosen to approach the topic by examining its "proximity to slavery." Proximity to slavery, for us, meant looking at Penn's trustees who owned enslaved people and the University's deriving a financial benefit from the institution of slavery. Also included in the definition of proximity are the experiences of enslaved people living on campus and on plantations to which the University had proximate connections. Penn still benefited financially and academically from enslaved people's labor and their bodies, both before and after the passage of the Gradual Abolition Act in Pennsylvania in 1780. This aspect of our definition of proximity required us to delve further into the experiences and lives of the enslaved people living on campus and on plantations which the University owned or had proximate connections to through its trustees.

The goal of this project is to provide transparency about the trustees' and the school's dealings in an era where slavery was widespread and normative. Our team approaches this project with the understanding that in a slaveholding society, no one was completely innocent of complicity in the institution of slavery,¹ and as such, we are interested in determining the complicity of the University. Our team defines complicity as "speaking to the many ways in which colonial universities relied on and contributed to America's slave society in the years prior to the Civil War."² In relation to our work this past semester, more specifically, we sought to better understand the role slavery might have played in the enriching the University through

¹ Brooke Krancer, "Penn Slavery Project Report," *University of Pennsylvania Archives: Penn in the 18th Century* (November 2017), 8, <http://pennds.org/psp/files/original/db12d79d57decbl82952584c3fed568a.pdf>.

² Penn Slavery Project, "Preliminary Findings of the Penn Slavery Project" (presentation, Penn Slavery Project – Recent Findings, Philadelphia, PA, May 3, 2018).

labor on its major real estate holdings, the role of enslaved labor on campus, the way slavery enriched Trustees, and the use of enslaved bodies in medical research.

Part 1

Overview of our Spring 2018 findings

During the Spring 2018 semester of research, one of my focuses was on the use of enslaved labor on the early University campus. Ebenezer Kinnersley (1711-1778) was the first professor of English Tongue and Oratory, a position he held from 1755-1772, and he was the steward of the school's first dormitory from 1764 until he retired in 1772. Kinnersley was also paid for an enslaved man's labor on the campus, whose responsibilities included "Ringing the Bell making Fires,"³ from October 1756-January 1770. Based on the continuous payments Kinnersley received for his enslaved man's labor over thirteen years and Kinnersley's being taxed for one negro from 1767-1774, I believed it was likely that the "Caesar" Kinnersley mentions in a letter to his wife in 1773 is the name of the enslaved man working on campus.

During the Spring 2018 I continued examining the Tilghman family's connections to slavery found during my research in Fall 2017. I focused on three Tilghman family members who were also Trustees of the University: James Tilghman, James's son William Tilghman, and William Tilghman's cousin, Edward Tilghman Jr.. None of the documents I examined during the Spring 2018 semester helped me conclude if Edward Jr. held enslaved people, so I determined further research was required. James Tilghman's will enumerates which of his heirs were

³ January 29, 1757 entry, *Day Book Belonging to the Trustees of the Academy of Philadelphia*, 39.

bequeathed which of his plantations and the enslaved people who worked on those plantations. James Tilghman only specifically mentioned two of his enslaved people, James and Hannah, but none of his other slaves, only referring to them as his “stocks of negros.”⁴ I was more curious about William Tilghman, due to his being the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania from 1805-1827. William Tilghman was a more conservative justice than his predecessors, and he often favored the owner in slave manumission cases when the paperwork was not in order, while his predecessors were more likely to grant the enslaved person their freedom.⁵

Part 2

Fall 2018 Goals

This semester, I wanted to continue to investigate the experiences and lives of the people enslaved by Trustees or who worked on the University’s land. As part of this desire, I strove to better answer the question of who Caesar (Ebenezer Kinnersley’s enslaved man who labored on the early campus for thirteen years) was and what happened to him after Kinnersley stopped receiving payments from the school for his services.⁶ As Caesar was the only confirmed enslaved man whose labor was used directly on the University’s campus, his life and experiences needed to be examined further.

I also wanted to continue to research the Tilghman family, their enslaved people, and their ties to Penn. I wanted to go to the archives at the Maryland Historical Society to gather

⁴ James Tilghman will (1792), Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, Will Book 2: 191.

⁵ Robert M. Cover, *Justice Accused: Antislavery and the Judicial Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 66.

⁶ Dillon Kersh, “Penn Slavery Project Spring 2018 Research Report,” *Penn & Slavery Project* (2018): 11-12.

more information than was available to me in Philadelphia, especially concerning James Tilghman and Edward Tilghman Jr. While I had found that James Tilghman enslaved a number of people based on his will, further work was needed in the Fall semester to learn more personal information about those enslaved people's experiences. At a minimum, I wanted to learn how many people James Tilghman enslaved and what their names were, as James and Hannah were the only two I had come across during the spring.

I was also determined to find the evidence that Edward Tilghman Jr. enslaved people that had eluded me during 2017-2018 academic year. Considering his own wealth and family ties to the Chews and Tilghmans – some of the wealthiest families in the Mid-Atlantic – I felt that evidence must exist that showed that Edward Jr. enslaved people.

I had only looked at William Tilghman through the lens of his role as Chief Justice of Pennsylvania last semester. I was interested in continuing to look at how he shaped the Pennsylvania courts on the topic of slavery, but I wanted to focus more on his personal ties to the institution. William Tilghman was one of the few slaveholding judges in the North and one of the last public officials in Pennsylvania to continue to own slaves.⁷ I wanted to know who these enslaved people were, what their experiences were, and hopefully what happened to them.

Lastly, I wanted to research whether enslaved labor was used on the University's important landholdings pre-1800: Perkasio Manor and Norristown Farm and Mill.⁸ These two properties were major investments for the University, and as such, I wanted to determine to what extent, if any, slave labor helped to fund the school directly by working on University land.

⁷ Paul Finkelman, *Supreme Injustice: Slavery in the Nation's Highest Court* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 155.

⁸ Norristown is spelled multiple ways in the *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*. For simplicity, I am going to only refer to the property as Norristown.

Exploring the connections to land owned by the University builds off previous work on fundraising trips to South Carolinian and Jamaican slave plantations by looking at the role slave labor played in Penn's finances.

Part 3

Methods

My sources this semester for the Tilghmans primarily came from primary source documents at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's archives (HSP) and the Maryland Historical Society's archives (MHS). These were mainly letters received from family members, plantation overseers, and friends who wrote to the Tilghmans and mentioned the names of enslaved people and their occupations, as well as journals, inventories, and other primary sources. I focused especially on William Tilghman and his connection to slavery, and I made significant use of the William Tilghman Papers at HSP. For legal issues relating to William Tilghman, I mainly used his papers at MHS and Google Books. For Kinnersley, I focused on the American Philosophical Society's collection (APS), Leo Lemay's book *Ebenezer Kinnersley: Franklin's Friend*, and newspaper articles. For Penn's land holdings, I focused on the Trustee Minutes. For all three, I used Ancestry Library's online database for Pennsylvania Tax Records to determine if anyone related to these topics had been taxed for enslaving people.

Part 4

Fall 2018 Findings

I started the semester by continuing to look into Ebenezer Kinnersley and Caesar. After Kinnersley returned from his stay in Barbados in 1773, he returned to his position at the University as steward for a time and resided at the College again. He also continued to lecture on electricity.⁹ However, since Caesar was last mentioned performing labor on campus in the Trustees records in 1770, it is unclear if he lived on campus with Kinnersley. Unfortunately, almost none of Kinnersley's personal records survive, so finding out more information on Caesar has proved fruitless thus far. Kinnersley makes no mention of Caesar in his will, nor does Caesar appear in Kinnersley's partial inventory after his death.¹⁰ I attempted to find information at Pennepack Baptist Church, where Kinnersley is buried and where he preached briefly, to see if there were Church records that had more information on Kinnersley or Caesar. However, their earliest records are housed in Atlanta, so I have not been able to pursue this. Fred Moore, a local historian and board member at Pennepack Baptist, suggested that I try to determine if Kinnersley's Caesar is the Caesar Penrose who worked as a sexton at Trinity Church Oxford from the late 1770s-1831. Further research is needed to determine the validity of this theory.

Failing to find new evidence about Caesar, I turned to the Tilghman family. Research from previous semesters showed that James Tilghman enslaved people in Pennsylvania until at least 1776, according to his tax records, and his will enumerated multiple plantations with "stocks of negroes"¹¹ on them. My goal for this semester regarding James Tilghman was to try to uncover more details about who the enslaved people were by looking at the Maryland Historical Society's archives. While his last Pennsylvania tax record to list enslaved people was in 1776,

⁹ Whitfield Jenks Bell, *Patriot-Improvers: Biographical Sketches of Members of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1997), 207.

¹⁰ Leo Lemay, *Ebenezer Kinnersley, Franklin's Friend* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), Appendices III and IV.

¹¹ James Tilghman will (1792), Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, Will Book 2: 191.

his records from Maryland indicate that he continued to use enslaved labor on his plantations until his death. He was assessed in 1783 as owning 51 slaves across his Maryland properties.¹² Upon his death, Tilghman requested no official inventory of his estate be taken. However, an unofficial estimate was performed by his executors, who determined that his estate was worth roughly \$80,000 at the time of his death in 1793.¹³ The unofficial estimate did not list any of the names of the people James Tilghman enslaved, so I turned to his letters for more information. Tilghman received a letter from Ringgold Hemsley on October 2, 1775 in which Ringgold referred to a previous letter that mentioned “[his family’s] willingness to take Philly and supposing it may be agreeable to have him [?] with us this winter we mention it now” and that Philly “shall [be?] usefully employed” by the Hemsley family should Hemsley have reached an agreement with Tilghman in proceeding discussions.¹⁴ The language used by Ringgold Hemsley suggests that Philly was an enslaved man. In another letter from December 1785, Tilghman rented his enslaved man Jacob to John Hurt for £27.10.0 per annum. Tilghman added that Jacob was not allowed to choose his own clothing for the summer months for fear he might choose something “more extravagant than necessary.”¹⁵ These details help build off of previous semesters’ research into the lives of the Tilghman family’s enslaved people, but James Tilghman’s papers at MHS did not prove as helpful as I had hoped.

¹² Biographical detail on James Tilghman (1716-1793) from Edward C. Papenfuss, et. al., *A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature 1635-1789*, vol. 426 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979-1985), 822.

¹³ James Tilghman Estate Papers, Series I, Subseries C, Box 9, Folder 9, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁴ Ringgold Hemsley Letter to James Tilghman, October 2, 1775, Series I, Subseries C, Box 8, Folder 14, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁵ John Hurt Letter to James Tilghman, December 22, 1785, Series I, Subseries C, Box 8, Folder 32, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

Edward Tilghman Jr.'s papers at MHS and HSP provided much more information than I had found in the past. Around the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Chew in July 1774, Edward was staying at Benjamin Chew's Cliveden property. While at Cliveden, Edward Jr. requested his father send him one house maid, one cook, and one negro boy not less than 12 or 14 years old who knew how to lay a table.¹⁶ While this is evidence that he certainly benefited from his family's deep ties to slavery, it is not evidence that he personally enslaved people. That evidence comes from subsequent letters and manumission papers.

In two letters to his father, one from January 1775 and another undated, Edward Tilghman Jr. discussed an enslaved man named Juba. In the 1775 letter, Tilghman Jr. wrote, "Juba will never do for me, he is too sensible and too lazy — needs eternal whipping — I must send him down to you if you chuse to exchange Bill for him, if not, to the Forest."¹⁷ Presumably, the Forest plantation was where Tilghman slaves were sent as punishment, based on the textual evidence. The offhand comment, "needs eternal whipping," underscored the foundations of slavery in physical coercion and the disregard for those enslaved. This letter can be contrasted with the other letter about Juba, in which Edward Jr. wrote that it was imperative to inoculate Juba from "small pox,"¹⁸ which shows some care in his well-being, perhaps due to their financial investment in him. Edward was also bequeathed at least one enslaved person by his father at some point in the late 1770s.

¹⁶ Edward Tilghman Jr. Letter to Edward Tilghman Sr., July 20, 1774, Series I, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 2, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁷ Edward Tilghman Jr. Letter to Edward Tilghman Sr., January 26th, 1775, Series I, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 2, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁸ Edward Tilghman Jr. Letter to Edward Tilghman Sr., Undated, Series I, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 2, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

In a letter to William Tilghman in 1786, Tilghman Jr. asked that the children of the enslaved man given to him, Rick, be added to his legal petition. Rick's children in 1786 were Henny, about 7 years old; Aminta, 6; Phill, 5; and Percy, 15 months.¹⁹ The petition to which Edward Jr. referred to is possibly his petition to the Maryland legislature that enslaved people Edward Jr. held in Delaware be allowed passage into Maryland. In a letter to William Tilghman, James Lloyd, Tilghman's friend and a future US Senator from Maryland, wrote that a bill that passed both houses of the Maryland legislature on Edward Jr.'s behalf "saves the rights of any persons to their said slaves."²⁰ Edward Jr. and William Tilghman also appear to have spearheaded the passage of a law allowing Edward Jr. to transport enslaved people across state lines.

Further evidence of Edward Tilghman's personal ties to slavery can be seen in two manumission papers held at HSP. In the first, Edward Jr. brought two enslaved people, Nanny and her daughter Hagar, to Pennsylvania in June 1785 with the intention of freeing them after six consecutive months of their residing in the state.²¹ After six months, the Gradual Abolition Act of 1780 decrees that all enslaved people held for more than six consecutive months in Pennsylvania are to be freed. His other manumission record at HSP freed an enslaved man named Jacob after he finished a seven-year term as a servant.²²

William Tilghman changed his opinions on the institution of slavery over the course of his professional life. Prior to his election as Chief Justice of Pennsylvania and nomination as

¹⁹ Edward Tilghman Jr. Letter to William Tilghman, February 17, 1786, Series I, Subseries E, Box 11, Folder 10, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

²⁰ James Lloyd Letter to William Tilghman, Box 2, Folder 7 (1786, March 3-15), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

²¹ Edward Tilghman Manumission Document for Nanny and Hagar, May 14th, 1788, Pennsylvania Slave Manumissions, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

²² Edward Tilghman Manumission Document for Jacob, November 10, 1794, Pennsylvania Slave Manumissions, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

University of Pennsylvania Trustee, Tilghman was offered membership to the Society for the Abolition of Slavery in late December 1789 or January 1790, when Benjamin Franklin was still President of the Society. While thanking the Society for extending their offer and noting that while their “constitution is in many respects highly meritorious ... there are certain points in my sentiments will not permit me” to join and declined the offer.²³ There were signs that Tilghman’s demurral reflected conflict about principles and not just simple politeness. He noted that the goals and principles were meritorious, and could see why some might join, but at that stage in his life he held views on slavery at odds with those of the Abolition Society.

During his tenure as Chief Justice of Pennsylvania and Trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, Tilghman shifted the court to become more conservative to favor the enslaver more than enslaved people in legal disputes. He differed sharply from the previous Justices’ opinions on the Gradual Abolition Act. Tilghman believed that the strict adherence to the letter of the Gradual Abolition Act should not automatically result in the enslaved person’s freedom because it failed to recognize the property rights of the enslaver. This is not to say that Tilghman did not grant freedom to enslaved people in cases when enslavers filed incomplete or erroneous registration documents with the state; rather, he argued that freedom of the enslaved person could not automatically be favored at the expense of property rights.²⁴ Tilghman also decided an important case on enslaved people’s rights in *Commonwealth v. Clements* (1814), in which he noted that “in [the] case of a slave, the general principle of common law is to be rejected.”²⁵ The

²³ William Tilghman Letter to The Electing Committee of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery, January 18, 1790, Series I, Subseries E, Box 12, Folder 1, Tilghman Family Papers (MS 2821), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

²⁴ Cover, *Justice Accused: Antislavery and the Judicial Process*, 66.

²⁵ *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Clements*, 6 Binn. 206 (1814), found in Elizabeth Stockton, “The Property of Blackness: The Legal Fiction of Frank J. Webb’s ‘The Garies and Their Friends,’” *African American Review* 43, no. 2/3 (2009), 474.

decision also said enslaved people could not “acquire any rights by marriage in derogation of the rights of her master, who retained the absolute control over her person and her services.”²⁶ The decision denied the enslaved woman in question her right to enter into a marriage contract and the right to be an equal citizen in Pennsylvania.²⁷

William Tilghman was one of the few slaveholding judges in the North and one of the last public officials in Pennsylvania to continue to enslave people.²⁸ However, he began to manumit his slaves in 1811, a move which coincided with his unsuccessful run for Pennsylvania governor and thus was likely politically motivated. In Horace Binney’s Eulogium for William Tilghman, he describes Tilghman’s arrangement to manumit those enslaved. According to Binney, Tilghman manumitted four enslaved people in 1811 and nine more over the next seven years, with the rest of the twenty-five enslaved people to be manumitted upon reaching the age of 28.²⁹

By 1819, however, Tilghman had shifted his position on slavery. When asked to chair a public meeting on the subject of slavery and the Missouri Compromise in New Jersey, he declined because he wanted to remain impartial on the bench when hearing slavery cases. However, he said that “no one who knows the arrangement that I have made with the slaves which belonged to me, will doubt my fervent wish to see the evils of this institution mitigated, and, if possible extinguished.”³⁰ Here, Tilghman noted that he wished to contain slavery to the current slaveholding states, with the institution “if possible, extinguished,” suggesting abolition

²⁶ Tera W. Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 75.

²⁷ Stockton, “The Property of Blackness,” 474.

²⁸ Finkelman, *Supreme Injustice: Slavery in the Nation’s Highest Court*, 155.

²⁹ Horace Binney, *Eulogium upon the Hon. William Tilghman, Late Chief Justice of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Mifflin and Perry, 1827), 39.

³⁰ Ibid.

as a long term rather than short term goal. Tilghman's position on the Missouri Compromise is also a sign of his somewhat changed views on slavery, especially when compared to his rejection letter to the Society for the Abolition of Slavery twenty years earlier.

In looking at how his professional opinions on slavery affected the entire state of Pennsylvania, it is important also to look into the individual people enslaved by William Tilghman to better understand their lives. An important resource was Mrs. Tilghman's household account book from 1796-January 1798, which detailed the domestic responsibilities of Tilghman's slaves and the compensation they received for that work. Few sources found thus far for the Penn & Slavery Project detail the daily lives of enslaved people, so those that do are invaluable for supporting our goal to learn more about the enslaved people of those connected to the University. Most of the enslaved people mentioned in the account book were female household servants who performed tasks such as cleaning, cooking, washing, or other domestic service. The few men mentioned in the book were waiters or performed work on the house. Some of the enslaved household workers appear multiple times throughout the book, but never for more than six months. For example, a slave named Marinot was paid in bulk after a few weeks or months as a cook from October 1796 to February 1797, and then a yearlong break until reappearing in January 1798. Polly, a domestic servant, appeared in the book over a four month stretch in the summer of 1796 before Mrs. Tilghman noted that payments to her would stop after September 1796.³¹

One of the most curious cases was of an enslaved woman named Milly who appeared in the account book for unspecified labor from December 1797 to January 1798. Mrs. Tilghman

³¹ Mrs. Tilghman Household Account Book Notes, 1796-1798, AM 9262 v. 5, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

brought Milly with her on a trip to London in early 1798, and the trip might be why the account book ends in January. Once Milly returned to Maryland, William Tilghman's close friend William Hemsley wrote to Tilghman, informing him that "Milly was set free by Mrs. Tilghman before she left this country & her manumission is recorded in the Clerk's Office in Queen Anne's. Your sister is positive she indentured herself at [?] ... & that you & Mr. Bond were witnesses to the indenture."³² Hemsley seems very positive about his recounting, but also possibly confused at the situation. How could William Tilghman be a witness to the indenture but have to be told about it six months later? Women also did not have property rights in Maryland at the time, so Mrs. Tilghman could not have freed Milly without her husband's approval. Mrs. Tilghman sent Milly back to Maryland to deliver letters for her sometime around May 1798 on the ship Rebecca, which arrived at Hampton Road near Norfolk, VA. Mrs. Tilghman had given the letters Milly were to deliver on her behalf to the ship's captain to hold until the ship reached America, but the captain never returned them to Milly.³³ Milly traveled to Baltimore before making her way to Wye on Maryland's Eastern Shore. In June 1799, William Tilghman filed manumission papers for Milly himself.³⁴ Milly was to be held as a servant until she turned 28; however, it was unclear when that might be because there is no date of birth listed on the manumission.

Milly gave birth to a daughter on August 5, 1799, and William Hemsley asked Tilghman what he would like to do with Milly given the fact that she needed to care for an infant.

³² William Hemsley Letter to William Tilghman, June 23, 1798, Box 12, Folder 9 (1798, June 18-29), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

³³ William Hemsley Letter to William Tilghman, June 5, 1798, Box 12, Folder 8 (1798, June 1-15), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

³⁴ William Tilghman Manumission Document for Milly, July 1799, Manumission Box 13, Folder 13 (1799, July 10-28), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Tilghman and Hemsley agreed that the best course of action was to try to sell Milly, but no one was interested in buying or hiring a gradually-manumitted enslaved woman with an infant child who was born free. As a result, Milly was sent to the Forest plantation at the end of 1799³⁵ (it is unclear if this is the same Forest plantation Juba is sent to by Edward Tilghman Jr. or a different plantation of the same name).

The other enslaved man to appear over a long period of time in William Tilghman's letters was a man named George, who appeared in letters from August 1797 to at least May 1798. Everyone on the plantation was afraid of George because of his violent temper and constant troublemaking. George was feuding with an enslaved man named Daniel, whom George claimed owed him money. George stole Daniel's chickens and sold them to Mr. Chew (first name not mentioned) to force repayment.³⁶ Tilghman's overseer, William Skervine, confronted George about his transgressions but George "struck [him] 10 or 12 most unmercifully which has hurt me very much & injured my eye very much" and was sent to jail.³⁷ George also threatened to murder Daniel after his release.³⁸ Skervine and William Tilghman's cousin, Richard Tilghman IV, both noted that Daniel, William Tilghman's best farm hand, and the other enslaved people on the plantation did not wish to work with George on the plantation. It is important to recognize that Skervine's account of the feud comes from the perspective of the enslavers and the biases of his being assaulted by George, both of which could lead to exaggerations of the situation. The

³⁵ William Hemsley Letter to William Tilghman, December 26, 1799, Box 13, Folder 20 (1799, December), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

³⁶ Richard Tilghman IV Letter to William Tilghman, September 10, 1797, Box 11, Folder 28 (1797, September), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

³⁷ William Skervine Letter to William Tilghman, August 21, 1797, Box 11, Folder 27 (1797, August 21-28), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

³⁸ Richard Tilghman IV Letter to William Tilghman, August 28, 1797 Box 11, Folder 27 (1797, August 21-28), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

story of George also raises the question of what it means that an enslaved person reached this point, mentally. What were the conditions or treatment enslaved people received that led to George's mental deterioration?

One of the main reasons everyone treated George with suspicion was because he stole provisions, a common pattern of everyday rebellion enslaved people utilized against their enslavers, who often felt that they had a claim on food and other goods that they had helped to produce. "Stealing" is also a tricky word for enslaved people because they did the work to produce the goods. In 1797, George broke into Tilghman's meat house three times. He also stole Daniel's and other enslaved people's chickens. The overseer flogged George after each of these acts, yet he continued these actions despite the reprisals.³⁹ While Richard IV recommended William Tilghman send George to Baltimore to be sold in September 1797, evidence shows that his advice was not heeded, as in December 1797 George was accused of beating one of Skervine's young oxen to death while it was taking a break.⁴⁰ Despite Skervine and Richard IV's suggestion that George be sold again after this incident, Tilghman chose not to do so. In May 1798, following a bad harvest when the wheat on the plantation was "killed up with the fly," George twice broke into the granary and took most of the surviving grain. It is unclear what happened to George after this incident, as he was not mentioned in the proceeding letters.⁴¹

William Tilghman also had personal connections to the Deep South. In March of 1798, Tilghman received a letter from William Gordon Forman asking to swap enslaved people to keep

³⁹ Richard Tilghman IV Letter to William Tilghman, September 10, 1797, Box 11, Folder 28 (1797, September), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

⁴⁰ William Skervine to William Tilghman, December 12, 1797, Box 11, Folder 31 (1797, December 2-15), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

⁴¹ William Skervine Letter to William Tilghman, May 22, 1798, Box 12, Folder 7 (1798, May), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

families together. Forman was going to move to New Jersey and could not bring his enslaved man with him. The man fathered a child with a woman enslaved by Tilghman, so Forman offered to “swap” by sending Tilghman a woman and her two infant children if Tilghman sent Forman the woman and child in question.⁴² Forman attended the College of Philadelphia, but graduated from Princeton, and is famous for introducing Eli Whitney’s cotton gin to Mississippi in the 1790s.⁴³

Among William Tilghman’s letters held at HSP is a particularly disturbing letter he received on December 30, 1785 from a friend named Samuel Avnor. Avnor was site-seeing in Charleston, South Carolina when he was:

induced to make visit to a part of the town where scenes of another nature were presented to my view – it is called the Sugar Home – it is a place of execution to those unhappy people who are doomed to slavery and wretchedness in this countrey – I entered this gloomy apartment – I saw the dreadful machinery in which they are confined and suspended – I marked the scourges which are tinged with human blood and other apparatus of more than savage barbarity – and what added to my astonishment, I beheld a bench, which, I was informed, was prepared for such spectators as choose to regale themselves with a view of the agonies of suffering humanity. Gracious Heavens! Is it possible that a people who have just risen up from the struggles of virtue and liberty, should be so soon insensible of these inestimable? blessings and forgetful of thy merciful interposition on their behalf in the season of danger and trial, or to consign to ~~slavery~~ misery and despair creatures like themselves and to triumph in their distress!⁴⁴

The horror of the unfathomably cruel punishments handed out at Sugar House are compounded by having a bench for white people to be “regaled” by the sight of torture of enslaved people.

⁴² William Gordon Forman Letter to William Tilghman, March 20, 1798, Box 12, Folder 5 (1798, March 18-31), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

⁴³ For Forman’s attendance at the College of Philadelphia, see “College Students: Classes 1780-1789: Class of 1783,” University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center, Accessed December 20, 2018, <https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-history/18th-century/college/students/1780-1789>. For more information about Forman and Mississippi, see Trip Henningson, “Princeton and Mississippi,” Princeton and Slavery, Accessed December 20, 2018, <https://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/princeton-and-mississippi>.

⁴⁴ Samuel Avnor Letter to William Tilghman, December 30, 1785, Box 1, Folder 25 (1785, December 21-31 & 1785 N.D.), William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

The conditions at Sugar House were intended to be “so bad that slaves would see their masters’ tasks as menial and gentle” in comparison.⁴⁵ The Sugar House may have roots in the British use of the facility during the Revolutionary War, but most accounts detailing the Sugar House come from the 1820s and later. This letter is one of the few eighteenth century sources to mention Sugar House; one of the only other sources I have found thus far is a runaway slave advertisement from 1784.⁴⁶ In 1802, William Tilghman received a letter from James Lloyd informing him that one of his runaway slaves has been caught in Charleston, SC, and Lloyd asked Tilghman if he would like the slave to be sent to the Sugar House.⁴⁷ Further research is required to determine what Tilghman decided to do and whether Penn had any more direct connections to the notorious house of torture.

My other major focus this past semester was in looking at Penn’s two largest landholdings, Perkasio Manor⁴⁸ and Norristown Farm and Estates. Provost Smith⁴⁹ was interested in purchasing Norristown for himself, but he decided to purchase the property on behalf of the College of Philadelphia on the condition that he was given right of first refusal should the school decide to sell it. Provost Smith purchased Norristown from Col. John Bull for £6,000.⁵⁰ Bull was taxed in 1769⁵¹ and 1774⁵² for one servant and two negros. Bull signed on as a tenant in 1777 to

⁴⁵ A Runaway Slave, “Recollections of Slavery,” in *I Belong to South Carolina: South Carolina Slave Narratives*, ed. Susanna Ashton (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 52.

⁴⁶ “Eighteenth Century Slaves as Advertised by Their Masters,” *The Journal of Negro History* 1, no.2 (Apr. 1916), 193. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3035637>.

⁴⁷ James Lloyd Letter to William Tilghman, May 12, 1802, William Tilghman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

⁴⁸ For information on Perkasio Manor, see Sam Orloff’s “Fall 2018 Penn & Slavery Project Report,” *Penn & Slavery Project* (Fall 2018).

⁴⁹ For more information on Provost Smith’s connections to slavery, see VanJessica Gladney, “Penn & Slavery Project Report.” *Penn & Slavery Project* (Fall 2017): 1-12, <http://pennandslaveryproject.org/files/original/104bffb3df1910d98780f7aacc0533a1.pdf>.

⁵⁰ October 31, 1776 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 2, 1768-1779, 1789-1791, 99-100.

⁵¹ “John Bull 1769 tax records from Philadelphia County, in Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801,” Ancestry Library, Accessed December 20, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2EGmYJj>.

remain on the land he occupied for three years but asked to be released from the lease in 1778 because his barn and plantation were destroyed during the Revolutionary War. It appears that after Bull left, the College signed Dr. Robert Shannon on as their new largest tenant for a term of seven years. Shannon and the College agreed that the property repairs were Shannon's responsibility (he was given one free year of rent to make the repairs) and the damaged mill was the College's responsibility to fix.⁵³ Shannon chose to renew his lease in 1786.⁵⁴ Dr. Robert Shannon's tax records indicate that he was taxed for two enslaved people in 1774,⁵⁵ and for one enslaved person in 1785,⁵⁶ 1787,⁵⁷ and 1788.⁵⁸ Dr. Shannon and Col. Bull's tax records indicate that for at least the College's first twelve years owning Norristown, from 1776-1788, the school received rent payments derived from the profits of enslaved labor.

The College hired a millwright named John Jones to make the repairs to the mill in 1777.⁵⁹ Jones signed a contract for £800 inclusive of labor and material costs.⁶⁰ Due to Jones's repeated refusal to perform the work because he claimed he was owed a substantial amount of money, despite already being paid in part, the school threatened to sue him. The College hired

⁵² "John Bull 1774 tax records from Philadelphia County, in Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801," Ancestry Library, Accessed December 20, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2EHl66P>.

⁵³ November 12-17, 1778 entries, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 2, 1768-1779, 1789-1791, 15-116.

⁵⁴ March 13, 1786 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 3, 1779-1788, 217.

⁵⁵ "Robert Shannon 1774 tax records from Philadelphia County, in Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801," Ancestry Library, Accessed December 20, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2LtAoca>.

⁵⁶ "Robert Shannon 1785 tax records from Philadelphia County, in Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801," Ancestry Library, Accessed December 20, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2GyTDII>.

⁵⁷ "Robert Shannon 1787 tax records from Philadelphia County, in Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801," Ancestry Library, Accessed December 20, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2rMli8F>.

⁵⁸ "Robert Shannon 1788 tax records from Philadelphia County, in Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801," Ancestry Library, Accessed December 20, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2PSem3B>.

⁵⁹ March 17, 1777 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 2, 1768-1779, 1789-1791, 104-105a.

⁶⁰ June 5, 1777 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 2, 1768-1779, 1789-1791, 105b.

James Wilson, who was not yet a Trustee but would be within a year, as their lawyer in this matter.⁶¹ Jones finished the work after agreeing to arbitrate the money issue, which ended up being ruled in his favor in the amount of £285 and 10 shillings in 1782.⁶² It is unlikely that slave labor was used by John Jones because he was assessed a tax bill of £0 in 1774, suggesting he would not have been wealthy enough to own enslaved people a few years later.⁶³

In the 1780s, the College sold or donated parts of Norristown land to be used for public purposes. In 1784, the College donated four acres of land in Norristown to be used as the county courthouse and jail for a new county, Montgomery County. A further twenty acres were to be available to be used for county purposes at auction prices.⁶⁴ In 1788, William Moore Smith, the son of Provost Smith, asked the trustees to grant him land to build a schoolhouse, and he was granted Lot 3 on which he could build.⁶⁵ The Board of Trustees at the College wanted to meet to discuss moving the campus from Philadelphia to Norristown in 1784, but nothing came of the idea; it did signify, however, how important Norristown was for the College that they would consider moving there.

In 1789, the College looked to begin selling off Norristown in pieces to fund other land investments. Penn was looking to sell the farm and mill, but not the town of Norristown, and they offered Provost Smith the right to buy the property. Provost Smith agreed to pay £4,300 to

⁶¹ December 23, 1778 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 2, 1768-1779, 1789-1791, 117.

⁶² Nov 5, 1782 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 3, 1779-1788, 134.

⁶³ “John Jones (Millwright) 1774 tax records from Philadelphia County, in Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801,” Ancestry Library, Accessed December 20, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2AecD3g>.

⁶⁴ March 8-11, 1784 entries, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 3, 1779-1788, 169-171.

⁶⁵ May 7-June 4, 1788 entries, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 3, 1779-1788, 245-246

buy the Norristown Farm and Mill on August 18, 1789.⁶⁶ After spending over one year negotiating contract terms and payment schedule, Provost Smith decided in October 1790 that he would keep the deal he made with the College, but he wanted the property to be under his son William Moore Smith's name.⁶⁷ After selling the largest tract to the Smiths, Penn spent the next twenty-three years selling the remaining tracts in the town of Norristown piecemeal, but based on the number of tracts sold and Provost Smith's purchase price for the farm and mill, Norristown appeared to be a much more successful investment for the school than Perkasio.

Part 5

Where do we go from here?

Moving forward, I would like to continue to research Caesar. I would like to explore Fred Moore's theory about Caesar's possibly being Caesar Penrose, the sexton at Trinity Oxford Church, by looking further into church records from Trinity Oxford and Pennepack Baptist Church.

More work also needs to be done on William Tilghman and his personal connections to slavery. HSP has an extensive collection of his papers, and I was only able to explore the first thirty years of the collection, from 1770-1800. More work needs to be done on the last 27 years of his life, especially around his gubernatorial election in 1811 and his decision to begin manumitting his enslaved people.

⁶⁶ August 18, 1789 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 2, 1768-1779, 1789-1791, 181-182.

⁶⁷ October 19, 1790 entry, *Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books*, Volume 2, 1768-1779, 1789-1791, 218.

Though not explicitly related to the University of Pennsylvania and their connections to slavery, more research needs to be done on the eighteenth-century existence of Sugar House in Charleston, SC. Avnor's letter was particularly disturbing to read, and I would like to learn more about what enslaved people's experiences were at Sugar House. I would also like to learn the identities of the white people watching the torture. Why did they watch? Was the Sugar House open to the public? Did any of the people who donated to Penn as part of the 1771 fundraising trip send enslaved people to the Sugar House?

I would also like for the project to continue to follow the money trail when looking at the University's proximity to slavery. During the Spring 2018, Caitlin Doolittle researched Penn's fundraising trips to South Carolinian and Jamaican plantations,⁶⁸ and this year Sam Orloff and I researched the connection to slavery at Perkasié and Norristown. However, Penn owned numerous other land holdings, investments, and had a fundraising trip to England that need to be examined further. How the University remained financially able to operate in its early years is crucial to understanding its proximity to slavery.

Lastly, it is important to continue to look at generational wealth among the students, faculty, and trustees. Generational wealth was not a major research goal of ours until this semester, although Breanna Moore did mention this topic in our presentation in Spring 2018. Ashley Waiter's⁶⁹ and Ami Diane's⁷⁰ findings on generational wealth among 19th century

⁶⁸ For more information on the fundraising trips to South Carolina and Jamaica, see Caitlin Doolittle, "Findings of the Penn Slavery Project, Semester Two," Penn & Slavery Project (Spring 2018): 1-15. <http://pennds.org/psp/files/original/54db0af4a592679df64f4093242d619d.pdf>.

⁶⁹ For more information on generational wealth, see Ashley Waiters, "Fall 2018 Penn & Slavery Report," *Penn & Slavery Project* (Fall 2018).

⁷⁰ For more information on generational wealth, see Ami Diane, "Fall 2018 Penn & Slavery Report," *Penn & Slavery Project* (Fall 2018).

students are reminiscent of Edward Tilghman Jr. and William Moore Smith's financial success in their young adulthood. Edward Tilghman Jr., while wealthy and respected in his own right, is symbolic of the nature of generational wealth being passed down in the form of his father's gifting him enslaved persons throughout his young adulthood. William Moore Smith's father also gave him the Norristown Farm and Mill, valued at £4,300. This level of financial support afforded the two of them early advantages to remain wealthy and influential for multiple generations.

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