

## **Who's Diary was it?**

The diary runs from January 1812 to December 1814. The last month is incomplete, containing only entries for the first 7 days. For two of those days, the diarist notes that he is "very ill," and the handwriting is notably shakier and messier. Two pages later, there is a list of several names, including some that seem to have death dates, probably in the handwriting of David Weems. At the top of the page it reads "Joseph Court departed this life 17 January 1815."

Joseph Court may be the diarist, based on this information, as well as other clues from the diary and his probate. There is no obituary for Court; neither of the Annapolis papers ran many obituaries in the winter of 1814-1815, and none were for someone who seems likely to have been the diarist.

The diarist seems to have been somewhat elderly during the years he kept this diary. He mentions that a number of his friends died during the winter and spring of 1814, including Bennet Darnall, Ben. Allein, Upton Scott, Henry Stephenson, Charles Drury, Lam. W. Smith, Joseph Yates, and especially James Clarke. Most of these friends were in their 80s or 90s when they died. He attended the sale of several, including Darnalls, on 16 March 1814.

The diarist was also friends with Dr. Hall and his wife Mrs. E. Hall, who died 10 July 1813, as well as John Tilliard (July 1812), Mr. Owens (August 1813), and others who are only identified by their initials. He was acquainted with several Owens, T., J., Nicholas, and B. (March 1813). There is a notation on 15 February 1814 of T.O.'s birthday.

He lived at Springfield, a farm in the First District of Anne Arundel County, the southern portion of the county [check in laws], which is known from the election results he recorded in October 1813. He lived at Springfield beginning in September 1801, according to a note on the heading of the entry from September 1814. He arrived from Britain on 17 April 1775, which he noted on the anniversary in 1812.

The diarist owned a number of slaves, periodically noting their birthdays. One slave, Fanny, died on 2 September 1812. She was the wife of Ben, another slave, and they had three children: Araminta (Minta), born 19 July 1807; Joseph, born 10 April 1809, and Nancy, born 1 July 1811. After Fanny's death, the diarist wrote that he wanted to free them on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays (or 25<sup>th</sup>, in the case of Joseph).

The diarist was a Federalist, and was opposed to the War of 1812. He often reported the arrivals and departure of ships, and lent money to people, sometimes in large amounts.

## **Joseph Court**

Court died between 12 December 1814 and 17 February 1815. His will [JG 3, p. 85, C153-7] was witnessed by H. Hall, Thomas Owens, and Philip I. Thomas, and his executor was Richard I. Jones. He freed his slaves Ben, Fanny, Mary Ann, Minty, Joe

and Nancy. He bequeathed land at Pig Point and Friendship; it is not clear where he lived. He may have given a house and land to a slave named William, and chairs to a slave named Mary Ann; they are not listed with last names. His inventory [JG 8, 215, C88-11] lists a number of slaves, including Joe, 5 years old, Nancy, 4 years old, and Minty, 7 years old.

Court attended the estate sale of Bennat Darnell 16 March 1814 and bought several items [JG 8, p. 114, C88-11].

Freed slaves 1801-1802

Ad in MG, 4 October 1787:

<http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001284/html/m1284-0067.html>