

Use of Enslaved and Free African-American Labor at the State House

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How many African Americans were involved in the construction of the Maryland State House? Who were they? What were their names?

Those are questions we have sought to answer over many decades. Perhaps one of the most lasting inequities of the practice of holding laborers in bondage, is how to this day, the practice separates the craftsman from getting any credit or pay for their work. It did then, and it continues to this day. Instead, these enslaved craftsmen, considered as property at the time, are more likely to show up in probate inventories, tax records, or in runaway advertisements if they bravely sought to emancipate themselves.

Our Legacy of Slavery in Maryland database sometimes helps with answers - sometimes runaways are listed by trade or by the craftsman from whom they escaped.

If you think about the State House as an 18th Century construction site there would have been a tremendous number of workmen on site: the architect/builder, carpenters, tradesmen to erect scaffolding, brick makers, bricklayers, stone masons, drayers and carters for all the building materials.

The following individuals who are identified and detailed below, may relate more to laboring at the State House in other ways rather than being involved in the actual construction of the State House. It is also important to be aware of the various building campaigns for the State House as it now exists. The 18th century portion was constructed between 1772-1779, the dome was built between 1785-1794, the Annex that houses the current Legislative Chambers was built between 1902-1905.

Research is ongoing and we continue to look for records of the builders and known contractors, especially Joseph Anderson, Joseph Clark and William Buckland.

1. "Negro Moses"

Governor and Council (Proceedings) and (Orders on the Treasury) indicate payments to "Negro Moses" for cleaning the public temple (State House) in 1804 and 1805.

Who was "Negro Moses"? On 10 April 1804 - Rezin Hammond granted deeds of manumission to Ned, Jason, Moses, Betty, Ruth, Valentine, and Pol. (Jerry M. Hynson, *Maryland Freedom Papers*, Volume 1: Anne Arundel County (Westminster: Family Line Press, 1996), 4.) Although a search for a record of manumission in ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY (Manumissions) 1785-1842 MSA C 111 did not turn up any record, this is the only reference to an enslaved man named "Moses" in the

county at the time of the work done in the State House. A search through the Census Records of 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830 for "Moses" showed only three free blacks named Moses--all three appeared in the 1830 census in Harford County. This would suggest that "Negro Moses" either died or moved out of Maryland prior to the 1810 census.

According to the 1800 Anne Arundel County Census, Rezin Hammond had 70 enslaved people on his property. Hammond never married and lived alone on a farm. In providing for those he enslaved, account book entries show that he gave them new suits of clothes each year. Upon his death his will made provisions for these enslaved people, freeing them, and giving many of them tenant houses. Hammond also served as a Colonel in the American Revolution, and was a member of the State Legislature (Lower House?) His death was recorded in the *Maryland Gazette* on 6 September 1809. He left two wills that reference those he enslaved by name, but there are no references to additional people he had previously held in bondage. (See biographical file 2/11/12/31, PIN number is 575)

Since the 1804 manumission record was the only reference found to a free African American in Annapolis c. 1800, it seems likely that the Moses freed by Rezin Hammond in April 1804 was the same Moses that did work on the State House in 1804 and 1805. Given Hammond's close association with the State Legislature it is plausible that he may have provided the introduction and opportunity for paid work for Moses who he had previously enslaved.

2. Mrs. Wells' Unknown Slave

Governor's and Council (Proceedings) indicate that a Mrs. Wells was paid \$250.00 on 23 June 1819 for the hire of her "Negro Man" employed in cutting Poplar Trees before the State House.

Who was Mrs. Wells, and who was her "Negro Man"? The Mrs. Wells paid by the Governor and Council in 1819 is likely Susanna Wells, the widow of Daniel Wells, Sr.. Daniel was an enslaver (at the time of his death his probate inventory lists 4 enslaved people, including 2 enslaved men in their 20s) who died in 1817. In his will (MSA C155-31), Wells, Sr. left all of his possessions aside from some land, money, and his "Negro Man" Dick, to his wife. This would make sense, since in the 1820 Census, Susan Wells is listed as a head of household in Annapolis, with several people and several enslaved people living at her home. When Susan died in 1821, her inventory (MSA C 88-15) listed five enslaved people: "3 Negro Boys valued at 200, 150, and 100; 1 Negro Woman valued at \$150.00; and 1 Negro Girl (3 Years Old) at \$50." The absence of other enslaved people in the inventory would suggest that Mrs. Wells gave the rest of her enslaved people to her children before she died--this idea, however, was not explored for the purposes of this report. Taking into account the slight inaccuracies of early 19th-century census records regarding ages and numbers of residents, it would appear that this is the Wells family that was paid by the Governor and Council. The ages of those enslaved by Mrs. Wells in the 1820 census would suggest that they were old enough to have done work on the State House grounds in 1819.

Daniel Wells, Sr. (1741 - 28 May 1817) marries Susanna --- (c. 1745 - 21 November 1821) Daniel Wells leaves will, inventory, and final account book. Wells' children include: William (c. 1760 - no date of death known. But he is last listed in the 1820 census.) marries (license issued 11 January 1794) Susanna (Hansliff) Garston (c. 1760 - 4 February 1808) Her death is listed in the *Maryland Gazette* on 11 February 1808; Richard (no dates) who marries (license issued 31 January 1805) Susanna Phipps (no known dates), Marriages and Deaths lists the deaths of two Richard Wells of Annapolis, one in 1829 and the other in 1837. Either way, it seems unlikely that this Susanna Wells is the one referred to by the Governor and Council because she would not have been widowed in 1819. Three of Wells' children, John, Frederick, and Richard, were students in the St. Johns' Grammar School. (explain - is this what is now known as St. John's College?)

Unfortunately, it seems to be impossible to determine the name of the person enslaved by Mrs. Wells who worked on the State House. Daniel Wells, Sr.'s inventory (MSA C 29-10) was one of the few from the period that did not enumerate the names of those who were enslaved. Unexplained curiosities: Daniel Wells, Sr. does not appear in any Maryland census records until 1810. This is interesting because, as Wells' account book indicates accounts with Annapolis residents as early as the 1780s. Also unknown was the number of people Wells enslaved prior to 1810.

Daniel Wells' final list of accounts (MSA C 29-10) that was settled after his death also raises several questions regarding Mr. Wells' occupation, his relationship to Annapolitans, and those he enslaved. Wells, his son Daniel Jr. and several other Wells men, were butchers in Annapolis. William Faris' account books record many purchases of beef, veal, lamb, and mutton from both Daniel Sr. and Daniel Jr. Listed among those who owed Mr. Wells money include: John Shaw from account from 1791 until 1803--\$45.69; Allen Quynn (a wealthy Annapolitan who served as Mayor of Annapolis and as a member of the General Assembly for many years during this period, provided supplies for the State House, and was instructed to solicit bids for seats for the galleries in the House of Delegates in 1779)--\$44.42; Simon Retalack [sic] on account dated 1798--\$47.37; William Tuck on 1811 and 1812 account; William Paca for 1795 account--\$73.40. There are several other well-known Annapolitans on this list. The two most noteworthy accounts are those owed by Shaw and Retalack both fall during the period in which the two men were working on the State House--Retalack did work on the dome in 1797. Speculative at best, it may be possible that Wells offered the services of his enslaved workers for the construction of the State House. The notion that Wells' wife offered the services of her enslaved person for work on State Circle, may strengthen this hypothesis-- although a definitive answer is unlikely.

3. Other Possible References to the Use of Enslaved Labor at the State House

Eighteenth-century State House architect Joseph Clark regularly employed the use of enslaved labor. Not only did Clark and his wife, Isabella, enslave people, but Isabella's mother and Joseph's brother, Stephen, were also enslavers. Written correspondence from Isabella reveals that the family had at

home "many Slaves to wait on us of my own raising," and may have used the people they enslaved at their bookstore, or even in Joseph's architectural and buildings projects. [Click here](#) for a more detailed examination of Joseph Clark and the people he enslaved. Information drawn from research conducted by Anne Tria on Isabella Clark According to Orlando Ridout IV's thesis about the James Brice House, a combination of free Black and enslaved labor was used in the construction of the house: "The men engaged on Brice's building belonged to almost every classification of worker. At the highest strata were the experienced builders, like Jubb Fowler, a bricklayer and carpenter, who sub-contracted himself to Brice and brought along his hired or indentured labor for the job. Skilled, independent masons, bricklayers, and carpenters worked for wages, like the Mantle brothers. Brice purchased outright the unfinished terms of skilled indentured servants like Henry Jackson to lay the stone and brick of the outbuildings. For the indentured servants, Brice provided clothing, board, and lodging as part of his obligation. Brice also hired the labor indentured servants and skilled enslaved people from other owners, paying their wages of hire to their masters. Discontented with their lot, the freemen and indentured servants frequently ran off, and some died during their employment. He used enslaved laborers and "semi-skilled Negroes" to assist his hired craftsmen. The Black laborers from the plantation were brought over to dig foundations and to raise the stone" (p. 100). "While many of Brice's workmen were freedmen working at a daily wage as skilled craftsmen, Brice employed a variety of kinds of labor. For instance from a contractor, Nathaniel Adams, Brice hired the labor of "Martin Watters, Mullato carpenter, for 10 months and 18 days for £48." Watter's pay went to Adams on three occasions. By October, Brice was paying another neighbor for the hire of his "Negro sawyer, who worked 66 1/2 days, from July until October, at a cost of £8:19:3 in cash, with a 7/6 reduction for shoes for the man in July" (p. 102). "The house servants lived in several rooms over the kitchen wing. Those enslaved included one older man, four adult women and five children and were named and evaluated in the inventory of Brice's estate" (p. 117). Correspondence between Captain Thomas Montgomery to Charles Wallace, the first undertaker of the State House, regarding an invoice dated 20 July 1771 includes a reference to a request by Wallace for two servants to work--likely at the public building--without wages. Montgomery responded to Wallace's request telling him that he was not sure whether he would be able to provide two such servants who would agree to travel to America for unpaid work. At this time it is not known whether Montgomery, or another English merchant, was able to find unpaid servants to work for Charles Wallace, possibly at the State House. Wallace's request, however, indicates that Annapolis merchants and architects were not opposed to using unpaid labor--whether servants or slaves--in the years during the construction of the State House. Considering the ownership of slaves by Joseph Clark and the use of enslaved labor at other construction projects in Annapolis, it is possible that enslaved workers could have been used in the construction of the State House. Finding references to these people, proves to be very difficult because without agency, payments from the State were made to the contractors or the enslavers, as in the case of Mrs. Wells, rather than directly to the workmen.