

EMANCIPATION and SALE OF SLAVES in FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT  
 From the Index of Fairfield, CT Land Records  
 Volumes 28 - 37 covering 23 Apr 1790 - 18 Sep 1822  
 Extracted by Priscilla A. Chatfield 44 Adams Road, Easton, CT 06612

Colonial Connecticut did not have large numbers of black slaves. The subsistence farmers in the colony did not need the number of field hands required on the much larger southern plantations. In Connecticut most slaveholders had only one or two slaves who worked next to their master or mistress, and usually lived in the same house taking meals together. Whereas most slaveholders in Connecticut were humane, the black slave was not entitled to the same rights as a free white. Even free blacks were not considered equal to free whites and were subject to many restrictions. David M. Roth in his book Connecticut, A Bicentennial History quotes the abolitionist John Hooker, a native of Farmington, as saying "the black man seemed to have no rights as a man. He was often kindly regarded by humane people, but such a thing as his having the rights of a man were hardly thought of."

The Connecticut legislature passed various laws concerning slavery. Legislation passed in 1774 prohibited the importation of any additional slaves. One of the supporting reasons for this law was the belief that slavery took away jobs from Connecticut's poor, who might then have to be provided for by the town in which they lived. All Negro and mulatto children born in the state after March 1, 1784 were freed of servitude upon turning 25 years old by a law passed in 1784. Support for this law, which provided for the gradual emancipation of many slaves, came largely from the fact that it was no longer profitable to keep slaves. Subsequent laws provided that any slave to be emancipated must be in good health, between the ages of 21 and 45, and should desire freedom. These laws prevented the emancipation of an old or ill slave who would then become the town's responsibility.

In addition to laws protecting the slave and the town, there were also laws protecting the slaveholder from any further responsibility after the emancipation of a slave. Under these laws the owner applied to the town civil authorities to form a committee of emancipation for the prospective free black. This was to ensure all qualifications were satisfied. An emancipation statement was then recorded in the town's land records and the transaction was treated as a property transfer. The master, as owner or Grantor, released ownership of the slave to the Grantee, who was the slave.

As a research volunteer at the Fairfield Historical Society, I had the great satisfaction of assisting a descendant of two Fairfield slaves discover records of her ancestors. To help other researchers, the following list of references to slaves in the Fairfield land records has been compiled. Researchers should keep in mind that many slaves adopted the surname of their masters.

Column headings in the Index include:

GRANTOR: the owner either emancipating or selling a slave

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GRANTEE: the slave being freed or the purchaser of a slave  
 FORM: "R", probably for "Release", is used in the index for  
 all the emancipation records  
 "Sale of Slave" is abbreviated SS in the extraction  
 "Transfer of Slave" is abbreviated T in the extraction  
 "Quit Claim of Slave" is abbreviated QC  
 "Gift of Slave" is abbreviated G  
 VOL:PG: the land record volume and page number(s)  
 Day Mo Year: the date of the entry in the land record

GRANTOR	GRANTEE	FORM	VOL:PG	Day	Mo	Year
Abel, Elijah	Amos a Slave	R	31:621	18	Oct	1808
Adams, Nathaniel	James a Slave	R	28:589	11	Apr	1799
Benedict, Jesse	Jemima a Slave	R	28:349	12	Jun	1797
Bennitt, Joseph Capt.	Timothy & Lill Slaves	R	28:588	8	Apr	1799
Bradley, Hezekiah	Titus a Slave	R	29:813	25	Aug	1802
Bradley, John	Boston a Slave	R	30:267	30	Aug	1802
Bulkley, Sally et al	Prince a Slave	R	31:881	30	Jul	1802
Burr, David Jr.	Quam Freeman	SS	28:23	3	Sep	1798
	"Dorcas age seven born Sept.3, 1791 of a Negro woman named Peg emancipated and now deceased"					
Burr, Gershom	Samuel Rowland	SS	29:492	30	Dec	1799
[Thaddeus & Priscilla Burr, executors, estate of Gershom Burr]	"Dinah, age 27, wife of free negro Kit"					
Burr, Ozias, Jr.	Rebecca Jennings	SS	28:534	15	Jan	1798
[for himself and as Guardian of Lois Jennings Burr]	"Sale of Slave Pompey"					
Burr, Ozias Jr	Pompey, free negro	SS	29:658	14	Oct	1801
	sale of "Slave Prissa"					
Burr, Priscilla	Kit a free negro	SS	29:729/30	30	Dec	1799
[executor Gershom Burr's estate]	"Sally and Prince children of Kit and Dinah his wife"					
Burr, Thaddeus Esq.	Luce a Slave	R	28:23	16	Oct	1798
Burr, Thaddeus Esq. et al	Samuel Rowland	SS	29:492	30	Dec	1799
	"Dinah, age 27, wife of free negro Kit"					
Burr, Thaddeus	Kit a free negro	SS	29:729	30	Dec	1799
[executor of Gershom Burr's estate]	"Prince, age 3, and Sally, age 9 months, children of Kit and Dinah, to be emancipated at age 21"					
Burr, Thaddeus et al	Dinah a Slave	R	29:482	1	Apr	1800
	"wife of Kit a free negro man"					
Burr, Thaddeus Esq. [Estate of]	Cato a Slave	R	29:806/7	23	Jun	1801
Chapman, James	Nancy a Slave	R	28:353	6	Mar	1798
Chapman, James	Nancy a free negro	SS	29:663	8	Sep	1802
	"Nancy late my property as a slave, lately called Nancy Chapman, two negro children Anson 7&1/2, Eli 6"					
Couch, Simon [of Redding]	Liman Couch	SS	28:542	6	Mar	1798
	"Will, age 27"					
Couch, Simon	Will a Slave	R	28:591	7	May	1799
Couch, William	Gin a Slave	R	33:521/2	28	Mar	1810
Disbrow, Asahel	Joseph Bennitt	SS	34:721	29	Apr	1794
	"Lille and her son William Ward"					

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GRANTOR	GRANTEE	FORM	VOL:PG	Day	Mo	Year
Hanford, Elizabeth [Widow of Ozias]	Polly Stone a Slave	R	30:609	10	Jan	1807
Hide, John	Caesar a Slave	R	31:449	9	Oct	1806
Hull, Benjamin et al	Amos a Slave	R	28:588	2	Apr	1798
Hull, Benjamin Capt.	Amos a Slave	R	31:781	11	Apr	1804
Hull, Ezekial	Frank a Slave	R	28:569	12	Sep	1798
Hull, Ezekial et al	Primus a Slave	R	28:609/10	19	Aug	1799
Hull, Permela et al	Amos a Slave	R	28:588	2	Apr	1798
Hull, Sarah	Chloe a Slave	R	33:577	22	Apr	1809
Hull, Thomas et al	Primus a Slave	R	28:609/10	19	Aug	1799
Jennings, Michael	Ozias Burr, Jr	SS	28:533/4	15	Jan	1798
[by Guardian Rebecca Jennings, Estate of Matthew, Sr dec'd]						
"Negro man named Pompey"						
Jennings, Moses	Primus a Slave	R	30:77	28	Apr	1803
Jennings, Rebecca	Pompey a Slave	R	28:371	15	Jan	1798
Jennings, Rebecca	Peg and Amos Slaves	R	33:565/6	2	Apr	1812
Jennings, Rebecca	Dinah a Slave	R	33:566	2	Apr	1812
Judson, David et al	Prince a Slave	R	31:860	30	Jul	1802
Judson, Esther et al	Prince a Slave	R	31:860	30	Jul	1802
Lewis, Lothrop	Prince a Slave	R	30:590	2	Mar	1805
Nichols, Ebenezer	Dorcas a Slave	R	31:883	7	Dec	1807
Nichols, Ebenezer	Thomas a Slave	R	31:882	10	Dec	1807
Nichols, Ebenezer	Thomas a Negro	SS	31:884	10	Dec	1807
"Zilpher age 5 child of Thomas and wife Dorcas...for the love and affection I have for Thomas a negro man"						
Nichols, John et al	Ebenezer Nichols	R	31:884/5	7	Dec	1807
"Negro man Thomas age 40"						
Nichols, Rebecca	Ebenezer Nichols	T	31:884/5	7	Dec	1807
[Widow of Ephraim et al] "Negro man Thomas age 40, formerly slave of Ephraim dec'd"						
Platt, Alexander et al	Amos a Slave	R	28:588	2	Apr	1798
Platt, Anna et al	Amos a Slave	R	28:588	2	Apr	1798
Read, Samuel	Sue a Slave	R	32:569	28	Feb	1809
Rogers, David	Lizetta a Slave	R	29:581	16	Oct	1802
Rowland, Samuel	Kit a Slave	R	28:610/11	25	Sep	1799
Rowland, Samuel	Thaddeus Burr, Esq	SS	29:486	30	Dec	1799
"Dinah a negro woman about age 24"						
Sherwood, Samuel et al	Dinah a Slave	R	31:451	15	Dec	1807
Sherwood Wm.& wife	William Couch	QC	33:522	27	Mar	1810
"Gin age 27, one month, 11 days, wife of Asher late slave of Capt. Ebenezer Coley"						
Sturges, Lewis B.Exe.	Cato a Slave	R	29:806/7	23	Jun	1801
Tennant Wm.M.of PA	David Rogers	G	29:581	16	Oct	1802
"Negro woman Lizetta, age about 26, in con- sideration of love affection and friendship"						
Wakeman, Adams et al	Amos a Slave	R	28:588	2	Apr	1798
Wakeman, Andrew	Charles a Slave	R	28:594	3	Jun	1799
Wakeman, Andrew	Jeffrey a Slave	R	34:703/4	10	Feb	1812
Wakeman, Ann et al	Amos a Slave	R	28:588	2	Apr	1798
[Wakeman, David et al, Elizabeth et al, Gideon et al and heirs of, Gideon dec'd Heirs of, and Mary et al]						
Wakeman, Joseph	Dorcus a Slave	R	28:583	27	Sep	1798
Wetmore, Robert W.	Sue a Slave	R	28:440	4	May	1799



Sources for slave records in Fairfield include land records, probate records, church records, and Family Book No.1 1696-1855 Town of Fairfield.

Fairfield Historical Society sources reviewed:  
 Cruson, Daniel Newtown's Slaves:a Case Study in Early Connecticut Black History, Newtown Historical Soc. Newtown 1994  
 Rosivach, Vincent J. "Slavery in Fairfield at the End of the Colonial Period", a talk given to the Fairfield Historical Society October 20, 1992  
 Roth, David M. Connecticut A Bicentennial History, Norton New York  
 Sanford, Elias B. A History of Connecticut, Hartford 1922

## EDITOR'S NOTES

1) The Burr and Jennings entries of 15 Jan 1798 in the preceding records are easier to understand when the following information about the family of Matthew Jennings (c.1731-1797) is known. This Jennings information is found in The Families of Old Fairfield by Donald Lines Jacobus, GPC, Baltimore, 1991

Matthew Jennings m.5 Feb 1756 Rebecca Morehouse dau.Abraham

Ch.: i. Michael (1757-1776)

ii. Lois (1761-1775)

iii. Lois (1776-1797) m.21 Apr 1786 Ozias Burr, Jr.

Ch.: Lois Jennings Burr

iv. Michael (1778-1811) [Ozias Burr, Jr., his brother-in-law, served as Administrator of his estate.]

2) Emancipation records for many other Connecticut towns are just waiting to be found in the town's land records. But a careful and diligent search is often needed. Making accurate transcriptions of such records available in Connecticut Ancestry or other generally available publications helps other researchers and preserves fragile records. Connecticut Ancestry is found in more than 85 public libraries across North America and would be pleased to print additional articles giving the emancipation of slaves for Connecticut towns. For the town of Greenwich, CT Mr. Jeffrey B. Mead published the information in 1995 in a paper bound book entitled Chains Unbound: Slave Emancipations in the Town of Greenwich, CT. Copies of Mr. Mead's book may be purchased from the gift shop of the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich. See page 181 of this issue for the telephone number and address of the Society.

3) The Book Reviews article in this issue includes the review of a very fine, new, how-to book on genealogy by Dee Parmer Woodtor, PhD. with a special emphasis on African-American genealogy.

