CAESAR RODNEY, SLAVERY, AND ENSLAVEMENT RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared for the City of Wilmington by Nicole Belolan Consulting

CITY OF WILMINGTON - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024 and 2025, the City of Wilmington, Delaware, Department of Land Use and Planning undertook research to document the people and families enslaved by Caesar Rodney (1728-1784), the often-referenced Delaware patriot and signer of the Declaration of Independence. This report describes the findings of a research project whose primary goal has been to establish facts about the people enslaved by Caesar Rodney. The work seeks to acknowledge individuals whose names, family connections, and descendants too often have been omitted and obscured from public record, and to foreground those persons as some of the previously uncelebrated Delaware patriots of the American Revolution. While Rodney's public life and legacy have been the subject of other historical writing, the lives and history of the people he and his family enslaved have not been fully explored in previously published works on Rodney's life and legacy. This reality is part of a national reckoning as citizens reflect on achieving freedom and independence for only a portion of Americans 250 years ago.

There were two secondary goals of the research. One was to clarify Caesar Rodney's thoughts on slavery, as far as they were put into letters and other records. The other was to create a shareable database containing the names and relationships of the men, women and children held bound by Caesar Rodney, so that their

descendants may be aided in their genealogical searches. Over the course of research, the project also recovered documentation of the enslaved persons held by members of Caesar Rodney's extended family. Those records will be included in the database.

Debra Martin, Historic Preservation Planner for the City of Wilmington, initiated the project in response to concerns raised by the public in 2020. There was an increasing awareness that the perspectives of individuals who were enslaved by the Rodney estate historically have been neglected in the civic narrative. This concern, along with the desire to present a more complete and unvarnished account of an important Delaware founder, was echoed by local historians and community members, particularly in the context of the city's decision to remove Rodney's statue from Rodney Square and place it in protective storage. The research project was designed to answer questions that might prove critical to any productive future public discourse about the statue, the man, and how to foreground the persons enslaved by Caesar Rodney.

The City of Wilmington engaged consulting historian Dr. Nicole Belolan to continue the project, with oversight by Martin and Elliott Larkin, Director of Land Use and Planning. It progressed in three parts: Phase I included surveys of local archives, secondary published sources, and preliminary reporting; Phase II involved an intensive search of primary documents for the names of people enslaved by four generations of Rodneys and other Caesar Rodney relatives, and compilation of the research report; and Phase III is an exploration of ideas for public interpretation and educational opportunities to tell a more expansive history.

The project revealed that Caesar Rodney, public servant, patriot, and advocate for the freedom to self-govern, participated in and benefited from a slaveholding society,

directly enslaving at least twenty-six people in his lifetime, including children and families. The frequently cited number of 200 persons enslaved by Rodney could not be documented by available primary sources. Also, the recent debate about Caesar Rodney as an abolitionist is not supported by primary documents nor by respected contemporary historians who have examined this notion over the past 30 years and published on Rodney and on the history of slavery and freedom in Delaware.

The project has received support from the Historic Preservation Fund administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Certified Local Government Program, in partnership with the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of these agencies.

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

This research has been prepared for the City of Wilmington. It is meant to help the City and the community learn more about, expand, and make more inclusive the public understanding of the life and legacy of Delaware founder Caesar Rodney (1728-1784), particularly as it relates to Rodney's enslavement of individuals in eighteenth-century Delaware. This report may help the city and the community decide how, whether, and where to interpret Rodney and the people he enslaved. In terms of Rodney's life, this research focuses on the relationship between the people Rodney enslaved and the historical context for that history. This report and future ideas for interpretation (Phase III) can be used for educational purposes in a variety of settings.[1] This work is timely, as other historic sites are seeking meaningful ways to present more complete history about uncomfortable subjects.

This report includes an introduction that foregrounds Black history in Caesar Rodney's story.[2] Next, it provides readers with an overview of how historians, public historians, and the public have told Rodney's story over the years and the extent to which those stories have involved the history of slavery and enslavement. This report also provides an overview of the history of how Caesar Rodney has been commemorated in Delaware, history that is intertwined with the ways Rodney has been interpreted in print by historians. This section also includes an overview of the recent anti-racist, community-based movement to remove, rethink and reinterpret, and/or

[1] The term "interpretation" is jargon for "communication." Public historians use the term interpretation to refer to how history is told and in what form. Forms might include in-person tours, exhibitions, audio tours, expert panels, sculpture, plays, books, or something else yet imagined.
[2] One way to practice inclusive history is to highlight the individuals or communities that the dominant culture has historically harmed in some way. See also "A moment of reckoning: What histories do our monuments commemorate?," *Radio times*, July 2, 2020, https://whyy.org/episodes/461777/.

replace statues in the United States. The report concludes with suggestions for next research directions; a timeline; lists of individuals Rodney and others close to him enslaved; snapshots of a few provocative documents that tell the history of Rodney's involvement with slavery and enslavement; and a bibliography. See also appendices with a variety of resources and digitized images of a few key primary sources as well as a separate spreadsheet listing the people Rodney enslaved and what we know about them.

A NOTE ON TERMS

This study uses the word "founder" to refer to people like Caesar Rodney but also the people he enslaved. The term "founder" is more inclusive than "founding father," a phrase Warren G. Harding first used in 1916 to refer generally to the white men who were involved in the founding of what would become the United States. Many historians used the phrase "founding father" in this sense throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, sometimes listing specific individuals. But over the past few decades, historians have expanded that definition—and have often shortened it to simply, "founder"—to include enslaved people, women, indigenous people, and others who contributed to the founding of the United States during the era of the American Revolution. This study, which highlights the people Caesar Rodney enslaved, reinforces that more recent usage of the term.[3]

[3] Marla R. Miller. "US Founders," *Inclusive Historians Handbook*, June 1, 2019, https://inclusivehistorian.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/chapter/u-s-founders/. Another phrase that can be used to refer to all people involved in the American Revolution is "revolutionary generation." See, for example, *Declaring Revolution: America's Printed Path to Independence*, The New York Historical, on view from November 14, 2025-April 12, 2026, https://www.nyhistory.org/exhibitions/declaring-the-revolution.

This study is about chattel slavery in colonial British North American and the early United States. The phrase “chattel slavery” refers to the system of enslavement practiced by three generations of the Rodney family, including Caesar Rodney, signer of the Declaration of Independence. Within this system, people like Rodney enslaved individuals based on race, and this enslavement was passed down to successive generations. This enslavement was referred to as “chattel slavery” because it meant that people like Rodney bought, sold, and treated people like property (or chattel). Delaware did not ratify the 13th-15th Amendments (which, among other things, freed enslaved people, made them citizens, and gave them the right to vote) until 1901. Nonetheless, Delaware had a substantial free Black population by 1860. When not quoting historical sources, this report uses words such as “enslaved” and “enslaver” or “enslaved by” per best practices among academic and public historians.[4]

INTRODUCTION

On December 8, 1767, an enslaved woman named Jude (birth and death dates unknown) and her two children, five-year-old Ezekiel (1762-?) and another child whose name and birth and death dates are unknown, were sold by their enslaver, Charles Nabb, who had recently moved to Kent County, Delaware, to Caesar Rodney.[5] Whether

[4] P. Gabrielle Foreman, et al. “Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help” community-sourced document, Accessed September 28, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/u/2/d/1A4TEdDgYslX-hlKezLodMIM71My3KTN0zxRv0IQTOQs/mobilebasic?ref=liberatingnarratives.com.

[5] The partial transcription of the deed reads, “…Charles Nabb, late of Queen Ann’s County in the province of Maryland, but now of the county of Kenton [sic] in Delaware…” The research presented here represents a starting point for learning more about the individuals Rodney enslaved but also other enslaved individuals with whom Rodney interacted. The focus in this work has been on official life documents, , but it is worth asking and trying to determine where people Rodney enslaved may have been buried. Conversation with Wade Catts, September 17, 2024.

they wanted to be relocated or not is unknown. But their current and future enslavers did not give them an option. Caesar Rodney, plantation owner and public official in Delaware, enslaved Jude and her children after purchasing them and two black horses from Nabb for £150.[6] Over the next seventeen years, it is likely that Jude and her children worked on one of Rodney's farms or inside his home. Upon Rodney's death in 1784, he freed Jude along with two other elderly persons who, it seems, had been enslaved at Byfield for a long time, namely "old Negro Charles" and "old negro Peg." Rodney required Jude's son "Ezekel" (who is likely the same as "Ezekiel" noted above based on age), valued at £50 in 1784, to be enslaved for five more years.[7] We do not know the name of the second child sold and enslaved along with Jude in 1767, though it may have been John. John, along with Harry, were listed as sons of Jude in Caesar Rodney's brother's "Account of the Negroes that belonged Caesar Rodney" in 1784.[8]

[6] "Bill of Sale, Charles Nabb to Caesar Rodney, For Jude and Children, 1767," Folder: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1765-1767, Rodney Collection, Box 6, Folder 2, Box: Caesar Rodney, signer, VB 6, Box 6, Caesar Rodney Papers, 1737-1798, Rodney Collection 1700-1884, Delaware Historical Society Research Library and Archives (hereafter, DHS). I could find few traces of Nabb in other historical documents. See an ad he placed in the Maryland Gazette, seeking the owner of a "brindle and white bull" that had wondered to his property. ["There is at the Plantation of Charles Nabb"], Maryland Gazette, September 25, 1760. Also published in October.

[7] See transcription of Rodney's inventory in Jane Harrington Scott, *A Gentleman as Well as a Whig: Caesar Rodney and the American Revolution* (Newark: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Delaware, 2000), 221.

[8] Thomas Rodney, "An Account of the Negroes that belongd Caesar Rodney Esq at the Time of his decd: with their ages," Caesar Rodney estate, 1784, manuscript book box 162, Brown Collection, DHS.

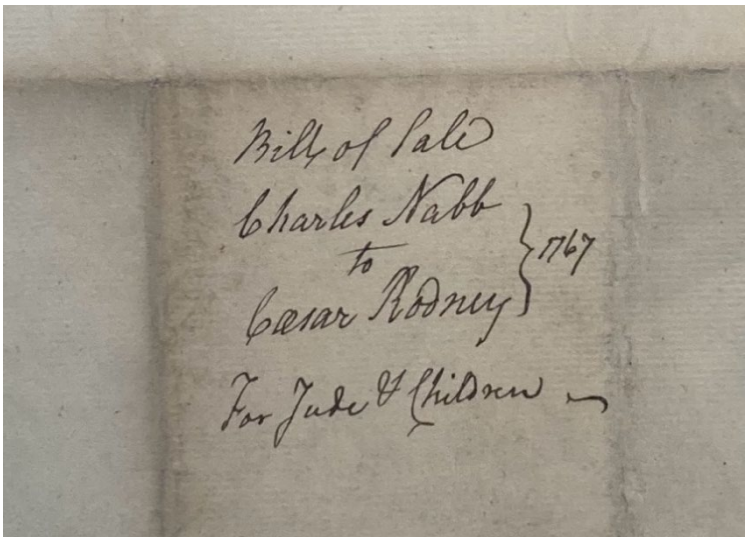

Figure 1. Detail of manuscript document that reads: "Bill of Sale/Charles Nabb/to/Caesar Rodney/1767/For Jude & Children~""Bill of Sale, Charles Nabb to Caesar Rodney, For Jude and Children, 1767," Folder: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1765-1767, Rodney Collection, Box 6, Folder 2, Box: Caesar Rodney, signer, VB 6, Box 6, Caesar Rodney Papers, 1737-1798, Rodney Collection 1700-1884, Delaware Historical Society Research Library and Archives.

Transactions like the one between Rodney and Nabb raise countless questions that could be asked about many individuals enslaved in colonial America and the early Republic. What were enslaved individuals' feelings about being sold along with two animals? Was the child unnamed in 1767, John, who was among the enslaved individuals included in Rodney's inventory as having to remain enslaved until they turned twenty-five?[9] Did the child die before becoming an adult? Had Rodney sold the child before he died? Did Jude and her two children have a relationship with the father of the children? Who was he? How backbreaking, debilitating, and relentless was the work they performed?[10] Did Jude or her children know that the person who enslaved

[9] Caesar Rodney's original Will and Inventory are at the Delaware Historical Society (Will) and the Delaware Public Archives (inventory). The microfilm of the Rodney probate files at the Delaware Public Archives includes a typescript of Caesar Rodney's Will and Inventory. Microfilm reads: "Compiled from the original in the Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware." Page # 735, RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives (hereafter, DPA).

[10] For more on the intersection of enslavement and being enslaved by a founder in the Revolutionary era, see Nicole Belolan, "William Lee: George Washington's Enslaved Valet," in *Hidden Voices: Americans with Disabilities in United States History*, Mike Rembis, ed. (New York: NYC Department of Education,

her played a key role in ratifying the Declaration of Independence, which stated “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”?[11] How might Jude and her children want to be remembered? How can learning the stories of Jude, her children, and others Rodney enslaved help us understand the history and contemporary implications of systemic racism?

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CAESAR RODNEY AS IT RELATES TO SLAVERY AND ENSLAVEMENT

Caesar Rodney, who enslaved Jude and her children, is perhaps best known for traveling to Philadelphia to cast what would be the deciding vote for Delaware in favor of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.[12] This was an important political act. Over the years, how Rodney got to Philadelphia and under what circumstances became romanticized, ensuring Rodney’s lasting fame—especially within the First State.[13] This may be due in part to the evocative language Rodney used in a July 4, 1776, letter to his brother Thomas, which is often called the “thunder and rain” letter. Caesar Rodney wrote: “I arrived in Congress (tho' detained by Thunder and Rain) in time enough to give

2024), https://www.weteachnyc.org/media2016/filer_public/1a/53/1a538bc9-0b77-454c-a2ec-afb7f195866d/hidden_voices_americans_with_disabilities_in_united_states_history_r2.pdf.

[11] The National Archives, “The Declaration of Independence,” America‘s Founding Documents, Accessed September 28, 2024, https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration.

[12] One historian noted that “At least nine, possibly more, poems have been written about his dramatic ride from Dover to Philadelphia.” William P. Frank and Harold B. Hancock, “Caesar Rodney’s Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary: An Evaluation,” *Delaware History*, 18, 2 (1978): 64.

[13] See, for example, Katherine Pyle and edited by Emily P. Bissell, *Once Upon a Time in Delaware* (Delaware Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1911), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008651983. The story may have started to become embellished during the nineteenth century. More research is required to trace how it changed over time.

my voice to the matter of Independence."[14] Rodney's now famous ride is the act the 1923 equestrian statue, designed for Rodney Square in Wilmington, DE, the artwork on the 1999 Delaware state quarter, and the horse and rider on signs for neighborhoods throughout Delaware are meant to evoke.

Under what circumstances did Rodney come to be one of the most famous people in Delaware history?

Rodney was born into a prominent Delaware family. The Rodneys are often associated with other wealthy Delaware families such as the Reads, Loockermans, and the Dickinsons. In addition to being known for signing the Declaration of Independence, Rodney is also known for having lived with and managed respiratory illness and facial cancer for much of his adult life. HBO's critically acclaimed miniseries *John Adams* (2008) and the cult classic stage (1969) and film (1972) musical *1776* made this disease a part of how he was portrayed. Yet what Rodney looked like largely remains a mystery; there are no known surviving, period depictions of him.[15] The most detailed period physical description of Rodney may be John Adams's oft-quoted 1774 diary description: "Caesar Rodney is the oddest looking Man in the World. He is tall—thin and slender as a Reed—pale—his Face is not bigger than a large Apple."[16] But like all founders,

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[14] "RODNEY, Caesar (1728-1784), Signer (Delaware)," Christie's, accessed June 29, 2025, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4606494. This letter is now in the collections of the University of Virginia's Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, MSS # 12155**,** University of Virginia Library, Accessed September 30, https://explore.lib.virginia.edu/exhibits/show/declaration/item/5772.

[15] In 1935, Joseph Shephard was arrested for, among other things, selling a fraudulent portrait of Rodney to the Delaware Historical Society. The portrait is still in the DHS collections. See FOLDER RG9200.R08.000 Rodney Papers Portrait Letters Concerning 1935, 9, BOX 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts Collection, Delaware Public Archives, and George Jospeh Shephard, *Caesar Rodney*, ink and watercolor on paper, 1934, 1975.003.001, Delaware Historical Society, Accessed September 30, 2024, https://dehistory.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/DC11337A-9450-4D6C-954F-211578360956.

[16] John Adams, From the Diary of John Adams, September 3, 1774, Founders Online, Accessed September 27, 2024, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-02-02-0004-0006.

Rodney was more than his public service and his public persona. This research report is a first step at highlighting lesser-known stories about Rodney and the people he enslaved.

Like many white men of means who died in the eighteenth century, Rodney was his own first biographer, describing himself as follows in his will:

> "I, Caesar Rodney of the County of Kent in the Delaware State Esquire, Delegate in Congress Held at New York to solicit the repeal of the memorable Stamp Act, last speaker of the General Assembly of Delaware held at Philadelphia, Signer of the Declaration of Independence, late President and Governor of the Delaware state aforesaid…"[17]

Nineteenth-century Rodney biographies featured similar themes but also his military service, which started during the Seven Years' War (or French and Indian War) (1754-1763) and included the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783).

Caesar Rodney's early biographers focused primarily on his public service. An 1823 biography discusses Rodney's involvement in proposing a ban on importing enslaved individuals into Delaware in 1767.[18] But it does not mention his ownership of enslaved individuals at that time.[19] Historian George Herbert Ryden (1884-1941) published the first edited collection of Rodney's letters in 1933.[20] By the 1980s, scholars

[17] Scott, 223.
[18] John Sanderson, "Caesar Rodney," in *Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, Vol. VIII (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Sanderson for the Proprietor, 1820-1827): 81-124, Accessed September 30, 2024, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/103011388/Home.
[19] For a recent synthetic, inclusive overview of the American Revolutionary era, see Woody Holton, *Liberty is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster: 2021).
[20] George Herbert Ryden, ed., *Letters to and From Caesar Rodney, 1756-1784* (Historical Society of Delaware, 1933; repr., University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). Ten years later, Ryden published

began to show more interest in Rodney's everyday life, including his relationship to slavery and enslavement. These historians highlighted letters and parts of letters that mentioned such topics, but that Ryden had not included in his collection.[21] The most comprehensive biography of Rodney, Jane Harrington Scott's *A Gentleman as Well as a Whig: Caesar Rodney and the American Revolution* (2000), includes many references to slavery and enslavement but does not focus on those topics. This project builds on all these contributions.

Why have academic and public historians made little headway in discussing and researching Rodney's relationship to slavery and enslavement? It may be due to the fact that there are no surviving or recreated houses where Rodney lived (unlike the case with George Washington [1732-1799] and Thomas Jefferson [1743-1826] and, more locally, John Dickinson [1732-1808]) that are open to the public.[22] Despite that, Rodney's Wilmington equestrian statue and a related anti-racist movement are spurring a change in the way historians and the public alike think about Rodney and his legacy.[23]

Biographical Sketches of Caesar Rodney (the Signer), Thomas Rodney, and Caesar A. Rodney (Dover, Delaware: Public Archives Commission, 1943).

[21] Harold Hancock, ed., "Letters to and from Caesar Rodney: the Personal Side," *Delaware History*, 20, 3 (1983):185-186, and FN 3.

[22] One of the buildings where Caesar Rodney (the signer) lived and owned still stands at 26 The Green in Dover, Delaware. It is not open to the public. For more on the cultural assets associated with the Dover Green area, see National Park Service, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Dover Green, First State National Historic Park*, 2017, https://npshistory.com/publications/frst/cli-dover-green.pdf. Rodney also lived at two other residences in Dover as a renter in the 1770s. Scott, *A Gentleman and a Whig*, 56-57. For more on Washington's relationship to slavery and enslavement, see Susan P. Schoelwer, ed., *Lives Bound Together* (Mount Vernon, Virginia: Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 2016) and Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017); on Jefferson's relationship to slavery and enslavement, see Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemmings of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007); and for John Dickinson's relationship to slavery and enslavement, see *Plantation Stories Project*, Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, Accessed September 28, 2024, https://history.delaware.gov/john-dickinson-plantation/.

[23] For more on what "anti-racism" means today and in the public history world, see "What Does It Mean to be Anti-Racist," Harvard Club of Southern California, Accessed January 23, 2026, https://hcsc.clubs.harvard.edu/article.html?aid=1348.

Like many other elite white people of his time, Rodney was exposed to slavery over his entire life and chose to uphold it even after his death. Rodney's accomplishments were made on the backs of enslaved individuals. As with other, more high-profile white male enslavers who have been and continue to be called founders of the United States, Rodney's interest in liberty and other founding ideals can be contrasted sharply with the fact that he was an enslaver. Yet, prior to now, historians have not yet taken a deep dive into Rodney's involvement with slavery and enslavement.

The earliest known reference to enslaving an individual in the Rodney family identified to date can be found in Daniel Jones's will and inventory (Caesar Rodney's maternal great-grandfather, died 1694). The first transaction is detailed in a receipt from June 13, 1699. It documents William Morton and William Rodney (1652-1708) (Caesar Rodney the signer's grandfather) selling "Three Good Likely Negro Men Nott to Exceed twenty five Years of Age" to John Stevens and William Stevens.[24]

In another instance, a 1733 bill of sale set off a series of transactions and legal proceedings that shaped multiple enslaved individuals' lives, perhaps through 1781. In 1733, Daniel Rodney (d. 1744) (uncle of Caesar Rodney the signer) sold five "negroes" to Caesar Rodney, Sr. (Caesar Rodney the signer's father, d. 1745): "a man named Mingo One Negro woman named Nancy and Three Children Namely Denby, Prescilla, and Abraham."[25] In 1746, after Daniel and Caesar Rodney, Sr.'s death, Elizabeth

[24] Collection William Rodney Folder. 1699. DHS.
[25] "Bill of Sale 5 Negro, Dan. Rodney to Caesar Rodney." FOLDER: Caesar Rodney Senior, 1728-1746, H.F. Brown Collection, Box 23, VAULT BOX 23, Caesar A. Rodney & others, Folder 22, BROWN COLLECTION, DHS.

Rodney, wife of Caesar, Sr. and Caesar the signer's mother, noted that Margaret Rodney (widow of Daniel and aunt of Caesar the signer) owed Caesar Sr.'s estate a balance of over £70—which appears to be a part of a separate transaction—as well as enslaved individuals listed in the 1733 Bill of Sale (Mingo, Nancy, Denby, Prescilla, and Abraham) and an another enslaved woman named Sarah.[26] These individuals were not listed in Caesar Rodney, Sr.'s, inventory. Denby and Abraham were listed on Daniel Rodney's inventory.[27] His inventory also listed a "Nancy," which could be the "Naney" noted in the legal documents. Daniel's inventory does not list Prescilla.

Where did these individuals end up? Some of them stayed with Margaret Rodney, suggesting the dispute between Margaret and Elizabeth was resolved at least partly in Margaret's favor. A 1763 Bill of Sale between Margaret and Caleb Luff (her son-in-law) includes Denbigh (or Denby), Jacob, and Cuff, who are probably the same individuals involved in the suit, as well as Ireland, who was not mentioned in any other documents identified to date, and Celia (quite possibly Prescilla).[28] This chain of events reinforces: the importance of enslaved individuals to elite Delaware life; the status of enslaved humans as property; women slaveholding in the eighteenth-century Mid-Atlantic; and the everydayness of enslaved individuals being split up from each other,

[26] "Nov [?] 1746., Benjamin Jones/ats/Caesar Rodeneys Admix, [?], a Copy"/Nov [?] 1746, Margaret Rodeney/Ats/Caeser Rodeney Admix/a Coppy," "Daniel Rodney widow Elizabeth 1746," FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5, Box 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts Collection Rodney Papers, DPA.
[27] Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll#188, Probate Files; Kent County, Robers, Thomas 1785-1790 to Rodney William 1787-1791, 1680-1936, DPA. To date, I have been unable to locate Elizabeth Rodney Wilson's probate.
[28] "Bill of Sale/Margaret Rodney/to Caleb Luff," FOLDER: Box 27, Folder 296, Volume 27, Page 29, BOX: Logan family papers, 1638-1964, Collection 0379, Series 1: Logan and Dickinson family papers, Subseries h. Estate Records, Dickinson estate, Kingston on Hill, Town Point (Luff and Withered) (Volume XXVII, HSP.

regardless of whether they were related by blood.[29] See Figure 7, image of the 1746 legal document describing the dispute.

The Rodney family lands, where many of the individuals the Rodneys enslaved likely labored, were in Delaware near Dover, where Lenape people had lived for thousands of years. Caesar Rodney inherited the land he owned from his mother. The land can be traced back to Daniel Jones (d. 1694). The primary land was often referred to as Byfield, but the plantation was made up of several farms, of which Byfield was one. The plantation included about 800 acres south of present-day Route 9 that extended to the marshes near the Delaware Bay.[30] This land was adjacent to lands owned by John Dickinson (1732-1808), another founder and enslaver and a signer of the Constitution of the United States. Rodney was buried at Byfield, but he died at his house and parcel known as Poplar Grove (near present-day Huntley Circle, Dover).[31] Rodney derived his societal power in part from the land he inherited and the people he enslaved. Perhaps his recent biographer Jane Harrington Scott put it best when she wrote: “It was the ownership of slaves, of course, that made it possible for the early families of Delaware, the Rodneys, Dickinsons, Loockermans, and Ridgelys to emulate

[29] For more on women slaveholders in eighteenth-century British north America, see Christine Walker, "Female Slaveholders in British America," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History,* February 27, 2024.
[30] Joanna Wilson, “In Search of Caesar Rodney: Marker Erected on Site Most Often Associated with Famous Patriot,” *Dover Post*, 23, 3, March 7, 1997. This article was included in the research packet associated with the historical marker. Delaware Public Archives, ”Collected Research Materials” for Byfield marker, accessed May 18, 2025, https://archivesfiles.delaware.gov/markers/pdfs/KC_053_Collected_Research_Materials.pdf. See also “Map showing location of Byfield,” in Scott, *A Gentleman as Well as a Whig*, 17.
[31] Ibid.

the lives of English squires and, in many cases, afford them the freedom to enter politics."[32]

Rodney's father, Caesar Rodney Sr., died in 1745, leaving seventeen-year-old Caesar Jr. to inherit the family property, which included an unsubstantiated number of enslaved persons. Caesar Sr.'s probate inventory listed two people, Glasso and Doll (birth and death dates unknown), but it is likely that there were others.[33] After his father's death, Caesar Jr. (the signer), requested that Nicholas Ridgely (1694-1755), a public servant, would become his guardian.[34] The Ridgelys also depended on enslaved individuals. In 1754, Nicholas Ridgely wrote to his son Charles in Philadelphia and asked about purchasing an individual to enslave as if they were a farm animal: "If you can hear of a likely young Negro fellow or Lad in Philada to be Sold Enquire abt his Qualities, Age, and Price. and lett me know & first opportunity—I want to buy one."[35] Ridgely's inventory listed nine enslaved "negroes" just before a list of livestock.[36] When Caesar Rodney himself died, he owned eighteen enslaved individuals, fifteen of whom were valued at over £392 in total.[37] One estimate is that around the time of the Revolution, there were about 37,000 people in Delaware, and 2,000 were of African

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[32] Scott, 19.
[33] Inventory, Caesar Rodney (Sr), 1745, Page #747, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, DPA. "Glasso" may instead be "Glasco." Additional research required to try to determine correct spelling of his name.
[34] "The Petition of Casar Rodney," FOLDER: RECORD GROUP 3840.006 RODNEY CASAR [SIC] (decd.), 1745, #1, DPA.

[35] Nicholas Ridgely, Dover, to Charles Greenberry Ridgely, Philadelphia, February 23, 1754, FOLDER RG 9200-R09-000 RIDGELY PAPERS TO RIDGELY, DR CHARLES GREENBERRY FOLDER 156, DPA.
[36] Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, DPA.
[37] Scott, 221. When Caesar Rodney died, his brother Thomas created his own list of people Caesar had enslaved.

descent. A majority of people of African descent in Delaware at that time were enslaved.[38]

Based on research to date, over his lifetime, Caesar Rodney the signer directly enslaved at least twenty-six individuals. Future research may uncover that Rodney enslaved additional individuals. If it had not been for the people Caesar Rodney enslaved, he would not have been able to profit from his plantation or pursue his political and military career. See Appendix B for notes on identifying individuals Caesar Rodney enslaved.

What was the nature of agricultural work on Rodney's land in eighteenth-century Delaware? How did enslaved labor fit into this type of wealth?

In several primary source documents cited here, Rodney's farms were called plantations. We tend to think of plantations as farms powered by enslaved individuals. But in the eighteenth century, a "plantation" did not necessarily involve enslaved labor.[39] The term "plantation" referred to larger farms, or, more simply as famed dictionary writer Samuel Johnson defined it, "the act or practice of planting."[40] In Rodney's case, though, enslaved people did do the work, overseen by Caesar and Thomas Rodney as well as free white and Black tenants. Compared to regional tobacco, cotton or rice plantations

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[38] John Henry Haas, "Caesar Rodney: Delaware's prudent engineer of revolution" (PhD dissertation, The Claremont Graduate University, 1994), 17. For more on enslaved people in Wilmington, DE, especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Wade Paul Catts, "Slaves, Free Blacks, and French Negroes: An Archaeological and Historical Perspective on Wilmington's Forgotten Folk," (History, University of Delaware, May 1988).

[39] Jennifer L. Green, "Plantations," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia* (Rutgers University, 2015), https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/plantations/.

[40] *A dictionary of the English language*, ed. Samuel Johnson, number edition. (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1766), s.v. "Plantation," https://archive.org/details/dictionaryofengl02johnuoft/page/n337/mode/2up. For more on the different definitions of plantation as a physical thing and an idea, see Amy Clukey and Jeremy Wells, "Introduction: Plantation Modernity," *The Global South* 10, no. 2 (2016): 1–10.

of the mid-19th century, which could include upwards of 700 enslaved persons or more, the number of people identified as held in bondage by Caesar Rodney may seem small in comparison. However, given the conditions of the late 18th century grain, fruit and livestock economy of Kent County, Delaware, the number of persons enslaved by Rodney was likely similar to other farms/plantations of his neighbors. These included the John Dickinson Plantation (as many as 59 enslaved persons (1786), and Whitehall Plantation (about 60 enslaved persons (1798) near Smyrna, on Duck Creek. The Rodney land holdings in the Dover area were part of a plantation culture on the Atlantic coast stretching from Massachusetts to Florida that used enslaved labor.[41]

[41] Richard Lyman Bushman, *The American Farmer in the Eighteenth Century: A Social and Cultural* History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018) 39-47. See also "Preserving American Freedom Project," Historical Society of Pennsylvania: https://digitalhistory.hsp.org/pafrm/doc/manumission-john-dickinsons-slaves-may-12-1777-march-27-1779 [accessed 03-02-2026]; Plantation Stories Project, John Dickinson Plantation website, DE Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, https://history.delaware.gov/john-dickinson-plantation/plantation-stories-project/ [accessed 03-03-2026]; Phillip Seitz and John Reese, "The Slaves of Whitehall Plantation, a True Story of Defiance and Resistance," *Delaware History*, Vol 33, No. 3, 2011.

Figure 2. The site of Byfield, where Caesar Rodney was born. He retained this land for the rest of his life. The historical marker reads: Near this site stood the boyhood home of Caesar Rodney, signer of the Declaration of Independence, Brigadier General of the State's militia (1775-1778), and President (Governor) of Delaware (1778-1781). Byfield was originally settled in the early 1680's by Daniel Jones, Rodney's maternal great grandfather. Following Jones' death, it became the family seat for three generations of the Rodney Family. Caesar Rodney spent his formative years here and eventually acquired ownership of the property after the death of his mother in 1763. Upon entering public life in 1764, Rodney moved to the town of Dover. Although the property was occupied by tenant farmers, Rodney retained Byfield until his death in 1784. He is buried in an unmarked family cemetery on the property." (Photo by author, February 3, 2025).

Like many white men of his class, Rodney's wealth derived largely from his land holdings. He had inherited the land from his mother Elizabeth in 1763. He retained it for the rest of his life and enlarged it. Enslaved laborers cultivated crops such as wheat and corn and raised livestock.[42] Between 1768 and the time of his death, Caesar's taxable property was valued at between £120 and £280 (peaking in 1781).[43] The value of

[42] Scott, 16-18.
[43] RG3535.000 Roll #003 Tax Assessments; Kent County, 1768 County Allowance List to 1784 Murderkill Hd 1768-1785, Microfilm, DPA.

Rodney's taxable property was among the highest of his neighbors, though founder and neighbor, John Dickinson's was considerably higher.[44] After Caesar's death, his land was valued at £100, then dropped down to between £2 and £10.[45]

We know Caesar Rodney believed in enslaving individuals because he did it himself. At least one source provides some insight into tense relations with them. During the American Revolutionary War, his brother Thomas Rodney (1744-1811) managed Caesar Rodney's affairs, including Caesar's plantations. After Thomas started investigating renting Caesar's enslaved individuals along with his land to drum up some income during uncertain times, he wrote to Caesar in April 1776 explaining that "the negroes have all been pleading...& are so averse to being sold that Billy [or William Rodney, Caesar's brother] does not know how you will part with them and seems to think you had better upon the whole rent them with the farms than go through the disagreeable feelings that will arise from their petitions & remonstrances on separating

[44] It is highly likely that people enslaved by Rodney and Dickinson interacted with each other. We know from one surviving, undated letter from Rodney to John's brother Philomon that Rodney asked about whether any of Philomon's "boys" were seen around some of Rodney's deer. Based on the letter, it is unclear what happened to the deer, though Philemon calls it a "crime." Philemon notes the boys had an alibi and that Cato, presumably an individual enslaved by a Dickinson, said that he did not "see it nor knew anything of the matter." This letter merely hints at possible opportunities for enslaved people to intermingle and interact. Philomon Dickinson to Caesar Rodney. General Reference Collections, Biography; 9270-000-002, Box 386253, Folder Philomon Dickinson, DPA. Thank you to Gloria Henry for showing me a copy of this letter. We also know that Caesar and Thomas Rodney shared enslaved individuals during Caesar's lifetime and after. In one 1775 document titled "Plantation Harvest/1775 An Acct of Harvest Wagers [sic]," Thomas Rodney listed several of "our own people" who assisted with the harvest (location not stated), and many of the names correspond with individuals enslaved by Caesar. Plantation Harvest/1775 An Acct of Harvest Wagers, Folder: THOMAS RODNEY, 1770s, Rodney Collection, Box 10, Folder 2, Box 10. Thomas Rodney papers. 1760-1816, Rodney Collection, 1700-1884 DHS.

[45] RG3535.000 Roll #004 Tax Assessments; Kent County, 1784 Dover Hd. To 1797 Duck Creek Hd, 1785-1797, DPA. The tax records available for Caesar Rodney's assessments do not specify what is being taxed, and so are not helpful in identifying enslaved persons.

& squandering them."[46] Caesar responded that "from their past vile misbehavior they have no right to expect any favour or partiallity for them at my hands."[47] Rodney went on to explain that because of this episode, he "lost all confidence in, and almost all affection or feeling for them." What was the nature of that "misbehavior" and "affection"? How did the relationship between the people Rodney enslaved and Rodney change over time?[48]

This dynamic between Rodney and the people he enslaved, recorded in at least two letters, provides hints as to Rodney's attitudes toward enslaved individuals. Perhaps more importantly, these letters also highlight the agency of individuals Rodney enslaved. In the eighteenth century, enslaved individuals resisted slavery in many ways. Resistance ranged from pretending to be ill to self-emancipating (as known as running away) to planning and carrying out violent revolts. It also included practicing their own cultural beliefs. In this case, it seems that the people Rodney enslaved did something in the past that aggravated him but that they continued to protest their enslavement by communicating their displeasure with the prospect of being sold or rented to someone else (and possibly moved and/or separated from family).[49]

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[46] Thomas Rodney to Caesar Rodney, Dover, April 26th, 1776, Folder: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 3-Feb-Aug 31, 1776, Rodney Collection, Box 6, Folder 9, Box: Caesar Rodney, signer, VB 6, Box 6, Caesar Rodney Papers, 1737-1798, Rodney Collection 1700-1884, DHS.

[47] Caesar Rodney to Thomas Rodney, Philadelphia May 1, 1776, quoted in Harold Hancock, "Letters to and from Caesar Rodney: the Personal Side," *Delaware History* 20, 3 (1983), 209-210.

[48] Thomas Rodney also enslaved individuals. In his ledger from the early 1770s, he noted purchasing "Wm Rodneys Negro Isac" in two installments (over £65) in November of 1772.
"THOMAS RODNEY/Directions respecting Executors and administrators...ms. 50.26, Personal/Memoranda, quotations, journal, "MBB 66, H. Fletcher Brown Collection of Rodney Family Papers-Thomas Rodney diaries, 11 vol., DHS.

[49] This aspect of the history of slavery and enslavement is ripe for interpretation. For an overview of this topic, see James H. Sweet, "Slave Resistance," Freedom's Story: Teaching African American Literature and History, National Humanities Center, Accessed September 29, 2024, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1609-1865/essays/slaveresist.htm.

Caesar Rodney also leased people he enslaved to individuals who rented his lands. For example, in December of 1770, William Snipes agreed “to lease and lett” a “plantation” from Caesar Rodney.[50] For £100 a year for five years, Snipes received use of buildings, animals, and farm equipment. He was also given specific instructions on how to work the land. With the land, he also rented “one Negro Lad named Ebenezer” and “another Negro Lad named Absolem.”[51] Snipes was required “To Keep and maintain in good Victuals and Cloaths the above named Negro’s so that they shall not at any time during the term afsd. have Reason to Complain.”[52] You could read this as special affection for Ebenezer and Absolem, but Rodney required that Snipes keep the buildings in good repair as well. Enslaved individuals were merely more of Rodney’s property, and he did not want them to cause trouble or cost him more than necessary.

We also know that Rodney was a part of a larger system or network of slavery and enslavement because at least one person reached out to him for help catching enslaved individuals who had self-emancipated. In July of 1777, Samuel Chase (1741-1811), a Maryland signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote to Caesar Rodney from Philadelphia explaining that Joe, an individual Chase enslaved, self-emancipated or ran away with another individual enslaved by Governor Thomas Johnson (1732-1819). They had been seen, he wrote, “at the back of one John Potter’s Plantation,

[50] FOLDER: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1770-1771, March 14, 1770-November 27, 1771, 9 items, H.F. Brown Collection Box 18 Folder 8, BOX: H Fletcher Brown Collection of Rodney Family Papers/Caesar/Rodney & Others VB 18, DHS.
[51] FOLDER: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1770-1771, March 14, 1770-November 27, 1771, 9 items, H.F. Brown Collection Box 18 Folder 8, BOX: H Fletcher Brown Collection of Rodney Family Papers/Caesar/Rodney & Others VB 18, DHS.
[52] FOLDER: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1770-1771, March 14, 1770-November 27, 1771, 9 items, H.F. Brown Collection Box 18 Folder 8, BOX: H Fletcher Brown Collection of Rodney Family Papers/Caesar/Rodney & Others VB 18, DHS.

Sussex County." Chase went on to ask Rodney to hire someone to help find the men and noted that there was a reward offered of £10 for each individual.[53]

Wealthy white people in early America often had developed close relationships with the people they enslaved. For example, George Washington maintained a close relationship with his enslaved valet William Lee. Disabled by enslavement and living at Mount Vernon upon Washington's death in 1799, Lee was the only enslaved individual Washington freed immediately.[54] Washington did so for several reasons including, "my sense of his attachment to me."[55] Indeed Caesar's Rodney's relationship with the people he enslaved might also be described as private and personal. Two days after Rodney died in 1784, "Old Negro Glasco," who may have been the individual Caesar inherited from his father's estate, showed Thomas Rodney where Caesar wanted to be buried. Thomas paid Glasco £0.7.6 for this information.[56] These relationships (which sometimes seemed to have been characterized by some degree of affection) between enslavers and the individual they enslaved should not be construed as better, good, or pleasant. Instead, we should see them as relatively common and always oppressive.

The enslaved individuals mentioned above represent only some of the people Rodney enslaved or interacted with during his lifetime. These and other sources show

[53] Samuel Chase to Caesar Rodney, July 25, 1777, FOLDER: Chase, Samuel, 1741-1811, Signer, DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, BOX: Simon Gratz autograph collection, 1343-1928, Declaration OF INDEPENDENCE: Adams, John – Manner in which...(portrait), Case 1, Box 19, HSP.
[54] George Washington, "Last Will and Testament," July 9, 1799, Founders Online, National Archives, Accessed May 14, 2025, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-04-02-0404-0001. For more on Washington's relationship with Lee, see Belolan,
[55] Ibid.
[56] June 28, 1784, "THOMAS RODNEY/Directions respecting Executors and administrators...ms. 50.26, Personal/Memoranda, quotations, journal, "MBB 66, H. Fletcher Brown Collection of Rodney Family Papers-Thomas Rodney diaries, 11 vol., DHS.

the potential to interpret biographies of individuals Rodney enslaved as well as Rodney's relationship to them.[57]

ON ABOLITION AND MANUMISSION

People in British North America started advocating for abolition once people were enslaved there in the seventeenth century. As one historian pointed out, enslaved individuals—through their acts of resistance such as self-emancipation or advocating not to be sold, as did some of the people Rodney enslaved—were the first abolitionists, not white elites who gradually manumitted (or freed) them or proposed laws about manumission.[58] Race-based slavery and enslavement had a lasting negative impact on the lives of Black people in the American colonies and in the United States.

What were the paths to freedom and liberty? In the colonial era and in the early United States, enslaved individuals could become free if their enslavers manumitted

[57] Thomas Rodney continued to enslave individuals after Caesar's death. We know, for example, that in 1791, his property, including people he enslaved, were sold at auction to satisfy a debt of £1600. These individuals included "1 Negro Man James," "1 Negro Boy [?]," and "1 Negro Boy Ezekiel." Indenture, April 9, 1791, Against Thomas Rodney, signed Andrew Barratt, Sheriff, to Joseph Barker, Delaware, U.S., Land Records, 1677-1947, Roll 786, Ancestry and Document: "Goods taken in Execution at the....Robert Clark and Thomas Fisher, Samuel Fisher, and Rowland Fisher, said to be the property of Thomas Rodney," April 28, 1791, FOLDER: THOMAS RODNEY, 1791-92, Rodney Coll., Box 10, Folder 8, Box 10. Thomas Rodney papers, 1760-1816, Rodney Collection. 1700-1884, DHS. A related document also includes "1 Negro girl." Document: "Inventory of James Grahams Goods, Sold to Col Thos Rodney, 2 May 1791," FOLDER: THOMAS RODNEY, 1791-92, Rodney Coll., Box 10, Folder 8, Box 10. Thomas Rodney papers, 1760-1816, Rodney Collection, 1700-1884, DHS. Upon Thomas's death in Mississippi, Thomas had two enslaved individuals: "One Negro woman named Charlotte" and a boy...Saul." Document: "Inventory and appraisement of all and singular the goods and Chattels of the late Honorable Thomas Rodney deceased [?] to us by William B Shields administrator," FOLDER: THOMAS RODNEY, 1806-1811, Rodney Coll., Box 10, Folder 15, Box 10. Thomas Rodney papers. 1760-1816, Rodney Collection. 1700-1884, DHS. For more on Thomas's financial troubles, see Jane Harrington, Scott, *A Gentleman as Well as a Whig: Caesar Rodney and the American Revolution* (The National Society of the Colonial Dames of the State of Delaware, 2000), 210-211.

[58] Manisha Sina, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 2.

them (that is, if the enslaver voluntarily gave an individual their freedom through a legal process); if a representative body passed a law deeming slavery illegal (abolition); if an enslaved individual sued their enslaver for freedom and won; or if an enslaved individual ran away from their enslaver and was never caught.[59] Based on research thus far, none of the individuals Rodney enslaved self-emancipated or ran away. Rodney did gradually manumit enslaved individuals just before his death, but not before selling them to someone else (see below). Prior to considering manumission, Delaware suggested changes to laws to keep the prices for enslaved individuals--which Rodney and others owned--high in Delaware.[60] These measures did not pass.

Despite recent books and exhibitions on slavery and enslavement in the North, many people do not realize that people such as Caesar Rodney in northern colonies and states like Delaware enslaved individuals. Once people do learn this, they often assume colonies and states in the northern part of what is today the United States would all have passed laws around the time of the Revolutionary War in favor of gradual abolition, or a legal path to becoming free, usually when an enslaved individual reached a certain age.

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[59] "The Struggle for Freedom," African Americans and the End of Slavery in Massachusetts, Massachusetts Historical Society, Accessed May 14, 2025, https://www.masshist.org/features/endofslavery/struggle. See also Dunbar, *Never Caught*. Enslaved people also petitioned colonial governments for freedom. Of the petitions issued in Massachusetts, no judge granted enslaved people freedom. Massachusetts Historical Society, "The Struggle of Freedom," African Americans and the end of Slavery in Massachusetts, Accessed January 24, 2026, https://www.masshist.org/features/endofslavery/struggle. Petitions for other colonies survive as well.

[60] William H. Williams, *Slavery & Freedom in Delaware, 1639-1865* (Lanham: Roman and Littlefield, 1996), 171, and Scott, 46. For more on slavery and enslavement in Delaware, see Patience Essah, *A House Divided: Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia,1996).

Pennsylvania, Delaware's neighbor to the north, for example, passed a gradual abolition act in 1780.[61] Connecticut and Rhode Island passed gradual abolition laws in 1784; New York passed one in 1799; and New Jersey passed one in 1804.[62] These gradual abolition acts started the process of giving enslaved Black individuals their freedom. But in some cases, as historian Miles Stanley pointed out, because of the age requirements a person had to meet to become free and requirements that babies born to enslaved women remained enslaved until they recached certain ages, it could take decades for a family to be free.[63] To use the people Caesar Rodney enslaved as an example Ezekiel, who was born in 1784, just before Rodney's death, remained enslaved until 1809 (per Rodney's will).

Delaware did not pass a gradual abolition act. John Dickinson (1732-1808), a signer of the U.S. Constitution, neighbor of Caesar Rodney, and enslaver, drafted one, but Delaware's Assembly did not pass it. It was less progressive than the gradual abolition act passed in Pennsylvania.[64] Instead, Delaware focused on manumission, and criminalized selling enslaved individuals.[65] The 1787 "Act to prevent the exportation of slaves, and for other purposes," which Thomas Rodney opposed, made it illegal to sell enslaved Delawareans to the Carolinas, Georgia, and the West Indies.[66] A 1789 supplement made it illegal to sell Delaware enslaved persons into Maryland and

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[61] Pennsylvania, "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery," Avalon Project, Yale Law School Library, Accessed May 15, 2025, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/pennst01.asp.
[62] Stanley, "'A Mere Mock Freedom.'"
[63] Stanley, "'A Mere Mock Freedom.'"
[64] Miles Stanley, "'A Mere Mock Freedom,' Free and Enslaved Black Life in Delaware, 1790-1840," Online presentation, Delaware Historical Society, April 22, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvpjoyAYfps.
[65] Stanley, "'A Mere Mock Freedom.'"
[66] Miles Albrook Stanley, "'A Mongrel Liberty, a Mere Mock Freedom': Free and Enslaved Black Delawareans, 1790-1830, PhD. diss. (University of Edinburgh, 2025).

Virginia. These laws resulted in the proliferation of what historian Miles Stanley called a "robust network of interstate kidnappers and illegal slave traders," though Delaware did pass a law in 1793 that punished such actions.[67]

Caesar Rodney enslaved people during his lifetime. He believed in and depended on slavery and enslavement for his livelihood. He was not an abolitionist who believed in what historian Peter Kolchin defined as "immediate and unconditional freeing of all slaves."[68] Yet just prior to and upon his death, Caesar Rodney instituted his own gradual manumission, but not without further changing forever the lives of some of the people he enslaved. A month before Rodney died, he sold Joice and her son named Charles, to James McClement, noting when they were to be "Manumitted Liberated and forever set free" after four years (Joice) and when he reached twenty five years old (Charles).[69] As a result of the sale of Joice and Charles, though, Rodney separated Joice from her children Salle and Pegg. Caesar Rodney also sold and gradually manumitted enslaved individuals Aron, Absolem, and a person that Thomas

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[67] Stanley, Ibid.

[68] Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang), 77. For more on slavery and enslavement during the American Revolutionary era, see "The American Revolution," in Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 63-92 and Scott, 46. See The 1688 "Germantown Protest" is the first or among the first written abolitionist statements issued in what would become the United States. Gerret Hendericks, Derick up de Graeff, Francis Daniel Pastorius, Abraham up den Graff, P. Jo. Hart, and Anthory Morris, Quaker Protest Against Slavery in the New World, Germantown, Pennsylvania, April 18, 1688, Haverford College Quaker and Special Collections, HC.MC-975-11-055, https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/202168. Caesar A. Rodney (1772-1824), son of Thomas Rodney and nephew of Caesar Rodney (the signer) was a member of the Abolition Society of Wilmington, DE.

[69] Caesar Rodney to James McClement, Kent County, May 24,1784, Delaware, Land Records, 1677-1947, Kent County, p. 411-412, accessed via Ancestry.

Rodney referred to as “a very young child.” Aron and Absolem were to be enslaved for four more years; the young child was to be enslaved until the age of twenty-five.[70]

Upon Caesar Rodney’s death, he freed immediately some individuals and stipulated the number of years others had to wait for freedom. In other words, except for several older enslaved individuals, the individuals Rodney enslaved had to wait until the age of 25 for freedom.[71] For some, this would be nearly 25 years. Rodney’s will also noted that any child born to an enslaved mother after his death would be free; that no enslaved individual should be sold out of state prior to reaching their age at which they would be manumitted; and that enslaved individuals could be sold to individuals in Delaware who would free them at the stipulated age. We may never know why precisely Rodney chose to gradually manumit most of the people he enslaved. Perhaps it was a rational or at least not unexpected act within the context of the Enlightenment tendency to question racist and violent institutions such as slavery.[72] That said, his separating a least one family calls into question the depth and nature of his interest in what enslaved people were entitled to.

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[70] Thomas Rodney, “An Account of the Negroes that belongd Caesar Rodney Esq at the Time of his decd: with their ages,” Caesar Rodney estate, 1784, manuscript book box 162, Brown Collection, DHS.
[71] Research did not find any standard age at which to emancipate enslaved individuals in wills or by law although laws related to slavery and enslavement seem to suggest that enslavers generally assumed enslaved individuals’ labor and ability to have children peaked between the ages of 18 and 35. By retaining enslaved individuals longer, enslavers or the estate of the enslaver were protecting their financial interests. There also existed a white notion that enslaved individuals were not capable of handling sudden freedom, hence the use of gradual emancipation. Peter P. Hinks, “Gradual Emancipation Reflected the Struggle of Some to Envision Black Freedom,” ConnecticutHistory.org, April 27, 2014, https://connecticuthistory.org/gradual-emancipation-reflected-the-struggle-of-some-to-envision-black-freedom/.
[72] For more on the relationship between the Enlightenment and slavery, see Kolchin, *American Slavery,* 65 and 69-70 and the Museum of the American Revolution, “Finding Freedom Big Idea 5: Slavery and Revolutionary Ideals,” Accessed June 29, 2025, https://www.amrevmuseum.org/finding-freedom-big-ideas/finding-freedom-big-idea-5-slavery-and-revolutionary-ideals.

In 1865, the United States Congress passed and ratified the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which freed enslaved individuals; Delaware did not ratify this Amendment until 1901. This delay suggests the ambivalence among Delawareans toward outlawing slavery.

HISTORY OF CAESAR RODNEY COMMEMORATION

For many years, people have grouped Caesar Rodney with other founders of the United States, in part because he signed the Declaration of Independence. In the past, "the founders" typically referred to white men who signed The Declaration of Independence and/or The Constitution; this phrase has been used more broadly to include others (such as women, people of color such as enslaved individuals, and indigenous people) involved in the creation of the United States, especially during the Revolutionary era.[73] Because of this, Rodney is perhaps the best-known Delawarean in history, though he is largely unknown outside the state.[74] Because of Rodney's role as an active public servant and as a signer of the Declaration of Independence, he has

[73] Marla Miller, "U.S. Founders," *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook*, June 1, 2019, https://inclusivehistorian.com/u-s-founders/. See also the recent exhibition at the Museum of the American Revolution, *Black Founders: The Forten Family of Philadelphia.* This exhibition was on view from February 11, 2023, through November 26, 2023. Learn more at the Museum's website: https://www.amrevmuseum.org/exhibits/black-founders-the-forten-family-of-philadelphia.

[74] Rodney is one of the founders featured on the Trump Administration's "Founders Museum" website. The video and written biography do not provide much history beyond the well-known facts about Rodney's political life and health. The White House, "Caesar Rodney," Signer Profiles, Accessed September 24, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/america250/founders-museum/signers/profiles/, and https://www.whitehouse.gov/america250/founders-museum/signers/#caesar-rodney. These resources have been criticized for failing to interpret historical figures as the very complex people they were and for neglecting to integrate marginalized voices. Kristian Monroe, "'Founders Museum' from White House and PragerU blurs history, AI-generated fiction," *NPR*, September 3, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/09/03/nx-s1-5521261/white-house-ai-founders-museum.

been honored with two statues and at least five, state-sponsored historical markers that feature him prominently. None of the memorials identify him as an enslaver, however.

- "Caesar Rodney," near the site of what may be his reinterred remains, in Dover, installed in 1934
- "Byfield," near the site of one of his homes, near Dover, installed in 1994
- "Caesar Rodney," near the first Caesar Rodney High School in Camden, Delaware, installed in 1999
- "Caesar Rodney School District," near the Caesar Rodney School District Building, Wyoming, Delaware, installed in 2015
- "Rodney Square," in Rodney Square, Wilmington, Delaware, installed in 2017

In addition to the historical markers listed above, there are other physical objects that make up the Rodney commemorative landscape. For example, in 1889, the Rodney Club in Dover, Delaware, raised funds to move and mark what were thought to be Rodney's remains from his home to Christ Church in Dover and erected a new gravestone[75] (the 1934 historical marker noted above is nearby). Wilmington's *Morning News* reported that 3,000 people gathered for the unveiling.[76] More recent research suggests Rodney's body may not have been moved and may remain at the site of Byfield.[77]

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[75] "Caesar Rodney: A Plan to Erect a Granite Monument Over His Remains," *The Morning News--Wilmington, DEL.,* June 7, 1888, and "Dover's Hero, General Rodney: A Monument to the Patriot to be Unveiled Next Month," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, September 25, 1889.
[76] "Monument Unveiled," *The Morning News-Wilmington, Del.*, October 31, 1889, and *Proceedings on unveiling the monument to Caesar Rodney* (Wilmington: Delaware Printing Company 1889), Accessed September 30, 2024, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009569324/Home.
[77] "[Byfield Historical Marker] Collected Research Materials," Delaware Public Archives, Accessed September 29, 2024, https://archivesfiles.delaware.gov/markers/pdfs/KC_053_Collected_Research_Materials.pdf. Delaware

Figure 3. Caesar Rodney's grave marker at Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery, Dover, Delaware. (Photo by Author, May 28, 2025).

Finally, there are two large-scale statues of Caesar Rodney. One was in Wilmington, Delaware, until 2020; the other is at the U.S. Capitol. Until June 2020, the equestrian statue stood in Rodney Square, which had been known as Old Court House Square until 1923.[78] The Rodney Square statue was first proposed by the Society of Colonial Wars, and they created a committee to work with groups such as the Delaware

archaeologists uncovered some human remains at the Byfield site in the 1970s. They determined that the remains were not eighteenth-century and the individual they studied was female. In the 2000s, Chuck Fithian did a reassessment of the records. Chuck Fithian, retired Delaware state archaeologist, in discussion with the author, May 20, 2025.

[78] Marjorie McNinch, “The Changing Face of Rodney Square, 1890-1940”, July 31, 1984, 1. File — Box: 6, Folder: 209, Accession: 1645, Part of collection: Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation research reports (1645), Hagley Library.

Historical Society, the Society of the Cincinnati, the Colonial Dames, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the War of 1812, and others.[79] Civil War Union General James H. Wilson served as the Committee's chairperson.

The equestrian statue, designed by sculptor James E. Kelly (1855-1933), is meant to evoke Rodney's ride from Delaware to Philadelphia, PA, that concluded with Rodney's casting a deciding vote for Delaware to approve the Declaration of Independence. The Statue also includes two reliefs: one depicts Rodney arriving in Philadelphia and the other depicts him casting his vote. Kelly wrote to Wilson that he "found a splendid model for the man. He is the son of an English gentleman…of the Island of Nevis where Hamilton was born. He is 5 ft 11…slim as a reed yet very strong."[80] But Kelly struggled with how to represent Rodney's face. He wrote to Wilson: "Do you think the cancer was cured or healed and came back…In Adams description which is very detailed he does not mention it which is strange if he was disfigured with a green patch."[81] The plaques were placed in 1925, two years after the statue itself was unveiled.

The second and lesser known of the two statues was funded by the State of Delaware and unveiled in 1934. The State of Delaware established the Delaware Statue

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[79] "Plan Equestrian Statue of Rodney," *Wilmington Morning News*, May 6, 1915, "Historical Society in Favor of Rodney Statue," *The Evening Journal*, May 18, 1915, and "Campaign for Rodney Statue," *Wilmington Morning News*, Wilmington, DE, August 20, 1915. See also, "Delaware's Patriotism Already Demonstrated," The Evening Journal, Wilmington, DE, December 14, 1915, 1.
[80] James E. Kelly to General H. Wilson, November 30, 1915, FOLDER: Caesar Rodney Equestrian Statue Association – Correspondence – J[ames] E. Kelly [sculptor] – N.D.—1915, BOX: CAESAR RODNEY EQUESTRIAN STATUE 2/CAESAR RODNEY EQUESTRIAN STATUE ASSOCIATION 0000.0028, DHS.
[81] James E. Kelly to General H. Wilson, February 14, 1916, FOLDER: Caesar Rodney Equestrian Statue Association – Correspondence – J[ames] E. Kelly [sculptor], BOX: CAESAR RODNEY EQUESTRIAN STATUE 2/CAESAR RODNEY EQUESTRIAN STATUE ASSOCIATION, 0000.0028, DHS.

Commission (1931-1934) for the purpose of selecting two individuals to be represented in the U.S. Capitol's statuary hall.[82] The Commission selected Caesar Rodney and John M. Clayton (1796-1856), another Delaware elected official, to be represented there. Sculptor Bryant Baker (1881-1970) completed both marble statues in 1933.[83] The statue shows Rodney standing. It is located inside the U.S. Capitol.[84] Like Kelly, Baker struggled with how to depict Rodney's face. According to a Newspaper account, Baker "used a word portrait written in Rodney's time as a means of making his statue." The same article suggested that no "photograph" (presumably reporters meant no likeness) "was ever made of this famed statesman...probably due to his physical impairment—a cancer of the face which marred his features."[85] George H. Ryden, an early Rodney scholar and the acting secretary of the Commission, delivered remarks about Rodney at the unveiling.[86]

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[82] The U.S. Congress invited states to submit statues to Statuary Hall in 1864. Delaware did not act on this invitation until 1929. "The Nation Joins Delaware in Honoring Worthy Patriots," *Evening Journal*, Wilmington, Delaware, June 26, 1934. Folder: DEL. STATUES Comm. Clippings, BOX 1330.2 Delaware Statue Commission Records Concerning the Presentation of the Rodney and Clayton Statues...U.S. Capitol, 1934-1935, DPA.

[83] Smithsonian American Art Museum, "Bryant Baker," Accessed September 16, 2024, https://americanart.si.edu/artist/bryant-baker-207. Draft of Governor's Remarks for Statue Unveiling, Folder: Delaware Statue Comm. Governor's Remarks, BOX 1330.2 Delaware Statue Commission Records Concerning the Presentation of the Rodney and Clayton Statues...U.S. Capitol, 1934-1935, DPA.

[84] Architect of the Capitol, "Caesar Rodney Statue," Accessed September 16, 2024, https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/caesar-rodney-statue.

[85] "Public Urged to Participate in Unveiling," *Wilmington Evening Journal*, June 22, 1934, Folder: DEL. STATUES Comm. Clippings, BOX 1330.2 Delaware Statue Commission Records Concerning the Presentation of the Rodney and Clayton Statues...U.S. Capitol, 1934-1935, DPA.

[86] "Public Urged to Participate in Unveiling," *Wilmington Evening Journal*, June 22, 1934, Folder: DEL. STATUES Comm. Clippings, BOX 1330.2 Delaware Statue Commission Records Concerning the Presentation of the Rodney and Clayton Statues...U.S. Capitol, 1934-1935, DPA. The U.S. Congress officially accepted the statues as gifts from the State of Delaware to the United States on January 15, 1935. *Congressional Record,* Seventy-Fourth Congress, First Session, Washington, Tuesday, January 15, 1935, 454. Folder: Delaware Statue Comm. See pp. 454-455 Rodney & Clayton Statues. Box 1330.2 Delaware Statue Commission Records Concerning the Presentation of the Rodney and Clayton Statues...U.S. Capitol, 1934-1935, DPA.

The Rodney statues cannot be separated from the context in which they were conceived and created. They were erected during an era of rampant statue and monument creation in the United States. Many of the statues that were erected after the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865 and through the 1930s or so depict individuals or scenes related to the Civil War; there was a second movement to erect similar monuments in the 1950s and 60s.[87] This enthusiasm for statues inspired similar projects for historic people and places beyond the Civil War, including monuments to Revolutionary War heroes and white founders such as Rodney.[88]

Americans conceived of, designed, raised money for, and erected these statues during the height of anti-Black discrimination, segregation, and violence in a place and time that valorized the Confederacy, which stood for slavery, enslavement, racism, and white supremacy.[89] These statue-creators operated during a time when groups were also establishing and preserving many house museums that preserved white stories and interpreted a romanticized (and often inaccurate, non-inclusive, and in many cases, racist) version of the past. In the museum and public history field, this era is often referred to as the Colonial Revival, and in some places, people continue to pursue the racist components of the Colonial Revival project even today. Many of these

[87] Southern Poverty Law Center, *Who's Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy*, February 1, 2019, https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy.
[88] For more on the history of monuments and memorials in the United States, see Seth C. Bruggeman, "Memorials and Monuments," *The Inclusive Historians' Handbook*, July 18, 2019, https://inclusivehistorian.com/memorials-and-monuments/.
[89] Laura A. Macaluso, "Monumental Relationships: International Monument Culture and the United States in the Early Twenty-First Century," in *Controversial Monuments and Memorials*, ed. David B. Allison, 2nd edition (New York: Roman & Littlefield, 2023), 214, Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies,* 1998 (Duram: Duke University Press, 2018), 174, and Melissa M. Bender and Klara Stephanie Szezák, "Introduction: The Mystic Discords of Memory: Contestation, Obliteration, and Sanitization in U.S.-American Cultures of Memory," in *Contested Commemoration in U.S. History*, edited by Klara Stephanie Szlezák and Melissa M. Bender (New York: Routledge, 2020), 3.

movements and the thinking of the people involved in such history-related projects were connected to the era's negative, reactionary forces, often against immigration (both from foreign countries and the Great Migration north of African Americans from the South) and urbanization, and to heightened nationalism and world war.[90]

The Rodney Square Caesar Rodney statue does not represent a Southerner who fought for the pro-slavery Confederacy, and not every person or group involved in supporting the creation of statues from this era contributed to upholding white stories. But it is critical to understand the national context of commemoration in the 1920s and 30s. It is impossible to divorce the creation of the Rodney statues from this context or to divorce Rodney's legacy from the way it has been remembered in public space, which has not included much if any mention of the individuals he enslaved.[91]

Anti-racist actions against statues like the Rodney statue spread beginning in 2015 after white supremist Dylan Roof murdered nine Black parishioners at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina; in 2017 in reaction to the deadly white supremacist Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, VA, where three people died; and in 2020 in reaction to the murder of a Black man named George Floyd by Derek Chauvin, a white police officer. Due in part to these tragedies, people have been protesting statues that represent slavery and enslavement and other despicable philosophies and actions around the world. This is the case in the North in the U.S. as

[90] For more on how societal changes threatened white men in particular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (Harper Collins, 2010).

[91] Rodney Square was also the backdrop for a Black-led uprising after Martin Luther King Jr. assassination in 1968, quelled by the National Guard. Say Burgin, "The 1968 Occupation of Black Wilmington," *Black Perspectives*, October 3, 2018, Accessed September 30, 2024, https://www.aaihs.org/the-1968-occupation-of-black-wilmington/.

well as the South, as the public discontent with the Caesar Rodney statue demonstrates.[92] The City of Wilmington removed the Rodney Square statue of Caesar Rodney in June 2020 after it learned that protestors may have been planning to damage it. The statue of Christopher Columbus on Pennsylvania Avenue was removed at the same time.

Figure 4. The Caesar Rodney equestrian statue pedestal in Rodney Square, Wilmington, DE, September 21, 2024. Photo by Author.

This research report is a step toward deciding what to do next as it relates to commemorating the people Rodney enslaved. The City of Wilmington noted in a 2022 press release: “Because memorials, statues, and other public displays are being scrutinized as part of the racial justice reform movement underway throughout America, Mayor Purzycki said his office is taking the opportunity while the statues are removed to engage individuals and groups in a discussion with him about their perspectives.”[93] The

[92] Tiya Miles, “The South Doesn’t Own Slavery,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 20217, Accessed September 30, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/11/opinion/south-slavery-confederate-states.html?mcubz=1&_r=0.
[93] “City Will Remove Christopher Columbus, Caesar Rodney Statues.” After George Floyd was murdered, eighty percent of the 170 statues that came down were removed by local officials. Erin L. Thompson,

Delaware News Journal reported on several individuals who called for change, including one woman who noted she would like to see more statues of Black Americans in Wilmington, in part because, as she put it, "'We've been looking at the white man for years."[94] Indeed, historian Erica Armstrong Dunbar noted in a 2020 interview with public radio station WHYY that people around the world have started "a movement that centers Black life and the respect and care for Black life."[95]

To begin grappling with these concerns, in September 2020, Preservation Delaware and the Center for Historic Architecture and Design hosted an online roundtable discussion titled "Monument Wars in Delaware." More recently, DETV's program "The Agenda" hosted a panel discussion called "Caesar Rodney Statue Debate."[96] This research report and related products represent another way Delaware has been working toward new ways to remember Caesar Rodney and the people he enslaved.

The imminent celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence has inspired some individuals to promote the reinstallation

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Smashing Statues: The Rise and Fall of America's Public Monuments (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2022), 101.

[94] Jeanne Kuang, Marina Affo, Patricia Talorico, and Ira Porter, "Wilmington removes Caesar Rodney, Christopher Columbus statues Friday amid calls for change," *Delaware News Journal*, June 12, 2020, https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/2020/06/12/wilmington-remove-christopher-columbus-caesar-rodney-statues/3175003001/.

[95] "A moment of reckoning: What histories do our monuments commemorate?," Radio times, July 2, 2020, https://whyy.org/episodes/461777/. Some practitioners are calling the move to revisit and revise commemoration and historical interpretation in public space "spatial justice." Marisa Angell Brown, "Spatial Justice and the Public Humanities," *Humanities for All*, July 13, 2021, https://humanitiesforall.org/blog/spatial-justice-and-the-public-humanities.

[96] DETV, The Agenda, "Caesar Rodney Statue Debate," March 27, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/live/FJjnxveLXlk. The City of Wilmington might consider referencing the "Monuments Toolkit Webinar" series for next steps. U.S. Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, "Monuments Toolkit Webinar," Accessed October 6, 2025, https://worldheritageusa.org/monumentstoolkit/mtwebinar/.

of the Wilmington Caesar Rodney statue. According to Delaware Public Media, Delaware State Senator, Eric Buckson, introduced a Delaware Assembly Resolution that proposes installing the statue to "the Green in Dover, the John Dickinson Plantation, or another appropriate location."[97] According to WBOC, "Mike Brickner, Executive Director of the ACLU of Delaware, argues that the statue should remain in storage, pointing to Rodney's history as a slave owner."[98] If it is decided to reinstall the Rodney statue, it should only occur after substantive community conversations that also develops ways to create physical commemorations for the people Rodney enslaved.

In recent years, protesting a statue like the Rodney statue is often the first step a community takes in restoring the history it wants to see (in this case, Black history) in public space. Communities that are rethinking statues have several choices. They can remove the statues permanently and interpret people like Rodney using contemporary tools and outlooks; they can leave the statues where they are; and they can create new statues. The old statue may stay in place, or it may not. Or artists can make new art out of the original statues. For example, artist Kara Walker made a new piece of art out of the Charlottesville, VA, Confederal General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson statue, which, in its original form, had represented the horror of white supremacy.[99] This work might

[97] Sarah Petrowich, "Del. lawmaker looks to bring Caesar Rodney statue out of storage and relocate to Kent County," Delaware Public Media, May 12, 2025, https://www.delawarepublic.org/politics-government/2025-05-12/del-lawmaker-looks-to-bring-caesar-rodney-statue-out-of-storage-and-relocate-to-kent-county. See also Senator Eric Buckson, "Senate Concurrent Resolution 65," Delaware Assembly, accessed May 18, 2025, https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail?LegislationId=142200.

[98] Tiffani Amber, "State Senator Pushes to Relocate Controversial Caesar Rodney Statue," WBOC, May 7, 2025, https://www.wboc.com/news/state-senator-pushes-to-relocate-controversial-caesar-rodney-statue/article_cc8e0315-4574-4d40-af73-c5090d863131.html.

[99] Siddhartha Mitter, "Kara Walker Deconstructs a Statue, and a Myth," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/08/arts/design/kara-walker-moca-monuments.html?unlocked_article_code=1.kU8.FLlg.sjbTZDVYomsE&smid=url-share.

also involve adding new objects (such as sculpture that centers Black history) to the commemorative landscape. See, for example, the new statue "Unbound" representing an enslaved woman in commemoration of the people past members of the church had enslaved that was recently installed outside King's Chapel in Boston.[100] Or, it might involve reinterpreting existing ones. Or it might do some combination of the above.[101] The opportunities are endless. The purpose of commemorating the people Rodney enslaved is not necessarily to pass judgement on Rodney or to forget him. Delaware will never forget Caesar Rodney. The point is to understand a complicated human and his times more thoroughly; to tell the stories of people whose stories have been untold for hundreds of years; and to allow those stories to teach us something about the history of societal racism that continues to perpetuate contemporary wrongs.

The people doing this work often seek to understand and share with others the history of harm done to a specific individual or community (in this case the African American community), and the work often involves deciding as a community (and centering the voices of the individuals or group harmed—in this case, African Americans) how those harms should be addressed--in this case, using tools of the public historian. This process can be referred to as many things, such as "restorative history," a phrase used by the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, or "inclusive history," a more general term that suggests public historians should facilitate conversations about and interpretations of history that make everyone feel welcome and

[100] Meghan Smith, "King's Chapel unveiling first-of-its-kind statue to honor people enslaved by its forebears," GBH, September 12, 2025, https://www.wgbh.org/news/local/2025-09-12/kings-chapel-unveiling-first-of-its-kind-statue-to-honor-people-enslaved-by-its-forebears.
[101] For more on the direction the field is moving in terms of whether to remove, reinterpret, or something else, see Bob Beatty, "'No Sooner Was It Over, Than the Memory Made It Nobler,' in *Controversial Monuments and Memorials*, ed. David B. Allison, 2018 (Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 2023), 45-49.

represented (whether that is a museum or a public space where history is interpreted, such as through a statue or other monument).[102]

It is more common to read news stories or literature about removing or rethinking Confederate-related statues and monuments, especially in the Southern U.S. as opposed to statues in the North. But several sites in the north have attempted to, or are in the process of reinterpreting people, historic sites, or statues as they relate to the history of slavery and enslavement in early America or indigenous history, genocide, and colonization in early America. See, for example, the Dinah Project at Stenton in Philadelphia, which resulted in research on enslaved individuals at Stenton, home of James Logon (1674-1751) who was known best for serving as William Penn's Secretary, and a new memorial to Dinah (1780-1838); the Declaration House in Philadelphia, a history and art project at the reconstructed building where Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) drafted the Declaration of Independence that features video projected eyes of descendants of Robert Hemmings (1762-1819), the enslaved individual who accompanied Jefferson in Philadelphia in the summer of 1776; the Town of Concord, Massachusetts, which recently removed 1930s-era historical markers commemorating the town's seventeenth-century founding; and Harvard Law School, which installed a plaque honoring the enslaved people who helped build Harvard

[102] The Center for Restorative History, "Restorative History Explained," Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Accessed September 29, 2024, https://americanhistory.si.edu/sites/default/files/Restorative%20History-explained_2.pdf and Chris Taylor, "Diversity and Inclusion," *The Inclusive Historians' Handbook*, June 10, 2019, https://inclusivehistorian.com/diversity-and-inclusion/. See also Diana A. Bailey and Richard C. Cooper, "The Necessity of Community Involvement: Talking about Slavery in the Twenty-First Century," in *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites*, Kristin A. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry, eds. (Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 2015), 61-70.

University and its law school.[103] (See also the story about “Unbound” above.) These projects have involved a range of community engagement strategies, and many of the projects have taken place over several years and, in some cases, have been funded by grants.

In addition to projects like those above that are meant to reinterpret specific monuments, markers or plaques, and in one case, a reconstruction of a historic building, there are perhaps dozens of other public history and academic history projects that document and interpret, for scholarly and public audiences alike, the history of slavery and enslavement in the United States.[104] Some Delaware-specific projects

[103] “About Dinah Memorial Project,” Senton, Accessed September 26, 2024, https://www.stenton.org/about-dinah-project, and Beth A. Uzwiak, "Memorializing Dinah and Reckoning with Enslavement: Community Integration, Arts-based Emplacement, and Racial Justice at Stenton Historic House in Philadelphia," *The Public Historian* 43, 3 (2021): 55-86; “Declaration House,” Monument Lab, Accessed September 26, 2024, https://monumentlab.com/projects/declaration-house; Lance Reynolds, “‘Problematic’ historic Massachusetts signs come down in Concord,” Boston Herald, January 27, 2024, https://www.bostonherald.com/2024/01/27/problematic-historic-massachusetts-signs-come-down-in-concord/; and Kim Wright, “Harvard Law School unveils memorial honoring enslaved people who enabled its founding,” Harvard Law Today, September 5, 2017, https://hls.harvard.edu/today/harvard-law-school-unveils-memorial-honoring-enslaved-people-contributed-founding/ and Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, 1998, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 188-190. Stenton recently announced receiving a $300,000 grant to start a project called “Wrestling with Justice: Quakers and Northern Slavery at Stenton.” According to Stenton’s Instagram, “the project will challenge prevailing views that Quakers were strictly abolitionists and that slavery was only a Southern phenomenon.” Stenton @StentonMuseum, [The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage grant announcement], Instagram, September 24, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/stentonmuseum/.

[104] Historic house museums in the North considered to be leading sites for the interpretation of slavery and enslavement include the Royall House and Slave Quarters in Medford, Massachusetts, and Cliveden in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. See “Slavery,” Royall House & Slave Quarters, Medford, MA, Accessed September 29, 204, https://royallhouse.org/slavery/, and “Slavery and Servitude,” Cliveden, Philadelphia, PA, Accessed September 29, 2024, https://cliveden.org/discover-cliveden/slavery-and-servitude/. See also the Jupiter Hammon Project, Preservation Long Island, Accessed September 29, 2024, https://royallhouse.org/slavery/ and *Unnamed Figures: Black Presence and Absence in the Early American North*, co-curated by Emelie Gevalt, RL Watson, and Sadé Ayorinde, American Folk Art Museum, November 15, 2023-March 24, 2024, and Historic Deerfield, May 1-August 4, 2024. See also *Unnamed Figures: Black Presence and Absence in the Early American North* (New York: American Folk Art Museum, 2023). For an overview of interpreting slavery and enslavement in the north, see Katherine D. Kane, “Institutional Change at Northern Historic Site: Telling Slavery’s Story in the Land of Abolition,” *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites*, Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry, eds., (Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 2015): 47-60. See also the new study about slavery and enslavement at the Vassall Estate (also known as the Longfellow House–Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site), Caitlin DeAngelis, Carla D. Martin, Rayshauna C. Gray, Aabid Allibhai, Eshe Sherley, *Black History*

include (but are not limited to): The Plantation Stories Project (John Dickinson Plantation); the Cooch's Bridge African American Heritage Database; Legacies of Enslavement & Dispossession at the University of Delaware; multiple initiatives at the Jane and Littleton Mitchell Center for African American Heritage at the Delaware Historical Society; and Delaware 250th. This work can also help contextualize other research about enslaved people in Delaware, including, for example, research conducted on the people Benjamin Chew enslaved at the Whitehall Plantation in Smyrna, Delaware.[105] Given Rodney's relationship to the Dickinson, Cooch, and Read families, these projects, along with the Rodney project, will likely help Delaware public historians and the public highlight and link not only the founders but the people they enslaved and their descendants.[106]

As noted above, many historians have expanded the definition of "founders" to include voices of those who have been historically marginalized: enslaved and Free Black persons, women, indigenous persons, and others. This is important, especially as we invite public reflection on the ideals, accomplishments, and challenges of the past 250 years and challenge the founders of the future to keep reimagining freedom,

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at the Vassall Estate: Special History Study (National Park Service, September 15, 2025), https://ncph.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/LONG_BHVE_2025.pdf.

[105] Delaware Public archives, "Former Site of Whitehall Plantation," Accessed August 12, 2025, https://archives.delaware.gov/delaware-historical-markers/former-site-of-whitehall-plantation/. For more on the people Chew enslaved, see Kristin Leahy, "Invisible Hands: Slaves and Servants of the Chew Family," accessed August 12, 2025, https://cliveden.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Invisible-Hands-Slaves-and-Servants.pdf.

[106] There are many ways to engage with descendant communities and/or local Black communities. These resources provide just a few examples: Emmanuel Felton, "At Alabama plantation, families of enslavers and enslaved strike a deal," *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2025, https://wapo.st/4n6VaPG, Rob DeHart and Ianna Recco, "Creating Ancestral Spaces: How Descendants Re-Imagined a D.C. Historic House Museum," *History News* Vol. 79, #2, 2025, 12-17, and Beth Uzwiak, "Memorializing Dinah and Reckoning with Enslavement," *The Public* Historian, 43, 3 (August 2021): 55-85. See also the Vassall Estate study (cited above).

democracy, and justice for everyone. This marks an extraordinary opportunity for the City of Wilmington to participate in the nationwide effort.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This research has focused primarily on identifying the names of and documentary information about individuals Caesar Rodney enslaved, as well as those enslaved by people close to him. In the first round of research, the work focused on identifying enslaved individuals who were connected to the life of Caesar Rodney, the signer. Phase II (which resulted in this report) expanded to examine the legacy of enslavement from the first Rodneys who came to Delaware through the last people they enslaved, and outward into archives beyond Caesar Rodney's will and inventory, to attempt to add details to lives long hidden from public history. In conjunction with Phase III, this research will allow the City of Wilmington and the greater community to connect with other related research efforts in Delaware and consider how to foreground and commemorate the individuals Caesar Rodney enslaved. The primary source base for this topic is rich and will inspire new takes on slavery and enslavement in Delaware during Rodney's lifetime.

This research provides the City of Wilmington and all Delawareans with an opportunity to revisit and revise familiar stories and to use these new stories to inform and engage with the public. It will also enhance the historical background for the Rodney Square Historic District, of which the Rodney statue represents one-seventh of the contributing elements.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

This is a timeline of significant events related to slavery and enslavement in Caesar's Rodney's lifetime and that of the people he enslaved. It is not comprehensive, but it helps put Rodney's life and his involvement in slavery and enslavement into a broader historical context.

1688: Several Quakers in Germantown, PA, protest slavery and enslavement. The document they present came to be known as the Germantown Protest.[107]

June 13-15, 1699: William Morton and William Rodney agreed to sell "three Negro men Nott to Exceed twenty five years of age" to John Stevens and William Stevens[108]

1726: Delaware passed a law stating that children born to white women and Black of mixed-race men would be born into servitude (enslavement) for 31 years (repealed 1795). Among other things, this law also required that the mother pay £10 to help care for the child. (Free African American of Maryland and Delaware and *Laws of Delaware*, Vol. 1, 108-109).[109]

1728: Caesar Rodney (the signer) was born October 7, 1728, to Caesar Rodney, Sr., and Elizabeth Crawford Rodney (later Wilson) near Byfield in Delaware (Scott 16)

[107] Gerret Hendericks, Derick up de Graeff, Francis Daniel Pastorius, Abraham up den Graef, P. Jo. Hart, and Anthony Morris, [Quaker Protest Against Slavery in the New World, Germantown (Pa.)], 1688, Haverford College, https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/hc135384.
[108] Collection William Rodney Folder. 1699. DHS.
[109] "Free African Americans of Maryland and Delaware," Accessed, Sept. 25, 2025, https://freeafricanamericans.com/Intro-md.htm.

1737: Benjamin Lay published *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates* (1737)[110]

1738: Quaker Benjamin Lay spoke out again slavery and enslavement at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in Burlington, NJ, one of his several of sensational protests he pursued at Quaker gatherings and elsewhere.[111]

1739: Fifty enslaved individuals killed approximately twenty whites in near Charleston, South Carolina, in what became known as the Stono Rebellion.[112]

1740: Any enslaver who emancipated an enslaved individual who needed care or who was 35 years of age or older also had to pay £30 to care for that person. This law also stipulated that if a free Black individual had a child and the parent could not support the child, the child would be "bound out" (possibly indentured rather than enslaved) until the age of twenty-one (males) or eighteen (females). (Essah 38-39 and *The Laws of Delaware*, Vol. 1, 214).

1741: About 200 people, both Black and white, were arrested for allegedly setting a series of fires in New York City, likely due to social unrest related to slavery and enslavement and labor. This became known as the New York Conspiracy.[113]

1743: Caesar Rodney, Sr., died and Nicholas Ridgley appointed guardian (Scott 16)

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[110] Benjamin Lay, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates…*1737 (New York : Arno Press, 1969), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000406900.
[111] For more on Benjamin Lay, see *Marcus Rediker: The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf Who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017).
[112] National Humanities Center, "Two Views of the Stono Slave Rebellion, South Carolina, 1739," National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox, Becoming American: The British Atlantic Colonies, 1690-1763, Accessed January 21, 2026, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/peoples/text4/stonorebellion.pdf.
[113] Daniel Horsmanden, "The New York Conspiracy of 1741: A Spotlight on a Primary Source," The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Accessed January 21, 2026.

1742/3?: CR went to Latin School in Philadelphia (Scott 20)

1745: CR's father died and left him two enslaved individuals, Doll and Glasco. (CR, Sr, Inventory)

1746: Legal dispute between Margaret Rodney (wife of Daniel Rodney, CR's uncle) and Elizabeth Rodney (Caesar Rodney, Sr., wife and CR's mother) over enslaved individuals Sarah, Denby, Abraham, Nanny, Prescilla, Jacob, Mingo, and Cuffy

Circa 1752: Delaware passed "an act for the trial of Negroes," which spelled out how a jury trial and punishment for Black or "mulatto" individuals would proceed in court. (Laws of the State of Delaware, Vol. 1, 102-105. This act was repealed by the 1789 "An additional Supplementary ACT to an act, intitled, An act to prevent the exportation of slaves, and for other purposes."[114] (*Laws of the State of Delaware*, Vol. 2, 942-944).

1755: CR ran for and won the election for High Sheriff of Kent County; reelected the next three years (Scott 22)

1756: CR became a captain for a Company of Foot Militia (Seven Years' War/French and Indian War), but did not see action (Scott 22)

1758: CR became "justice of the peace and judge in all lower courts" (Scott 23); sheriff (Hancock, "Letters to and from," 186)

[114] In 1770, Charles Ridgely, son of Caesar Rodney the signer's guardian, wrote a letter to Rodney suggesting that Rodney consider "introduce[ing] to the House a short Act, for altering the Trials of Slaves." He seemed to believe that part of his act conflicted with "our Constitution." The U.S. Constitution was signed in 1787; the Delaware State Constitution was signed in 1776, 1792, 1831, and 1897. In referring to "our Constitution," Ridgely was referring the concept of a "Constitution" defined as the collection of laws a particular society follows (as opposed to a specific founding document. From Charles Ridgely to Caesar Rodney, March 12, 1770, in Ryden, *Letters to and from*. For more on this definition of "Constitution," see Gordon S. Wood, *Power and Liberty: Constitutionalism in the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press 2021), esp. pages 42-48.

1761: CR elected to Delaware's unicameral legislature/assembly (Scott 24) [three lower counties of PA]

1762: CR was living at Lebanon Farm (Scott 16; 29), part of the family plantation

October 1762: CR elected as a member of Delaware legislature (Delaware Register 19); also 1766,1767, 1768 (Delaware Register 21)

1763: CR elected register of wills for Kent County; was also "a judge, a trustee of the loan office, and recorder of deeds" (Scott 29)

1763: CR's mother Elizabeth Crawford Rodney Wilson died (Scott 31)

1764 and 5: Brother Daniel and sister Elizabeth died (Scott 31)

1764: CR appointed justice of the peace; CR and Thomas moved to Dover (location undetermined) (Scott 30, 31)

1765: CR participated in Stamp Act Congress in NY (Scott 34)

1766: CR one of three who wrote a letter thanking the King for repealing the Stamp Act (Scott 37)

1766: CR "was made Register, Recorder and Clerk of the Orphans Court, and...one of the trustees of the General Loan Office. He afterwards was...one of the Judges of the Supreme Court for the whole government...He was also appointed Clerk of the Peace..." (Thomas Rodney, as cited in Hancock, "Letters to and from," 190)

August 9, 1766: CR purchased and enslaved Bausmond and Moses (both children) from James Stevens for £80. (Bill of Sale, DHS)

October 31, 1767: Delaware passed law requiring that enslavers who manumitted enslaved individuals had to pay £60 each to the county in case the state needed to care for them. (Essah 40 and *Laws of the State of Delaware*, Vol. 1, 436).

December 8, 1767: CR purchased and enslaved Jude and her children, Ezekiel and another child, along with three horses, from Charles Nabb of Maryland for £150. (Bill of Sale, DHS)

1767: CR and others proposed imported enslaved people should be taxed. Tax defeated. (Williams 171) (see Minutes of the House of Representatives of the State of Delaware, 1765-1770)[115]

1767: CR "introduced a proposition to forbid the further importation of slaves into the province; it was defeated nine votes to seven." (Scott 46) (see Minutes of the House of Representatives of the State of Delaware, 1765-1770, 125-128)

1768: CR and three others, as part of DE assembly, wrote letter to king "asserting their right to tax themselves through their own assembly and objecting to the idea of sending anyone caught smuggling in violation of the Townshend duties back to England for trial." They also protested the dissolution of the New York Assembly, correctly perceiving it as a potential attack on the authority of all colonial assemblies." (Scott 41)

[115] For a full list of Delaware laws related to enslaved individuals and free Blacks, see Barnes, Robert C., and Judith M. Pfeiffer, eds., *Laws of the State of Delaware on Slaver, Free Blacks & Mulattos, VOLUMES 1-14, 1700-1874* (2002). Thank you to Gloria Henry for bringing this source to my attention.

1768: CR health concerns re: face. Philadelphia doctor referred to it as “cancer.” Letter cited in Ryden and in 1933 was in hands of Mrs. Anne Read Janvier. (Hanock, Letters to and from FN 6)

1768: June 23, operation completed on CR’s face “cancer.” (Scott 43)

1769: CR selected speaker of DE Assembly (Delaware Register 22)

1769: September 4 (?), Thomas Rodney noted he overheard someone complaining that CR and possibly Dr. Ridgley sent their enslaved individual to jail. This complaint made Thomas upset (“warm”) (“Thomas Rodney Journal, Aug.-Sept. 1769/no acc. Number,” DHS).

1770: CR received a letter from Dr. Thomas Bond noting he was “greatly concerned at the Return of your Cancer, especially so near the eye…” He goes on to provide a plaster suggestion. Footnote leads to Lewis B. Flinn Library, Delaware Academy of Medicine, Wilmington. Repository no longer has an archivist, and they could not locate the letter. (Scott 51)

1770: Thomas married Elizabeth M. Fisher and opened a store in Philadelphia. (Scott 52)

December 15, 1770: CR leased one of his plantations along with the use of enslaved individuals: “One Negro Lad named Ebenezer, another Negro Lad named Absolem”[116]

1771: CR was not reelected to Delaware Assembly, the only year of fourteen (Scott 52)

[116] ” Articles of Agreement between Caesar Rodney and William Snipes,” FOLDER: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1770-1771, March 14, 1770-November 27, 1771, 9 items, H.F. Brown Collection Box 18 Folder 8, BOX: H Fletcher Brown Collection of Rodney Family Papers/Caesar/Rodney & Others VB 18.

1772: CR appointed second justice of the supreme court of the Lower Counties (Scott 53)

April 1772: CR and James Sykes "overseeing the building of 'new public offices'" in Dover. (Scott 58)[117]

May 1772: CR bled for pleurisy (Scott 54)

December 1772: CR bled for "a bad pain in his side, a chill and fever." (Scott 55)

1774(?): CR and others in DE assembly wrote to support "'Boston Resolve'" and "the idea of a Continental Congress" (Scott 68)

August 1774: CR, Thomas McKean, and George Read selected to rep DE at First Continental Congress (Scott 70)

Sept. 1774: CR participated in Cont. Congress but reported to Thomas he didn't feel well. (Scott 73)

March 1775: CR noted he had gout and had to take carriage to Assembly in New Castle. (CR to Thomas Rodney, March 20, 1775, Rodney Collection, HSD) (Scott 81)

March 1775: CR appointed to Second Continental Congress (Scott 81)

1775: DE proposed banning importation of slaves again (defeated). (Williams 171) (Minutes of the House of Representatives of the State of Delaware, 1765-1770, 125-128)

[117] This is probably referring to James Sykes (1725-1792). Among other things, Sykes served in the Continental Congress. "Sykes, James," History, Art, & Archives: United States House of Representatives, Accessed September 18, 2025, https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/S/SYKES,-James-(S001132)/.

May 1775: CR “elected colonel of the upper regiment” in Delaware (Scott 87)

August 1775: CR and Thomas (and others) elected to “new revolutionary committee” in Kent County; CR, chairman; CR and Thomas also on “Committee of Correspondence,” CR a chair (Scott 93)

1775: Kent’s two battalions became one. CR in charge. (Scott 93)

November 1775: Lodging in Philadelphia and paying for his servant’s (possibly enslaved) board (Scott 98)

November 1775: Lord Dunmore in Virginia offered freedom to enslaved individuals and indentured servants if they joined British forces in the American Revolution.

1776: DE proposed banning importation of slaves again (defeated). (Williams 171) (see Minutes of the House of Representatives of the State of Delaware, 1765-1770, 125-128)

1776: DE constitution banned importation of slaves (Williams 172);[118] legislation to back this passed in 1787 (Williams 172)

1776: CR “appointed to serve as trustee to Kent County” re issuing money (Scott 95)

1776: DE declared itself independent from PA [and Britain?] (making CR highest elected official). (Scott 113)

July 2, 1776: Caesar arrived in Philadelphia via carriage or horseback to vote for Lee’s resolution (had been split between McKean and Read) (apparently managing asthma and Scott says was wearing a scarf around face, but no citation) (Scott 117)

[118] Constitution of Delaware (1776), The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, Accessed May 14, 2025, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/de02.asp.

1776 (?): Thomas misjudged the Whig ticket in Kent County, and CR was not elected. Still served in Cont. Congress (Scott 120-122)

October 1776: Caesar used his own money to purchase supplies (which were difficult to procure) for soldiers (Scott 137)

Fall 1776: CR became chief executive of Kent County (Scott 138)

December (?) 1776: CR went to Philadelphia (with his militia?); Thomas expressed concerns about CR's health, and CR said he was doing well (Scott 147)

February 1777: George Washington sent CR back to Delaware (Scott 149)

February 1777: CR reappointed "'Brigadier General of the Two Battalions of Militia in Kent County & the Western Battalion of Militia in Sussex County"; also trustee of Kent County Loan office (Scott 150)

Aug? 1777: CR was asked to lead Sussex militia (Scott 156). Provided intel, sent scouts to find British as they moved from the Chesapeake toward Philadelphia.

October 1777: CR's Continental Congress term ended. (Scott 138)

March 1778?: CR elected President of DE Legislature for three-year term

1779: British General Sir Henry Clinton issued the Philipsburg Proclamation. It provided protection and freedom for enslaved people owned by American colonists fighting against the British who would go to the British lines.

March 1, 1780: Pennsylvania passed a gradual abolition act. It declared that all Black and mixed-race individuals born in Pennsylvania after the act was passed would be free at the age of 28.

1780: CR (as Governor) pardoned Prince, an enslaved individual. According to Historian William Williams, Prince "was found guilty of the attempted rape of a white girl and also was sentenced to have his ears nailed to the pillory and then cut off. Due to the intercession of his master, who doubtless feared the permanent scarring of a valuable slave, Prince was pardoned by President (that is, Governor) Caesar Rodney." (Williams 77). Prince was enslaved by William Polk (see Prince, 1780, Special Court for Negroes, Sussex County Court of Oyer and Terminer, Slavery Materials, Delaware State Archives).

November 1781: CR relieved of duty as President of DE Assembly (a bit later than expected) (Scott 207)

October 25, 1781: Letters between CR and Dr. Bond re cancer (Scott 207)

1782: CR appointed to Congress (despite being sick) (Scott 208)

Between May and Sept 1782: CR left Philadelphia for Dover (Scott 209)

1782: John Dickinson "asked the state legislature to halt sales that would cause individual blacks to be 'cruelly separated' by great distances from 'near relatives.'" Did not pass. (Williams, 172)

April 23, 1782: CR inoculated "Negroes, Absolam, Ezekiel, Jacob, Cyrus, and Maria." This was almost certainly for smallpox.[119]

1783: CR elected to State Legislature; selected speaker (Scott 209)

[119] FOLDER: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1776-1777, March 28, 1776-November 16, 1777, 12 items, H.F. Brown Collection Box 18 Folder 11, BOX: H Fletcher Brown Collection of Rodney Family Papers/Caesar/Rodney & Others VB 18, DHS.

April 1784: Senate Session held at CR's house at Poplar Grove due to his weakness/illness (Scott 209)

May 24, 1784: CR sold Joice and baby Charles to James McClement. Joice to be manumitted and set free April 13, 1788. Charles to be manumitted at the age of 25. By this sale, CR separated Joice and Charles from Joice's other children, Pegg and Sall (Kenty County, DE, land records, 1677-1947, pg. 411-412)

June 26, 1784: CR died at Poplar Grove, his residence on the plantation.

1784: Three individuals CR had enslaved free immediately: Charles, Jude, Peg (CR Will)

1784: Sixteen individuals CR had enslaved required to wait different amounts of time before receiving freedom: Shadrack, Charles, Ezekel, Hannah, Cyrus, Ezekil, Kate, Maria, Charlotte, Bosman, Pegg, Harry, John, Sal, and Beth.

October 11, 1784: John Freeman in Dover rented Ezekiel, "one of the negroes of Caesar Rodneys Estate," for a year[120]

1784: Connecticut passed a gradual emancipation act. Any enslaved individuals born on or after March 1, 1784, remained enslaved until they reached the age of 25. Enslaved individuals born before March 1, 1784, remained enslaved for life.

[120] Brown Collection-manuscript book box 162. Caesar Rodney estate. 1784.

1784: Rhode Island passed a gradual abolition act stating that everyone born in Rhode Island after March 1, 1784, would be free.[121]

1785: “Allen McLane...introduced a bill ‘for the gradual abolition of slavery....no action.” (Williams 172)

February 3, 1787: Legislation titled “An Act to prevent the exportation of slaves, and for other purposes,” banning exportation of slaves already in DE to the Carolinas, Georgia, or the West Indies without a permit; banning the exportation of free Black people in DE; banning importation of Black individuals into DE to be enslaved (Williams 171) (*Laws of the State of Delaware*, Vol. 2, 884-888)[122]

1789: Repealed circa 1752 "act for the trial of Negroes." (Williams 77) Also outlawed selling or exporting “any negro mulatto or slave [from Delaware]” to Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, or the West Indies.[123]

February 3, 1789: “...the use of Delaware ports by slave ships and the outfitting and equipping of any ship used in the slave trade anywhere was outlawed by the General Assembly.” (Williams 172) (*Laws of the State of Delaware*, Vol. 2, 942-944)

1791: Popular Grove was foreclosed upon, its material goods sold along with four enslaved individuals ("1 Negro Man James,” "1 Negro Boy [?],” "1 Negro Boy Ezekiel,"

[121] For more on slavery and enslavement in Rhode Island, see Brown University, “Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Brown University,“ in *Slavery and Justice Report*, Accessed May 12, 2025, https://slaveryandjusticereport.brown.edu/sections/slavery-the-slave-trade-and-brown/.
[122] Delaware, *Laws of the State of Delaware*, Vol. 2, 884-887, Accessed May 15, 2025, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008891419.
[123] In 1770, Charles Ridgely, son of Caesar Rodney the signer’s guardian, wrote a letter to Rodney suggesting that Rodney consider “introduce[ing] to the House a short Act, for altering the Trials of Slaves.” He seemed to believe that part of his act conflicted with “our Constitution.” From Charles Ridgely to Caesar Rodney, March 12, 1770, in Ryden, *Letters to and from*. See also “circa 1752” note on timeline.

and "One Negro woman") at auction. (“Goods taken in Execution” and Scott 210). Thomas Rodney sent to debtor’s prison.

1792: Unsuccessful attempt to abolish slavery in DE by abolitionists (Williams 172)

1793: Delaware passed “An Act to punish the practice of kidnapping free negroes and free mulattoes, and for other purposes.”

1796: Bill introduced to abolish slavery in DE; did not pass (Williams 172)

1797: Bill introduced to abolish slavery in DE; did not pass (Williams 172)

1797: “Delaware’s special negro courts...resurrected” (Williams 77)

1799: New York passed a gradual emancipation law stipulating that any individual born to an enslaved mother on or after July 4, 1799, would be born free. But they had to provide free work to those who enslaved their mothers (females until the age of 25 and males until the age of 28).

1803: Bill introduced to abolish slavery in DE; did not pass (Williams 172)

1808: U.S. forbids importation of enslaved people into the U.S.

1865: U.S. abolished chattel slavery via the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

1889: Rodney Club moved what were believed to be CR’s remains and marked new grave at Christ Church in Dover.

1901: Delaware ratified the 13th-15th amendments.

1923: CR equestrian statue erected in Wilmington, DE.

1934: CR statue erected at U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC.

1934: CR historical marker erected near site of his reinterment.

April 8, 1968: Prolonged protests in Wilmington after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., culminating in Rodney Square (and resulting in a nine-month occupation of Wilmington by the National Guard)

1994: Byfield historical marker erected re CR's residence near Dover

1999: CR historical marker erected near first CR High School in Camden, DE.

2015: CR School District historical marker erected in Wyoming, DE.

2017: Rodney Square historical marker erected in Wilmington, DE.

2020: City of Wilmington removed CR equestrian statue in Rodney Square.

APPENDIX B: Identifying People Caesar Rodney Enslaved

We cannot be certain of the precise number of individuals Caesar Rodney enslaved, but we can document with certainty that he enslaved at least twenty-six individuals during his lifetime. It is likely that he enslaved others. It is highly unlikely that all records related to Rodney have survived, and it is possible that Rodney enslaved additional people.

When researching the people that individuals enslaved, the first place most historians look would be the enslaver's will and inventory. Not surprisingly, then, one of the two most comprehensive documents for documenting the people Rodney enslaved includes his will and inventory. Rodney's manuscript inventory (except the will portion that includes Old Charles, Old Peg, and Old Jude) can be viewed at the Delaware

Public Archives. See FOLDER RG9200.R08.000 Small Manuscripts Rodney Papers Probate of Caesar Rodney Esq. Will & Inventory 1784 Folder 2. The portion of the inventory that includes all enslaved individuals is also printed in Scott, *A Gentleman as Well as a Whig*, page 221. Scott's transcription is mostly accurate, though the spelling of the first Ezekiel listed in her book should read "Ezekil," not "Ezekel." In addition, she left out words in places (such as, "Cyrus 3 years to serve till 25" instead of "Cyrus 3 years old to serve till 25"). The portion of Caesar Rodney's will that liberates Old Charles, Old Peg, and Old Jude is transcribed in the Rodney will and inventory microfilm at the Delaware Public Archives. See: Caesar Rodney, 1784, Will and inventory, #0756, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives. Or see the manuscript version of the will at the Delaware Public Archives: FOLDER: RG9200.R08.000/Small Manuscripts Rodney Papers Probate of Caesar Rodney Esq. Will & Inventory 1784, Folder 2. The transcription here of the manuscript inventory differs slightly in Scott's *A Gentleman as Well as a Whig*. The original documents help us determine the ages of several of the enslaved individuals listed.

The 1784 probate inventory includes (note: the numbers coincide with the author's designations) the following enslaved individuals:

- Old Charles 3
- Old Pegg 2
- Old Jude
- Shadrack
- Charles 2

- Ezekil 1
- Hannah
- Cyrus
- Ezekil 2
- Kate
- Maria
- Charlotte
- Bosman
- Pegg 1
- Harry
- John
- Sal
- Beth

When Rodney died, his brother Thomas also made a list of individuals Rodney had enslaved around the time of his death. It includes the people listed below and some important information about ages, birth dates and familial relationships not found elsewhere. This list also includes the names of people Rodney had enslaved but sold prior to his death. Note that some names are spelled differently on each list (ex: Bosman versus Bozman, Maria/ Mariah) but are here treated as one person:

- Old Charles 3
- Old Pegg 2
- Old Jude

- Shadrack
- Betty
- Bozman
- Young Charles 2
- Hannah
- Ezekiel 2
- Kate
- Harry (son of Jude)
- Pegg (daughter of Joice)
- Salle (daughter of Joice)
- Cyrus (son of Hannah)
- Mariah (daughter of Kate)
- John (son of Jude)
- Charlotte (daughter of Kate)
- Ezekiel 1 (son of Hannah)
- Aaron (sold before CR died) (not on CR inventory)
- Absalem (sold before CR died) (not on CR inventory)
- Joice and her young child (Charles 1) (sold before CR died) (not on CR inventory)

The four additional names of people sold before Caesar Rodney's death, bring the total to 22 people, 18 of whom were enslaved by Rodney when he died (including the three individuals he freed immediately).

Wills, inventories, and lists made at the time of an enslaver's death are not the only places where we can find the names of enslaved individuals, though. During the research conducted for this project, we also came across names of enslaved people in documents such as letters, bills of sale, and in ledgers. Some of these references added additional names to the list of individuals Caesar Rodney enslaved during his lifetime. These additional people include:

- Ebenezer
- Jacob
- Moses
- Unnamed child of Jude

This brings the total to **26** persons documented as directly enslaved by Caesar Rodney, the signer during his lifetime.

There are other instances where Rodney or others mentioned individuals in letters, and the circumstances (performing work) suggest that the names are likely those of enslaved people. See, for example, Solomon, Elisha and John. [This would not be the same John listed in the 1784 Rodney will and inventory. That John was born in 1776, whereas the John mentioned in a letter was old enough in 1768 to be performing tasks.] If these individuals could otherwise be confirmed as having been enslaved, the total would come to **29** *(see also Appendix E, Spreadsheet of Names and Documentation (separate document)).*

Therefore, based on documentation identified to date, we can confirm that Caesar Rodney the signer enslaved 26 or more individuals during this lifetime.

APPENDIX C: Transcriptions of Caesar Rodney Inventory of Enslaved People (1784) and Thomas Rodney Inventory of Caesar Rodney's Enslaved People (1784)

Transcription of the list of people Caesar enslaved at the time of his death, ages and years left to serve, and their value as part of the estate in British pounds, as listed in his manuscript inventory. This does not include the three individuals he freed immediately at his death (Old Charles, Old Jude, and Old Pegg). See the original manuscript at the Delaware Public Archives (FOLDER RG9200.R08.000 Small Manuscripts Rodney Papers Probate of Caesar Rodney Esq. Will & Inventory 1784 Folder 2) and pictured next page.

"Negroes

Shadrack	4 years to serve	40
Charles	4 years	40
Ezekil	5 years	50
Hannah	4 years a Breeding woman	10
Cyrus	3 years old to serve til 25	25
Ezekil	3 months old to serve til 25	5
Kate	5 years to serve a Breeding woman	10
Maria	3 years old to serve til 25	15
Charlotte	1 year old to serve til 25	7.10
Bosman	4 years to serve	40
Pegg	14 years old to serve til 25	40
Harry	10 years to serve	50
John	17 years to serve	25
Sal	18 years to serve	15
Beth at Fields	4 years to serve	20"

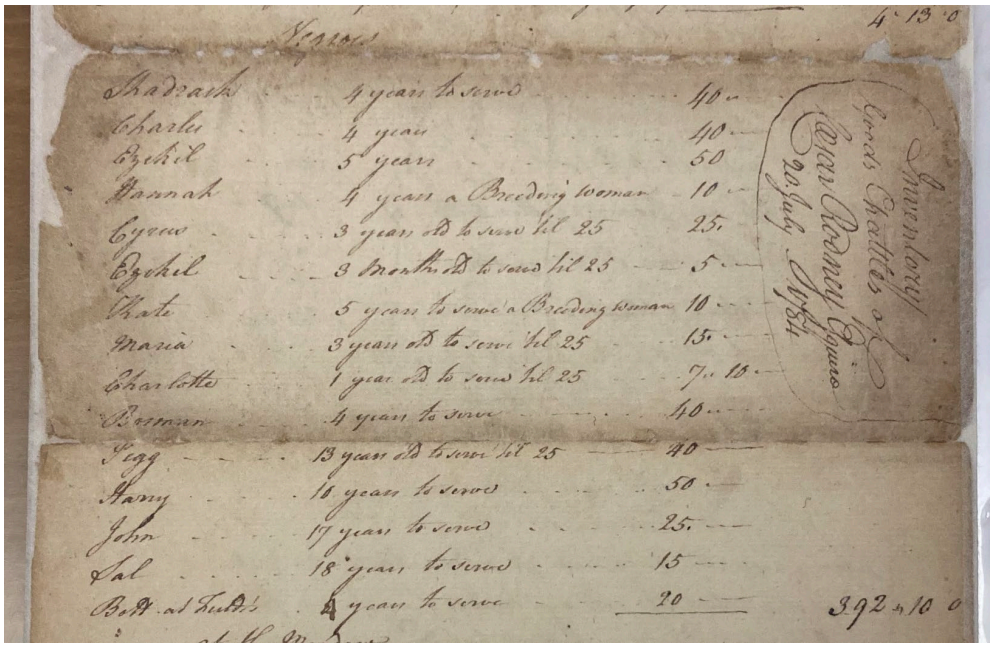


Figure 5. Excerpt from FOLDER RG9200.R08.000 Small Manuscripts Rodney Papers Probate of Caesar Rodney Esq. Will & Inventory 1784 Folder 2, Delaware Public Archives.

Transcription of the list of people Caesar had enslaved at his death, recorded by his brother Thomas in 1784. See the original manuscript at the Delaware Historical Society (Thomas Rodney, “An Account of the Negroes that belongd Caesar Rodney Esq at the Time of his decd: with their ages,” Caesar Rodney estate, 1784, manuscript book box 162, Brown Collection, Delaware Historical Society) and pictured on the following page.

“An Account of the Negroes that belongd Caesar Rodney Esq at the Time of his decd: with their Ages ~

Old Charles

Old Pegg

Old Jude

[The above individuals bracketed with this note] “By his will are lett free Immediately”

Shadrack

Betty

Bozmon

Young Charles

Hannah

[The above individuals bracketed with this note] Being above Twenty one years of age are to be free after four years Service

Ezekiel

Kate

[The above individuals bracketed with this note] Being 20 years old are to be free at 25

Harry (Son of Jude) Born

Pegg (daughter of Joice) Born

Sall (daughter of do) Born

Cyrus (Son of Hannah) Born March 2 1781)

Mariah (daughter of Kate) Born Nov. 9. 1781

John (Son of Jude) Born

Charlotte (daughter of Kate) Born Nov. 20. 1783

Ezekiel (son of Hannah) Born May. 1784

[The above individuals bracketed with this note] These are able to be free at Twenty five years of age ~

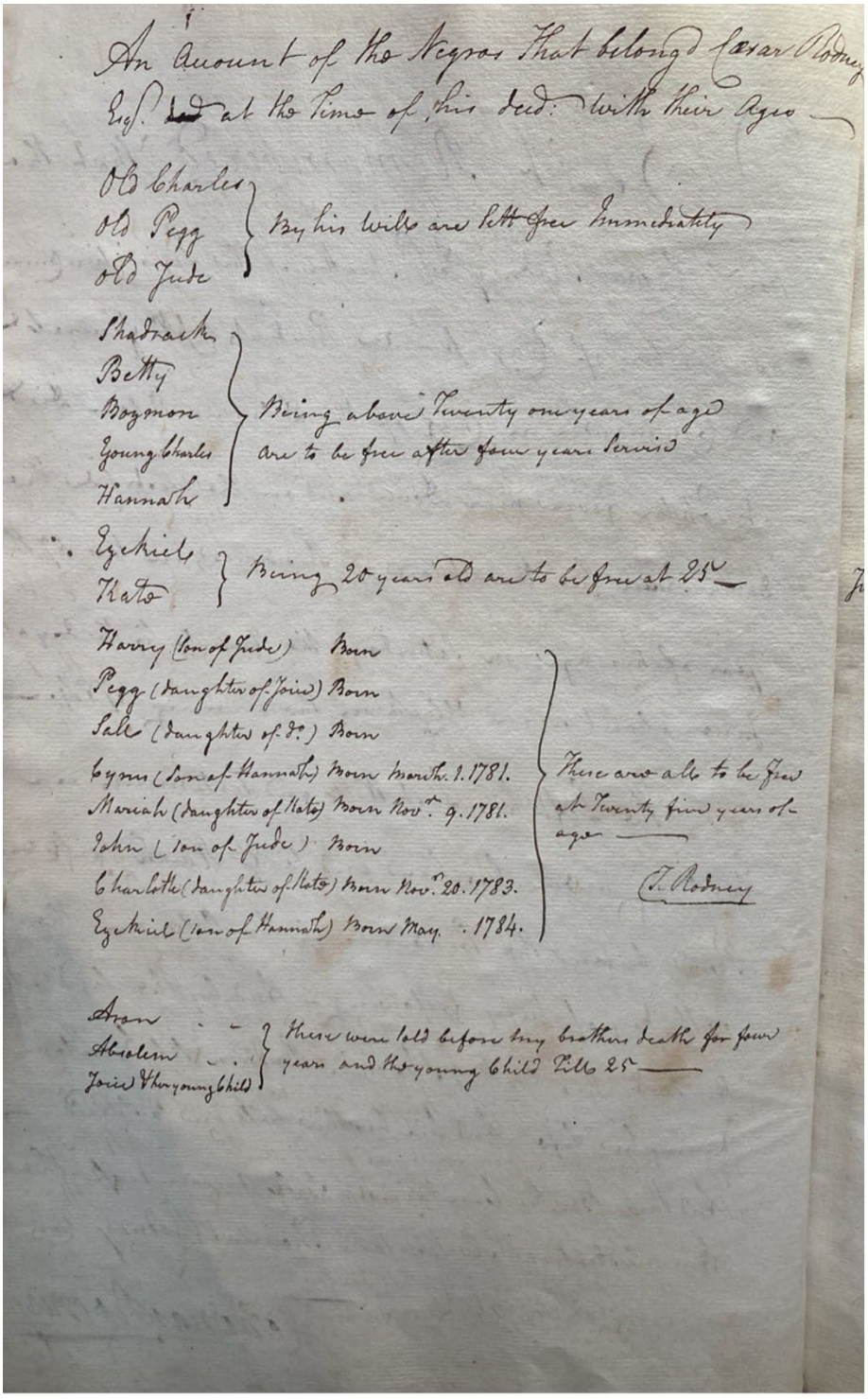
Aaron

Absolem

Joice & the young child

[The above individuals bracketed with this note] these were sold before my brothers death for four years and the young Child till 25 ~"

Note: "Maria" on Caesar Rodney's probate inventory and "Mariah" in Thomas Rodney's inventory are very likely the same person. Their ages listed are about the same. Also, the "Kate" of Caesar Rodney's inventory and the name that looks like "Kato" on Thomas Rodney's inventory are very likely the same person. The brothers shared a quirk of their handwriting that frequently made "e" at the end of a word look like "o" (see the words "the," "time," and "age" in Figure 6, for example). Also, not only would it have been unusual to mention a father's name and <u>not</u> a mother's name, but the birth years of "Kate"/ "Kato" are about the same. "Beth" and "Betty" are also likely the same person, sharing similar birth years.



An Account of the Negros That belongd Caesar Rodney Esq. ~~dec~~ at the Time of his decd: with their Ages —

Old Charles
Old Pegg
Old Jude
} By his Will are Sett free Immediately

Shadrack
Betty
Bozmon
Young Charles
Hannah
} Being above Twenty one years of age are to be free after four years Service

Ezekiel
Kate
} Being 20 years old are to be free at 25 —

Harry (Son of Jude) Born
Pegg (daughter of Joice) Born
Sall (daughter of do.) Born
Cyrus (Son of Hannah) Born March. 1. 1781.
Mariah (daughter of Kate) Born Novr. 9. 1781.
John (Son of Jude) Born
Charlotte (daughter of Kate) Born Novr. 20. 1783.
Ezekiel (Son of Hannah) Born May. . 1784.
} These are all to be free at Twenty five years of age —

T. Rodney

Aron
Absolem
Joice & her young Child
} These were sold before my brothers death for four years and the young Child Till 25 —

Figure 6. Thomas Rodney, "An Account of the Negroes that belongd Caesar Rodney Esq at the Time of his decd: with their ages," Caesar Rodney estate, 1784, manuscript book box 162, Brown Collection, Delaware Historical Society.

Appendix D: Tables of Individuals Enslaved by Members of Caesar Rodney's Family

PEOPLE CAESAR RODNEY (THE SIGNER) ENSLAVED

See spreadsheet, Appendix F (separate)

PEOPLE DANIEL JONES ENSLAVED AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH (d. 1694) (CAESAR RODNEY'S MATERNAL GREAT-GRANDFATHER)

Individual's Name[124]	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
Jack	1694	Will	Daniel Jones, Typescript of Will, 39-40, in KC-53: Collected Research Materials for Byfield, https://archives.delaware.gov/delaware-historical-markers/byfield/.	"one Negro Boy called Jack"		
Maria	1694	Will	Daniel Jones, Typescript of Will, 39-40, in KC-53: Collected Research Materials for Byfield, https://archives.delaware.gov/delaware-historical-markers/byfield/.	"one Negro Girl called Maria"		
Sambo	1684	Will	Daniel Jones, Typescript of Will, 39-40, in KC-53: Collected Research Materials for Byfield, https://archives.delaware.gov/delaware-historical-markers/byfield/.	"one Negro Man named Sambo"		
Hagar	1694	Will	Daniel Jones, Typescript of Will, 39-40, in KC-53: Collected Research Materials for Byfield, https://archives.delaware.gov/delaware-historical-markers/byfield/.	"one Negro Woman named Hagar"		

[124] Table column content inspired by "Plantation Stories Project," John Dickinson Plantation, Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs, Accessed June 28, 2025, https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Kqfvj7lkNlllrSIC0QPssUrEWdmhgEIMy-tMsRZfaHs/edit?gid=1713565635#gid=1713565635.

PEOPLE CAESAR RODNEY, SR ENSLAVED AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH (d. 1745) (CAESAR RODNEY THE SIGNER'S FATHER)

Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
Glasco	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Caesar Rodney (Sr), 1745, Page #747, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To one Negroe Man name Glasco"		£35
Doll	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Caesar Rodney (Sr), 1745, Page #747, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To one Negroe Woman named Doll"		£18

PEOPLE DANIEL RODNEY ENSLAVED AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH (d. 1745) (CAESAR RODNEY THE SIGNER'S PATERNAL UNCLE)

Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
Jude	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"Negroe girl name Jude about 12 years old"		£30
Sall	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"1 Do Named Sall Eight years old"	"Do" is abbreviation for "ditto," or "same as above.	£25

Dick	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“1 Boy Named Dick Eight years old”		£20
Adam	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“1 Do Named Adam 14 years old”		£2
Sill	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“1 Negroe girll Named Sill 14 years old”		£35
Coffe?	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“1 Do Boy Named Coffe 2 years old		£5
Jacob	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“To 1 Do Named Jacob 7 Years old”		£15
Abraham	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“To 1 Do Named Abraham 15 years old”		£30

Cambridge	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do named Cambridge 4 years old"		£10
Jonathan	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Mulatto Named Jonathan 6 years old"		£12
Bellander	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Negroe Girl Named Bellander 2 years Old"		£7
Denby	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Lad Named Denby 18 Years Old"		£45
Mingo	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do Named Mingo 3 Years Old"		£12
Sabrina	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Negroe Woman Named Sabrina"		£35

Naney	1745	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Daniel Rodney, 1745, Page #782, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do Named Naney"		£35

ENSLAVED PEOPLE DISPUTED BY MARGARET RODNEY (WIDOW OF DANIEL RODNEY) AND ELIZABETH RODNEY (1746) (CAESAR RODNEY'S AUNT AND MOTHER)

Individual's Name	Date of Primary Source	Citation	Text	Notes
Sarah (girl)	1746	Court document/attestation (copy),	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA)	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate?
Denby (man) (or Donby, Denbigh)	1746 1763	Court document/attestation (copy) Bill of sale	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA) "Bill of Sale/Margaret Rodney/to Caleb Luff," FOLDER: Box 27, Folder 296, Volume 27, Page 29, BOX: Logan family papers, 1638-1964, Collection 0379, Series 1: Logan and Dickinson family papers, Subseries h. Estate Records, Dickinson estate, Kingston on Hill, Town Point (Luff and Withered) (Volume XXVII, HSP	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate? Margaret Rodney's property; see also "Other People Margaret Rodney Enslaved"
Abraham (man)	1746	Court document/attestation (copy),	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA)	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate?
Nanny (woman)	1746	Court document/attestation (copy),	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA)	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate?
Pressila (woman)	1746	Court document/attestation (copy)	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA)	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate?

Jacob (boy)	1746 1763	Court document/attestation (copy) Bill of sale	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA) "Bill of Sale/Margaret Rodney/to Caleb Luff," FOLDER: Box 27, Folder 296, Volume 27, Page 29, BOX: Logan family papers, 1638-1964, Collection 0379, Series 1: Logan and Dickinson family papers, Subseries h. Estate Records, Dickinson estate, Kingston on Hill, Town Point (Luff and Withered) (Volume XXVII, HSP	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate? Margaret Rodney's property; see also, "Other People Margaret Rodney Enslaved"
Mingo (boy)	1746 July 14, 1791	Court document/attestation (copy), Thomas Rodney Prison Journal	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA) Thomas Rodney, Prison Journal, Folder: Rodney, Thomas, American Jurist (b. June 4, 1744-Jan 2, 1811), prison journal, Simon Gratz collection, 1715-1872/Collection 250B, Autographs: Rodney, T. (cont.)-Roe, Box 238, Historical Society of Pennsylvania)	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate? "Old Mingo, family free negro"
Cuffy (boy)	1746 1763	Court document/attestation (copy), Bill of Sale	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA) "Bill of Sale/Margaret Rodney/to Caleb Luff," FOLDER: Box 27, Folder 296, Volume 27, Page 29, BOX: Logan family papers, 1638-1964, Collection 0379, Series 1: Logan and Dickinson family papers, Subseries h. Estate Records, Dickinson estate, Kingston on Hill, Town Point (Luff and Withered) (Volume XXVII, HSP	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate? Margaret Rodney's property; see also, "Other People Margaret Rodney Enslaved"
Sarah	1746	Court document/attestation (copy),	FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA)	Daniel Rodney or Caesar Rodney, Sr., estate?

OTHER PEOPLE MARGARET RODNEY ENSLAVED

Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
Ireland	1763	Bill of Sale	"Bill of Sale/Margaret Rodney/to Caleb Luff," FOLDER: Box 27, Folder 296, Volume 27, Page 29, BOX: Logan family papers, 1638-1964, Collection 0379, Series 1: Logan and Dickinson family papers, Subseries h. Estate Records, Dickinson estate, Kingston on Hill, Town Point (Luff and Withered) (Volume XXVII, HSP FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5 (DPA)	With "Negro Men called Ireland, Denbigh, Jacob, and Cuff, and a Negro Woman called Celia"		
Celia	1763	Bill of Sale	"Bill of Sale/Margaret Rodney/to Caleb Luff," FOLDER: Box 27, Folder 296, Volume 27, Page 29, BOX: Logan family papers, 1638-1964, Collection 0379, Series 1: Logan and Dickinson family papers, Subseries h. Estate Records, Dickinson estate, Kingston on Hill, Town Point (Luff and Withered) (Volume XXVII, HSP	With "Negro Men called Ireland, Denbigh, Jacob, and Cuff, and a Negro Woman called Celia"	"Use and Service of the said Negro Woman above named for and during the Space and Term of One year next ensuing the Date of the Presents"	

PEOPLE NICHOLAS RIDGELY ENSLAVED AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH (d. 1755) (CAESAR RODNEY THE SIGNER'S GUARDIAN)

Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
Tom	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"To one negroe man named Tom"		£40
Sampson	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"to one Do named Sampson"		£40
Charles	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"To one negroe boy named Charles"		£50
Pompy	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"to one Do [boy] named pompy"		£40
Celia	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"To one negroe woman named Celia"		£40

Sarah	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"to one Do [negro woman] named Sarah"		£50
Fanny	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"to one negroe woman named Fanny"		£37
Cloe	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"to one Do named Cloe"		£50
Betty	1755	Inventory (probate)	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0067, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"to one very old negroe woman named Betty"		£0 2 6
Jean	1755	Inventory (probate) additional notes	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0075, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"For a negro man named Charles & a negro woman named Jean alotted to Sarah Ridgely as Her share as by the same Division may appear."	Note: Jean not listed above on first inventory.	

Rachel	1755	Inventory (probate) additional notes	Inventory, Nicholas Ridgely, 1755, Page #0077, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll #187, Register of Wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Ridgely, Henry Moore to Roberts, Susannah, Delaware Public Archives	"To a Negro Child named Rachel born since appraisement"		£10 2 6

PEOPLE WILLIAM RODNEY ENSLAVED AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH (d. 1787) (CAESAR RODNEY THE SIGNER'S BROTHER)

Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
Caesar	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"one Negro Man Caesar 55 yrs old"		£20 0 0
Thomas	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"one---Ditto Thomas – 40—"		£45 0 0
Frank	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"One—Ditto Frank 30"		£60 0 0
Richard	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	One – Ditto Richard 30"		£60 0 0

S[?]	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“One Ditto [Negro] Woman S[?] 25		£37 10 0
Philis	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“One Ditto [Negro] Ditto [Woman] Philis 24”		£40 0 0
Abram	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“One Ditto [Negro] Boy Abram 13”		£50 0 0
Absole[o]m	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“one ditto [Negro] – [boy] Absole[o]m 9”		£30 0 0
John	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“One Ditto [Negro Boy] John 2”		£10 0 0
Jon[?]	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	“One Ditto [Negro Boy] Jon[?] 6 sickly”		£5 0 0

[?]	1787	Inventory	Inventory, William Rodney, 1787, Page #869, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"one ditto [Negro] ? 1"		£5 0 0

PEOPLE MARGARET RODNEY ENSLAVED AT THE TIME OF HER DEATH (d. 1781) (CAESAR RODNEY THE SIGNER'S AUNT, WIDOW OF DANIEL RODNEY)

Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
Unnamed	1786	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Margaret Rodney, Page #806 and #808, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Negro 30 years old"		£60
Richard or Dick	1786	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Margaret Rodney, Page #806 and page #808, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do Named Richard 8 years old"		£22 10 0
Nancee	1786	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Margaret Rodney, Page #806 and page #808, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do Do Nancee 4 years Do"		£12 10 0
Jude	1786	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Margaret Rodney, Page #806 and page #808, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do Jude 14 years Do"		£42 0 0

Belinda	1786	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Margaret Rodney, Page #806 and page #808, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do Belinda 12 years Do"	Daughter of "Bellander" born c. 1743, enslaved by Daniel Rodney?	£35 0 0
Sabrina	1786	Probate (inventory)	Inventory, Margaret Rodney, Page #806 and page #808, Microfilm RG3545.000, Roll # 188, Register of wills; Kent County; Probate Files, Roberts, Thomas to Rodney, William, Delaware Public Archives.	"To 1 Do Sabrina 3 years Do"		£8 0 0

PEOPLE THOMAS RODNEY ENSLAVED (d. 1811) (CAESAR RODNEY THE SIGNER'S BROTHER)

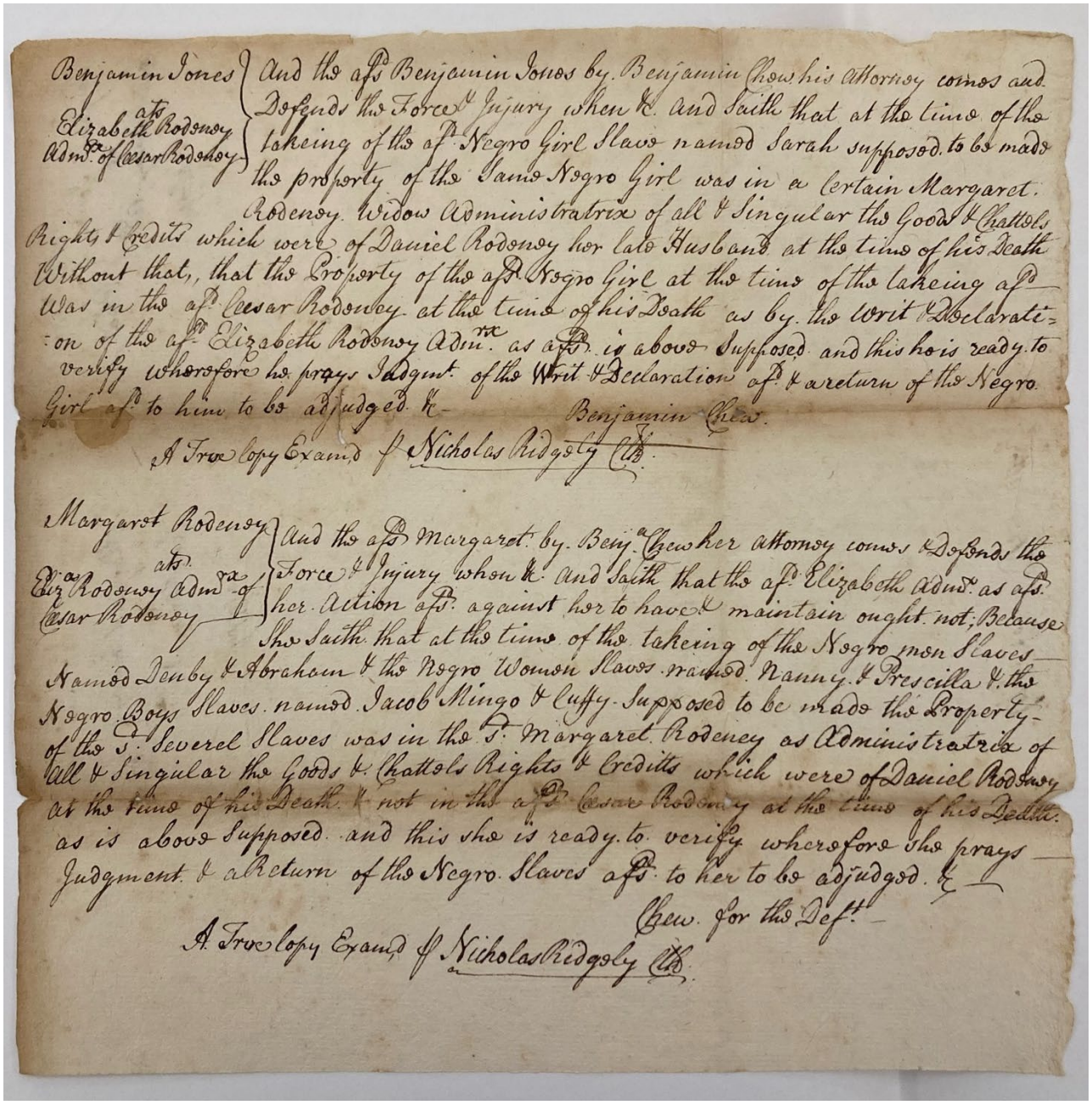
Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation	Text	Notes	Other
James	1791 July 4, 1791	Foreclosure/bankruptcy documentation Prison journal	Box 10, Rodney Collection, Delaware Historical Society Thomas Rodney, Prison Journal, Folder: Rodney, Thomas, American Jurist (b. June 4, 1744-Jan 2, 1811), prison journal, Simon Gratz collection, 1715-1872/Collection 250B, Autographs: Rodney, T. (cont.)-Roe, Box 238, Historical Society of Pennsylvania)	"1 Negro Man James "Negro Jim"	 Visited Thomas Rodney in debtor's prison,	
Scy[illegible]	1791	Foreclosure/bankruptcy documentation	Box 10, Rodney Collection, Delaware Historical Society	"1 Negro Boy Scy[illegible]"		
Ezekiel	1791	Foreclosure/bankruptcy documentation	Box 10, Rodney Collection, Delaware Historical Society	"1 Negro boy Ezekie""		
Negro girl	1791	Foreclosure/bankruptcy documentation	Box 10, Rodney Collection, Delaware Historical Society		£10 0 0	

Ezekiel (man)	June 19, 1791	Prison journal	Thomas Rodney, Prison Journal, Folder: Rodney, Thomas, American Jurist (b. June 4, 1744-Jan 2, 1811), prison journal, Simon Gratz collection, 1715-1872/Collection 250B, Autographs: Rodney, T. (cont.)-Roe, Box 238, Historical Society of Pennsylvania)	"My negro man Ezekiel'"	Visited Thomas in debtor's prison.	
Chatt	June 19, 1791	Prison journal	Thomas Rodney, Prison Journal, Folder: Rodney, Thomas, American Jurist (b. June 4, 1744-Jan 2, 1811), prison journal, Simon Gratz collection, 1715-1872/Collection 250B, Autographs: Rodney, T. (cont.)-Roe, Box 238, Historical Society of Pennsylvania)	"An old Family Negro Chatt"	Visited Thomas in debtor's prison.	
Jack	July 4, 1791	Prison journal	Thomas Rodney, Prison Journal, Folder: Rodney, Thomas, American Jurist (b. June 4, 1744-Jan 2, 1811), prison journal, Simon Gratz collection, 1715-1872/Collection 250B, Autographs: Rodney, T. (cont.)-Roe, Box 238, Historical Society of Pennsylvania)	"Negro Jack"	Visited Thomas in debtor's prison.	
Charlotte	1816	Inventory		"One negro woman named Charlotte"		$450
Saul	1816	Inventory		"One do Boy do Saul"		$300

FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR MENTIONED BY CAESAR RODNEY AND THOMAS RODNEY

Individual's Name	Date of primary source	Primary Source Type	Citation
Jacob Armstrong	March 28, 1782	Thomas Rodney to Caesar Rodney, explaining Armstrong would be a good tenant despite the fact that he is black and Thomas "know[s] you [CR] do not like to have any of this colour on your land"	Hancock, "Personal Side," 220 See also letter from February 7, 1782, beg. pg. 217 in Hancock, "Personal Side"
Charles Miller	1797	Listed as a "free negro" tenant at one of Rodney's "plantations."	"Dover Hundred, 1797," RG3535.000 Roll #004 Tax Assessments; Kent County, 1785 Dover Hd. To 1797 Duck Creek Hd, 1785-1797, Microfilm, DPA.

APPENDIX E: SELECTED PRIMARY SOURCES



Benjamin Jones
ats
Elizabeth Rodeney
Admrx of Caesar Rodeney

And the afs Benjamin Jones by Benjamin Chew his Attorney comes and Defends the Force & Injury when &c. and Saith that at the time of the takeing of the afd Negro Girl Slave named Sarah supposed to be made the property of the Same Negro Girl was in a Certain Margaret Rodeney Widow Administratrix of all & Singular the Goods & Chattels Rights & Credits which were of Daniel Rodeney her late Husband at the time of his Death Without that, that the Property of the afd Negro Girl at the time of the takeing afd Was in the afd Caesar Rodeney at the time of his Death as by the Writ & Declaration of the afd Elizabeth Rodeney Admrx as afs is above Supposed and this he is ready to verify wherefore he prays Judgmt of the Writ & Declaration afd & a return of the Negro Girl afd to him to be adjudged &c

Benjamin Chew

A True Copy Examd ff Nicholas Ridgely Clk

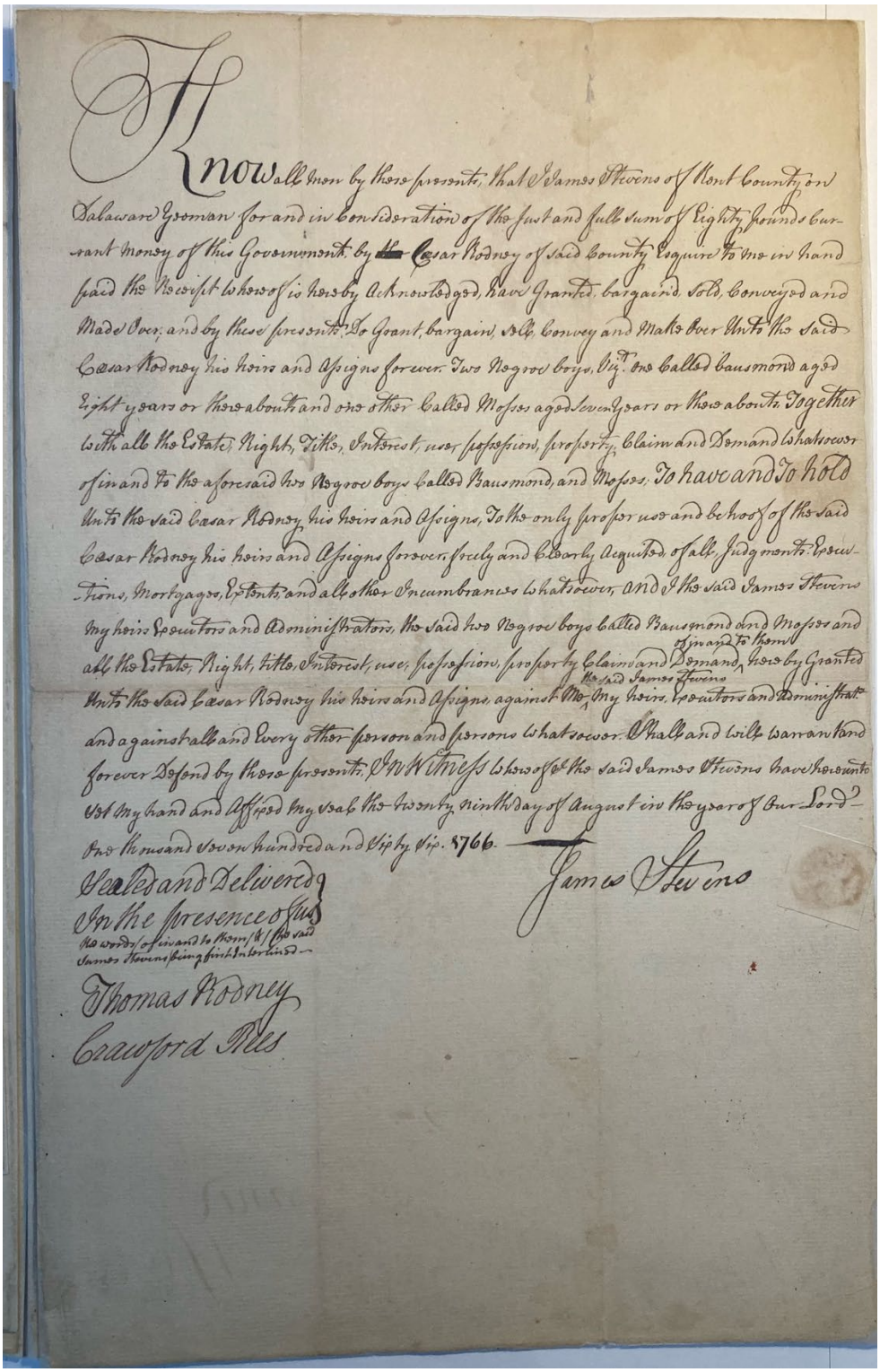
Margaret Rodeney
ats
Eliza Rodeney Admrx of
Caesar Rodeney

And the afs Margaret by Benja Chew her attorney comes & Defends the Force & Injury when &c. And Saith that the afd Elizabeth Admx as afs her Action afs against her to have & maintain ought not; Because She Saith that at the time of the takeing of the Negro men Slaves Named Denby & Abraham & the Negro Women Slaves named Nanny & Prescilla & the Negro Boys Slaves named Jacob Mingo & Cuffy Supposed to be made the Property of the Sd Severel Slaves was in the Sd Margaret Rodeney as Administratrix of All & Singular the Goods & Chattels Rights & Creditts which were of Daniel Rodeney at the time of his Death & not in the afd Caesar Rodeney at the time of his Death as is above Supposed and this she is ready to verify wherefore she prays Judgment & a Return of the Negro Slaves afs to her to be adjudged &c

Chew for the Deft

A True Copy Examd ff Nicholas Ridgely Clk

Figure 7. This 1746 document provides some details about a dispute regarding the ownership of enslaved individuals between Elizabeth Rodney (Caesar Rodney the signer's mother) and Margaret Rodney (Caesar Rodney the signer's aunt). This and related documents provide an opportunity to explore the history of enslaved individuals associated with the broader Rodney family. FOLDER RG 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts, Rodney Papers Caesar Rodney, General (Deed) 1746; 1764; 1784 5, Box 9200R08.000 Small Manuscripts Collection Rodney Papers, Delaware Public Archives.



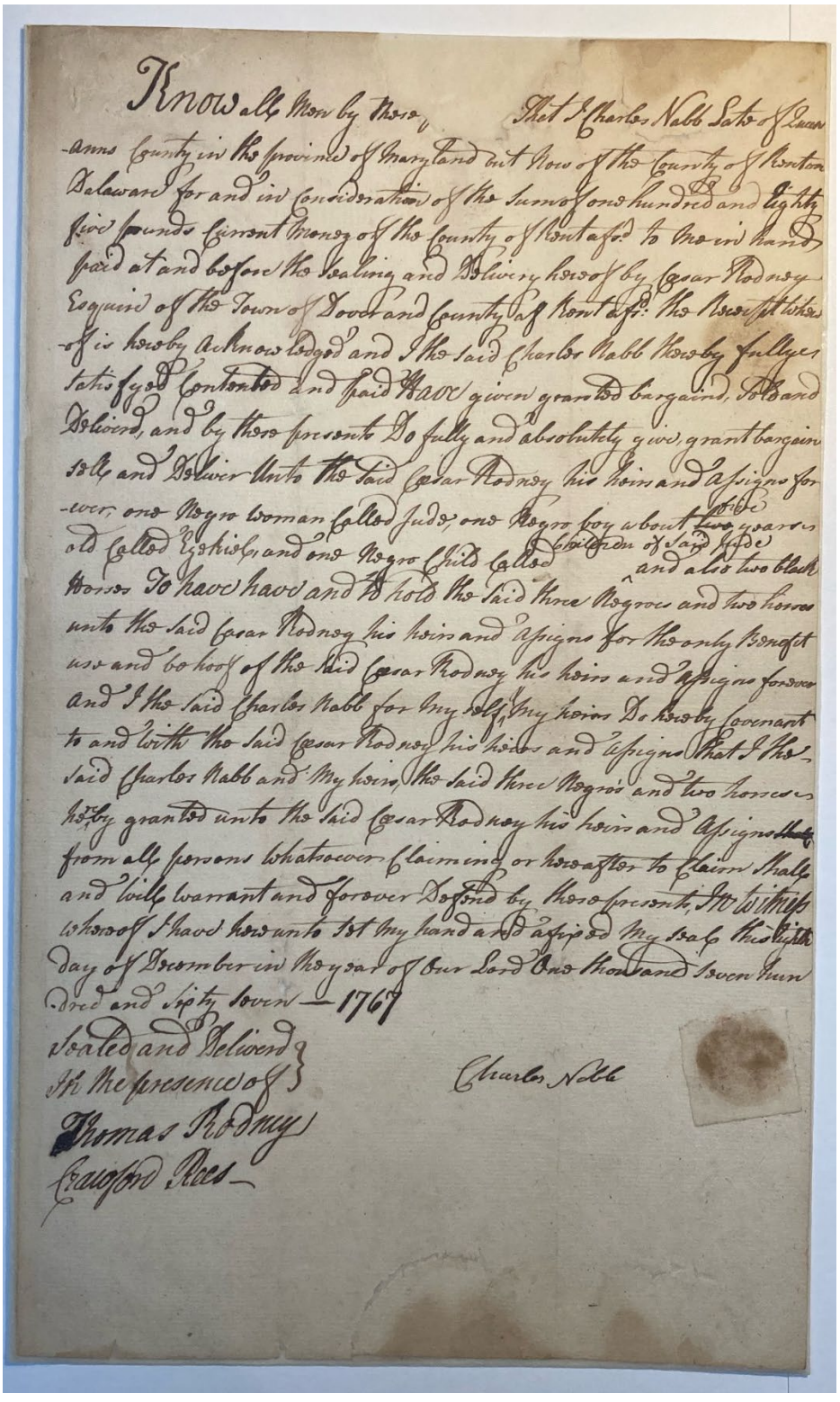
Know all men by these presents, that I James Stevens of Kent County on Delaware Yeoman for and in Consideration of the just and full Sum of Eighty Pounds Current money of this Government to me by Caesar Rodney of said County Esquire to me in hand paid the Receipt whereof is hereby Acknowledged, have Granted, bargained, Sold, Conveyed and Made Over, and by these presents Do Grant, bargain, Sell, Convey and Make over Unto the said Caesar Rodney his Heirs and Assigns forever. Two Negroe boys, Viz. one called Bausmond aged Eight years or there abouts and one other Called Moses aged Seven years or there abouts. Together with all the Estate, Right, Title, Interest, use, possession, property, Claim and Demand whatsoever of in and to the aforesaid two Negroe boys called Bausmond, and Moses; To have and To hold Unto the said Caesar Rodney his Heirs and Assigns, To the only proper use and behoof of the said Caesar Rodney his heirs and Assigns forever, freely and clearly Acquitted of all, Judgments Executions, Mortgages, Extents, and all other Incumbrances whatsoever, and I the said James Stevens my heirs Executors and Administrators, the said two Negroe boys called Bausmond and Moses and all the Estate, Right, title, Interest, use, possession, property Claim and Demand of in and to them by Granted Unto the said Caesar Rodney his heirs and Assigns against Me the said James Stevens my heirs, Executors and Administrators and against all and every other person and persons whatsoever. I shall and will warrant and forever Defend by these presents. In Witness Whereof the said James Stevens have hereunto set my hand and affixed my Seal this twenty ninth day of August in the year of Our Lord One thousand Seven hundred and Sixty Six. 1766.

James Stevens

Sealed and Delivered
In the presence of us
the words of in and to them & the said James Stevens being first interlined

Thomas Rodney
Crawford Nes

Figure 8. Bill of Sale [for two enslaved boys, Bausmond and Moses], James Stevens to Caesar Rodney, August 29, 1766, Folder: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1765-1767, Rodney Collection, Box 6, Folder 2, Box: Caesar Rodney, signer, VB 6, Rodney 1700-1884, Delaware Historical Society.



Know all Men by these Presents That I Charles Nabb Late of Queen-anns County in the Province of Maryland but Now of the County of Kent on Delaware for and in Consideration of the Sum of one hundred and Eighty five pounds Current Money of the County of Kent aforesd to me in hand paid at and before the Sealing and Delivery hereof by Caesar Rodney Esquire of the Town of Dover and County aforesd the Receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged and I the said Charles Nabb thereby fully Satisfyed Contented and paid Have given granted bargained Sold and Delivered, and by these presents Do fully and absolutely give, grant bargain sell and Deliver unto the said Caesar Rodney his Heirs and Assigns for-ever, one Negro woman called Jude, one Negro boy about two years old called Ephish, and one Negro Child called Children of said Jude and also two black Horses To have have and to hold the said three Negroes and two horses unto the said Caesar Rodney his heirs and Assigns for the only Benefit use and behoof of the said Caesar Rodney his heirs and Assigns forever and I the said Charles Nabb for my self my Heirs Do hereby Covenant to and with the said Caesar Rodney his heirs and Assigns That I the said Charles Nabb and My heirs the said three Negros and two horses hereby granted unto the said Caesar Rodney his heirs and Assigns from all persons whatsoever claiming or hereafter to Claim Shall and will warrant and forever Defend by these presents In Witness whereof I have hereunto Set my hand and Affixed my Seal this Eighth day of December in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty Seven — 1767

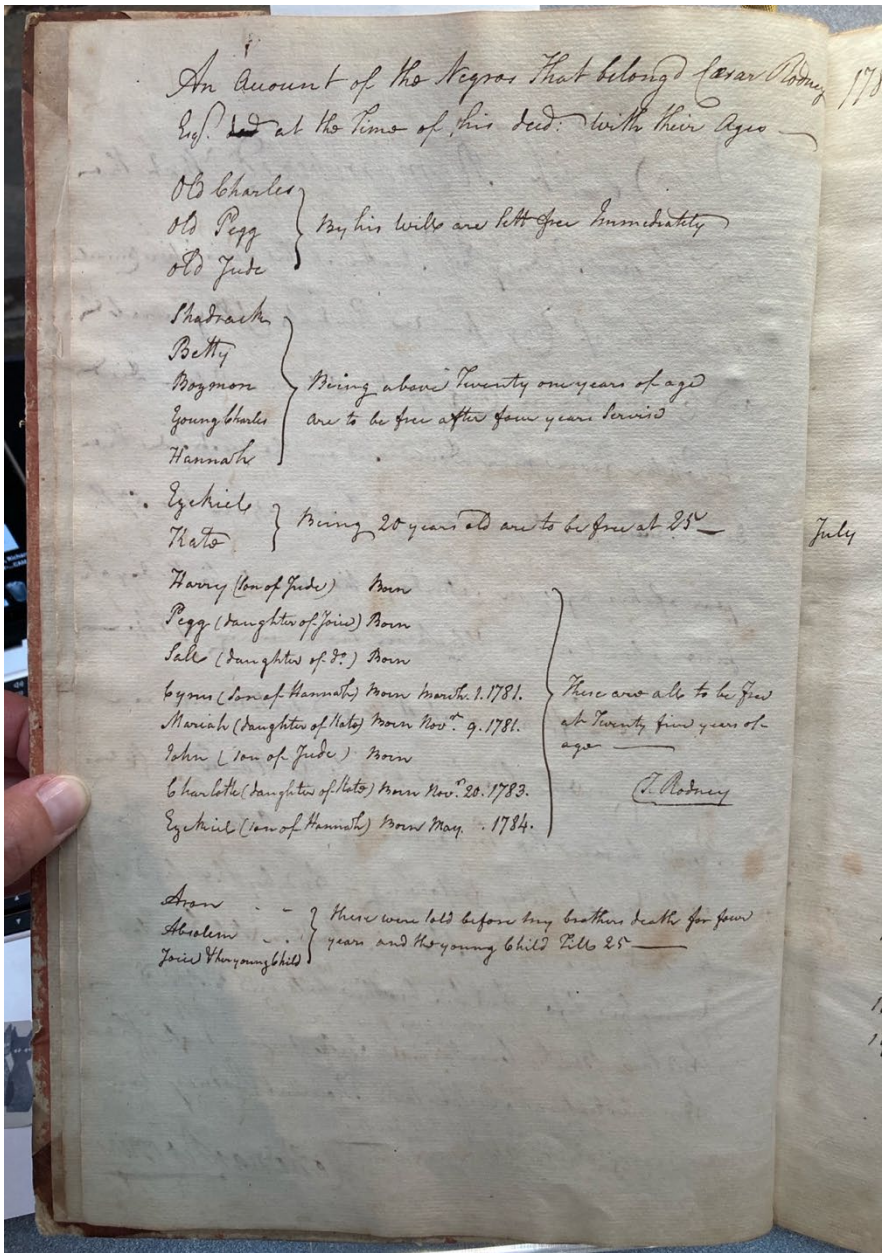
Sealed and Delivered
In the presence of
Thomas Rodney
Crawford Rees

Charles Nabb

Figure 9. "Bill of Sale, Charles Nabb to Caesar Rodney, For Jude and Children, 1767," Folder: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1765-1767, Rodney Collection, Box 6, Folder 2, Box 6, Caesar Rodney Papers, 1737-1798, Rodney Collection 1700-1884, Delaware Historical Society.

Figure 10. Brother Billy Rodney reported to Thomas that "…the negroes have all been pleading… and are averse to being sold…" after hearing of the plan to lease several farms to raise funds. Thomas Rodney to Caesar Rodney, Dover, April 26th, 1776, Folder: Caesar Rodney, Signer, 3-Feb-Aug 31, 1776, Rodney Collection, Box 6, Folder 9, Delaware Historical Society.[125]

[125] Many of Thomas's letters to Caesar are addressed, "Sir." This one starts with, "Dr. B.," as in, "Dear Brother." There is at least one letter in the archive from Thomas to Caesar that does read, "Dr. Brother." Thomas Rodney to Caesar Rodney, 1775 Letter, Folder Caesar Rodney, Signer, 1774-1775, Rodney Collection, Box 6, Folder 8, Delaware Historical Society.



An Account of the Negros That belongd Caesar Rodney Esq. at the Time of his decd: with their Ages

Old Charles
Old Pegg
Old Jude
} By his Will are sett free Immediately

Shadrack
Betty
Bozmon
Young Charles
Hannah
} Being above Twenty one years of age are to be free after four years Service

Ezekiel
Kate
} Being 20 years old are to be free at 25

Harry (Son of Jude) Born
Pegg (daughter of Joice) Born
Sall (daughter of do.) Born
Cyrus (Son of Hannah) Born March. 1. 1781.
Mariah (daughter of Kate) Born Novr. 9. 1781.
John (Son of Jude) Born
Charlotte (daughter of Kate) Born Novr. 20. 1783.
Ezekiel (Son of Hannah) Born May. 1784.
} These are all to be free at Twenty five years of age

T. Rodney

Aron
Absolem
Joice & her young Child
} These were sold before my brothers death for four years and the young Child Till 25

Figure 11. Thomas Rodney, "An Account of the Negroes that belongd Caesar Rodney Esq at the Time of his decd: with their ages," Caesar Rodney estate, 1784, manuscript book box 162, Brown Collection, Delaware Historical Society.

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