Preliminary Findings of the Penn Slavery Project

Caitlin Doolittle, VanJessica Gladney, Dillon Kersh, Brooke Krancer, and Matthew Palczynski
Questions We Asked

- Not quite the same questions that were being asked elsewhere
- How many owned enslaved people?
- Proximity?
- Definition of “implicated”?
- Is it possible to trace enslaved folks’ lineage?
- What were the lives of these enslaved people like?
Our Research Methods

- Read Gary Nash’s *Forging Freedom*
- Visited the University Archives website
- Met with Mark Lloyd
- Utilized Ancestry Library’s database of Pennsylvania Tax Records
- Visited the Historical Society of Pennsylvania Archives
- Utilized *The Pennsylvania Gazette’s* Archives
- Compiled our data into a Google Spreadsheet
Trustees, by the Numbers

126 Trustees in the 18th Century

28 Closely Investigated by PSP

20 Found to have Owned Slaves
Brooke’s Research Subjects

- **William Allen (1704-1780)**
  - A founder of what became Penn
  - Held numerous public offices in Philadelphia including mayor
  - Freed the people he held in bondage in his will

- **William Bingham (1752-1804)**
  - Served as a U.S. senator
  - Reputed to be the wealthiest man in America in the 1790s
  - Held enslaved people until at least 1783

- **Dr. Thomas Cadwalader (1707-1779)**
  - Father of John Cadwalader
  - Founding trustee of Penn’s medical school

- **John Cadwalader (1742-1786)**
  - Formed a successful mercantile business
  - Held at least 9 enslaved people until 1782, and at least one as late as 1786
John Cadwalader

- Five different versions of his will, of which four are largely the same
- Leaves most of his enslaved people to his wife and daughters in the first four versions and all of his enslaved people in the fifth
- Frees a man named James Sampson in first four versions of the will, but there is no mention of him in the fifth version
VanJessica’s Research Subjects

- Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) (Trustee: 1749-1790)
  - Founder and Trustee
  - Tax records indicate ownership of at least 1 slave

- John Inglis (1708-1775) (Trustee: 1749-1775)
  - Founder and Trustee
  - Tax records indicate ownership of at least 8 people
  - Died before more taxes were collected
  - Unable to locate will

- Isaac Norris (1701-1766) (Trustee 1751-1755)
  - Family owned enslaved people and bequeathed them to children
  - Norris and his sister who later freed them
  - Suggested inscription for Liberty Bell (symbol for the abolition movement)

- William Moore...
Run away from William Moore of Moore Hall in Chester County, a likely young Negro man named Jack, speaks but indifferent English, and had on when he went away a new ozenburg shirt, a pair of strip'd home-spun breeches, a strip'd ticking waistcoat, an old dainty coat of his master's with buttons of horse-teeth set in brass, and cloth sleeves, a felt hat almost new. Whoever secures the said Negro, and will bring him to his master, or to John Moore, Esq; in Philadelphia, shall receive Twenty Shillings Reward and reasonable Charges.

August 10, 1730

William Moore
I do hereby further give and grant unto my said Wife full power and authority for me and in my Name... and my slaves, furniture and estate...
My Will is that my three mulatto slaves, Solomon, George and Rachel at Moore Hall, be free... or Tenants, and that my Negro Boy, Harry, be free at twenty eight years of age.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negro, 2 Horse, 1 Cow</td>
<td>$5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25 of SEA: Stewart, Bldg</td>
<td>$15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$27 de loc, Erwine</td>
<td>$16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 acres wood, land</td>
<td>$5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$33 of Susana Commins Wm</td>
<td>$21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50 de John Penn Exp</td>
<td>$30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty House County Seat</td>
<td>$4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probate</td>
<td>$97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** $131
Caitlin’s Research Subjects

- **Benjamin Chew (1722-1810)**
  - Trustee 1757-1791
  - Very wealthy Maryland family, owned many enslaved people
  - Richard Allen

- **Thomas Willing (1731-1821)**
  - Trustee 1760-1791
  - Mayor of Philadelphia, Justice of PA Supreme Court, President of the Bank of North America
  - Three enslaved people in 1769, zero in 1782

- **Robert Morris**
  - Trustee 1778-1791
  - Merchant, Founder of the Bank of North America
  - Owned enslaved people up until 1797

- **Joseph Reed**
  - Trustee 1778-1785, President of Board of Trustees 1779-1781
  - Governor of PA
Joseph Reed

- Aide-de-camp to George Washington
- Owned one enslaved person in 1774
- Wrote the preamble of the Gradual Abolition Act
Under the influence of these practical and friendly counsels, the controversy seems to have died away, no further trace of it appearing on the Journals, and on the next day the Committee of Assembly reported a bill (probably in substance that of the Council) for the gradual Abolition of Slavery. On the 29th it passed to a second reading, and was ordered to be printed. Its provisions are substantially the same as those of the law subsequently enacted, with the exception of a penal prohibition of mixed marriages, that was not retained. In form, especially in the Preamble, it was different. At this point the action of the Assembly ceased, and its doubtful zeal suddenly abated. Again, to the same body, did it become necessary for the Executive to speak, and we find on 9th September, 1780, President Reed urged them to action.

“Our anxiety,” says the Message, “to perpetuate and extend the blessings of freedom, and enlarge the circle of humanity, induces us to remind you of the bill emancipating the children born of negro and mulatto parents. We wish to see you give the complete sanction of law to this noble and generous purpose, and adorn the annals of Pennsylvania with their bright display of justice and public virtue.”

The appeal was in vain. The Assembly soon after expired, and the measure was referred to the attention of their successors.
Dillon’s Research Subjects

- **James Potter** (1729-1789)
  - Trustee
  - High-ranking General, Vice-President of Pennsylvania, and Frontiersman

- **Edward Tilghman Jr.** (1750-1815)
  - Trustee
  - Leading Philadelphia Lawyer

- **James Tilghman** (1716-1793)
  - Trustee
  - Lawyer, Secretary of the Land Office of Pennsylvania

- **Caspar Wistar** (1761-1818)
  - Trustee
  - Professor of Anatomy at Penn, President of American Philosophical Society
  - Leading abolitionist, President of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society
Edward Tilghman Jr.

- Bequeathed Whitehall Plantation in Delaware in 1772
- Sold the plantation to Benjamin Chew a few months later
- Whitehall is the only record of Tilghman Jr. owning enslaved people I have discovered so far
Edward Tilghman Jr.
Matthew’s Research Subjects

- **James Logan (1674-1751)**
  - Founder
  - Trustee 1749-1751

- **William Masters (d. 1760)**
  - Founder
  - Trustee 1749-1760
  - Up to 34 enslaved people, as late as May 1761
  - Signed Petition of 1741

- **William Plumsted (1708-1765)**
  - Founder
  - Trustee 1749-1765
  - Purchased an enslaved person as late as 1762
  - Signed Petition of 1741

- **Charles Pettit (1736-1806)**
  - Trustee 1786-1802
  - 1 female enslaved person listed in 1782 Tax and Exoneration lists
Petition of 1741 - Plumsted and Masters
Interpretations

- Penn should publicly acknowledge their ties to slavery
- Acknowledge that the prominence and wealth of the trustees was integrally related to slavery even if they did not own enslaved people themselves (merchants, etc)
- Do something similar to what Georgetown did - atonement; find ancestors of enslaved people held by trustees, provosts, etc and give them admissions priority
- Include the results of our research on the University Archives page
- Retract its previous statement that it had nothing to do with slavery, as published in *The Philadelphia Tribune* and *The Daily Pennsylvanian*
- Need to conduct further research
Further Questions

- More about enslaved people
  - Name & Ages
  - Stories
  - Descendants

- Mapping of the original University
  - Physical proximity

- Delve deeper into explicit connections with the slave trade
  - Enslaved people sold to fund the University?
Questions & Answers...