

**History of Slave Laborers  
in the Construction of the  
United States Capitol**



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**Foreword by  
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**June 1, 2005**

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No one will ever know how many slaves helped to build the United States Capitol Building—or the White House; or the homes of founding fathers George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison; or Philadelphia's Independence Hall. Indifference by earlier historians, poor record keeping, and the silence of voiceless classes have impeded our ability in the twenty-first century to understand fully the contributions and privations of those who toiled over the seven decades from the first cornerstone laying to the day of emancipation in the District of Columbia.

Ten years ago, official celebrations of the Capitol's two-hundredth anniversary focused national attention on earlier Americans who had no cause to celebrate: the slaves who quarried the stone, cut the timber, and formed and fired the bricks that became our nation's Temple of Freedom. As plans proceeded for construction of a Capitol Visitor Center in the 1990s, members of Congress and others expressed increasing concern that a great opportunity to tell this story might be missed.

The following report responds to that opportunity. It offers a balanced and well-reasoned account, based on the surviving sources, of a significant chapter in American history. By infusing this story with its broader historical and architectural context, the author has added a dimension never before available. While we will never know as much about the slave laborers who built the Capitol as we do about their free counterparts, we now know a good deal more than before this project began.

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**Illustration Credits**

Page 6, *Quarrying*: From Lee Nelson, *White House Stone Carving*.

Page 10, *Pit Sawing*: Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Page 10, *Stone Sawing*: From *White House Stone Carving*.

Page 11, *Bricklaying*: Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Page 14, *Loading Potomac Marble onto a Canal Boat*: Detail of a sketch by B. Henry Latrobe, 1817. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## Introduction

Soon after it was finished in the 1820s, the Capitol began to be called the “Temple of Liberty” because it was dedicated to the cherished ideas of freedom, equality, and self determination. How, then, can a building steeped in those noble principles have been constructed with the help of slave labor? The first step in the Capitol’s evolution was taken in the last decade of the eighteenth century and was, in fact, assisted by the toil of bondsmen—mainly slaves rented from local owners to help build the Capitol and the city of Washington. They were an integral component of the city’s workforce, which otherwise would have suffered from a severe shortage of hands. In every colony north and south, from the seventeenth century on, the building trades drew upon slave labor to augment the available supply of free workmen. This was especially true in the Potomac region, where the population was sparse and the concentration of slave laborers was the highest in the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The irony of slaves helping to build America’s “Temple of Liberty” is potent. It is instructive, however, to recall that other landmarks of American freedom were also built with a similar labor force or in other ways intertwined with the institution of slavery. Faneuil Hall—Boston’s celebrated “Cradle of Liberty”—, for instance, was given to the city by a slave owner whose fortune was founded on the slave trade. America’s oldest lending library, the Redwood Library in Newport, Rhode Island, was founded in 1747 with the help of New England’s largest slaveholder, Abraham Redwood. Two well-known Massachusetts leaders, Cotton Mather and John Winthrop, were also slave owners.<sup>2</sup> Independence Hall was built at a time when slavery was widespread in Pennsylvania. Indeed, the colony’s Quaker founder, William Penn, was a slave owner. The homes of George Washington (Mt. Vernon), Thomas Jefferson (Monticello), and James Madison (Montpelier) were constructed with the help of slaves. Bondsmen helped construct the three principal public buildings in Williamsburg, Virginia: the Capitol, the Governor’s Palace, and the Wren Building at the College of William and Mary.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is highly unlikely that any eighteenth-century building now standing in Colonial Williamsburg was built without the assistance of slave labor. By the time of the American Revolution slavery had existed in every state for generations. When the Capitol was begun in the 1790s slave labor had a well-established record in the building trades, a record that would only expand with the work necessary to build a capital city on the Potomac.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1790 there were 753,430 African-Americans living in the United States; over half lived in Maryland and Virginia. While the vast majority were enslaved, 13 percent in Maryland were free, and the number stood at 21 percent in Virginia. Letitia Woods Brown, *Free Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1790–1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> William D. Pierson, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth Century New England* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *The Public Buildings of Williamsburg* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1958).

It is not possible to examine the documents at the National Archives relating to the Capitol's early construction without being impressed by the sheer number of references to "Negro Hire" (see the appendix). These vouchers record payments to owners for time their slaves spent working on the Capitol, the President's House, and elsewhere in the emerging city of Washington. Today it may seem negligent on the part of early historians of the Capitol that they failed to include the story of slave labor in their accounts. Surely they were aware of the fact; however, their failure to incorporate slaves in their Capitol histories should be seen as a typical disinterest in the working classes in general. In years past, the labor of everyday workmen of all races and ethnicities was not considered a subject worthy of scholarly notice. The issue of slavery in particular was an embarrassing topic that did not sit well with squeamish writers. Early histories of the Capitol by George C. Hazelton (1897), Glenn Brown (1900, 1902) and I. T. Frary (1940) were focused on architecture, architects, and superintendents and not on the workmen who actually implemented the plans and orders. This situation has changed dramatically in more recent accounts, which reflect a new respect for all who played a role in the Capitol's history—including lower-class laborers and slaves. This is the result of a more inclusive view of history by modern scholars and a relatively new interest in multi-cultural subjects. A glance at the index to Bob Arnebeck's authoritative examination of the city's formative years, *Through A Fiery Trial*, reveals no fewer than 89 entries for slave labor.<sup>4</sup> In 1993 Robert Kapsch completed a landmark dissertation on the workmen who built the President's House during the period 1793–1817.<sup>5</sup> Another example of this new interest in workmen is found in the February/March 1995 issue of *American Visions*, a magazine of Afro-American culture. It contains a series of articles about blacks in Washington history and includes two narratives on slaves helping to build the Capitol and the President's House. The most recent history of the Capitol (2001) contains numerous references to slaves and other workmen.<sup>6</sup> The documents that made such scholarship possible have never been lost, have never been "discovered," and have in fact been available to the public for generations, yet only in the last fifteen years have they captured the interest of historians of Washington's early days.

This study on slave labor and the construction of the Capitol has been prepared at the request of Congress.<sup>7</sup> Here, the focus will be on the construction of the Capitol from the early 1790s until it was occupied in 1800. This period contains the most comprehensive documentation relating to slave labor in the history of the Capitol, and while later materials will be discussed, the bulk of the story belongs to the 1790s.

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<sup>4</sup> Bob Arnebeck, *Through A Fiery Trial: Building Washington 1790–1800* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Robert James Kapsch, "The Labor History of the Construction and Reconstruction of the White House, 1793–1817," PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> William C. Allen, *History of the United States Capitol: A Chronicle of Design, Construction, and Politics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> "The Committee directs the Architect of the Capitol, working with the Historians of the Senate and House and the Librarian of Congress, to study the history and contributions of slave laborers in the construction of the U. S. Capitol, and provide a report within 180 days of the enactment of this Act." Report 108-307, accompanying S. 2666, p. 28. The Act passed on December 8, 2004.

## I. Manpower, Money, and Materials: The Capitol's Faltering Start

The authority to construct the Capitol was granted to the president by Congress in the Residence Act of July 16, 1790. This law gave George Washington broad powers to oversee the construction of a new city on the Potomac River, complete with buildings necessary to house the chief executive and the legislature. (A home for the judicial branch would have to wait.) To facilitate matters, the law granted the president the authority to appoint a three-man board of commissioners to act as his representative on the spot.<sup>8</sup> The government, after all, would be in Philadelphia while the new federal city was being prepared. Commissioners had been appointed to lay out cities in other places during the colonial period, when new towns were needed for county seats or state capitals. What set this venture apart was the breathtaking scale of the new city and the vastness of the public buildings that would be built there. Washington's vision for this national metropolis reached far into the future: at eleven square miles the planned capital would be many times bigger than Philadelphia, then America's most populous city, which at the time covered approximately one square mile. Indeed, the federal city was (on paper, at least) larger than London's eight square miles.<sup>9</sup> The President's House promised to be the largest residence in America, and the Capitol would surpass the size and scale of any contemporary public building in the country. (The Capitol design that Washington eventually approved covered an area 10 times larger than Independence Hall.)

What makes Washington's vision for America's capital city all the more remarkable is where it was to be situated: rural Tidewater Maryland. Such ambitious plans might have been more practical in areas near Boston, New York, Philadelphia, or Charleston—areas with well-established building industries—but the sparsely populated agrarian context of the Maryland countryside could do little but throw roadblocks in the path of a city's rapid or orderly development. Most of the human elements necessary to build a great city were missing: there were too few carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, or roofers; there were virtually no stone cutters or carvers; and surveyors, architects, and engineers had to be brought in from elsewhere. The only human resource that the neighborhood could supply in abundance was unskilled labor—mostly slaves, but a smattering of free blacks and whites as well. Basic building materials, such as lumber, brick, and stone, could be procured locally, but the vast quantities needed to build the Capitol and President's House strained resources to the breaking point. Another vexing problem was the city's finances, which were always in a state of disarray. Proceeds from the sale of building lots were intended to pay for construction activities, but the anticipated real estate bonanza never materialized. (The first sale of lots in October 1792 netted only \$2,000.) In desperation the city commissioners sought loans

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<sup>8</sup> Washington appointed three members of the local slave-owning aristocracy to the first board: Daniel Carroll and Thomas Johnson of Maryland and Dr. David Stuart of Virginia. These were replaced in 1794 by Gustavus Scott, William Thornton, and Alexander White. Unlike the first board, they were salaried and expected to look after the city's affairs full time. Both Scott and Thornton (a Quaker) were slave owners.

<sup>9</sup> Allan Greenberg, *George Washington Architect* (London: Andreas Papadakis Publisher, 1999), p. 112.

from Dutch capitalists, Congress, and the Maryland legislature. After the initial optimism regarding the city's finances turned sour a few years into the project, decisions affecting the Capitol and President's House were made with economy foremost in mind. Scaling back the grand designs was never an option, but building piecemeal was. Therefore, while the Capitol was begun in 1793 with the expectation that it would be finished in seven years, it would not be completed until 1826. (Admittedly, the Fire of 1814 imposed an unexpected and excusable setback.) During the initial phase of construction (1793–1800) only the Capitol's north wing was completed.<sup>10</sup>

Even before the Capitol's design had been decided upon, the city commissioners realized that they were facing a long-term labor problem and took steps to solve it. The secretary of state, Thomas Jefferson, advised them in March 1792 to investigate the possibility of importing Germans and Highlanders.<sup>11</sup> Three months later the commissioners sent a letter to a Dutch merchant asking his assistance in procuring 100 unmarried Germans to help build the public buildings in the new city. They were particularly anxious to have stone masons, stone cutters, and bricklayers.<sup>12</sup> (There is no evidence that any Germans actually emigrated as a result of this letter.) In October 1792 they sent the head of the stone department on a scouting mission looking for stone cutters who might be among the redemptioners aboard a recently arrived ship.<sup>13</sup> Redemptioners were essentially indentured servants who promised to repay—or redeem—the cost of their passage to America with future earnings that would be paid to the ship's captain. The commissioners wished to purchase fifteen to twenty contracts if the redemptioners possessed the construction skills they needed. It is doubtful, though, that the commissioners realized any benefit from this scheme: the people who were obliged to secure transatlantic passage in this manner rarely possessed valuable skills.

President Washington had decided that the Capitol and the President's House would be faced entirely with stone, a decision that caused the commissioners considerable anxiety over the years. The best local buildings were brick, and if stone were used at all it was usually relegated to the trim around doors and windows. The federal city was located below the fall line, and stone architecture was an exceedingly rare sight in the neighborhood. Scarce, too, were the men who knew how to cut and carve stone. This situation did not deter Washington, however, whose admiration for stone architecture was amply demonstrated at Mt. Vernon: his frame dwelling was made to look like a dressed masonry building by its exterior sheathing of boards cut, beveled, painted, and sanded to imitate stone blocks. As nature's most durable building material, stone would contribute to the sense of grandeur and permanence that Washington wished the public buildings to impart.

The first stone mason to arrive in the federal city was Colin Williamson, a Scot who was a relative of John Suter, the proprietor of the Fountain Inn in Georgetown where the

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<sup>10</sup> Construction of the President's House proceeded with similar setbacks: the great audience chamber known as the East Room was not finished until Andrew Jackson's administration.

<sup>11</sup> Jefferson to the Commissioners, March 6, 1792, Saul K. Padover, *Jefferson and the National Capital* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 106.

<sup>12</sup> Commissioners to Herman Hind Bamen, July 4, 1792, Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, Record Group 42, National Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Commissioners to Adrian Valk (spelling uncertain), October 3, 1792, *ibid.*

commissioners held their meetings. He took charge of the stone department in 1792 and oversaw the laying of the foundations of the President's House and the Capitol. During a trip to Great Britain, George Walker scouted Masonic lodges (at the commissioners' behest) looking for recruits. He had little luck in London but was able to sign on several experienced masons from Lodge No. 8 in Edinburgh. George Blagden of Yorkshire, England, began his career in the federal city in 1794 and was employed there until his death thirty-two years later. Many other masons, however, found it difficult to persevere in the infant city due to the high cost of living and the lack of urban amenities.

On December 2, 1791, the commissioners paid \$6,000 for a sandstone quarry on Aquia Creek in Stafford County, Virginia. Other nearby quarries with the same stone deposits were leased during this period. The quarry purchase was the first major outlay of funds for the benefit of the new capital city and predated actual construction activities by almost a year. But the commissioners knew the new city would demand a great deal of stone and determined to operate the quarry themselves rather than rely on stone delivered from far away. Contracts with various quarriers document the efforts to extract stone from several different quarries simultaneously. Robert Brent, a quarrier from Stafford County, was hired in 1792 to work the public quarry. In the fall of that year, just as operations at the quarry would have slowed down, he was authorized to hire forty "stout-armed" Negro men at £12 [\$32] a year, pay their taxes, and feed and clothe them.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that the commissioners wanted the slaves hired quickly in order to keep the quarry in operation throughout the winter months. It is also likely that Brent already had a crew of slaves at work. In a letter to the secretary of state written at the beginning of 1793, the commissioners referred to their prior use of slave labor, which was employed at the quarries or in felling trees lying in the paths of city streets:

. . . as to laborers, a part of whom we can easily make up of Negroes and find it proper to do so. Those we have employed this sumer [sic] have proved a very useful check and kept our affairs cool.<sup>15</sup>

By referring to slave laborers keeping "our affairs cool," the commissioners indicated that white laborers tended not to express dissatisfaction with their pay or working conditions, knowing that slave labor could easily replace them.

The commissioners hired William Wright to operate a quarry and authorized him to hire as many as twenty workers, who would be fed pork, beef, and bread. Housing was also provided. Wright's workmen were, no doubt, also slaves.<sup>16</sup> The firm of Brent & Cooke used slave labor, as the following newspaper advertisement attests:

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<sup>14</sup> Commissioners to Robert Brent, November 6, 1792, Record Group 42.

<sup>15</sup> Commissioners to Thomas Jefferson, January 5, 1793, *Jefferson and the National Capital*, p. 166.

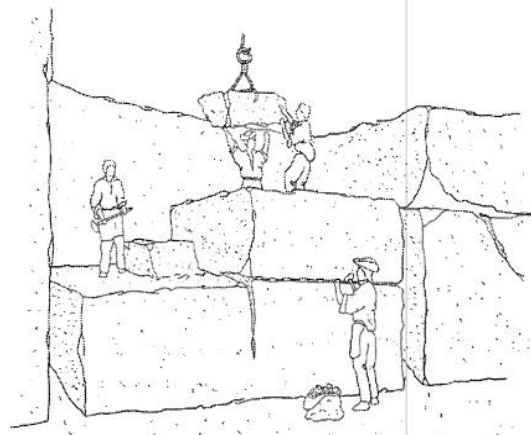
<sup>16</sup> Commissioners' Proceedings, April 10, 1792, Record Group 42.

Wanted to Hire, For the next year, to work on the FREE-STONE QUARRIES lately occupied by the Public, on Aquia Creek, Sixty strong, active NEGRO MEN, for whom good wages will be given - They shall be well used and well fed.<sup>17</sup>

Coaxing stone from the earth without power tools of any kind was demanding work. Transporting, hauling, cutting, and carving were also difficult tasks, but the operations at the quarry were the most burdensome and backbreaking in the entire stone business. To make matters worse the quarries were located on a snake-infested island and in nearby areas that swarmed with mosquitoes during the summer months. Free and enslaved workmen had to endure isolation and loneliness in addition to their rigorous labors. From August 1 to September 15 the commissioners allowed each worker a half-pint of whiskey per day to help them cope.<sup>18</sup> Stone workers in the city were better off, although not by much. They occupied huts similar to those at the quarries, and they ate a diet of pork, beef, and cornmeal, but they had a more hospitable environment and rudimentary medical care. To care for sick workmen, the commissioners operated a hospital overseen by a nurse, Mrs. Cloe LeClair, who may have been a free black woman. (Her pay was \$10 a month.) A doctor regularly visited the hospital, administered his cures, and inoculated at least some of the slaves against small pox.

The quarrying methods employed at Aquia had been around for a thousand years. First, shrubs, plants, and trees were cleared from a stone outcrop; this was then chipped away to reach stone that had not been damaged by vegetation or frost. After exposing one face of the stone wall, slaves and free workmen used pick axes to slowly chip out small cavities about twenty inches wide, five or six feet deep, and spaced about ten to twenty feet apart. The cavities were just wide enough for one man to work in. Next, a trench was created parallel to the face of the stone wall, which was being fashioned into a huge block by the quarryers' activities. Finally, horizontal grooves were cut into the face according to predetermined dimensions and iron wedges inserted. The wedges were hammered to split the stone and free it from the larger block. Cranes were used to lift the stone blocks onto wooden sleds, which were used to drag it to shallow-draft boats for its journey to the federal city 40 miles away. Each stone was identified with marks that would tell masons where it was intended to be placed.<sup>19</sup>

The most immediate need for stone was in the surveying department, which was setting boundary stones at one-mile intervals along the perimeter of the ten-mile-square



Stone Quarrying

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<sup>17</sup> *Virginia Herald* (Fredericksburg), December 22, 1794. Quoted in Jane Henderson Conner, "Government Island: Its Forgotten History and Interesting Stone," unpublished manuscript, 1980.

<sup>18</sup> Commissioners' Proceedings, August 1, 1793, Record Group 42.

<sup>19</sup> Lee H. Nelson, *White House Stone Carving: Builders and Restorers* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), pp. 4-6.



federal district. The head surveyor, Andrew Ellicott, was assisted for a few months by Benjamin Banneker, a free black astronomer from Baltimore, who helped establish true north for the survey.<sup>20</sup> Banneker was a self-taught mathematician who compiled and published several astronomical almanacs—a highly significant achievement for the time.

The Stafford County quarries had been in operation for about two years when the Capitol was begun. Agreeing on a design had taken more time than anyone could have imagined and resulted in a hybrid scheme that put one man's floor plan into another man's exterior elevation. But most of the design issues had been settled by the summer of 1793 and it was time to begin work. The foundations were begun in mid-August and the president came to lay the cornerstone on September 18. (The cornerstone ceremony was the highlight of a three-day auction of city lots.) The foundation stone (a gneiss) came from a quarry located in the vicinity of modern-day Foggy Bottom, which was operated for the commissioners by William O'Neale. He was directed to keep up the supply of this stone so that the two teams of masons working on the site would not be idle. O'Neale was instructed to "keep the yearly hirelings at work from sunrise to sunset—particularly the Negroes."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Iris Miller, *Washington in Maps* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> Commissioners to William O'Neale, July 30, 1794, Record Group 42.

## II. "Negro Hire"

At the end of 1794 there was not much to show for a year's work at the Capitol. Progress at the President's House was also slower than expected. The delivery of stone was the only thing that did not lag, and that was due in large part to the number of slaves employed by the contractors. During that year the commissioners had employed 37 slaves in the city, another seven with the surveyors, and six at the quarries.<sup>22</sup> Now only six years remained before the government would move to the city, and the buildings had to be ready. They decided to double the number of slaves hired and so better help the city's construction crews keep up with their ever-increasing demands for speed:

The Commissioners Resolve to hire good laboring Negroes by the year, their masters clothing them well and finding each a Blanket, the Commissioners finding them Provisions and paying sixty Dollars a year wages, the payment if desired to be made quarterly or half yearly. If the Negroes absent themselves a week or more such time to be deducted.

Capt. Williams is requested to obtain as far as 100 Negro men on the above terms.<sup>23</sup>

Renting slaves was a common practice in the Potomac region and elsewhere. George Washington, for instance, occasionally leased his slaves to neighbors who required their labor and skills for short periods of time. (He was careful to rent only to people who treated slaves well.) From time to time Washington found himself short of hands and was obliged to pay for additional help: in 1799, for instance, 13 percent of the slaves at Mt. Vernon were rented. Spring housecleaning and fish harvests were seasonal activities that regularly brought rented slaves to Mt. Vernon.<sup>24</sup>

Records documenting individual payments for "Negro hire" at the Capitol begin on February 11, 1795, and end on May 17, 1801; there were 385 payments, with the largest number being for the year 1798. Initially, pay for enslaved black labor was \$60 a year at a time when an unskilled white laborer earned \$70. In a few years, with time running out, the commissioners decided to raise the pay of slave hire to \$70 a year, or \$60 for the period March 1 to December 20.<sup>25</sup> The need for laborers dropped dramatically once the government moved to the new city and began using the public buildings. Congress first met in the Capitol's north wing on November 17, 1800, and there is only one record of slave hire after that date. When construction activities resumed in Thomas Jefferson's first term, the three-

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<sup>22</sup> *Through a Fiery Trial*, p. 262.

<sup>23</sup> Commissioners' Proceedings, November 2, 1794, Record Group 42.

<sup>24</sup> Mary V. Thompson, "They Work Only From Sun to Sun: Labor and Rebellion among the Mount Vernon Slaves," unpublished manuscript, 1993, p. 16, courtesy of the author and the Mt. Vernon Ladies' Association.

<sup>25</sup> Commissioners' Proceedings, January 2, 1797, Record Group 42.

man commissioners' office had been abolished and was replaced with a one-man superintendent. During construction of the Capitol's south wing there is no record of slave labor or any reference to blacks whatsoever. That does not mean that enslaved persons did not work on labor crews or for contractors, only that public documents do not address the subject.

While records offer few specific details, it can be assumed that slaves helped in every facet of construction activities. They worked along side of free blacks and whites in the areas of carpentry, masonry, carting, rafting, roofing, plastering, glazing, and painting. One activity, however, seems to have been performed exclusively by slaves: sawing. References to "Negro sawyers" are numerous, yet they never refer to salaries. Instead, there are monthly payments for the "extra wages of Negro sawyers." The money (in the \$10 to \$30 range) was divided among an unspecified number of workmen. The commissioners most likely worked crews of enslaved sawyers seven days a week. The slave owner, therefore, would have received \$5 a month for the labor performed during the six-day workweek and the extra payments would have been made to the slave himself for working nights, Sundays, and holidays, such as Easter Monday. Despite the hardships apparent in this nonstop work schedule, this was a rare instance of a slave's opportunity to earn money to buy little items—or perhaps freedom. Similar gangs of slave sawyers were operated by the plantation gentry throughout the region to earn extra income for their owners. In Orange County, Virginia, for instance, James Madison's father managed a sideline construction business based on sawing plank, but he had his slaves doing carpentry, riving clapboards, and making hogsheds as well.<sup>26</sup>

Timber used by the sawyers came from several sources, the closest being the city streets, which the surveying department needed cleared of obstructions. The second source was the White Oak Swamp located east of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Ax-wielding slaves working for the commissioners felled the oak, which was highly prized for its strength, while other slaves rafted the timber to the site of the new city. Yellow poplar and white oak came from Stradford Hall, Henry Lee's plantation in Westmoreland County, Virginia. Lee's own slaves cut the timber there.

Sawing was hard and uncomfortable work. Logs would be cut into boards by means of a whip saw or a framed pit saw that was five to seven feet in length. After the bark was removed with an ax, the logs were rolled over a pit so that an upper man standing on the log could push and guide the saw while a lower man in the pit pulled the saw and was showered with sawdust. (Wearing a broad-rimmed hat and veil helped.) Chalk lines snapped on the log guided each pass of the saw. Since water-powered mills had not yet been built in or near the federal city, pit sawing was the only way to cut trees into usable boards.

Sawing was also an important activity in the Capitol's stone yard. There rough stones from the quarry were transformed into smooth ashlar blocks or other regular shapes as called for in the architect's design. Saws consisted of a wooden frame fitted with a plain steel blade; wet sand worked by the toothless saw created the abrasion necessary to make the cut. If less precise cuts were desired, chisels and hammers could be used.<sup>27</sup> The work was less

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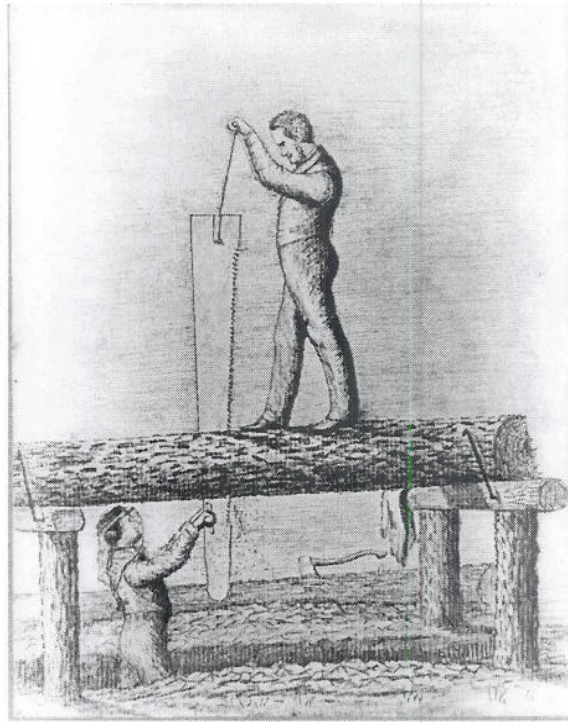
<sup>26</sup> "Notes on Slave Builders at Montpelier," 2005, courtesy of Ann Miller and the Montpelier Foundation Research Department.

<sup>27</sup> *White House Stone Carving*, p. 10.

distasteful than pit sawing, but grueling nevertheless. To help solve the perennial problem of an insufficient number of stone cutters, one of the commissioners, Dr. William Thornton, proposed putting slaves on the job. He further suggested purchasing slaves for the stone cutting department and rewarding their work with freedom. His proposals were contained in a letter to his fellow commissioners:

. . . it would perhaps be advisable to hire 50 intelligent negroes for six years, to be superintended and directed how to cut stone. . . . At first these men may be employed in cutting stone till it be nearly ready for rubbing; the last cutting to be done by more experienced men. The advantage of this would be that no change of men and prices could affect the work at the Capitol and it would insure [sic] completion of the building. . . . If Negroes were to be purchased, to have their liberty at the expiration of 5 or 6 years, it would be perhaps still better, as no interference of the owners could then take place.<sup>28</sup>

The commissioners never bought slaves but continued to rent them throughout this period. In addition to timber and stone sawing, slaves were employed in brick making and brick laying, two construction activities that (unlike stonework) were familiar to area slaves and free workers alike. Hundreds of thousands of bricks were needed to build the walls of the Capitol, and the commissioners annually placed sizeable orders with local brickmakers. In the fall of 1796, for instance, the commissioners let it



Pit Sawing



Stone Sawing

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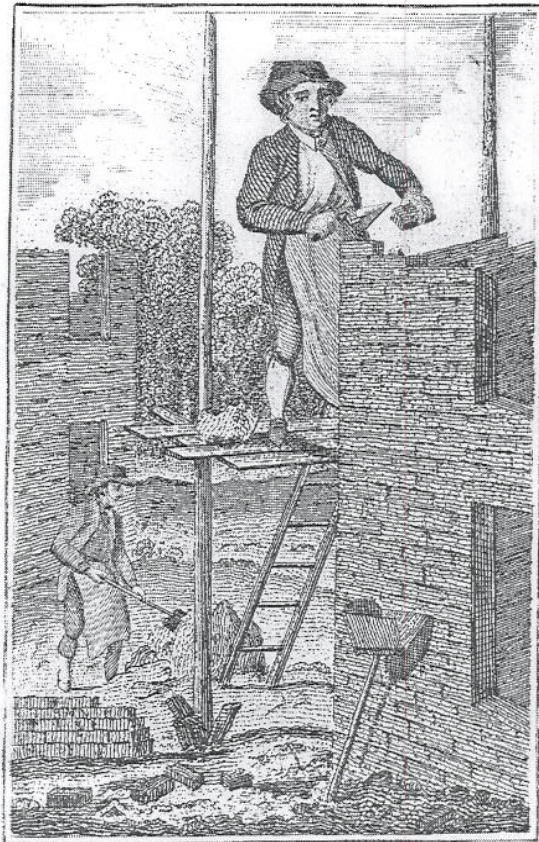
<sup>28</sup> William Thornton to the Commissioners, July 18, 1794, Record Group 42.

be known that they were in the market for brick as well as for provisions to feed their slaves during the upcoming winter:

The Commissioners are Desirous of contracting for the delivery of the following articles in the City of Washington, to wit: One million of good place bricks, six thousand bushells [sic] of unslaked lime, 150 barrells [sic] of Pork, 40 barrells of beef and 1500 bushells of [?] or shifted Indian meal.<sup>29</sup>

By today's standards, the eighteenth-century method of brick making was primitive. A master brick maker would concoct his recipe using clay, sand, and water mixed in large pits dug in the ground; the ingredients were stirred with large wooden paddles. By sight, taste, and experience, the master would know when the mixture was ready to be thrown into wooden molds and set in the sun to dry. Because it was considered semi-skilled labor, molding brick was usually the work of female or adolescent slaves, who could mold as many as 5,000 bricks in a day. Once firm enough to be unmolded, the bricks were piled into huge pyramidal stacks with tunnels left open to receive the wood that would fire the kilns. Once the stacks were completed they received an exterior coating of mud to help seal in the heat. Hardwoods, such as hickory, were necessary to fuel the kilns because of the high heat needed to properly fire the brick—1,500 to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. It could take days for the heat to climb to those temperatures, and close attention had to be paid to the fires during this critical period. Experience told the brick maker when the fires should be left to die and then, once cool, the kiln could be disassembled. John Mitchell and Bennett Fenwick were both brick makers who supplied the Capitol, Mitchell from his kilns on Capitol Hill and Fenwick from his brickyard northwest of the President's House. Both men employed scores of slaves in their operations.

Skilled slaves were often trained in the art of bricklaying. When Washington needed a bricklayer in 1762 he rented a neighbor's slave named Gus, who probably passed on his skill to other slaves on the plantation. In 1816 the slaves building William Dunbar's great, multi-columned mansion near Natchez, Mississippi, included five male and two female bricklayers who were assisted by



Bricklaying

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<sup>29</sup> Commissioners' Proceedings, November 1, 1796, Record Group 42.

three young black boys.<sup>30</sup> The Capitol's bricklayer was a white contractor named Allen Wiley. He charged \$2.26 per thousand bricks laid in straight walls and \$0.07 more for curving walls. Arches were turned for \$1.50. Public records also indicate that he needed 100,000 bricks to raise the walls of the north wing just three feet. Although Wiley's business records do not survive, it is certain that his crews were made up principally of slaves, some of whom may have been leased from the commissioners' inventory.

Mortar making and plastering were related activities that were heavily dependant on slave labor and a ready supply of oyster shells or rock lime. Burning shells or rock lime in kilns was a common practice in the United States; whether the kiln was a permanent brick structure or a temporary wooden one depended on local means and practices. Lime was sifted with fine sand and mixed with water to create the mortar needed by bricklayers. Breaking up oyster shells and mixing mortar were tasks undertaken by slaves, and as one historian noted, "many a slave in Virginia must have known as much about shell lime as Sir Christopher Wren did."<sup>31</sup> Boiled plaster of Paris could be added to mortar for interior plaster work. The commissioners ordered twenty tons of plaster of Paris and hired John Kearney of Baltimore to undertake this important part of the north wing's interior finish. He could not find enough workmen for such a large job and was obliged to employ four (or more) of the commissioners' rented slaves in 1799 and 1800.<sup>32</sup> Large kettles were used in the boiling process, which, if undertaken during the summer months, was miserably hot work: the only relief that the commissioners could offer was a half pint of whiskey a day for the workmen and slaves.<sup>33</sup>

Of all construction work performed by slaves, perhaps carpentry was the most significant and ultimately the most influential. Slave carpenters were both necessary and numerous on large plantations, building and repairing such structures as tobacco barns, cow sheds, hog houses, chicken coops, horse stables, corn cribs, granaries, dairies, and smoke houses. Fences were also an important part of the agricultural landscape that kept carpenters busy. Some carpenters made furniture, toys, and other household items. An especially talented slave at Monticello, John Hemmings, was a carpenter who learned cabinet making and fine interior finishing under several skilled woodworkers whom Jefferson had employed to enlarge his house. (Hemmings was one of the few slaves Jefferson freed in his will.) At Mt. Vernon, Washington had at least four slave carpenters, including Isaac, who made carts, plows, rakes, wheelbarrows, and other farm implements in addition to building simple wooden structures. Carpentry was a useful skill that was taught to slaves, passed down to succeeding generations, and grew more marketable as the city of Washington developed—a good carpenter could earn a living long after the public quarries had closed and pit sawyers had been replaced by saw mills.

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<sup>30</sup> Adams County (Mississippi) Circuit Court Records, Elisha Roundtree v Dinah Dunbar, 1821, New Box 7, file 24, courtesy of Mary Warren Miller and the Historic Natchez Foundation.

<sup>31</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *Eighteenth Century Houses of Williamsburg* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> See the appendix, October 25, 1800.

<sup>33</sup> Commissioners' Proceedings, June 12, 1799, Record Group 42.

Unlike some other construction activities, carpentry has not changed a great deal since the eighteenth century. Saws, hammers, drills, planes, chisels, and augers look much the same today, although they now can be powered by motors or compressors. Carpenters working on the Capitol's north wing were responsible for framing the floors and ceilings with large wooden joists held in sockets built into the brick walls. Sawyers would have supplied the rough boards intended for flooring, but the carpenter had to plane the tops smooth and gouge the bottoms so that, when laid across the joists, boards of different thicknesses would end up at the same level. Carpenters were also responsible for making the mahogany and pine doors and frames. The more expensive wood was intended for exterior doors, while ordinary pine was meant for interior use. These would be painted later to imitate a finer wood like walnut or mahogany. The Ionic columns in the Senate chamber were also wood and were made by the carpenters working under the watchful eye of the Capitol's superintendent. (The column capitals, with their distinctive volutes, were made of molded plaster.) Supporting the columns was a one-story brick arcade that was sheathed in wooden paneling made by the carpenters. They also made and installed the wooden ceiling lath that the plasterers needed. Among the most important jobs undertaken by the carpenters were framing the roof and installing its shingle covering. The roof was a complicated series of short slopes and flat platforms intended to make it disappear behind the balustrade. There were also three large skylights, whose framing required careful attention to details. The commissioners were uncertain whether to use wooden shingles or slate as the covering material and finally decided upon the former material because it was cheaper. After the roof was installed it was coated with paint and sand to preserve it and to protect it from fire.

Carpenters employed two methods of joining wooden members together: mortise and tenon joints and nailing. The first method was used to connect large structural pieces, such as joists, plates, and beams, while the second was employed in most other instances. Nails could be either handmade by a blacksmith or machine made in a nailery. Jefferson's slaves operated a nailery at Monticello, producing nails that were consumed in his various construction projects or sold to neighbors for cash. (James Madison was a customer.) In 1796 Michael Shanks opened a nailery at Greenleaf Point in Washington. He placed an advertisement in a local newspaper indicating that he was ready to sell "Nails, Sprigs, and Flooring Brads, of the best quality, and on the most reasonable terms." He also wanted to employ four apprentices from 11 to 14 years old, and did not care if they were black or white.<sup>34</sup>

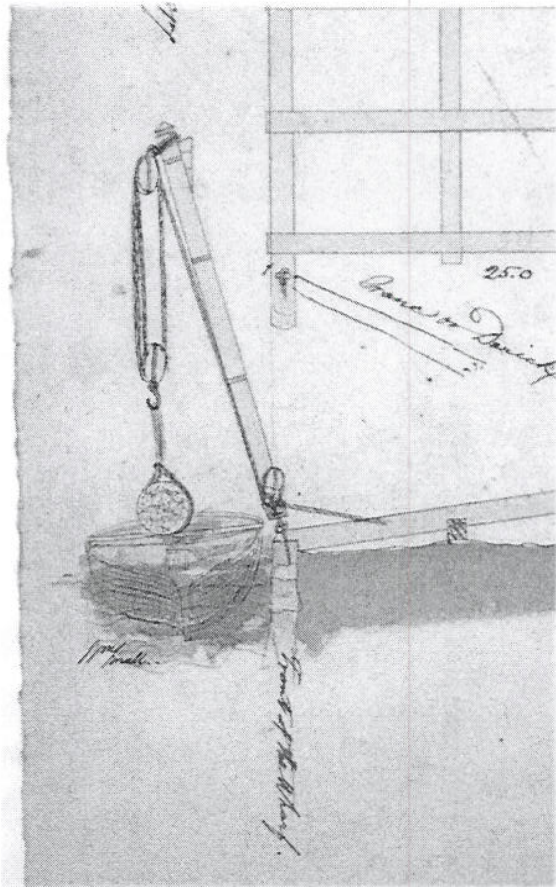
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<sup>34</sup> *Washington Gazette*, June 15, 1796. Quoted in "Labor History of the Construction and Reconstruction of the White House," p. 187.

### III. Biography

With the completion of the north wing in 1800, the story of slave labor as a collective force in the Capitol's history comes to a virtual end. For the next six decades much of this history disappears behind vague references to "laborers" in payroll records or payments to white contractors for work that one might suspect was done by slaves. Slavery was legal in Washington until April 16, 1862, and it would have been nearly impossible for enslaved men and women not to have participated in building, operating, or maintaining the Capitol and other public buildings in the city. The problem for the historian, however, is to discover the records that might shed more light on this elusive subject.

The few slave-related stories that exist for the period 1802–1862 are remarkable in one respect: they are biographical. Whereas no more than a few slave names are recorded for the period 1795–1801, and virtually nothing is known of their lives, there are two men who played interesting roles in the Capitol's later development whose lives are documented. The first was Captain George Pointer, a slave born in 1773 in Frederick County, Maryland. He worked for the head engineer and the directors of the Potomac Canal Company, and with his earnings he was able to purchase his freedom at age eighteen. In a petition written in 1829, Pointer gave biographical details of his life that included associations with many prominent figures in early Washington history—including George Washington himself. He helped build the canal and was captain of a boat that regularly brought building materials to the federal city for the Capitol: Seneca sandstone (used for flooring) and Potomac marble (used for column shafts in the House and Senate chambers). The marble quarry was located near Noland's Ferry in Montgomery County, Maryland, and was briefly operated by the government (1817–1818). The commissioner of public buildings had found it difficult to hire enough hands to work the quarry and was obliged (like his predecessors in the 1790s) to rent an unknown number of slaves



Loading Potomac Marble onto a Canal Boat



to ease the situation.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, little is known about the quarry that supplied Potomac marble (actually, a breccia), and even its exact location remains something of a mystery. The marble and sandstone were employed in the construction work (1815–1819) that was necessary to restore the north and south wings of the Capitol following the Fire of 1814. Pointer was a typical boat hand on the canal, but he was unusual in leaving behind a detailed autobiographical sketch.<sup>36</sup> His petition was written to save his house from the encroaching waters of the canal and to redress several other grievances. The ending of his story is not known, but his role in the Capitol’s history is significant nonetheless. Pointer also helps represent the untold numbers of other free black and enslaved workers whose biographies were never written.

The second slave biography belongs to Philip Reid, the best known black person associated with the Capitol’s construction history. He was a slave laborer in the foundry run by the self-taught sculptor Clark Mills, a former resident of South Carolina, where he had purchased Reid for \$1,200. Master and slave moved to Washington in the late 1840s when Mills won the competition for an equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson that was commissioned for Lafayette Park. A temporary foundry was erected south of the President’s House and, through trial and error, Mills, Reid, and other workmen produced the first bronze statue ever cast in America. The accomplishment was extraordinary due to the absence of any formal training of any of the participants. The success of Mills’s statue of Jackson (and political pressure from South Carolina’s congressional delegation) prompted the secretary of war in 1860 to give him the commission for casting Thomas Crawford’s Statue of Freedom for the top of the Capitol’s new cast-iron dome. After some negotiations, a financial deal was struck whereby the government would rent Mills’s foundry, pay him \$400 a month for his services, and pay for the necessary materials and labor. The government compensated Reid at the rate of \$1.25 a day, and he was able to earn extra pay by attending to the fires on Sundays.<sup>37</sup> There were eleven other workmen in the foundry during this period: three molders, a chaser, a stucco worker, a finisher, a blacksmith, and four other laborers. Documents provide their names and rates of pay but no biographical information; Reid was the only known slave among them.<sup>38</sup>

Reid was a short, illiterate, intelligent mulatto, who, according to Mills, was “smart in mind and a good workman.”<sup>39</sup> Several stories have cropped up over the years that testify to

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<sup>35</sup> Samuel Lane to Henry St. George Tucker, January 24, 1818, quoted in U. S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Documentary History of the Construction and Development of the Capitol Building and Grounds*, 58th Congress, 2d Session, Report 646, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 205.

<sup>36</sup> “Petition of Captain George Pointer to the President and Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal,” September 5, 1829, Record Group 79, National Archives, courtesy of Dr. Robert J. Kapsch.

<sup>37</sup> Pay voucher, copy in “Casting *Freedom*” file, Curator’s Office, Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.

<sup>38</sup> “Daily Report of the Application of Materials and Services rendered on the Figure of Freedom,” October 30, 1860, copy in “Casting *Freedom*” file, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Clark Mills, “Petition to the Commissioners under the act of Congress approved the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 1862, entitled ‘An act for the release of certain persons held in service or labor in the District of Columbia,’ ” June 20, 1862, National Archives, copy in “Casting *Freedom*” file, *ibid.*

his talents, but only one withstands scrutiny. A book published in 1869 gave an account of Reid that was told to its author by Clark Mills's son. The story involved the plaster model of the Statue of Freedom, which was displayed in the old hall of the House of Representatives prior to being moved to Mills's foundry northeast of the Capitol. Standing over eighteen feet tall, the model was made in five sections that had been reassembled in Washington after arriving from the artist's studio in Rome. An Italian sculptor employed at the Capitol had overseen the reassembly, and when the time came to separate the sections for casting, no one but the nameless Italian knew how—and he would not reveal the secret unless given a pay increase. This led to an impasse until Reid solved the mystery by attaching an iron hook to the statue's head and, with a block and tackle, gently lifting the top section until a hairline crack appeared, indicating where the first joint was located and where the interior connections could be found. The operation was repeated until all five sections had been separated and were ready to be transported to the foundry.<sup>40</sup>

Philip Reid's story is one of the great ironies in the Capitol's history: a workman helping to cast a noble allegorical representation of American freedom when he himself was not free. Yet by the time the statue was put into place on top of the Capitol's dome on December 2, 1863, Reid had been a free man for more than a year.<sup>41</sup> It is not known if he witnessed the ceremony, but the Statue of Freedom must have been a particularly poignant sight for the former slave.

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<sup>40</sup> S. D. Wyeth, *The Rotunda and Dome of the U. S. Capitol* (Washington: Gibson Brothers, 1869), pp. 194–195.

<sup>41</sup> Pursuant to the congressional act that freed slaves in the District of Columbia, Mills filed for compensation for the value of his property. He requested \$1,500 for Philip Reid and was granted \$350.40. The District of Columbia was the only jurisdiction in the United States that had a compensation program for the owners of emancipated slaves. Clark Mills, "Petition to the Commissioners under the act of Congress . . ." op. cit.

#### IV. Conclusion

Despite the misery of slavery, working in the federal city provided some blacks with the opportunity of acquiring skills such as carpentry or bricklaying that eventually could lead to a change in their economic status. It has been shown that skilled workers became the leaders within the slave population, empowered by their skills with a sense of self worth and pride.<sup>42</sup> Hopefully at least some of the slaves working at the Capitol acquired skills that led to a more prosperous and meaningful life.

Slavery was a wretched institution but an undeniable facet of the Capitol's history. Today little remains to be seen that bears the imprint of slave labor from the 1790s, since fires, rebuilding, and remodeling are also parts of the story. Only one aspect of the existing exterior can be viewed today in connection with eighteenth-century slave labor: the west elevation of the old north wing, the only part of that wing not covered over by later additions. (Limited areas of the original east facade are exposed inside.) On this elevation sandstone quarried by slaves in Virginia and cut by slaves on Capitol Hill is still visible. Hidden from view behind the stone are the brick walls that were also the product of slave labor. The work of slave carpenters has long since disappeared, however, destroyed by fires set by British soldiers in 1814. The beautiful columns in the old Senate chamber and National Statuary Hall are prominent interior features that are connected with slaves who worked the quarry and the free black man who helped bring the stone to Washington. While these aspects of the Capitol's architecture are noteworthy, it is the Statue of Freedom on top of the dome that will forever be the most significant and visible object with a connection to slave labor.

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<sup>42</sup> Bruce Sinclair, "Integrating the Histories of Race and Technology," in *Technology and the African-American Experience* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), p. 8.

## Appendix Payments for Slave Labor at the Capitol, 1795–1801

The following list was compiled from the records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, record group 42, entries 14 (ledgers) and 37 (daybooks), located in the National Archives. These are the financial records of the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, the officials in charge of creating the city of Washington, from 1792 to 1802. The list contains the names of local residents who rented their slaves to the commissioners for various purposes associated with construction activities. Remuneration was \$60 a year (raised to \$70 in 1797), and, to judge from the diversity of payments, the commissioners accepted flexible work periods and deducted unexpected absences and expenses from the owner's compensation. All of the following entries for "Negro hire" were charged to the Capitol's account. A list of similar length could have been prepared for work at the President's House.

Many of the slave owners' names have long been forgotten, but a few have not. Middleton Belt, for instance, was an overseer of laborers at the Capitol for many years. Two of the city's commissioners, Gustavus Scott and William Thornton, appear on the list. Thornton is also remembered as the designer of the United States Capitol. The architect of the President's House, James Hoban, is listed here, as is William Deakins, a Georgetown merchant who was an early activist in promoting the city's interests. He was also the commissioners' treasurer. Samuel N. Smallwood would later become mayor of Washington (1819–1822, 1824). One of the last names on the list, Thomas Law, is remembered as a wealthy developer whose wife was Martha Washington's granddaughter. Not here, of course, are many of the names of slaves who actually performed the labor that helped build the nation's Capitol.

### 1795

February 11, Bernard O'Neill, \$1.35

February 12, Middleton Belt, \$4.85½

February 17, Alexander Scott, \$9.51

February 19, Alexander Scott, \$51.33

Miss Ann Digges, \$51.33, for Dick 5 months & Tom 6 months

March 7, John Syle, \$14.43

April 2, Teresa Brent, \$13.00, for Nace

Mary Brent, \$13.00, for Gerrard

Eleanor Brent, \$26.00 for David and Charles

Elizabeth Brent, \$23.00, for Harry and Gabe

Jane Brent, \$13.00 for Sil

April 3, Middleton Belt, \$15.00

April 16, Mary Simmes, \$15.00

April 18, J. M. Jackson, \$14.33

April 20, James Stone, \$45.00

April 24, Leonard Wood, \$13.00  
     James Latimer, \$26.00  
     Charles Love, \$26.00  
     Ann Barber, \$26.00  
     William Somerville, \$13.00  
     Gladen Hunt, \$13.00  
     William Mills, \$65.00  
 April 29, Mary Simmes, \$12.91, for Will  
 May 7, Edmund Plowden, \$25.00  
 May 27, William B. Magruder, \$103.71  
 June 6, John Dobson reimbursed the commissioners for the "hire of Negro Liverpoole" for  
     201 days ending the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1795 @ \$0.40 per day: \$80.40  
 July 6, "Paid Caleb Varnal's Negro Sawyer," \$20.33  
     Edmund Plowden, \$28.33  
     Thomas Bond, \$29.16  
 July 7, E. J. Millard, \$5.77  
 July 11, M. Belt, \$15.00  
 July 13, J. M. Jackson, \$15.00  
     Charles Love, \$18.83  
     James Latimer, \$27.03  
     William Somerville, \$14.17  
     Leonard Wood, \$15.00  
     Ann Barber, \$29.00  
     William Mills, \$76.67  
     Luke W. Barber, \$73.00  
 July 14, Mary Simmes, \$15.00  
     Joseph Queen, \$72.33  
 July 20, James Stone \$45.00  
 August 6, Francis Hammersly, \$30.73, for Negro sawyers  
 August 13, J. S. Slye, \$15.00  
 August 24, J. Adderson, \$19.17  
 September 3, Gladen Hunt, \$14.17  
 September 5, Joseph Turner, \$36.83  
     Joseph Turner, \$20.00  
 October 5, Gustavus Scott, \$15.00  
 October 7, Thomas Bond, \$30.00  
     Joseph Forrest, \$5.00  
 October 9, Alexander Scott, \$5.00  
 October 10, Middleton Belt, \$15.00  
 October 12, Mary Simmes, \$15.00  
     Luke F. Matthews, \$10.00  
     John S. Slye, \$30.00 (includes wages)  
 October 16, E. Plowden, \$50.00  
     James Heighe, \$5.00  
     Richard Kent, \$5.00  
     James Hollinshead, \$10.00

Susannah Johnson, \$25.00  
Thomas Wolfe, \$15.00  
October 24, William Somerville, \$15.00  
October 27, Charles Love, \$15.00  
James Latimer, \$25.00  
J. M. Jackson, \$25.00  
Joseph Queen, \$5.00  
October 29, Robert Young, \$15.00  
October 30, B. W. Barber, \$15.00  
November 6, James Stone, \$45.00  
Valentine Reintzell, \$10.00  
November 17, Leonard Wood, \$15.00  
November 23, William Magruder, \$5.00  
November 27, Mary Brent, \$10.83  
Elizabeth Brent, \$30.00  
Eleanor Brent, \$30.00  
Teresa Brent, \$15.00  
Jane Brent, \$15.00

#### 1796

January 1, Michael Reiley, \$5.00  
January 16, R. Kent, \$10.00  
Francis Wolfe, \$1.00  
Susanna Johnson, \$49.67  
January 18, Valentine Reintzell, \$13.33  
James Stone to January 1, 1797, \$39.50  
James Stone to January 16, 1796, \$7.00  
January 22, William Magruder, \$13.67  
January 23, Elizabeth Brent, \$30.00  
Teresa Brent, \$15.00  
Eleanor Brent, \$30.00  
Mary Brent, \$15.00  
Jane Brent, \$15.00  
Jasper M. Jackson, \$15.00  
Mary Magruder, \$15.00  
January 25, Catherine Graves, \$13.33  
January 27, Mary Simmes, \$11.17  
Middleton Belt, \$15.00  
Luke F. Matthews, \$5.50  
B. W. Barber, \$20.33  
James Latimer, \$27.50  
Charles Love, \$15.00  
January 29, John Slye, \$15.00  
February 4, Thomas Bond, \$28.33  
February 5, Edmund Plowden, \$53.00  
Robert Young, \$5.00

Josiah Hollinshead, \$10.00  
James Heighe, \$15.00  
February 6, Joseph Queen, \$14.20  
Thomas Parran, \$15.00  
February 16, George Fenwick, Negro hire to Dec. 1, \$10.00  
February 19, Joseph Forest, \$5.00  
February 24, Alexander Scott, \$13.33  
March 23, Joseph Ireland, \$18.33  
April 17, James Stone, \$56.67  
May 17, Mary Simmes, \$12.33  
June 10, Barnard W. Barber, Negro hire to 1<sup>st</sup> April, \$63.33  
John Slye, Negro hire to 1<sup>st</sup> April, \$25.00  
Edmund Plowden, Negro hire to 1<sup>st</sup> April, \$72.33  
June 28, George Fenwick, \$15.00  
July 9, Charles Love, \$15.00  
Edmund Plowden, \$75.00  
Luke W. Barber, \$75.00  
July 15, James Stone, payment not recorded  
July 25, B. W. Barber, \$75.00  
Samuel Briscoe, \$28.50  
July 27, William Deakins, \$103.50  
July 28, Mitchell Belt, \$17.85  
George Fenwick, \$15.00  
August 1, Misses Brent, \$153.00  
August 8, Mary Simmes, payment not recorded  
August 20, Edmund Plowden, \$7.47  
Luke Barber, \$15.00  
September 30, Joseph Turner, Negro hire to 1<sup>st</sup> July last, \$48.00  
Leonard Wood, Negro hire to 1<sup>st</sup> July last, \$28.00  
October 7, Barnett W. Barber, Negro hire to the 1<sup>st</sup> Instant, \$75.00  
Middleton Belt, Negro hire to the 1<sup>st</sup> Instant, \$28.00  
William Thornton, Negro hire to the 1<sup>st</sup> Instant, \$16.67  
Middleton Belt, Negro hire to the 1<sup>st</sup> Instant, \$15.00  
Jacob Butler, Negro hire to the 1<sup>st</sup> Instant, \$12.00  
October 15, Luke Barber, \$59.83  
Edmund Plowden, \$75.00  
George Fenwick, \$15.00  
November 14, Elizabeth Thomas, Negro hire to 1 October last, \$64.00  
November 15, Susanna Mills, Negro hire to 1 October last, \$65.67  
Mary Simmes, \$15.00  
November 30, Joseph Turner, \$15.00  
December 14, Leonard Wood, \$15.00

#### 1797

January 28, Middleton Belt, \$15.00  
John L. Slye, \$30.00

George Fenwick, \$15.00  
Mary Simmes, \$15.00  
February 7, Edmund Plowden, 65.00  
Luke W. Barber, \$45.00  
February 11, Elizabeth Brent, \$30.00  
Jane Brent, \$30.00  
Teresa Brent, \$30.00  
Eleanor Brent, \$60.00  
Joseph Turner, \$15.00  
February 28, James Stone, \$30.00  
March 31, Alexander Scott, \$15.00  
April 6, Barnett W. Barber, \$90.00  
April 12, Joseph Simmes, \$35.00  
Samuel Briscoe, \$17.50  
Joseph Queen, \$26.66  
Middleton Belt, \$17.50  
April 29, Samuel Smallwood, \$17.50  
James Heighe, \$12.23  
Teresa Brent, \$13.09  
Eleanor Brent, \$13.09  
Jane Brent, \$13.09  
Mary Brent, \$13.09  
Elizabeth Brent, \$28.93  
William Digges, \$12.23  
James Stone, \$52.56  
Bennett Fenwick, \$17.50  
May 12, Sarah Bond, \$17.50  
June 10, Edmund Plowden, \$15.60  
June 14, James Key, \$20.00  
Benjamin Sunderland, \$16.00  
June 22, Joseph Turner, \$17.50  
June 30, William Bryan, \$20.00  
July 17, Jane Brent, \$16.17  
William Digges, \$16.17  
Elizabeth Brent, \$33.67  
Eleanor Brent, \$16.17  
Teresa Brent, \$16.17  
Mary Brent, \$17.50  
Sarah Bond, \$17.00  
Nathaniel Dare, \$100.00  
Joseph Simmes, \$35.00  
July 22, James Stone, \$68.67  
Charles Love, \$40.00  
August 22, Joseph Queen, \$87.26  
James Hith, \$15.98  
William M. Duncanson, \$20.00



August 31, Joseph Turner, \$15.79  
September 22, Alexander Scott, \$20.00  
    Barnett W. Barber, \$87.50  
    Benjamin Sunderland, \$20.00  
October 11, James Key, \$20.00  
November 11, 1797, Samuel H. Briscoe, \$35.00  
    Leonard Wood, \$15.00  
    Joseph Simmes, \$35.00  
    James Hith, \$17.50  
    Hammett Brookes, \$20.00  
    Edmund Plowden, \$52.50  
    Samuel N. Smallwood, \$35.00  
    Barnett W. Barber, \$87.50

### 1798

January 17, Joseph Simmes, \$35.00  
    Hammett Brookes, \$20.00  
    James Clagett, \$22.00  
    Eleanor Brent, \$35.00  
    Jane Brent, \$35.00  
    Teresa Brent, \$35.00  
    Mary Brent, \$35.00  
    William Digges, \$29.17  
    Nathaniel Dare, \$122.00  
    Elizabeth Thomas, for 1797, \$15.00  
    James R. Dermott, for 1797, \$29.16  
    Charles Tarlton, \$21.43  
    Thomas Hodges, \$60.00  
    James Key, \$20.00  
    Anthony Reintzell, for 1797, \$35.00  
    Edward Simmes, for 1797, \$8.23  
    Middleton Belt, for 1797, \$35.00  
    Joseph Jackson, for 1797, \$163.50  
January 22, Joseph Queen, \$53.41  
    Thomas Dixson, \$15.70  
    Barnett Barber, \$87.50  
    George Fenwick, \$12.00  
    Samuel Smallwood, \$17.50  
February 1, Alexander Scott, \$55.83  
    Sarah Bond, \$35.00  
    James Broome, \$58.33  
February 10, James Stone, \$134.00  
February 24, Richard Bryon, \$40.00  
    Joseph Turner, \$26.57  
    Charles Love, \$6.40  
April 10, James Broome, \$26.92

Nathan Walker, \$27.00  
 Miss Brent, \$47.07  
 James H. Blake, \$49.12  
 April 20, Middleton Belt, \$17.50  
   Joseph Queen, \$52.47  
   Edmund Plowden, \$26.25  
   James B. Heard, \$14.36  
   Joseph Simmes, \$17.50  
   Bennett Fenwick, \$50.91  
   Thomas Parran, for 1797, \$104.93  
   Joseph Dant, \$11.67  
   Peter Short, \$15.02  
   James Stone, \$61.04  
 May 1, Jasper M. Jackson, \$35.00  
   Clemont Sewell, \$17.50  
   James Simpson, \$70.66  
   Overton Carr, \$17.50  
   Robert Douglass, \$52.50  
   Edward Boone, \$17.50  
 May 10, Samuel N. Smallwood, \$77.79  
 May 17, Barnett W. Barber, \$54.72  
   John Jackson, \$11.66  
 July 9, John Jackson, \$17.50  
   Joseph Dant, \$17.50  
   James Simpson, \$87.50  
   Bennett Fenwick, \$52.50  
   Joseph Simmes, \$17.50  
   Overton Carr, \$17.50  
   James Broome, \$32.91  
   James H. Blake, \$52.50  
   Jasper M. Jackson, \$35.00  
   Margaret Chew, \$28.17  
 July 18, Edmund Plowden, \$35.00  
   Joseph Queen, \$17.50  
   James Stone, \$70.00  
   Gerrard Causeen, \$31.50  
   Peter Short, \$17.50  
   Nathan Walter, \$35.00  
   Samuel Smallwood, \$78.75  
   Joseph Turner, \$32.04  
   Miss Brent, \$52.50  
 July 31, Barnett Barber, \$70.00  
 August 8, Middleton Belt, \$17.50  
   Edward Boone, \$17.50  
   James B. Heard, \$17.50  
 August 28, Robert Douglass, \$52.00

October 16, Joseph Simmes, \$17.50  
James H. Blake, \$52.50  
William Magruder, \$17.50  
Joseph Dant, \$17.50  
Middleton Belt, \$8.30  
October 20, James Broome, \$35.00  
Edmund Plowden, \$52.50  
Edward Boone, \$17.50  
October 27, Samuel N. Smallwood, \$78.75  
Nathan Walker, \$35.00  
James B. Heard, \$17.50  
November 9, Robert Douglass, \$52.50  
Henry Burch, \$35.00  
James Simpson, \$75.83  
James Stone, \$70.00  
November 17, Clemont Sewell, \$17.50  
Overton Carr, \$17.50  
Joseph Queen, \$87.50  
December 7, John Jackson, \$17.50  
Bennett Barber, \$70.00  
Gerrard Causin, \$17.50  
Edward Simmes, \$35.00  
Joseph M. Jackson, \$35.00  
December 15, William Cartwright, \$30.87

#### 1799

January 17, Samuel Smallwood, \$72.91  
Nathan Walker, \$35.00  
Joseph Dant, \$17.50  
Overton Carr, \$17.50  
James H. Blake, \$36.94  
James Stone, \$68.10  
Peter Short, \$17.50  
Joseph Beck, \$70.00  
Misses Brent, \$52.00  
Gerrard Causin, \$17.50  
Joseph Queen, \$85.10  
February 2, Thomas Parran, in full for 1798, \$120  
Bennett Barber, in full for 1798, \$70.00  
James B. Heard, in full for 1798, \$17.50  
Joseph Simmes, in full for 1798, \$17.50  
Edward Simmes, in full for 1798, \$35.00  
Henry Burch, in full for 1798, \$17.50  
Edmund Plowden, in full for 1798, \$52.50  
James Hoban, in full for 1798, \$70.00  
James Broome, in full for 1798, \$35.00

Joseph Turner, in full for 1798, \$35.00  
 Robert Douglas, in full for 1798, \$35.00  
 John Jackson, in full to 1 January last, \$17.50  
 Jasper Jackson, in full to 1 January last, \$35.00  
 March 17, William Cartwright, \$11.70  
 April 13, Samuel Smallwood, \$43.75  
     Nathan Walker, \$20.54  
     Jasper M. Jackson, \$52.50  
     John Lynch, \$17.50  
     Edmund Plowden, \$52.50  
 April 23, Edward Boone, \$17.50  
     James H. Blake, \$17.50  
     Joseph Queen, \$87.50  
     Elizabeth Brent, \$17.50  
     Jane Brent, \$17.50  
     Eleanor Brent, \$17.50  
 April 29, John Lynch, \$17.50  
 June 15, Samuel Briscoe, \$93.33  
 July 17, John Lynch, \$17.50  
     John Jackson, \$17.50  
     Samuel Smallwood, \$43.75  
     Jasper Jackson, \$52.50  
     Nathan Walker, \$17.50  
     Edmund Plowden, \$52.50  
     Joseph Queen, \$87.50  
     James Blake, \$17.50  
 August 17, Misses Brent, \$52.50  
 August 31, James Height, \$17.50  
     Catherine Brown, \$35.00  
 October 19, Jasper Jackson, \$52.50  
     James H. Blake, \$17.50  
     Edmund Plowden, \$52.50  
     John Jackson, \$17.50  
     Samuel Smallwood, \$43.75

## 1800

January 4, Joseph Queen, \$87.50  
     Misses Brent, \$52.50  
     Samuel Smallwood, \$32.08  
     James Blake, \$17.50  
     J. M. and John Jackson, \$70.00  
     James Burnes, "hire of a labourer," \$0.67  
 February 15, Joseph Queen, \$87.50  
     Edmund Plowden, \$52.50  
     Richard Beck, \$17.50  
     Edward Simmes, \$140.00

April 5, Hez[e]k[iah]. Orme, \$71.67

Misses Brent, \$52.50

May 17, John Jackson, \$17.50

Zephaniah Prather, \$11.66

June 7, Joseph Queen, \$19.74

July 7, Thomas Law, \$19.30

August 16, Samuel Briscoe, \$77.40

Edward Simmes, \$35.00

September 29, Daniel Carroll of Duddington, \$72.62, for the hire of four sawyers 48 days in July 1799, and 70 days in August 1799, at \$16 per month

October 25, John Kearney (plasterer), \$8,656.45 reimbursement for "65½ months Labor of public hands at \$16.00 per month and a few old materials"

### 1801

April 2, Negroes James and Rhode Butler (probably free), \$0.67

May 17, Samuel H. Briscoe, \$26.15, for hire of a labourer