Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania

American Negro slavery has been the object of frequent examination by scholars. Its growth and development, beginning with the introduction of the first Negroes into English North America and culminating in its abolition during the Civil War, have been traced in much detail. To be sure, scholars do not always agree in their descriptions and conclusions, but certainly the broad outlines of Negro slavery as it existed in North America are well known.¹

Slavery in colonial Pennsylvania has also had its investigators. These researchers have tended to place a great deal of emphasis upon Quaker influence in the Pennsylvania antislavery movement. Friends in general and Pennsylvania Quakers in particular are credited, and it would seem rightly so, with leading the eighteenth-century antislavery crusade. It was in the Quaker colony that the first abolition society in America was founded; the roll call of important colonial abolitionist pamphleteers is studded with the names of Pennsylvania Friends—William Southeby, Ralph Sandiford, Benjamin Lay, and Anthony Benezet among them.²

The rudimentary state of our knowledge of the colonial slave trade, as distinct from the institution of slavery, becomes apparent when one examines the role of the Philadelphia Quaker merchants in the Pennsylvania Negro trade. Little recognition has been accorded the fact that some Quaker merchants did participate in the Negro traffic, even as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. Nor has

¹ A recent study of slavery in America, which reviews the work that has been done on the problem and also introduces some valuable new insights, is Stanley Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago, Ill., 1959).
² Edward R. Turner, The Negro in Pennsylvania: Slavery—Servitude—Freedom, 1639–1861 (Washington, D. C., 1911), is the most detailed examination yet made of slavery and the slave trade in Pennsylvania. The development of Quaker antislavery attitudes is traced by Thomas E. Drake, Quakers and Slavery in America (New Haven, Conn., 1950), 4: “The only significant movement against slavery in colonial America took place among the Quakers.”
it previously been noted that Quaker attitudes regarding slavery and the slave trade were formed and crystallized at a time when the Pennsylvania Negro trade was possessed of somewhat peculiar characteristics. There is at least some suggestion that moral objections voiced by the Quakers were supplemented and strengthened by economic considerations.\textsuperscript{3}

Quaker thought on the issues of slavery and the slave trade was a slowly developing process which passed through several stages. The Society of Friends early cautioned its members against importing Negroes into Pennsylvania, and, somewhat later, they were encouraged not to purchase slaves imported by others. The Society then sought to end slaveholding among its members. The movement was at flood tide during the Revolutionary era, when slavery was abolished in Pennsylvania and efforts were being made to eliminate it throughout the world.

Like the Quaker position on slavery, the Pennsylvania slave trade itself progressed through a number of apparent phases. Almost all the Negroes who arrived in Pennsylvania before 1730 were shipped from the West Indian islands in small lots of two or three. They were sent northward at the direct request of Pennsylvania residents for their own personal use, or on consignment to Philadelphia merchants for purposes of sale. Friend James Claypoole, who came to the colony in 1683 and who was to serve as treasurer of the Free Society of Traders, did as many were doing when he wrote his brother at Barbados requesting slaves. Aware of the labor shortage in Pennsylvania before leaving England, he had written asking that Negroes be shipped to him. Arriving in Philadelphia and finding that the Negroes had not been dispatched, he renewed his request:

\begin{quote}
I writt to thee, to send me 4 blacks viz. a man, a woman, a boy, a Girl but being I was so disappointed in Engl[and] as not to send thee those goods thou wrote for, I could not expect thou wouldst send them. . . . Now my
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{3} Writers seem aware that Pennsylvania Friends participated in the Negro traffic, though their emphasis is universally on Quaker antislavery activities. It is usually implied, moreover, that the Society was successful in withdrawing its members from the slave trade by 1730. Turner, 8–9, 66–67; Drake, 11, 20, 26–27, 34, 42; also Rufus M. Jones, \textit{The Quakers in the American Colonies} (London, 1911), 514. See, however, Frederick B. Tolles, \textit{Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682–1763} (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1948), which contains a chapter titled "In the Counting House," but does not discuss Quaker involvement in the slave trade.
desire is that if thou dost not send them all however to send me a boy between 12 & 20 years. . . .

About 1730, Philadelphia merchants began importing Negroes from the West Indies and selling them in the local market; that is to say, merchant owners of vessels not only purchased the slaves in the islands but also sold them in Pennsylvania. This represented a process of maturation in the Negro trade, for cargoes now were larger (containing perhaps as many as thirty or forty slaves), and the middleman, formerly the consignee, was partially eliminated. This method of trading was dominant for more than two decades, until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. Demand for slaves rose sharply thereafter, resulting in a corresponding expansion of the supply. The last decade of the heavy slave traffic, from about 1755 to 1765, was the summit of the Pennsylvania Negro trade. It was characterized by the many large cargoes of slaves which entered the Delaware River and by a shift in the trading patterns which sent local vessels directly to the west coast of Africa in quest of slaves.

Five of the sixteen "parcels" of Negroes advertised in the Pennsylvania Gazette between 1759 and 1762 came directly from Africa. Not one of the twelve "parcels" so advertised from 1750 through 1758 was obtained there.

Evidence indicates that Quakers were most active in the Pennsylvania slave trade in the period prior to 1730, when Friends made up a larger proportion of the population than they did later and before Quaker attitudes regarding slavery had become fully developed. These were years during which Pennsylvania's social and economic structure was taking form, and there was a searching for trade outlets and commercial contacts. As the colony grew and prospered, its

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5 Robert Ellis, a non-Quaker merchant and slave trader, was one of many merchants instrumental in broadening the Negro trade in the 1730's. See Robert Ellis Letter Book (1736-1748), HSP.

6 See Pennsylvania Gazette, May 6, 1762, for a cargo of 170 "fine Gold Coast negroes"; ibid., July 25, 1765, for "Seventy Gold Coast slaves" newly imported; Thomas Riche to Jacob Van Zandt, July 30, 1761, Thomas Riche Letter Book, I (1750-1764), HSP, and Pennsylvania Gazette, Aug. 6, 1761, for near 100 slaves brought "directly from the Coast of Guiney"; and Thomas Riche to Samuel Tucker, Aug. 16, 1762, Thomas Riche Letter Book, I (1750-1764), for a sloop carrying 100 Negroes from Guinea.
economic ties with the West Indian colonies were made more secure. Even before Pennsylvania had celebrated its tenth birthday, William Penn declared proudly that ten sail of ships had been fitted out in one year for the West Indian trade.\(^7\) Return cargoes consisted primarily of sugar, rum, and molasses, although the Negro trade was not overlooked. Gabriel Thomas, propagandist for the young colony, wrote thus when speaking of its emergent trade:

Their Merchandize chiefly consists in Horses, Pipe-staves, Pork and Beef Salted and Barrelled up, Bread, and Flower, all sorts of Grain, Pease, Beans, Skins, Furs, Tobacco, or Pot-Ashes, Wax, etc., which are Barter’d for Rumm, Sugar, Molasses, Silver, Negroes, Salt, Wine, Linen, Household-Goods, etc.\(^8\)

Some insight into the early Pennsylvania slave trade can be derived from the account book of the barkentine Constant Alice, a non-Quaker vessel owned by William Douglas and James and Hercules Coutts, which plied the seas between Pennsylvania and Barbados. The Constant Alice sailed, for example, from Barbados for Philadelphia in June, 1701, carrying a cargo freighted at £134 16s. 3d. Forty-seven pounds ten shillings of this amount went for the freight of nineteen Negroes, the remainder of the cargo being made up of rum, molasses, sugar, cider and lime juice. Sailing from Barbados one year later, the value of the barkentine's freight totaled £114 10s. 8d.; the twenty-three Negroes on board accounted for more than half of this amount—£57 10s.\(^9\)

Friend William Frampton, a merchant and operator of a “Brew house and Bake house” in Philadelphia, was involved in the Negro trade as early as 1686. In that year, he received instructions from the

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\(^7\) “Some Proposals for a Second Settlement in the Province of Pennsylvania,” Penn Letters and Ancient Documents Relating to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, I, 68; III, 14, American Philosophical Society (APS).


\(^9\) Booke of Acente Relating to ye Barquentine Constant Ailse (Alice) Andw Dykes mastr from March 25 1700, 9, 16, Division of Public Records, Pennsylvania State Library, Harrisburg. According to the accounts, the nineteen Negroes on the 1701 voyage were to be distributed among seven persons; one individual, George Lloyd, paid freight on eight of the Negroes. Seventeen of the slaves brought from Barbados in 1702 were the property of two families transporting all their goods to Philadelphia.
Bristol firm of Charles Jones, Jr. and Company to sell six Negroes brought from the coast of Africa on the ship Isabella.\(^\text{10}\) Quaker participation in the Negro trade prompted the Yearly Meeting in 1696 to advise "that Friends be Careful not to Encourage the bringing in of any more Negroes."\(^\text{11}\) Two years later the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting expressed concern about Friends who sold slaves "at the publick Markett place & Outcry." This declaration followed the reading of a paper written by Pentecost Teague, in which he called attention to that practice. It was agreed at this meeting that Friends should reconvene in one week for the purpose of writing to their co-religionists at Barbados, informing them that no more Negroes were wanted in the Quaker colony.\(^\text{12}\)

No records survive of any meeting held the following week, but at the next Monthly Meeting a letter was composed and addressed to Friends on the island. Noting that so many Negroes in Pennsylvania might, in various ways, prove prejudicial, the letter continued:

... It was Agreed that Endevors should bee used to put A stop to the Importing of them; & in order Theyrunto that those friends that have correspondencies In ye west Indies should discurredg ye sending Any more hither; not withstanding which; many negroes have been brought In this last summer; our meting taking it into consideration thought fit to signifie the same to you; desiring that friends off your Island in general might be Aquainted theyrwith; & its ye Request of our said metings that no more negroes may bee sent to this River to friends or others. . . .\(^\text{13}\)

Nine members of the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, all of whom appear to have been leaders in the Quaker community, signed the communication. One signer, the wealthy Samuel Carpenter, seems to have later disobeyed the tenor of the letter. William Trent's ledger discloses that in November, 1703, he purchased from "S.

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\(^\text{10}\) Early Letters from Bristol and Philadelphia, 2, 17, HSP; The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (PMHB), IX (1885), 74.

\(^\text{11}\) Minutes of Philadelphia and Burlington Yearly Meeting (1681-1746), 57, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 302 Arch St., Philadelphia.

\(^\text{12}\) Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (1682-1714), 115, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

\(^\text{13}\) Copy of a paper sent to Barbados to discourage the sending Negroes hither, the 30th of 8th Mo 98, Pemberton Papers, Parrish Collection, Friends, HSP. This is printed by Henry J. Cadbury, "Another Early Quaker Anti-Slavery Document," in Journal of Negro History, XXVII (1942), 211–212.
Carpenter" four slaves for £130; this S. Carpenter was probably "Friend" Samuel Carpenter.  

There were other evidences, too, that many Quakers were displeased with the slave trade in Pennsylvania. The protest drawn up in 1688 by Germantown Friends is well known; they were, as their opening words put it, "against the traffick of men-Body." An early arrival in Pennsylvania and an inhabitant of Penn's Welsh Barony, Cadwalader Morgan had reported to the Yearly Meeting in 1696 his own feelings about slavery. Like many others, Morgan was seeking some means of compensating for the lack of laborers and had therefore sent for a Negro. "In the mean while," Morgan said, 

the Consideration of it came before me, If I Should have a bad one of them, that must be Corrected, Or would Run away, Or when I went from home, & Leave him with a Woman or Maid, and he Should desire or Seek to Comitt Wickedness, If such a thing happened that it would be more Loss and Trouble to me, than any outward Gain could Countervail, and I was in Perplexity Concerning it. . . . 

After considerable soul-searching and consultation with God, Morgan stated that it was revealed to him "That I Should not be Concerned with them [Negroes]."

Many Friends had not yet arrived at this conclusion, however, and, as the eighteenth century opened, Quaker merchants continued selling Negroes, two of the most active traders being Jonathan Dickinson and Isaac Norris I. Dickinson had brought ten Negroes from Jamaica when he first sailed for Philadelphia on the barkentine Reformation. Some failed to survive the ensuing shipwreck and period of Indian captivity in Florida, while others met their deaths


15 Minutes of Philadelphia and Burlington Yearly Meeting (1681-1746), 19-20. The Germantown protest of 1688 has been printed in many places: see PMHB, IV (1880), 28-30. 

16 Cadwalader Morgan Paper Presented to the Yearly Meeting, 1696, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. This paper is printed along with biographical data by Thomas E. Drake in "Cadwalader Morgan, Antislavery Quaker of the Welsh Tract," Friends Intelligencer, XCVIII (1941), 575-576.
during their first winter in Philadelphia. By April, 1698, after one full year in that city, Dickinson had but three Negroes remaining, and one of these was seriously ill with distemper. Faced with caring for three burdensome slaves, he made apparently unsuccessful efforts to sell them in the Philadelphia area.17

Dickinson soon began dealing in Negroes sent him on consignment by West Indian merchants. By 1700, he was fully cognizant of the problems associated with the Pennsylvania Negro trade: a letter to his brother-in-law Isaac Gale at Jamaica notes the common disagreement that existed between the West Indian shipper and the Philadelphia buyer when they met in the slave market:

I hope I have Compleatly considered thy Interest in making an Agreeemt. Some thing Short of thy Order abt the Negroes. As to Jack both I and Isaac [Norris] have Endeavored to make Sale of him—but Cannot get the Money to answr thy Vallue or £45 here. The boy Carro is not much Bigger then one of ye Two boys I brot. wth mee and is not Soe likely for a Market.18

As this letter reveals, Friend Isaac Norris had by this time also entered the slave trade. Like Dickinson, he served as factor for his correspondents in the islands, selling Negroes on consignment in return for a commission. Like Dickinson, too, he was aware of the same problem of an uncertain market and value for slaves:

Ye Negro woman being bigg wth child is not of ready Sale—I have offer'd her to several & hitherto hold ye price £40 for I think her worth it—the boy I have not yet gott a Mastr. for—There is here Generally 5 or £10 Difference between offering to sell & wanting to buy a Negro.19

Negroes handled by these men came exclusively from the West Indies and continued to be sold on consignment. Dickinson made frequent visits to his plantations in Jamaica and while there would sometimes ship Negroes to Pennsylvania or suggest to others that they do so. Thus, Cole Scott sent Norris two Negro men and eight

17 Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles McLean Andrews, eds., Jonathan Dickinson's Journal Or, God's Protecting Providence, Being the Narrative of a Journey from Port Royal in Jamaica to Philadelphia between August 23, 1696 and April 1, 1697 (New Haven, Conn., 1945), especially 124-132; Jonathan Dickinson to his father, Apr. 21, 1698; Dickinson to Caleb Dickinson, May 14, 1698, Jonathan Dickinson Letter Book (1698-1701), HSP.
18 Dickinson to Isaac Gale, June 25, 1700, ibid.
19 Isaac Norris to Richard Sleigh, May 20, 1701, Isaac Norris Letter Book (1699-1702), HSP.
casks of sugar at Dickinson's behest, while Dickinson himself sent three Negroes from Jamaica in the spring of 1703, asking that they be disposed of by Norris.\textsuperscript{20} In 1705, Norris wrote Dickinson, who was again in Jamaica, and reported on the legislative action of the Assembly then sitting; significantly, he added, "but Nothing therein Effects the Trade from you unless ye 40s $ head Laid upon Negroes."\textsuperscript{21}

Isaac Norris quite early made it clear that he would prefer not to be involved in the slave traffic. Writing to Dickinson in 1703, he said: "Jonata. Send me no more nor Recommend me no more Negroes for Sale I Don't like that Sort of Business any thing Else the Least Considerable is much more Exceptable."\textsuperscript{22} A reiteration of this desire to be free of the slave trade was transmitted to others of his West Indian correspondents. To Thomas Swan he wrote, after receiving two Negroes, "... & do Intreat Excuse at my Friends hands from Concerning mee wth those kind of Creatures."\textsuperscript{23} A somewhat more acrid tone was employed when writing to Joseph Curtis a few years later:

I Preceive tis by thy recomendation I have recd. a Lame Negro & Sickly I know not wt to Do wth I have no Inclination to be Concernd in Selling Negro's at all & desire to avoid It as much as Possible—but Especially crazy one's are a Charge & won't go off—Thou or thy freinds [sic] may comand mee in any other business, but I Desire to be Excus'd from Negroes.\textsuperscript{24}

Dickinson, too, requested that his associates cease shipping him Negroes, although his decision came a number of years after Norris first wrote in that vein. Dickinson dropped a subtle hint to Friend

\textsuperscript{20} Norris to Cole Scott, June 17, 1703, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704), HSP; Dickinson to Norris, Apr. 10, 1703, Dickinson File, Maria Dickinson Logan Collection, HSP. Dickinson may have sent Negroes to various other Philadelphia Friends when visiting at Jamaica. They, like Norris, acted as factors in selling the slaves. See Samuel Preston to Dickinson, May 3, 1709, Preston File, Maria Dickinson Logan Collection.

\textsuperscript{21} Norris to Dickinson, Dec. 31, 1705, Norris Letter Book (1704-1706), HSP. The reference is to the Duty Act of 1705/6 which levied an impost of 40s. on every Negro imported into Pennsylvania. The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801 (Harrisburg, 1896-1911), II, 285.

\textsuperscript{22} Norris to Dickinson, Nov. 12, 1703, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704).

\textsuperscript{23} Norris to Thomas Swan, Mar. 13, 1704, ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} Norris to Joseph Curtis, July 25, 1709, Norris Letter Book (1709-1716), HSP.
Jacob Gutteres in April, 1715, stating that the slave trade did not answer him well: "One of thy Negroes I sold I have Yett by mee a promisory note for the payment of which I Expect wll be made good. I am Very Unfitt for Comission bussiness being taken up other ways." A similar remark was made to Thomas Fearon after Dickinson informed him of the sale of his Negro to a purchaser now reluctant to pay his creditors: "If thou Doubt or Mislikes It thou please to appoint any other &son thy atty I Shall render to thy ordr therein." He was much more explicit when writing to Jonathan Gale, another brother-in-law: "I must Intreat ye not to Send any more [Negroes] to mee for our people Don't care to buy Except boys or girles & ye generality of our people are against any Coming into the Country."25

It is important to realize that though Dickinson and Norris protested against their involvement in the slave trade, both sold Negroes in the years that followed, Dickinson until his death in 1722, Norris until 1732, some three years before his death in 1735. Dickinson, moreover, lamented the fact, even as late as 1721, that the Assembly seemed predisposed to levy a duty on Negroes imported into Pennsylvania.26 The vituperations of these two Quakers against the trade, lacking any vigorous moral or religious indignation, must be examined in the light of other factors, including the quality of the slaves shipped from the islands, the difficulties encountered at the point of sale, and the profits, as well as the growing repugnance of the trade in the eyes of their fellow Friends.

There can be little doubt that most of the slaves transported from the West Indies and consigned to the Philadelphia merchants were of poor quality. The evidence is extensive that these Negroes were what the island planters would term "refuse" or "waste slaves," for some reason undesirable for plantation labor. Dickinson pointed out the deficiencies of two Negroes received by him when writing a brother-in-law at Jamaica:

As frncis Moore he and his Brot Samuell by Their Agent at Kingston Sent me Two Negroes wch I Recd paid ffreight and Duty on them. Samll Negroe

25 Dickinson to Jacob Gutteres, Apr. 26, 1715; Dickinson to Thomas Fearon, Apr. 26, 1715; Dickinson to "Dear Brother," Apr. 30, 1715, Dickinson Letter Book (1715-1721), Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP).

26 Dickinson to Joseph ————, Nov. 7, 1721, ibid.
Sickened & Dyed for they were not well wn I recd. Them. Frances Negroe had an Ulcerated Legg. I putt him to Cure wch took up ye Summer & Winter Untill Next Summer before any Would offer for him but at Length I Sold him to a Country man & took his Bond to pay in 12/mo—£30.27

Negroes sent to Norris suffered from yaws, stomach disorders, distemper, and the flux. Oftentimes, women were pregnant, which rendered their sale difficult, while others were in such poor health that they died shortly after their arrival in Pennsylvania. The three slaves Dickinson sent Norris when he was visiting Jamaica in 1703 were transported, it appears, only because they no longer were capable of satisfactorily performing their plantation duties. Harry was described as a “choice boiler” who also had served as a carpenter and wheelwright. Concerning his behavior, Dickinson said that his former masters and overseers had found him to be of good disposition. The rub came when Dickinson explained that “hee hath highly Suspected to have given Poison to Some of the negroes.” Obviously, Harry was not a slave, refractory as he was, who would fit well into plantation life. “As to the Other two Negroes,” Dickinson continued, “I know of no fault but through Sickness were Inclineable unto a Dropsey which the Sea may help as it hath offten done to others.” It might be added that these Negroes caused Norris no little hardship.28

The residents of Pennsylvania throughout the eighteenth century were confronted with an insufficient labor supply and were willing to purchase good, high-quality, and “likely” Negro slaves.29 But the situation was not so critical as to force them to buy “refuse” slaves, and they harbored no illusions about the quality of the Negroes dispatched from the West Indies. Norris summarized the matter with precision when reporting to his niece at Jamaica. After commenting on the hazards of the Negro trade, he went on to say,

I am thus particular because thou mentions thy Spouse’s purpose of Sending more Neagroes, to Shew they are a Sort of Mdze Hazardous & rarely

27 Dickinson to Isaac Gale, Nov. 20, 1719, *ibid.* See also Josiah Rolph to Christopher Feake, Sept. 8, 1712, Feake File, Maria Dickinson Logan Collection, for a blind Negro shipped from Kingston, Jamaica.

28 Dickinson to Norris, Apr. 10, 1703, Dickinson File, Maria Dickinson Logan Collection; Norris to Dickinson, Nov. 12, 1703, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704).

29 After receiving a lame Negro from Edith Lott, Norris wrote, “Likely Young negro's will sell here, but such as this will not.” Norris to Edith Lott, July 25, 1709, Norris Letter Book (1709-1716).
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profitably [sic] to ye owner, and Seldom pleasing to factors here, because tis Troublesome & hard to make ye Sale beneficall to ye Imployer People who would buy being Jealous They are Criminals or otherwise of Little worth who are So Transported.  

The poor quality of the Negroes received in the Quaker colony amplified and accentuated various other problems faced by the factor, many of which were related to the additional money charges coincident with receiving and attempting to sell slaves in ill-health. A recurring requirement was that Negroes be given over to a doctor's care. Norris, who seems to have been more concerned with the well-being of his Negroes than were most slave traders, often obtained medical treatment for them. A Negro man with a back injury, for example, was put "undr Cure," while a woman suffering from the flux was sent out to "a Very Careful Nurse." Sickly Negroes and those with mean dispositions were apt to lie on hand for a good while, the cost of food and care being added to the factor's expenses. These charges would, of course, be deducted from the selling price in the event the slave was sold and, being sold, if payment were made. Dickinson referred in 1715 to a "$cell of Negroes yt Lay on My hands a Yeare."  

Rapid sale was further hampered when slaves were shipped to arrive at Philadelphia in the winter season. There was, to begin with, less demand for labor during the off-season; moreover, the danger to the new Negroes presented by Pennsylvania's cold climate was of no little concern to prospective purchasers. Both Norris and Dickinson periodically reminded their associates that Negroes should not come to port in the months from October to March. Such warnings proved ineffective, and new Negroes continued to die from the extreme cold or to lie by until the coming of spring, when they might be sold. The concomitant expense was considerable. Slaves who remained unsold during the winter months required additional clothing. Indeed, some

30 Norris to Prudence Moore, Dec. 8, 1731, Norris Letter Book (1730-1734), HSP. Italics mine.
33 Norris to Hugh Totterdill, Nov. 22, 1703, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704); Dickinson to Moses Cardoso, July 1, 1720, Dickinson Letter Book (1715-1721).
slaves arrived with no clothing at all, which contributed to the slowness of their sale. Norris wrote of a Negro woman lately received and commented thus: "I have put her on Cloathes It not being a Custom here for ym to go Naked—people will not buy ym So."

Aside from these charges, the factor was called upon to pay freight on the slaves ranging from £1 10s. to £3. Still other costs and inconveniences were encountered in posting bond for the duty payments and in seeing that Negroes who died were properly buried. Dickinson once paid 15s. for the burial of a man, and Norris was put to a good deal of trouble and expense when a Negro woman died. "I Could not gett any Negroes," he wrote, "to Carry to ye Grave wth out putting her in a kind of a Coffin and Giving of ym Drink."

Credit was universally employed when disposing of slaves, a procedure which sometimes kept Norris and Dickinson from reimbursement for as long as twelve months following a sale. It was not always easy to collect from one's debtors, particularly when the slaves were sold to inhabitants of the three Lower Counties or the Jerseys. Travel was slow and to call on a defaulter required time and money. Dickinson thought it would be necessary in the spring of 1715 to journey into West New Jersey in an attempt to secure payment for a Negro. Sound businessman that he was, Norris ably summarized the whole range of problems outlined above when writing Richard Sleigh in 1703:

I have Recd Some Negroes By thy recommendations wch no doubt thou designed a kindness wch I shall always acknowledge but they being Dis-temper'd will not Sell and Unsold are Very troublesom and Noisom therefore I Entreat ye hereafter to give Encourgmt to any for they Neither Answer Expectations and Should I Charge the full trouble wth ym ye Negroes would be lost.

Conceivably, difficulties arising from the sale of slaves, including the money advances made by the factor, would have been treated more lightly had ample profits ensued, but the reward to the factor, in the form of a commission, was little compensation for his time,

34 Norris to Thomas Swan, Aug. 11, 1702, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704).
35 Dickinson to Ezekiel Gomersell, June 14, 1700, Dickinson Letter Book (1698-1701); Norris to Hugh Totterdill, Nov. 22, 1703, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704).
36 Dickinson to Thomas Fearon, Apr. 26, 1715, Dickinson Letter Book (1715-1721).
effort, and expense. To illustrate, Norris paid £6 to the captain of the ship *Unity* for freight on two Negro women received in 1703. It was necessary because of the cold to clothe the Negroes, for which he expended an additional 16s. One of the women was sickly and died after several days’ illness. Norris paid out 12s. for nursing and diet of this slave, 7s. 8d. to Edward Evans for a coffin, 3s. 4d. to the gravedigger, and 5s. 6d. for drink for those who carried her to her grave. These charges were deducted from the sale price (£38) of the remaining Negro. In the end, Norris’ five per cent commission brought him a mere £1 18s.—hardly enough to compensate him adequately for his trouble and cash advances.

One further illustration is afforded by two Negroes, a man and a woman, who came to Norris’ hands on December 2, 1731, from Jamaica. The slaves lacked clothing and, after an uncommonly long voyage, were thin from an unsatisfactory diet. Norris’ son, Isaac II, took charge of the slaves, outfitting the man in an old coat and caring for them at his “Kitchen fire” where they were fed on “Gruel and Broath.” It was late the next May before young Isaac could report that the Negroes had been sold. Three pounds ten shillings were deducted from the sale price of the man (£32 6s.) to cover duty and freight, and a further charge of £2 12s. 8d. was levied for clothing. “Tho wilt receive,” he wrote, “That I have not Chargd Any thing for the Winters dieting ye Negro Man Tho I had no Occasion of his service.” The Negro woman was charged with duty and freight as well, on top of which Norris deducted £2 10s. for clothing and keep. “The wench provd So ill,” he added, “that ye Doctors had Some Charge agt her & I have in all debted her winters Expences @ 20s having had a good deal of Expense & trouble wth her.” For all this, there is no evidence that Isaac II charged the usual five per cent commission; nor did he deduct for an advertisement which appeared in a local newspaper.

Commenting on an infirm Negro woman recently shipped to him, Norris said, “It is a little unaccountable that People Should send abrod. Such Infirm Creatures, to fix a Charge & Trouble wn there can be no Reasonable Proffit.” Norris to Joseph Curtis, Nov. 8, 1709, Norris Letter Book (1709-1716).

Norris to Hugh Totterdill, Nov. 22, 1703, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704).
Dickinson's and Norris' aversion to the slave trade could well have had ample roots in the economics associated with acting as a slave factor, apart from whatever moral feelings might have been aroused. It is instructive, for example, to note the marked difference in the tone of Norris' correspondence when, as only rarely happened, the slaves received were of high quality and thus were rapidly sold. Within two and a half weeks of their arrival, Norris was able to inform Cole Scott of the sale of his two Negroes. Unlike his response on other occasions, Norris made no effort to discourage further Negro shipments:

Thine of Apr. ye 9th came to hand wth 2 Negroes & 8 Casks of Sugr & ye Amity Jos: Hamerton Mr the 31t Ulto. I have Sold Manwell for 42£ 10s—& Sambo for 45£ & 5 Cask of ye Sugr to Sundr & sons. . . . I am undr obligation to my frd Jonathan Dickinson & do hope to give Such Satisfac-

Most of the two merchants' correspondence, however, stresses the bother and expense that were a part of handling sickly and recalcitrant slaves. That they sold Negroes for so many years after making known their dislike for the trade was doubtless due to the nature of their commercial contacts. They received not only Negroes from the West Indies, but rum, molasses, and sugar as well, and depended upon the island colonies as a market for their own goods. A clear and definite refusal to deal in Negroes might seriously have interfered with their business activities. And so they continued to sell Negroes in spite of small returns and much inconvenience, and in the face of an increasingly firm stand against the traffic taken by the Society of Friends.

At the urging of Chester Quarterly Meeting, the Yearly Meeting of 1711 had renewed its advice of 1696 that Friends be careful not to encourage the bringing in of any more Negroes. All merchants and factors were at the same time directed to "write to their correspondents to discourage them from sending any more." Neither Norris nor Dickinson seems to have responded specifically to this directive. Four years later, in 1715, Chester Friends again noted "That some Friends be yet in the practice of importing buying and selling negro slaves . . .," to which the Yearly Meeting replied that such Friends should be "dealt with and advised, to avoid that

41 Norris to Cole Scott, June 17, 1703, Norris Letter Book (1702-1704)
The Book of Discipline drawn up in 1719 repeated the advice that “none among us, be concern’d in the fetching, or importing Negro slaves, from their own country or elsewhere.” In replying to a query of the London Yearly Meeting “concerning the Importation of Negroes, from their Native Country and Relations,” the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting stated (1728) that “no Friends that we know of within the Extent of this Meeting, are concern’d in that practice.”

The reply to the London query of 1728, taken in conjunction with minutes adopted in years following, which began now to focus on the buying of Negroes imported by non-Quakers, would suggest that Friends were thereafter free of involvement in the Negro slave trade. Admittedly, few Quakers were selling slaves in the Philadelphia market after 1730, but the point to be made here is that some Friends did persist in importing and selling Negroes. A number of Friends joined such non-Quaker merchants as Robert Ellis, William Allen, Joseph Turner, Joseph Sims, and Joseph Marks in expanding the slave traffic into Pennsylvania.

William Plumsted, who was later disowned by the Society and became a member of Christ Church, gave notice in 1733 of the sale of three Negroes, all of whom were said to be “fit for Town or Country Business.” Francis Richardson III, son of a famous Philadelphia silversmith and described by a contemporary as “a very Worthy young Quaker,” co-operated with Robert Ellis during the summer of 1738 in the sale of a small group of slaves from South Carolina. An unsigned letter dated July 24 in Ellis’ letter book seems to have been written by Richardson. Writing to Dr. Burleigh, he said, “Friend this Comes to Lett thee Know that I have Reced by

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42 Minutes of Philadelphia and Burlington Yearly Meeting (1681-1746), 139, 165-166, 172, 211, 333.
43 Pennsylvania Gazette, Oct. 11-18, 1733; PMHB, VI (1882), 106-109. It was reported to the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting in 1742 that Plumsted had left his wife and was behaving in a disorderly manner. A testimony was prepared against him, stating that he “hath conducted himself very Imprudently & in many respects not consistently with our Profession vizt: His leaving the Province & his Family & going to Europe in so abrupt a manner; his assaulting in a very abusive manner a Person publicly in the Street; his Neglect in not attending our Religious Meetings, his Conversation and deportment evidently manifesting a Slight & Contempt to the Simplicity & plainness of the Truth we profess. . . .” The Meeting declared its disapprobation of Plumsted’s conduct and disowned him (1742). See Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (1715-1744), 336, 339, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.
the hands of Capt. Tisdale Twelve Negroes 4 Men 4 Women & 4 Boys, But thee has given More for them than they will Sell for here. . . ."

Another Quaker who persisted in acting contrary to the advices of his brethren was Reese Meredith, who sold slaves in the Philadelphia area as early as 1739. Meredith had acquired a reputation as somewhat of a rebel within the Society by the close of the 1740's, when, judging from newspaper notices, he quickened his interest in the slave trade. In 1747, for example, he announced the arrival of "a parcel of likely Negroes, men and women," just in from Barbados. Negroes were still being offered for sale by Meredith in 1754. Samuel Powel, Jr., and Benjamin Mifflin, both Quaker merchants, participated in the Negro trade on only a small scale. When the ship *Five Friends* entered in from Jamaica in 1755 it carried "a few likely Negroes" who were to be disposed of by William Plumsted, now disowned by the Quakers, and by Friend Samuel Mifflin. Another prominent Quaker merchant, John Reynell, brought a young Negro man from Montserrat in 1757 and hoped to facilitate his quick sale by announcing that he could "talk pretty good English."
But while some Friends were selling Negroes even into the decade of the 1750's, the great majority were not. The "King of the Quakers," Israel Pemberton, no doubt reflected what was the majority opinion among Quaker merchants when writing two of his correspondents near the middle of the eighteenth century. Though this communication relates to an Indian slave, the same point of view would have applied to Negroes; moreover, the moralistic objection to the slave trade illustrates the refinement of Quaker thought on the issue since the time of Norris and Dickinson. Having lately received an Indian slave from Furnell and Gardiner, Pemberton replied:

The Indian Mans feet are frost bitten so that he is yet under the Doctor's Care; as I decline dealing in Slaves on any acc. I was unwilling to meddle with him & therefore acquainting Joseph Marks of the Consignment He readily agreed to dispose of him. . . . I must desire you not to recomend the sending any more to me as If I had no other Scruple I should be unwilling to encourage the importing such fellows here as prove too refractory here. 49

There seems to be little evidence which would link Quaker merchants with the Pennsylvania slave trade after 1760. Friend Thomas Clifford refused to sell Negroes sent him that year by West Indian associates, explaining that "As I do not keep any Negroes myself I choose not to dispose of any." 50 James Pemberton, Quaker leader of the Pennsylvania antislavery movement and an astute observer of the slave traffic, accurately described the situation in 1762. Sending his English friend James Phipps two small treatises on the inhumanity of the slave trade, Pemberton went on to observe: "That In[j]quetous traffic hevy of late lamentably Increas'd here [in Pennsylvania], tho' the members of our Society Appear entirely clear of being Concernd in the Importation [of Negroes] & there are few Instances of any purchasg of them." 51 Non-Quakers were subject to no such pressures as developed within the Society of Friends, and it was they, not the Quakers, who made the decade from 1755 to 1765 the summit of the Negro slave trade in colonial Pennsylvania.

University of Washington

DAROLD D. WAX

49 Israel Pemberton to Furnell and Gardiner, Mar. 21, 1744, Israel Pemberton Letter Book (1744-1747), APS.
50 Thomas Clifford to Joseph Maynard, Sept. 25, 1760, Thomas Clifford Letter Book (1759-1766), Pemberton Papers, HSP.
51 James Pemberton to Joseph Phipps, Dec. 13, 1762, Dreer Manuscripts, HSP.