

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

James Carter's Account of his Sufferings in Slavery

JAMES CARTER'S 1807 ACCOUNT of his slavery was written at the request of Edward Stabler, a Quaker apothecary in Alexandria, Virginia, for the use of a Philadelphia Friend. Quakers pioneered the antislavery movement in Pennsylvania, and the unnamed recipient of this manuscript may have desired information to use in a tract or pamphlet. Whatever the case, there is no reference to James Carter in any contemporary Friends' tract.

After Carter's escape from the last of his several owners, he made his way to Philadelphia where he was taken in by Elias Boudinot. Boudinot was then filling his last public office as director of the United States Mint after having given years of service as a congressman from New Jersey and a member of the Continental Congress. While living in Philadelphia from 1795 to 1805, he kept a city residence at 218 Arch Street and a country home, Rose Hill, at what is now Cambria and Rosehill Streets.¹

The family which Carter's relatives had served for "upwards of one Hundred and 30 years" were the Baylors of New Market, one of the prominent plantation owners of Caroline County, Virginia. Lucy Baylor, with whom Carter's mother had grown up, married another of the County's large landholders, John Armistead, in 1764. Landon Carter, Mrs. Armistead's son-in-law who is also mentioned below, married Mary Burwell Armistead in 1800.

Other names which appear are also easily recognized as members of the Virginia gentry and, indeed, are often found on branches of the Armistead family tree.²

The manuscript is now in the Historical Society's Parrish Collection

¹George Adams Boyd, *Elias Boudinot Patriot and Statesman, 1740-1821* (Princeton, 1952)

²Virginia Armistead Garber, *The Armistead Family, 1635-1910* (Richmond, 1910, Marshall Wingfield, *A History of Caroline County, Virginia* (Richmond, 1924), T E Campbell, *Colonial Caroline A History of Caroline, Virginia* (Richmond, 1954)

of Quakeriana, given by Anna H. Denniston in 1936.

a Small Jernel of an only and beloved Brother and two sisters my poor brother Henry was Born in the Family of Mrs Lucy Armistead of Caroline County Virginia near the Bowling green untill he was 22 years old he was then sold to one George Buckner of that County without knowing of it and buckner bearing a very cruel name my Brother would not go with him and Runaway a few days after I sawd him and pesuade him to go and try Mr Buckner but Buckner had advertise him for 20 dollars reward and thretting to send him to Millers Iron works in North Carolina he was afraid but after some pesuading he consent to go and set of form me at Frederickburg to go to his master and met Mr Wm Woodford who knewd him and want to take him up my Brother Run from him this was opposite to Mr Man Pages Mr Woodford call to Mr Pages overseer and tell him to stop my Brother the overseer Run as fast as he could but could not over take my brother he in this time got to the Rappohannock River near Mr Pages Mill whare he found a shelving Rock and crept under it the was some little boys playing at the Mill the overseer call to the boys and ask them whare that man went as came down to the River the boys told him that he was under the Rock my brother hearing this he came from under the rock and took to the River to swim a cross the overseer Immediately begun to Stone him and Struck him on his head which put an end to his Life these is the Last words of my Brother Lord have murcy on me you have kil'd me help me for god sake I am all most gone and sunk to the bottom the next morning we heard of it and went to Look for him and was out 5 days Looking for him the 6th day after his death I ask my Master if I might go with my father to Look for my Brother he said no you must go to Dumfries after my horse it appear that he had more Regard for his horse then he had for my poor Dead brother Dumfries is a bout 25 mile of from Fredg my Mother said to me Do my Son try and get home by sun set we may hear of your brother and you can help your father to get him home I Made all the hast I could and got home as the sun was setting the first thing I saw in the ward was a horse and cart with a coffin my Mother I am glad you have come we have heard of your brother he is 4 miles down the River on the other side we Immediately set of and cross the River and inquireing at Every house untell we came to whare he was and call up the Black men the got some nots of pine wood and Lit them

and got a little boat and went Down the River whare my brother was tied to a bush with a grape vine the boat was so very small it would not bear us all and the bank was so steep we could not get him up we was oblige for to put him in the water again and flote him on the water untell we could land him we put him in the coffin and brought him home to the buriel ground and we was not able to take him out of the cart this was a bout 3 in the morning my father said to me you must stay hear untell I go in to the Town and get some person to help us he ask me if I was not a fraid to stay I told him no that I was not a fraid of my brother and that I had never did thes dead bodies any harm and for that Reason I was not a fraid and when my father came with the man I was fast a sleep leaning on the coffin my Brothers grave Look very dreadfull at being open but I was not the least a fraid my mind tell me not to be a fraid that nothing will hurt me. my brother Left under the Rock a Little napsack which cantains 1 [?] of sugar 1 bottle of Molasses and a few Gingerbreads which I gave him to take to his wife and one child——

my sister Nelly was sold to one Johnson a Merchant of Fredg it is true that Johnson is a Speculater but his Greatist Speculation is on human flesh he sold my sister Nelly whose I have never heard of her sense my Little sister Judy was sent for from my Mothers house to be Brought to Bensons Tavern by Mr Landon Carter of Savern Hall who is a son inlaw of Mrs Lucy Armisteads to be viewed by thes Blood thrusty fellows this child was a bout 8 years old and was very much a fraid of them she cried very much my Mother and myself beaged Mr Carter not to sell this child out of Fredg he gave us his word and honour that he would not but as soon as we left him he sold the child to thes fellows and did not Let us know of it and as soon as the fellow had got as many as he could convenently convay a Long he came to my Mothers house and take the child by its arm and Led it of he would not so much as to tell my Mother what part of the cuntry he livs my Mother in this time had got part of the money to purchase the child — we have never heard of the child sence my Mother has had 9 children and altho she and Mrs Armistead has been brought up together from Little Girls she has sufferd all my Mothers children to be picked from her my Mothers Family has served the Family of Mrs Armistead upwards of one Hundred and 30 years my Mother is at this time 64 years old and the has Jest Gave her the discharge as She can not be of any service to them my father is 67 years old and I have offerd Mrs Armistead one

Hundred Dollars for him and She would not take it—as I want him to go and Live with my Mother — I was sold to Mr James Sutton of Alexandria a clerk at the Bank by a son of Mrs Armisteads who was my master and servid him 15 Months the last 3 Monthes he hired me to 2 Gentlemen who livs in Camden South Carolina to attend them to that Place which is a bout 6 Hundred miles and after wards was Left thair to get home to Alexandria as I could the paid me my wagers which was 24 dollars and 12 dollars to bring me and I walk all the way home and paid Mr Sutton 24 dollars and 6 days after I had got home he sold me to thes negro drivers the came to my house a bout 2 oclock in the morning and nock at the door my Master said to me get up I got up and open the door he said to me you must go with these men I ask him whare he said to whare the Livs I ask him if he was going to sell me I would thank him if he would Let me get a master in Alexanadria he said to me I am nothing More to do with you and you have sence Enough to come Back if you do not Like the place these words to me was what compell him to Return the money which he had Received for me the took me and caried me 75 Miles on thair Jerney one Night the put us in a Room and I got of from them and with a very great difficulty I got to Philadelphia Whare I got to Live with Mr Elias Boudinot who I soon found was a Charatable man and I told him of my distress he Immediately wrote to my Master and did Every thing to Releave me he was very kind to my Family he Employ my wife he gave her 60 dollars per year for washing he gave my Family clothes and the is not one artikle of this Life but what he gave my Family — and in the time the yellar Fever he take my Family to his house in the Cuntry for 2 and 3 Monthes Mrs Boudinot and Mrs Bradford the daughter of Mrs Boudinot also was very kind to my Family and thrugh his goodness and the goodness of God I have got my Freedom

Wrote by me the 16th July 1807 in Alexandria James Carter a Mulatto man — NB I had a Brother in Law caried of in one of the droves and he wrote me a few Lines he says when he got to tennese cuntry he had ticks on his Back as Larg as the Ends of his fingers being not able to take them of for the I ron bands the is not a week but what the is Larg droves go thrugh this city men all Link together with Iron Bands at this moment this Goal is full of men womans and children to be caried of by thes negro drivers the Genely take them in night James Carter.

for one of the friend in philadelphia as a Request of Docter Stabler
Alexandria virginia

Mr Boudinot please to tell what friend it is

to the care of Mr. John B. Wallace Philadelphia or to Elias Boudinot
Burlington for one of the friends Philadelphia————

James Carters accot of his sufferings &c————

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

LINDA STANLEY