

# *BILLS OF SALE FOR ENSLAVED PEOPLE: QUEBEC, CANADA*

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Note: All of the bills of sale transcribed and analyzed in this publication were located and digitized by Prof. Charmaine A. Nelson during her research fieldwork at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ) in Quebec City. Prof. Nelson then shared her research with her students in her fourth year undergraduate Art History seminar, “James McGill was a Slave Owner: Slavery and the History of Universities,” (McGill University, Winter 2020) instructing them on how to read and analyze the bills.

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## **Bills of Sale: An Introduction**

Chris J. Gismondi

For scholars trying to piece together social lives under slavery, we are left with documents – often mere fragments - that consistently dehumanize the enslaved representing them as objects, criminals, or commodities. This is laid bare in documents like a “bill of sale,” a legal transactional record created throughout Transatlantic sites of slavery like Canada where the enslaved were sold and transferred from one owner to another. Scholars undertaking research with archival sources such as these bills endure the labour of locating the documents and then meticulously deciphering historical (in this case eighteenth-century) cursive handwriting. Even worse, the fragility of the original documents means that such transcriptions must be routinely done – word for word - from poorly digitized images on microfilm reels.

These are the sources we use to recuperate the stories and histories of the African (black/Negro) and Indigenous (*panis/panise*) enslaved, under both the British and the French Empires in what is currently Canada.<sup>1</sup> Stories like the alliance of white-supremacy across religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences include the Glasgow-born merchant James McGill and his Québécoise wife Charlotte Trottier Desrivieres who consistently held people in bondage in Montréal. Their exploitation included a panis boy and panise girl who both died around the age of ten, a black man named Jacques, and two black women Marie-Louise and Marie-Charles/Charlotte/Sarah Cavilhe, whose bill of sale is included here.<sup>2</sup>

Historian Marisa J. Fuentes explains how orthodox historical methods fail slavery scholars. Instead, scrutiny of the nature of knowledge production itself reveals how “the violent systems and structures of white supremacy produced devastating images of enslaved (personhood), and how these pervade the archive and govern what can be known about them.”<sup>3</sup> For example, the 1804 bill of sale for the eight year old “Negro Girl slave” Priscilla from Annapolis, Nova Scotia has a cold, dehumanized tone and no mention of her mother or father.<sup>4</sup> What remains for us today preserved in the archives tells us more about how slave-owners and slave societies saw the enslaved, rather than how they saw themselves, wanted to be represented or remembered.

Documents like these are the “fragments” left behind from which we try to retrieve and tell the stories of the separated families, women, men, and children, whose labour and personhood was stolen by the institution of slavery for the benefit of their owners and imperial economies. These archival traces were overwhelmingly created by pro-slavery institutions and surrogates like the legal-punishment system where the enslaved were never protected and newspaper printers who used their technology to sell the enslaved and hunt runaways. Historical documents that scholars inherit also overwhelmingly come from slave owners themselves who were fixated on the value and return of their “investments”. Researchers rarely have access to the inner psyche of the enslaved since the documents mentioned above by nature had little regard for their emotional, psychic, or social wellbeing since literacy for the enslaved was commonly outlawed. As well, demonstrated here is the role of notaries as another complicit institution in slavery. Notaries like Charles Stewart routinely worked to secure transactions through which human chattel was bought and sold, providing a cruel legal record of the enslaved person’s status as bound and unfree.

In a temperate-northern region of slavery like the Canadian Maritimes, Québec, and Ontario we must understand that sales like these were an opportunity for slave owners to forcibly and deliberately separate the enslaved from blood family, community, or other kin from previous

sites and regions. Historian Trevor Burnard posits that the enslaved lived a life of “radical uncertainty,” they could be beaten, sold, exchanged, gifted, bequeathed, traded, exploited, rented, or used to absolve debts like John Thomson’s enslaved man James exhibited here.<sup>5</sup> This precariousness is also demonstrated even in this small sampling where we see Bell, Harry, James, and William all being passed along multiple owners. Bell, had three successive white male owners of varying classes: two captains, a butcher, and the Lieutenant Governor within a year.<sup>6</sup> As a “mulatto” mixed-race woman, she was likely the target of much predatory sexual attention due to her enslaved status, partial European ancestry, and the matrilineal order of slavery which incentivized rape and the production of enslaved children.<sup>7</sup> However Bell’s resistance to the normal violence and predations of enslaved women is also recorded in the historical record; two fugitive slave advertisements were published for her by George Hipps on 20 August and 5 November 1778.<sup>8</sup> Bell’s flights are all the more startling since enslaved women are customarily out represented in fugitive slave advertisements by enslaved men like Caleb, Jack, and Lowcanes who was also owned by the Gill family (discussed here when they purchased Rebecca and her infant Peggy).<sup>9</sup>

In Canadian Slavery, the temperate climate unsuitable for plantation agriculture meant that the mostly urban, slave minority population experienced intense psychological isolation and unimaginable regimes of surveillance. Additionally, we cannot begin to recuperate from the archive the daily fear, trauma, and isolation of the enslaved populations who were continuously separated from their communities to labour in Canadian colonies.<sup>10</sup> As art historian Charmaine A. Nelson has noted, “many slaves of African descent, whether from the Caribbean, the US or elsewhere were alienated from familial bonds with the very process of their forced migration to Montreal.”<sup>11</sup> An example of the enslaved being sold across vast spaces is Sylvia, a twenty-four year old “Negroe Wench” transported from New York to Captain James Perry in Montreal in 1773.<sup>12</sup> Other Anglo-American sites fed Canadian Slavery as demonstrated by the “Negroe boy” Abram sold away from his family in Maryland to the Nova Scotia tanner Matthew Archibald in 1779.<sup>13</sup> Others like painter Francois Malépart de Beaucourt, forced his enslaved woman Marie Thérèse-Zémire from Saint-Domingue, on the eve of the Haitian Revolution.<sup>14</sup> From the Anglo-Caribbean, George and Jane Cook enslaved an African born woman named Charlotte, in St. Vincent and Antigua until Jane was widowed and remarried fur-trader Dominique-Rousseau, relocating with Charlotte to Montreal sometime before 1798.<sup>15</sup> Apart from being an actual amputation of family and community, the constant threat of sale and subsequent exportation was a known form of discipline and punishment.<sup>16</sup>

From these bills of sale assembled here, there seems to be a seasonal trend. Only three sales take place in the late fall or winter of November or December, with seven others being in the warmer months of April, May, June, August, or September. Of the winter transactions, we can infer that the enslaved were likely traded internally like Bell who was sold twice within the city, or they were transported by ground since ports like Montréal were unnavigable in the winter.<sup>17</sup> With the warmer months, even internal sales would have been more agreeable, and the thawed river allowed for more bountiful sea trade including plantation commodities or the trafficking of enslaved chattel.

The value of an enslaved person varied on the basis of their sex, fertility, labour, and any expertise that they learned from languages and skilled trades. The prices paid for the enslaved in these documents vary. Women like Bell (including clothing and linen textile), Rebecca with her infant Peggy, and Sarah were sold for 40-56 pounds. At one point, black women were the most expensive slaves in Québec history due to their exoticness, resistance to European diseases

(unlike Indigenous *panis* slaves), and their exploitable reproductive capacity which could produce more chattel in the form of enslaved children like Peggy.<sup>18</sup> The price range for the males varies from 35 to 58 pounds with the exception of William who sold for 77 pounds at his third sale. Perhaps after four known owners, William had acquired a variety of labour skills making him a valuable asset justifying the large sum paid by James Tod.

Notable from the documents and transcriptions exhibited here are the several Captains and merchants in the role of slave-sellers. The bills of sale identify the slave sellers Joseph Poiré, James Thompson, William Boyd, John Thomas, and Thomas Venture as captains of vessels and William Lindsay, George Hipps, and Jean Louis Cavihe are described as merchants. Given their direct access to shipping networks and infrastructure we may appropriately consider these Captains and merchants in the Canadian context as slave traders.<sup>19</sup> For example, the enslaved woman Bell was likely imported from the Caribbean through these economic channels rather than born in the Canadian colonies. Scholars have not yet considered what “additional Middle Passages” for the enslaved may look like when they were transported again by ship, this time further north.<sup>20</sup>

Date	Enslaved	Buyer	Seller	Notes
1778, Nov. 14th	Isabella/ Bell “mulatto” (female, ~15 years old) + linens and clothes	Lieutenant-Governor Hector Theophile Cramahé (notary Michel-Amable Berthelot d’Artigny and J.A. Panet) -50 pounds Halifax currency	George Hipps Merchant butcher	-Fugitive Slave Ads published August 20 <sup>th</sup> , 1778 and November 5th, 1778 (Mackey, 321) -previous owner Captain Thomas Venture, sold at auction to Hipps
1779, April 20th	Isabella/Bell (female, ~15 years old)	Pierre Napier ship captain (notary J. Panet) -45 pounds Halifax currency	Lieutenant-Governor Hector Theophile Cramahé	-Napier purchased Bell in 1779 at the recorded age of 16 (Trudel, 390)
1781, Oct 20th	James (male)	John Buchannan and John Shannan Insurance Firm, and Alexander Campbell (notary Charles Stewart)	John Thomson merchant	-a Thomson carpenter listed as burying a Panise girl, 15, in 1773 at Detroit (Trudel, 421)
1782, Aug. 15th	Jack (male, ~14 years old)	Michel Bernard merchant (notary J. Thompson) -35 pounds Halifax currency	Captain James Thompson	- Fugitive Slave Ad published March 15th, 1792 (Mackey, 335)
1783, May	William (male)	Hugh McKay (notary Charles Stewart) -58 pounds shillings and 8 pence Halifax currency	William Boyd ship captain	- previous owners listed: John Gray
1785, May 24th	William (male, ~18 years old)	John Jones (notary Charles Stewart) -55 Halifax pounds currency	William Lindsay Halifax merchant and Hugh MacKay	-Jones listed as having a Negro man 18-19 he sells in Québec, 1791 (Trudel, 351) -Lindsay listed as owning “negress” Pamela Steward domestic in Québec, 1792 (Trudel, 375)
1786, June 26th	Caleb (male)	Mathew MacNider (notary Pierre-Louis Descheneaux) -35 Halifax pounds currency	William MackKenzie	-Guinea or African born as opposed to Creole, born in the Americas -Fugitive Slave Ad published April 16 <sup>th</sup> , 1788 (Mackey, 330)
1786 Aug. 7th	William (male)	James Tod -77 pounds	John Jones (creditor James McGill and Pollard, notary Charles Stewart)	-Jones see above -Pollard buried Marie “negress”, 27 in 1788 Montréal (Trudel, 399)
1787, Dec. 4th	Harry (male, ~15 years old)	John Simpson (notary Charles Stewart) -36 Halifax pounds currency	Joseph Poiré captain	-Poiré bought a “negro” from John Lahorn in 1787 Berthier-en-haut (Trudel, 399) -past owners listed Barrach Hays merchant (notary MF Le Guay), Samuel Wade blacksmith

1788, Sep. 23rd	Sarah (female, ~25-29 years old)	James McGill (notary John Gerbran Beek) -56 pounds	Jean Louis Caville merchant	-McGill see introduction (Trudel, 337) -Caville listed as selling “Negress” 25 to McGill (Trudel, 297)
1788, Dec. 13th	Rebecca and Peggy (female, ~25 years old, and female ten months)	Elizabeth Wilkinson (notary Isaac Roberts and Charles Stewart) -40 pounds	Mary Gill (née Cawley; enslaved bequeathed from captain William Gill)	-Gill listed as owning “negro man” Lowcanes (Trudel, 336) -Fugitive Slave Ad published, Lowcanes 25 years old flees Québec, November 30th 1775 (Mackey, 319)

<sup>1</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (New York: Routledge Press, 2016), p. 59; Marcel Trudel, Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage, trans. George Tombs (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2013), pp. 85-133.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Trudel, Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français (Montreal: Hurtubise HMH, 1990), p. 337.

<sup>3</sup> Marissa J. Fuentes, Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Trevor Burnard, Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo Jamaican World, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 179.

<sup>6</sup> William Renwick Riddell, “Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France,” The Journal of Negro History, vol. 8. no. 3 (July 1923), pp. 323-24.

<sup>7</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles, “Property Rights in Pleasure: The Marketing of Enslaved Women’s Sexuality,” Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers Limited, 2000), pp. 692-701; Kay Dan Kriz, “Marketing Mulatresses in Agostino Brunia’s West Indian Scenes,” Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies 1700-1840 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 36-69.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University press, 2010), p. 321.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery, pp. 335, 330, 319; Jan Kurth, “Wayward Wenches and Wives: Runaway Women in the Hudson Valley, N.Y., 1785-1830,” NWSA Journal, vol. 1, no. 2 (Winter 1988-1989), pp. 199-220.

<sup>10</sup> Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> William Renwick Riddell, “Further Notes on Slavery in Canada,” The Journal of Negro History, vol. 9, no. 1 (Jan 1924), p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, p. 103.

<sup>14</sup> Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, p. 119.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Mackey, Black Then: Blacks and Montreal, 1780-1880's, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), pp. 26-27; Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery, pp. 46-48.

<sup>16</sup> Gerda Lerner, Black Women in White America: A Documentary History, (New York: Pantheon Books: 1972), p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Trudel, Canada's Forgotten Slaves, pp. 95-97

<sup>19</sup> Marcus Rediker, The Slave Ship: A Human History, (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, p. 7.

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### **Transcription: Bill of Sale for Isabella/ Bell (1778)**

Enslaved Person: Isabella or Bell

Seller: George Hipps

Buyer: Hector-Théophile Cramahé

Notaries: Michel-Amable Berthelot d'Artigny & J.A. Panet

Date: November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1778

Location: Quebec City

Source: Reel M173/627, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

### **Transcription in French**

Roxanne Cornellier

14 Novembre 1778. Vente d'un esclave par le S. George Hipps, à l'honorable Hector Théophile Cramahé, Ecuyer.

Pardevant les Notaires.

publies \_?\_ à Québec, soussignés, fut présent le -

Sieur George Hipps, Marchand-boucher demeurant en

sa maison rue Sainte Anne en cette haute-ville ; lequel a -

par ces présentes volontairement vendu et cédé dès . -

maintenant, avec garantie de ses faits et promesses . -

seulement, à l'Honorable Hector Théophile. -

Cramahé, Ecuyer Lieutenant-Gouverneur de la Province de

Québec, à ce présent et acceptant pour lui ses hoirs et

ayant cause, c'est à savoir, l'esclave et mulatre nommée

Isabella ou Bell, fille âgée d'environ quinze ans, avec les hardes

et linges à son usage, que mondit Sieur acquéreur. -

reconnoit avoir \_?\_ en sa maison, et dont il se tient

pour content \_?\_ faits. Laquelle esclave et mulatre -

appartenoit autrefois au Capitaine Thomas Venture, qui

la fit crier et adjuger par encan audit Sieur George -

Hipps, suivant le titre et la quittance du prix, qui ont

été remis à mondit Sieur Cranabé. -

La présente vente ou cession de tous les droits légitimes

que ledit vendeur peut exercer envers ladite esclave, faite

à la charge par mondit Sieur acquéreur de nourrir, loger,

entretenir et traiter ou faire traiter humainement ladite

mulatre ; en outre moyennant le prix et somme de. -

cinquante Livres monnoye du cours actuel de Québec, -

égale à deux cent piastres d'Espagne, que ledit Sieur -

George Hipps a reçu de mondit Sieur Cramahé, en

monnoye d'or et d'argent comptée nombrée et réellement

délivrée à vue des Notaires soussignés. Aux conditions -

ci-dessus, le vendeur cons- ?t- que la présente vente. -

demeure totalement quittancée du prix, et que mondit  
 Sieur acquéreur doit dès à présent et autant de biens  
 que de droit le maitre de ladite esclave nommée Bell, -  
 qu'elle lui obéisse, lui rende des services, enfin qu'il la  
 vende, rente si bon lui semble, et qu'il en dispose -  
 tel qu'un maitre légitime peut et doit faire de son -  
 esclave en Canada, -

Car ainsi & Promettant & Obligeant &  
 Renonçant & Fait et passé à Québec en la maison  
 de mondit Sieur acquéreur situé rue S. Louis, l'an  
 mil sept cent soixante dix huit le quatorze Novembre  
 après midi, et les parties ont signé, lecture faite . Le  
 nom Isabella par \_?\_ bon, -

H.T. Cramahe      George Hips,  
 Berthelot d'Artigny      J.A. Panet

### **Translation to English**

Roxanne Cornellier

14 November 1778. Sale of a slave by the S. George Hipps, to the honorable  
 Hector Théophile Cramahe, Esquire.

In the presence of the Notaries.  
 published \_?\_ in Quebec, undersigned, was present the -  
 Sir George Hipps, Merchant butcher living in  
 his house on Sainte Anne street in Upper Town Quebec ; whom has -  
 hereby voluntarily sold and ceded as of . -  
 now, with guarantee of his actions and promises . -  
 only, to the Honorable Hector Théophile. -  
 Cramahé, Esquire Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of  
 Quebec, to this day and accepting for him and his heirs and  
 successors, namely, the slave and mulatto named  
 Isabella or Bell, a girl aged approximately fifteen years old, with clothes  
 and linens for her use, that said Sir acquirer. -  
 acknowledges to have \_?\_ in his house, and which he holds himself  
 for \_?\_ deeds. Said slave and mulatto -  
 belonged formerly to Captain Thomas Venture, whom  
 had her shouted and auctioned to said Sir George -  
 Hipps, according to the title and the receipt of the prize, which were  
 given to said Sir Cramahé. -  
 The hereby sale or cession of all his legitimate rights  
 that said seller can exert towards said slave, made  
 to be owned by said Sir acquirer to feed, lodge,

entertain and treat or have her treated humanely said  
mulatto ; furthermore provided the price and the sum of. -  
fifty Pounds currency of Quebec, -  
which is equivalent to two hundreds Spanish piastres, which said Sir -  
George Hipps received from said Sir Cramahé, in  
gold and silver counted numbered and actually  
delivered in the presence of the undersigned Notaries. To the conditions -  
above, the seller \_?\_ that the hereby sale. -  
remains totally acquitted from the price, and that said  
Sir acquirer has as of now as much goods  
as rights as the master of said slave named Bell, -  
that she is to obey him, render him service, at last that he  
sells, rents if he thinks fit, and that he should dispose of her -  
as a legitimate master can and should make of her -  
slave in Canada, -  
Because so & Promising & Obliging &  
Renouncing & Made and passed in Quebec in the house  
of said Sir acquirer located on S. Louis street, the year  
one thousand seven hundreds seventy eight the fourteen November  
after noon, and the parties have signed, reading done . The  
name Isabella by \_?\_ good, -

Signed by H.T. Cramahé, George Hips, Berthelot d'Artigny and J.A. Panet

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Isabella/Bell (1778)**

Roxanne Cornellier

An enslaved adolescent, Bell or Isabella was sold for fifty pounds, rating of Halifax<sup>1</sup> currency by the merchant butcher George Hipps to the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec Hector Théophile Crahamé on 14 November 1778 in the city of Quebec. Interestingly, Bell was also sold with her clothes and linens, a detail which does not appear to be standard in the sale of enslaved people in the region. The bill of sale also documented Bell's previous sale at auction to Hipps by Captain Thomas Venture. Since several white men based in Montreal<sup>3</sup> and Quebec City<sup>4</sup> were known as West Indian merchants, it is important to consider if Bell's origins may have been related to Venture's shipping practices. If so, Bell may have been African Caribbean and not African Canadian. That a butcher sold Bell to the governor demonstrates that slave owning occurred across various classes of people in the province.

Little is disclosed about Bell other than her age, approximated to fifteen years old. The young girl is described as *mulatre* or mulatto which means she was mixed race, <sup>5</sup> born from one white parent (most likely her father) and an enslaved black mother. Since Transatlantic Slavery was structured within a matrilineal order, Bell would have inherited this enslaved status at birth from her mother. The matrilineal order incited sexual violence against enslaved women such as Bell. The fact that she was owned by at least four different men: Venture, Hipps, Cramahé and Napier <sup>6</sup> made her particularly vulnerable to sexual violence because she would have been alone and isolated with white men and their "sexual predilections for black women."<sup>7</sup> The reason for

her sale is not stated in the notarized document. However, two distinct publications from the Quebec Gazette newspaper from August and November 1778 indicate that she ran away twice from Hipps; on 18 August<sup>8</sup> and 29 October,<sup>9</sup> just over ten weeks apart. In August, she ran away with “no shoes or stockings on,”<sup>10</sup> a decided rarity in Canada which demonstrates her “distress and apparent hastiness”<sup>11</sup> to flee. The second time she ran away, at the end of October, Hipps offered no rewards for her return,<sup>12</sup> unlike the previous escape when he offered four dollars.<sup>13</sup> Also of note, Hipps changed his initial description of Bell from “Mulatto Negress” to “Mulatto wench,” a shift which may have indicated his growing frustration considering the term wench “referred to a bold or forward woman of loose character.”<sup>14</sup> Two weeks later, in mid-November, she was sold to the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec. While the proximity of Bell’s two documented escapes from Hipps certainly indicates her discomfort, or even fear at residing in his household, Hipps’ quick sale of Bell upon her second recapture likely indicates that he was tired of her resistance. Hipps expected Bell to obey him which meant controlling her bodily appearance, gestures, reactions and even her emotions.<sup>15</sup> The bill of sale states that the new owner should “treat and have her treated humanely.” But what did that mean to a slave owner who considered an enslaved person like Bell to be their legal property who they could sell and rent at will and hunt down if they escaped?

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<sup>1</sup>. The Halifax rating was the one used in Quebec city. The original document also mentions *la piastre espagnole* which was to be used in settling debts. The exchange rate was 5 shillings (Halifax rating) for a Spanish dollar.

<sup>2</sup>. James Powell, “British Colonies in North America: The Early Years (pre-1841),” A History of the Canadian Dollar (Ottawa: Bank of Canada, 2005), pp.11-14

<sup>3</sup>. Such West Indian merchants include James McGill, a slave owner based in Montreal who was deeply involved in the trade of rum, molasses and tobacco which depended on plantation slavery. Other West Indian merchants in Quebec City include the partners Johnston & Purss who also owned enslaved people.

<sup>4</sup>. The partners James Johnston and John Purss also owned enslaved people.

<sup>5</sup>. Frank Mackey, “Introduction,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), pp.7-8.

<sup>6</sup>. William Renwick Riddell, “Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France,” The Journal of Negro History, vol. 8, no. 3 (July 1923), p. 324.

<sup>7</sup>. Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscape of Montreal and Jamaica (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 240.

<sup>8</sup>. Frank Mackey, “Appendix I: no. 26,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), p.321

<sup>9</sup>. Mackey, “Appendix I: no. 27,” Done with Slavery, p.321

<sup>10</sup>. Mackey, “Appendix I: no. 26,” Done with Slavery, p.321

<sup>11</sup>. Charmaine A. Nelson, “Servant, Seraglio, Savage or ‘Sarah’: Examining the Visual Representation of Black Female Subjects in Canadian Art and Visual Culture,” Women in the ‘Promised Land’: Essays in African Canadian History, eds. Nina Reid-Maroney, Boulou Ebanga de B’beri and Wanda Thomas Bernard (Toronto: Women’s Press, 2018). p.57

<sup>12</sup>. Mackey, “Appendix I,” Done with Slavery, p.321

<sup>13</sup>. Mackey, “Appendix I: no. 26,” Done with Slavery, p.321

<sup>14</sup>. Nelson, Slavery, Geography, and Empire, p.239.

<sup>15</sup>. White, Shane, and Graham White, “Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” The Journal of Southern History, vol. 61, no. 1 (1995), p. 49.

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[http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/cramahe\\_hector\\_theophilus\\_4F.html](http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/cramahe_hector_theophilus_4F.html)

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**Transcription: Bill of Sale for Isabella/ Bell (1779)**

Enslaved Person: Isabella or Bell

Seller: Lieutenant-Governor Hector Theophile Cramahé

Buyer: Pierre Napier

Notaries: J. Panet

Date: April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1779

Location: Quebec City

Source: Reel M173/628, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec

**Transcription in French**

Frédéric Limoges

20 Avril 1779. Vente ou union par l'Honorable Hector Théophile

Cramahé, Ecuyer à M<sup>r</sup> Pierre Napier.

Pardevant les Notaires

publics résidens à Québec, sousignées, fut présents l'Honorable Hector Théophile Cramahé, Ecuyer Lieutenant-Gouverneur de la province de Québec; lequel a par ces présentes rendu et cédé avec garantie de ses faits et promet, seulement, à Monsieur Pierre Napier capitaine de navire demeurant en cette ville, à ce présent et acceptant, l'esclave et mulâtre nommée Isabella ou Bell, fille âgée d'environ \_ ?z ans, avec les hardes et linges à son usage que ledit Sieur Napier reconnaît avoir reçus, dont il est content, et telle que ladite esclave appartient ou peut appartenir suivant les loix et par la vente faite à mondit Sieur Cramahé par le Sieur George Hipps ---- devant M<sup>e</sup> Panet Notaire soussigné le quatorze Novembre dernier, dont expédition remise au Sieur Napier avec les titres y datés et mentionnés.

La présente vente ou union faite à la charge par le Sieur Napier de traiter humainement ladite esclave et moyennant le prix et somme de quarante cinq livres monnaie actuelle de Québec ou dur courru d'Halifax que mondit Sieur Cramahé reconnaît avoir ci-devant reçu du Sieur Napier, dont quittames intime et générale.

Car ainsi et Promettant et obligant et

---

Renonçant et fait et passé à Québec rue St-Louis  
en l'Hotel du Sieur vendeur, l'an mil sept cent  
soixante dix neuf le vingtième Jour d'Avril avant-  
midi; et les partis ont signé lecture faite.

H. T. Cramahé

Peter Napier

\_?\_

J.A. Panet

### **Translation to English**<sup>1</sup>

Frédéric Limoges

April 20, 1779. Sale or union by the Honorable Hector  
Theophile

Cramahé Esquiper to Mr Pierre Napier.

Before the Notaries

the undersigned, residents of Quebec City, were present  
the Honorable Hector Théophile Cramahé, Esquire  
Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Quebec; who  
hereby surrendered and assigned with warranty of its  
facts and promises, only to Mr. Pierre  
Napier ship captain living in this town,  
to this present and accepting, the slave and mulatto named  
Isabella or Bell, \_?\_ year-old girl,<sup>2</sup> with  
her linen and clothes for his use that the said Sir  
Napier admits to receiving, which he is happy about, and  
such as the said slave belongs or may belong to  
in accordance with the law and by the sale made to the said  
Sir Cramahé by Sieur George Hipps  
before Mr. Panet Notary undersigned the fourteenth  
Last November, of which shipment handed over to the Sir  
Napier with the titles dated and mentioned.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Temporal linguistic differences have been corrected to facilitate translation.

<sup>2</sup> A November 14 1778 Bill of Sale between George Hipps, and Hector Théophile Cramahe estimated her age at fifteen, the document here is illegible possibly a shortfor for sixteen; Reel M173/627, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada; translated by Roxanne Cornellier.



The present sale or union made at the expense  
 of Sieur Napier to treat humanely the said  
 slave and for the price and sum of forty  
 five pounds current Quebec City currency or currency  
 of Halifax that my lord Sieur Cramahé recognizes  
 having previously received from Sieur Napier, from whom  
 are relinquished both intimate and communal.

For thus and Promising and obliging and

---

Renouncing and done and passed in Quebec City St-Louis  
 Street  
 in the hotel of the Sir Seller, in the year one thousand seven  
 hundred  
 seventy-nine on the twentieth day of April in the  
 morning; and the parties signed the reading made.

H. T. Cramahé

Peter Napier

\_?\_

J.A. Panet

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Isabella/Bell (1779)**

Frédéric Limoges and Chris J. Gismondi

Isabella's recuperable history from archival documents like this bill of sale, reveals glimpses into the customs and attitudes of Canadian Slavery. She was owned and held in slavery by men of varying classes like Lieutenant-Governor Cramahé, a ship captain and merchant Piere (Peter) Napier, and previously by a butcher, George Hipps. This is a prime example of what scholars like Marcel Trudel had described as a system of slavery that transcended all social-economic classes of whiteness.<sup>1</sup> Slave owners were not only upper class and wealthy, but also middle and lower class artisans or merchants used enslaved labour and participated in the institution of slavery.

An additional exploitation within slavery for enslaved women went beyond labour into sexual predations since enslaved people had no legal rights and were chattel property of their owners. Isabella had three known white male slave owners between 14 November 1778 and 20 April 1779. For an enslaved woman this was exceptionally dangerous and would have left her open to ongoing exploitation since rape was incentivized and institutionalized within the matrilineal order of slavery to increase a slave owner's wealth.<sup>2</sup> Any child born to an enslaved woman, was also a chattel slave and another commodity regardless of the race and class of the father. Additionally, her description as "mulatto," of mixed African and European ancestry, would have garnered further sexual intrusion since her lighter complexion and partial European features were coupled with the chattel servitude of Transatlantic Slavery. This is not to say that

only mixed-race or lighter-complexion enslaved women experienced sexual violence; unfortunately the potential or practice of sexual exploitation was shared across complexions and enslaved hierarchies.

Lines ten to thirteen of the bill of sale briefly describe the enslaved female referred to as,  
 “Isabella or Bell, ? year-old girl, with her linen and clothes for his  
 use that the said Sir Napier admits to receiving, which he’s happy  
 about, and such as the said slave belongs or may belong to”

It is unclear how normal it was to sell the enslaved in Quebec with certain possessions, but in this case Isabella was sold with both linens and clothing. The transaction of both Isabella as an enslaved woman along with her clothing and textile material is noteworthy and unique. Slave dress was an important topic amongst slave owners across the Transatlantic World. The common practice included the enslaved being stripped naked during the transatlantic crossing and for sale as a practice for physical inspection.<sup>3</sup> However, while slave owners in tropical sites like Jamaica often gave enslaved females rations of cloth to produce clothing for the enslaved population, in Canada, it seems that slave owners gave the enslaved their second hand garments.<sup>4</sup> This is evident in the routine description of slave dress in Canadian fugitive slave advertisements as “worn”, tattered, or discoloured.<sup>5</sup> Her commodification alongside her likely frayed garments suggest the intention to resell her quickly or a potential neglect of care. Another possibility is that Isabella was somehow able to insist that she be sold with material culture items which she had produced.

Isabella’s quick succession of sales is also a unique feature of her life. This likely had to do with her resistance to servitude well documented by Frank Mackey with two fugitive slave advertisements only eleven weeks apart. An advertisement published 20 August 1778 by George Hipps documents her running away the night before.<sup>6</sup> She ran away from Hipps again on 29 October and was hunted in an advertisement that was printed on the 5 November 1778, in the Quebec Gazette.<sup>7</sup> Her second flight was more risky and with cold weather approaching she is described as wearing only a “Calico gown and Petticoat, a dress’d Cap, and a black silk Handkerchief”.<sup>8</sup> (sic) Even the August escape shows evidence of haste and little planning since she is described as running away barefoot with “no shoes or stockings on.”<sup>9</sup> In both of Isabella’s flights we can surmise that she was desperate to escape the Hipps household.

Her freedom seeking and resistance to slavery diminished her re-sale value as we can see in this secession of sales. On 14 November 1788 she was sold for fifty pound Quebec currency which Roxanne Cornellier equated to two hundred Spanish piastres (see previous essay).<sup>10</sup> With this bill of sale, less than a year had passed but her resale value here in 1779 is five pounds less which is likely explained not from an advancement in age and less of a labour output. Rather, this devaluation was linked to her resistance. After her second escape on 29 October, the advertisement was run on 5 November, and Isabella was recaptured and promptly sold by 14 November 1778. Isabella’s flights were made public through the very print technology that was also used to recapture her; Hipps’ publication of the fugitive slave advertisements in the Quebec Gazette.

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Trudel, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Centuries of Bondage* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2013), pp. 105-118; Trudel, Marcel Trudel, *Dictionnaire Des Esclaves Et De Leurs Propriétaires Au Canada Français* (LaSalle, Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1990); Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscape of Montreal and Jamaica*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscape of Montreal and Jamaica* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 240.

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<sup>3</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles, "White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean," *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader*, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), p. 662; Hilary McD. Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure: The Marketing of Enslaved Women's Sexuality," *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader*, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, "Roundtable: Cash's Bundle: Fugitive Slave Advertisements, Clothing, and Self-Care," *The Junto: A Group Blog on Early American History*, 14 Feb 2017, <https://earlyamericanists.com/2017/02/14/roundtable-cashs-bundle-fugitive-slave-advertisements-clothing-and-self-care/> (date of last access 31 July 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, "A 'tone of voice peculiar to New-England': Fugitive Slave Advertisements and the Heterogeneity of Enslaved People of African Descent in Eighteenth-Century Quebec," *Atlantic Slavery and the Making of the Modern World: Experiences, Representations, and Legacies*, *Current Anthropology*, guest editors Ibrahim Thiaw and Deborah Mack, vol. 61, no. 22 (September 2020), 14 pages; Frank Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Rebecca Earle, "'Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!': Race, Clothing and Identity in The Americas (17th – 19th Centuries)," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 52 (August 2001), pp. 175-95.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 321(nos. 26 and 27)

<sup>7</sup> Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," p.321 (nos. 26 and 27).

<sup>8</sup> Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," p.321 (nos. 26 and 27).

<sup>9</sup> Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," p.321 (nos. 26 and 27).

<sup>10</sup> Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," p.321 (nos. 26 and 27).

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**Transcription: Bill of Sale for James (1781)**

Enslaved Person: James

Parents of Enslaved Person: Unknown

Original Slave Owner: John Thomson

New Slave Owner: Alexander Campbell

Notary: Charles Stewart

Date: October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1781

Location: Montreal

Source: Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

Amalie Alver Løeseth

Colin McCrossan

Before the Notary Public hereto subscribing presently appeared Mr. John Thomson of Montreal Merchant Who of his own free will and accord acknowledged and Declared as follows right That Whereas he the said John Thomson is greatly indebted and owing unto Mr. John Buchanan and John Shannan Merchants in Quebec \_?\_ known under the firm of Buchanan and Shannan \_?\_ for \_?\_ \_?\_ and \_?\_ of \_?\_ merchants \_?\_ in the Sum of Five Thousand Pounds Sterling \_?\_ of Great Britain and also Unto Alexander Campbell of Said City of Quebec Merchant as serving for life James \_?\_ and \_?\_ of \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ in the Sum of Five Thousand Five hundred Pounds Sterling \_?\_ aforesaid. In Consideration of aforesaid respective \_?\_ for the Seller \_?\_ the payment thereof to the said Messrs Buchanan and Shannan and the said Alexander Campbell Have Bargained sold assigned and transferred as \_?\_ hereby by these presents

\_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ assign and \_?\_ \_?\_ the said Buchanan and Shannan and Alexander Campbell \_?\_ \_?\_ aforesaid All and all \_?\_ of \_?\_ \_?\_ Debts \_?\_ and all other \_?\_ of \_?\_ the said John Thomson \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ of \_?\_ said \_?\_ or \_?\_ \_?\_ To Have and to hold the Same and \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ unto the said Buchanan & Shannan & Alexander Campbell \_?\_ Executors administrators and assigns \_?\_ And Further that the said John Thomson \_?\_ Executors and Administrators \_?\_ and \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ hereafter at the request of the said Buchanan and Shannan and Alexander Campbell \_?\_ Executors Administrators and assigns make do and \_?\_ all such \_?\_ and other \_?\_ and things and shall be reasonably required for the \_?\_ and \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ \_?\_ to receive and enjoy the Privileges according to the \_?\_ \_?\_ And \_?\_ \_?\_ of this assignment And the said Buchanan & Shan

nan and Alexander Campbell \_? \_?\_ aforesaid being also  
Present and accepting of the present assignment have also declared  
and

And so by their Present bind and oblige themselves that out of the  
Money that shall be received by them that Executors administrat  
ors and assigns by virtue of this present assignment they shall  
In the first place offer a deduction of all necessary charges and  
Expenses apply the same towards payment of their several  
Respective debts due to their Constituents and that after come  
pleat satisfaction and payment shall and will be made to  
account sell? pay and deliver to the said John Thomson his  
Executors Administrators and assigns all and every Ballance  
Sum and sums of money Goods affects to and all others who \_?\_  
That shall will or may be remaining \_?\_ payment of the foresaid  
respective sums of money

In witness \_?\_ of the said John Thomson and John  
Shannon not only for sum of but also for \_? \_?\_ Alexander  
Campell have hereunto sett their hands and seals this twenti  
eth day of October in the year of our Lord One Thousand  
Seven Hundred & Eighty One - The Marginal note of four \_?\_ wrote  
on

The \_?\_ appears \_?\_ of \_?\_ signing  
John Thomson  
John Shannon  
For Buchanan & Shannan  
\_?\_ for \_? \_?\_  
Alexander Campbell  
Buchanan \_?\_ for Nelson \_?\_  
Charles Stewart

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for James (1781)**

Amalie Alver Løeseth

This notarial record, where extensive parts of the document are unreadable, centres around the man John Thomson, a merchant of Montreal, whom the document reveals was indebted to the firm of John Buchannan and John Shannan, as well as the person Alexander Campbell. Thomson therefore received a loan of 5000 pounds sterling from Great Britain to pay Buchannan and Shannan. However, the payment to Campbell consisted of the transfer of a man named James, who most likely was enslaved by Thomson, as the document cedes James as “serving for life”<sup>1</sup> unto Campbell. The document seems to mention James only once, and gives no racial description of him, his age, or the nature of his servitude, past or intended. Not every enslaved person in Quebec was black, and not all blacks were enslaved.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the term “servitude” was fluid, ranging from slavery to indentureship, the latter customarily being contractual free labour engaged for several years.<sup>3</sup> However, the duration of James’ servitude to Campbell was given for life, which indicates that he was likely enslaved and not white. The document tells little of the true identity or status of James. Objectified as a possession which could be exchanged for a debt, James became

currency and humanizing details like his age, skills, appearance, and ethnicity were not deemed important enough to document. Significantly, during the period of slavery in Canada, the position of blacks was fluid because the line between different forms of indentureship and slavery was extremely precarious. Free blacks often were re-enslaved through kidnapping or manipulated into participating in unjust indentureship contracts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

<sup>2</sup> Frank Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 312.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Mackey, "Jacks of All Trades," Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1850 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, "Runaway Advertisements and Social Disorder in the Maritimes: A Preliminary Study," Violence, Order and Unrest: A History of British North America, 1749-1875, eds. Elizabeth Mancke, Jerry Bannister, Denis McKim, and Scott W. See (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), pp. 216-17.

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### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for James (1781)**

Colin McCrossan

This notarial document from 1781 details a financial agreement between white male merchants in Montreal involving debts and slavery. John Thomson was a Montreal merchant who was “greatly indebted” to three other merchants in the city; John Buchanan, John Shannan, and Alexander Campbell.<sup>1</sup> Buchanan and Shannan were both business partners and are referred to in the document as “Buchanan & Shannan”.<sup>2</sup> Thomson agreed to pay off his debt to Buchanan & Shannan by way of a loan of £5,000 pounds sterling from Great Britain. To pay off his debt to Alexander Campbell, Thomson paid him in the form of human flesh. Thomson gave Campbell a man he enslaved named James. James was given to Campbell to serve “for life” but clues about James’s age, origins, or skills remain agonizingly absent from the agreement. Even though no racial/racist categorization is found in conjunction with James, it is likely that he was a black person enslaved by Thomson who could have been born free, forced into slavery, or previously an indentured servant; the lines between freedom and bondage were blurred by white enslavers.<sup>3</sup> Campbell could have enslaved other individuals along with James, because he accepted enslaved people as a form of payment from other white men indebted to him three years later in 1784.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Before the Notary Public hereto...., 20 October 1781, Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Before the Notary Public hereto...., 1781, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, “Runaway Advertisements and Social Disorder in the Maritimes: A Preliminary Study,” Violence, Order, and Unrest : A History of British North America, 1749-1876, eds. Elizabeth Mancke, Jerry Bannister, Denis McKim, and Scott W. See (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2019), pp. 216-18.

<sup>4</sup> William Renwick Riddell, “After the Peace,” The Journal of Negro History, vol. 5, no. 3 (1920) pp. 296-97; Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 402.

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**Transcription: Bill of Sale for Jack (1782)**

Enslaved Person: Jack

Seller: Michel Cornud

Buyer: James Thompson

Notary: Charles Stewart

Date: August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1782

Location: Quebec City

Source: Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

Jane O'Brien Davis

Sam Perelmuter

Province & City of Quebec

Before the viewing public subscription, I personally appeal Mr. James Thompson Master of the Ship \_\_?\_\_, of the One Part, and Mr. Michel Cornud of the City of Quebec, \_\_?\_\_ merchant of the other part.

This which said James Thompson for and in consideration of the sum of thirty five pounds Halifax Currency to him at or before the \_\_?\_\_ and delivery of those presents by the said Michel Cornud well and truly paid the receipt wherefore \_\_?\_\_ \_\_?\_\_ acknowledged those Granted, Bargained, Sold, Assigned, and set over, and by the foresaid? and fully \_\_?\_\_ and absolutely , Grant, Bargain, sold assign, and set over, unto the said Michel Cornud a said Negroe boy named Jack aged about fourteen years -----To Have and to Hold the said negroe Boy unto the said Michel Cornud his Heirs, Executors, Administrators, and Assigns to his and their own use and uses and as his and their own property, goods, and chattel, from henceforth forever. And the said James Thompson does for henceforth his Heirs, Executors, Administrators, and Assigns \_\_?\_\_ progress and agrees to and with the said Michel Cornud his Heirs, Executors, Administrators, and Assigns in manners follow- ing. That is to say at the time of \_\_?\_\_

**Page 2**

Of the \_\_?\_\_ and delivering hereof the said

James Thompson has in himself good, right full,  
 power, and Lawfull Authority to Grant, Bargain,  
 Sell, Assign, and set over the said Negroe Boy  
 unto the said Michel Cornud his Heirs, Executors,  
 Administrators, and Assigns in manner and \_?\_?\_  
 Aforesaid that the said Negroe Boy now  
 is and so from henceforth for ever shall remain  
 and continue unto the said Michel Cornud,  
 his Heir, Executor, Administrators, and Assigns  
 free and cleat and fully and clearly acquitted  
 and discharged of and from all forms bargain,  
 sales, gifts, grants, thefts, debt?, charges and  
 incumbrances, whatsoever. In \_?\_  
 whereof the said parties have \_?\_ set their hands  
 and at Quebec aforesaid this fifteenth day  
 of august in the year of Our lord one thous-  
 and and seven hundred and eighty two and in  
 the twenty second year of the reign of \_?\_  
 Sovereign Lord George the third by the Grace  
 of God of Great Britain \_?\_ and \_?\_  
 King defender of faith and so forth.

J. Thompson,  
 Michel Cornud,  
 Cha. Stewart (notary signature)

### Page 3

Renaud Quebec 15<sup>th</sup> August 1782 from  
 Mr. William \_?\_ Michel Cornud the sum  
 of thirty five pounds Halifax Currency being  
 the full amount of the purchase price of the  
 William bargained promises stipulated and again  
 to be paid to the \_?\_ assigned James Thom-  
 pson and thereof and every part thereof  
 do fully \_?\_ and discharge the said  
 Michel Cornud his Heir, Executors \_?\_,

J. Thompson  
 Cha. Stewart (notary)  
 \*Michel Cornud's signature is absent.

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Jack (1782)**

Jane O'Brien Davis and Sam Perelmuter

This document details the sale of a fourteen-year-old “negroe boy named Jack”.<sup>1</sup> Jack was sold by a Mr. James Thompson to a Mr. Michel Cornud for “the sum of thirty-five pounds Halifax currency” in 1782.<sup>2</sup> Cornud is likely a white merchant, however there is no further information regarding him in the document. Through the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, it is possible to identify this James Thompson as perhaps a British soldier and office holder.<sup>3</sup> Following the British victory over France in their North American colonies, Thompson remained in Quebec as a clerk and worked with the engineering corps and in 1772 was named as head of the military engineering service responsible for the fortifications of Quebec City during the American invasion of Quebec in 1775.<sup>4</sup> His appointment to this position would have placed him securely in the slave owning class. A third signature is present in the document, that of the notary Charles Stewart.

A fugitive slave advertisement from a 1792 publication of the Quebec Gazette identifies a “negro named Jack...About 30 years old”.<sup>5</sup> The Jack listed in this bill of sale is said to be 24 years old, however slave owners commonly did not know the exact age of their enslaved people therefore, it is possible that the notice describes the same individual. This is difficult to prove due to the common usage of the name Jack and lack of other documentation regarding this individual. The advertisement states that Jack was born in Africa, meaning that he survived two Middle Passages— first from Africa to a place most likely in either the Caribbean or the United States, and then another passage to Canada.<sup>6</sup> This advertisement further states that Jack’s final destination was believed to be the United States,<sup>7</sup> leading us to surmise that he may have first been enslaved to the United States, to which he was attempting to return when he escaped.

Additionally, it should be noted that during the eighteenth century the term “Negro” was often used to specifically indicate a person of African descent whose heritage was not mixed with other races.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, through the use of the term “Negro” in both the bill of sale and later the fugitive slave advertisement, we can understand that both Jacks were likely dark-skinned individuals.

The price listed for Jack is “thirty-five pounds Halifax currency.”<sup>9</sup> Halifax currency refers to the customary standard rating for the dollar, which became the official currency of the colony in 1777, at one dollar equaling five shillings.<sup>10</sup> Sales of young boys around Jack’s age for £32-£50 was commonplace.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, £35 can be understood as an average price for an enslaved male. Thompson earned an annual salary of £174,<sup>12</sup> which suggests that the sale price of £35 (1/5th of his salary) would have represented a significant sum of money for him. From this it can be understood that Thompson saw value in the labour and social status provided through the enslavement of Jack. Thompson was willing to spend 1/5<sup>th</sup> of his salary to keep this individual in bondage.

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<sup>1</sup> “Before the viewing public...”, 15 August 1782, Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada.

<sup>2</sup> “Before the viewing public...”, 1782, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Christian Rioux, “Thompson, James,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography (date of last access 25 January 2020) [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thompson\\_james\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thompson_james_6E.html)

<sup>4</sup> Rioux, “Thompson, James” (date of last access 25 January 2020).

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<sup>5</sup> Frank Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 335.

<sup>6</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, "Introduction," Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (London: Routledge/Taylor Francis, 2016), p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," p. 335.

<sup>8</sup> Nelson, "Introduction," p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> "Before the viewing public...", 1782, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada.

<sup>10</sup> Adam Shortt, "History of Canadian Metallic Currency," Money and Banking in Canada, eds. E.P. Neufeld (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1964), p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Fryer, Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain, *Pluto Classics* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), pp. 61, 89.

<sup>12</sup> Rioux, "Thompson, James" (date of last access 25 January 2020).

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Shortt, Adam, "History of Canadian Metallic Currency," Money and Banking in Canada, eds. Neufeld, E.P. (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1964).

**Transcription: Bill of Sale for William (1783)**

Enslaved Person: William

Seller: William Boyd

Buyer: Hugh McKay (and his Heirs)

Notary: Charles Stewart

Date: May 1783

Location: Quebec City

Source: Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

Lucia Bell-Epstein

May \_\_?\_\_

Province and City  
of Quebec

Before The Notaries Public here to subscribing personally approved. Mr. William Boyd master of the ship Quebec \_\_?\_\_ who voluntarily and of His own Free will and accord confessed that on the fifteenth day of July in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty three. He had assigned transferred and made over a certain Negro lad at that time in his profession and his \_\_?\_\_ -- \_\_?\_\_ by virtue of an assignment bearing date the Thirty Four day of December One Thousand and Seven Hundred and Eighty do by John Qooke \_\_?\_\_ and And \_\_?\_\_ Byrons \_\_?\_\_ to an original Bill of \_\_?\_\_ sale dated April 11 1781. given and granted by John Gray the said Proprietor or Profiteer \_\_?\_\_ of the said negro Boy William as in and by the said Deed with the said Gift \_\_?\_\_ more fully appear being delivered by the said Boyd to M. Hugh. McKay of Quebec merchant \_\_?\_\_ of the said negro boy was delivered vigt the Thirteen day of July in the year aforesaid and thereas the said \_\_?\_\_ McKay is desirous of having a Deed of Sale regular passed Therefore known all men By these Present that the said William Boyd for and in Consideration of the sum of Fifty Eight Pounds in Shillings and Eight Pence Halifax currency formerly paid the receipt \_\_?\_\_ \_\_?\_\_ of the said William Boyd acknowledges to have received has Granted sold and Transferred and assigned as by these pre-present, doth hereby grant and sell assign Transfer and hand over unto the said Hugh McKay his Heirs and assigns for over all right \_\_?\_\_ interest or claim he had to the said negroe lad called William and the Said William Boyd for himself his Heirs Executors and administrators and for every of them



doth Consent and Grant to and with the said Hugh McKay.  
 His Heirs and assigns and to and with every of them by these Present  
 that He the said William Boyd hath not done, committed executed or  
 suffered any Act or Acts thing or things whatsoever whereby the said  
 negro lad William now is or at hereafter shall or may be  
 empeaded\_?\_ or otherwise the Conveyance made and granted by him the  
 said William Boyd to the said Hugh McKay and his Heirs \_?\_  
 before mentioned only excepted. And the said Hugh McKay also at  
 same time Personally appeared Before the said Notaries who of  
 his own free will and accord voluntary accepted and does by  
 this Present accept and acknowledge the receipt and delivery of  
 the said negro lad William - In Himself whereof the said  
 Parties have to this minute left in the Custody of one of the \_?\_  
 \_?\_ing notaries Charles Stewart doth their hands and affirm-  
 ed their seals this First Day of August One Thousand Seven  
 Hundred and Eighty Three.

William Boyd  
 In Notary  
 \_?\_  
 Cha Stewart

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for William (1783)**

Lucia Bell-Epstein

This bill documents the Sale of a “Negro lad William”<sup>1</sup> on 1 August 1783. William was sold by Mr. William Boyd master of a Quebec ship<sup>2</sup> for “Fifty Eight Pounds in Shillings and Eight Pence Halifax currency” to Quebec merchant Mr. Hugh McKay.<sup>3</sup> William Boyd originally acquired the enslaved William from a previous “proprietor” John Gray, who “gifted and granted” William on 11 April 1781.<sup>4</sup> Since enslaved people were considered chattel or moveable personal property, they were customarily exploited as currency to pay debts, handed down in wills, or gifted to others. For instance, the enslaved were bestowed as marriage presents, revealing their symbolic mistreatment as trophies.<sup>5</sup> In 1779, the sale of an enslaved fifteen year old mulatto “girl” Isabella, for forty-five pounds in Halifax currency, begs comparison with the fifty-eight pounds for which William was purchased.<sup>6</sup> Since enslaved females were customarily more expensive due to their ability to create new wealth – in the form of enslaved children – for their owners, Isabella’s lower price may signal problems with her health, her ongoing and documented resistance, or other issues (see bills of sale for Isabella for 1778 and 1779 above). Indeed, Isabella or Bell was listed in two fugitive slave advertisements in the Quebec Gazette dated 20 August 1778 and 5 November 1778 respectively.<sup>7</sup> The prices of William and Isabella illustrate the financial value of enslaved “boys” and “girls” in Quebec. Pertinent to this bill is the language employed -- “to the said Hugh McKay and his Heirs” -- signifying William’s enslavement to Hugh McKay’s family lineage. The perpetual bondage of Transatlantic Slavery is also documented in slave narratives such as Harriet A. Jacobs’s story.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the term “heirs” is critical because it implies property ownership for an indefinite future. The bill of sale was notarized by Charles Stewart, who worked for the Judicial District of Quebec and notarized

multiple bills of sale.<sup>9</sup> Notably, in 1789, Stewart contributed financial capital for the building of The Dorchester Bridge, which cost £1,627 and spanned the Saint-Charles River.<sup>10</sup> The other names stated in the transcription, either illegible or currently inaccessible via archival research, were not only witnesses to, but also engaged in the transatlantic regime of eighteenth-century Quebec.

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<sup>1</sup> Also referred to as “Negro lad” (see the seventh line of the bill of sale transcription).

<sup>2</sup> The title of the ship is illegible (see the second line of the bill of sale transcription).

<sup>3</sup> Alan McCullough, “Currency Conversions in British North America, 1760-1900,” *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1985), pp. 83-84. During the 1770’s Halifax currency (HC) dominated the eastern colonies, with the exception of Newfoundland, until 1821.

<sup>4</sup> Markus A Denzel, “Canada (1757-1914),” *Handbook of World Exchange Rates, 1590–1914*, (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 439. In 1781, the exchange rate from pounds to Halifax currency (HC) was 1 £ : 1.1382 HC, which was when the enslaved William was gifted to Boyd. Two years later, HC was 100.00 pounds, signifying that value had decreased 13.82 pounds by 1783.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Steven Wilder, *Part I: Slavery and the Rise of the American College, Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* (New York City: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), p. 45; William Renwick Riddell, “Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France,” *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 8, no. 3 (July 1923), p. 329.

<sup>6</sup> Riddell, “Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France,” p. 324.

<sup>7</sup> George Hipps, “RAN AWAY from my service,” *Quebec Gazette*, 20 August 1778; George Hipps, “RUN away from Mr George Hipps,” *Quebec Gazette*, 5 November 1778; transcribed in Frank Mackey, “Appendix I: Newspaper Notices,” *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), p. 321.

<sup>8</sup> Harriet A. Jacobs, “The New Master and Mistress,” *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 9. Harriet A. Jacobs became the legal property of Dr. Flint’s little daughter, who had married the sister of her deceased mistress.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), pp. 436, 458, 460, 461, 467, 510, 534-38, 596.

<sup>10</sup> David Roberts, “Gray, Ralph,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (2003) (date of last access 24 January 2020) [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gray\\_ralph\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gray_ralph_5E.html).

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ex \_?ed before the said notaries and hereby acknowledges the delivery  
for the said negroe \_? \_ William.

In witness \_? \_ of the said Hugh McKay, William  
Lindsay \_? John their hands to this \_? \_  
\_? \_? \_ office of Charles Stewart and of the subscribing notaries  
\_? \_ this twenty fourth day of May – one thousand seven  
hundred and eighty five

M. McKay  
Mr. Lindsay  
John Jones  
Charles Stewart

\_? \_

Quebec the 25 May 1785

Received from the \_? \_? \_ and \_? \_ Mr John Jones the  
Sum of fifty five pounds Halifax Currency being the full Con-  
sideration made for the within bargained negroe boy and thereof  
and every part thereof \_? \_ said Hugh MacKay and William  
Lindsay \_? \_ hereby \_? \_ and discharge the said John Jones  
His Executors administrators and assigns forever by those present  
In witness \_? \_? \_ Have presents sell and among the hands? at Quebec  
the said twenty fourth day of May – one thousand seven hun-  
dred and eighty five

Cha Stewart

M. MacKay  
M. Lindsay

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for William (1785)**

Maddie Coombs and Ellie Finkelstein

On 24 May 1785, a bill was documented for the sale of the black enslaved man named William. At the age of eighteen, William was sold by the merchant William Lindsay of Halifax, to the buyer John Jones of Quebec City. Despite his age, William was described as a boy in the document, an act which aligned with the pervasive drive to infantilize black men within Transatlantic Slavery.<sup>1</sup> It must be acknowledged that many enslaved black people in Quebec – African American, African Caribbean, and African-born - would have survived multiple crossings by land or sea, and the level of harm and inhumanity that these travels caused is difficult to quantify.<sup>2</sup> The nature of Lindsay's merchant enterprise is unclear. However, if he was a West Indian merchant, engaged in the shipping of slave-produced plantation products from the Caribbean, William may have been of African-Caribbean origin and conceivably arrived in Quebec as the "secondary cargo" on one of Lindsay's ships.<sup>3</sup> In the tropical or semi-tropical colonies of the Caribbean or the American South, the population of enslaved people was significantly higher than in Quebec. Therefore, if relocated from the Caribbean, William would have been subjected to an intense transition which included a dramatic shift in climate, increased surveillance, and isolation. William is described in his bill of sale as an enslaved man capable of

“all services.” The tasks that William would have been required to do range from household work, tending to the land and property, fishing for cod, sawing timber, building ships, and working in iron mines, amongst other labour.<sup>4</sup>

The nature of colonial archives and how they impede our access to the lives of enslaved people is a violence within itself. Due to the difficulty of transcribing the document, as well as the process involved in gaining access through archives, full narratives of Canadian enslavement are impossible to recuperate. Fragments of documents about enslaved people found in the archives offer fundamental evidence of the kind of lives endured under the domination of slavery.<sup>5</sup> Slave owners and their surrogates did leave considerable archives which document their engagement in the institution of slavery. Bills of sale like the one for William shed light on the extreme objectification of the enslaved and the constant fear with which they lived; that they might be sold away from loved ones, kin, community, and the environments which they knew at any moment. Such bills of sale also demonstrate the ways that the law was used to support slavery and the rights of free people to turn others into property.

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<sup>1</sup> To call enslaved men “boys” was a strategy frequently used in slavery in order to infantilize, dehumanize and emasculate black men. This concept must be understood in the relations of inequality or domination which exist whenever one person has more power over another. This strategy was psychological because it forced the enslaved person to internalize these power relations and think of themselves as inferior. See Orlando Patterson, “The Constituent Elements of Slavery,” *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1982), pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson has conceptualized the idea of a Second Middle Passage to discuss the nature and impact of these multiple ocean displacements on the enslaved. See: Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 7, 34 n. 32, 85, 127.

<sup>3</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, “Colonialism and Art: Landscape and Empire,” *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p.50, and John McGregor, *British American*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1832), vol. 2, p. 504.

<sup>4</sup> Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Marisa J. Fuentes, “Introduction,” *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*, (Philadelphia: PENN University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 2.

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Winks, Robin W., The Blacks in Canada: A History (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

### **Transcription: Bill of Sale for Caleb (1786)**

Enslaved Person: Caleb

Seller: William MacKenzie

Buyer: Mathew MacNider

Notary: Pierre-Louis Descheneaux

Date: June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1786

Location: Québec City

Source: Reel M173/307, Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

### **Transcription in French**

Denisa Marginean

(Recto) N9, 26 Juin 1786, Vente d'un Nègre  
 Il fut présent \_ ? \_ William  
 McKenzie, libre d'apparaître. Menuisier de cette ville  
 Lui qui a pour Carpentier son esclave et l'ayant avoué  
 Venda \_ ? \_ dormi \_ ? \_ toujours  
 Et permit la garantie de toutes évictions dans toutes langues –  
 De toutes personnes quelle que soit à Monsieur Mathieu  
 MacNider +restant de cette ville y demeurant  
 Savait \_ ? \_ son nègre \_ ? \_  
 Valet de Guinée l'esclave homme Caleb pour sa vie  
 \_ ? \_ l'avoir reçu chez lui \_  
 Le travailleur Guillaume l'ayant utilisé son nègre  
 Esclave \_ ? \_ est satisfait et content de l'achat  
 Apparemment pour l'avoir acheté du Cap. James Davidson  
 Capitaine du Brigg Ceves le 13 Juillet 1783  
 \_ ? \_ pour 80 francs  
 Sous une vente privée signé James Davidson –  
 Joseph Brown et Rob. Aupu a qui il remis et parle  
 À William McKenzie et maintenant Mathieu  
 Macnider donc cela la présente vente ainsi faite  
 Pour le Carpentier le prix fut la somme de trente cinq  
 Livres courant d'Halifax, la grande somme  
 Qui William McKenzie atteste avoir reçu  
 Et \_ ? \_ Mathieu devant nous c'est présenté  
 Donc Guillaume confirmant le prix total de la présente  
 Vente \_ ? \_  
 Alors, William McKenzie prive  
 (Verso) tous droits de propriété qu'il pourrait avoir se  
 Présenter sous sa personne du Caleb esclave à McNider  
 Qu'il en soi et dispose comme son esclave  
 De ce jour jusqu'à toujours son propriétaire  
 De la traite ainsi toute le moins impossible qui est



\_? \_ qui peut lui vendre \_? \_ McKenzie  
 Comme avoir maître car ainsi \_? \_  
 \_? \_? \_ part à Québec  
 \_? \_? \_?  
 Sous ligné ; an mille sept cent quatre-vingt six  
 Le vingt-sixième juin après \_? \_  
 \_? \_ McKenzie ayant permis d'avoir  
 \_? \_ après l'esclave  
 Deux \_? \_ marges sont moins \_? \_  
 Son \_? \_

Signatures : William Makenzie  
 Matthew Macnider  
 Descheneaux

### Translation to English

Denisa Marginean

(Recto) N9, 26 June 1786, Sale of a Negro  
 Was present, \_? \_ William  
 McKenzie, free to appear, carpenter of this city  
 and he who confesses having made carpenter (his slave)  
 is selling \_? \_? \_? \_ forever  
 and allowed the warranty to be free of all evictions in all languages –  
 and of all people whomever they may be, to Mister Mathieu  
 McNider (+ all remaining) whom in this city lives –  
 knowing to be a negro \_? \_? \_  
 native of Guinea, a slave man Caleb for his life, received in his home-  
 of the worker Guillaume who has made use of him as his negro  
 slave, is satisfied and content of his purchase who he  
 apparently bought from James Davidson,  
 captain of the Brig Ceres on July 13<sup>th</sup> 1783  
 \_? \_? \_ for 80 francs  
 under a private sale signed James Davidson-  
 Joseph Brown and Rob. Aupu to whom he handed (and talked)  
 to William McKenzie and now to Mathieu  
 MacNider, so that is how the present sale was fixed.  
 For the carpenter the price is in the amount of 35  
*current Halifax pounds*, the grand sum  
 which William McKenzie attests to having received  
 and \_? \_ Mathieu before us was presented  
 and confirms the total price of the present  
 sale. \_? \_? \_?  
 Thus, William McKenzie denies  
 (Verso) all right of property that he could have  
 presented on the body of Caleb the slave (now) to McNider

to be and dispose of him as his slave  
 from this day to forever his owner.  
 So, from the trade the least impossible that is  
 all \_? \_ who can sell him \_? \_ McKenzie  
 as his former master- because so \_? \_  
 \_? \_? \_ is part of Quebec.  
 \_? \_? \_?  
 Signed the year a thousand, seven hundred and eighty-six  
 on the twenty-sixth of June after \_? \_  
 McKenzie was permitted to have \_? \_  
 \_? \_ after the slave (does/trade) of \_? \_  
 Two \_? \_ the margin(s) are less \_? \_  
 His \_? \_.

Signatures: William Makenzie  
 Matthew Macnider  
 Descheneaux<sup>1</sup>

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Caleb (1786)**

Denisa Marginean

This notary bill from 1786 registers the sale of Guinea-born Caleb between the slave owners William Mackenzie to Matthew Macnider. The term Guinea was used in Quebec and elsewhere to mean Africa. Significantly then, in comparison to blacks who were born in the Americas and known as Creoles, Caleb would have been a part of what was most likely the smallest community of enslaved blacks in Canada, those who were born on the continent of Africa.<sup>2</sup> This raises questions about if and how he was able to preserve his African languages and cultures, and if he was old enough at the point of embarkation to remember them. Caleb reappears in public records two years later on 17 April 1788, in the Quebec Gazette,<sup>3</sup> when Matthew Macnider and his brother John placed a fugitive slave advertisement.<sup>4</sup> Caleb was sold to the Macniders for 35 Halifax pounds, the equivalent to 31.5 pounds sterling,<sup>5</sup> which is the equivalent of 5,209.93 US dollars in 2020.<sup>6</sup> Caleb was described as a “negro slave” and as a “native from Guinea.” His African birth confirms he survived two Middles Passages.<sup>7</sup> A vast majority of enslaved blacks in Quebec would have been Creoles (African Canadian, American, or Caribbean).<sup>8</sup> Unlike places like Jamaica where workhouse documentation lists specific ethnicities such as Coromantee and Eboe,<sup>9</sup> Canadian slave owners mainly alluded to Africa as a continent (birth or accent). Joe, an enslaved man with numerous runaway attempts owned by the printer and co-owner of the Quebec Gazette, William Brown, was primarily referenced in Brown’s fugitive notices as a “Negro lad born in Africa.”<sup>10</sup> In the case of the enslaved men Ireland and Jack, Guinea is only identified as an accent.<sup>11</sup> The lack of specificity and the clear absence of knowledge of Africanness among slave owners in Canada makes the recovery of enslaved lives extremely difficult. This deliberate invisibility transfers the violence inflicted onto the enslaved body to the archival documents, as the history of Black Canadians becomes disposable.<sup>12</sup> Although the information is missing from the bill of sale, we can recuperate from the fugitive slave advertisement that Caleb would have been close to 24 years old in 1786, the

age close to many students attending McGill University today. However, for enslaved blacks in Canada who were susceptible to high mortality rates due to poor food, hard labour, exposure to corporal punishment and European diseases, inadequate housing, and a lack of access to medical care, 24 was an advanced age.

<sup>1</sup> Although the signature is difficult to read, the only active French notary of Quebec City in 1786 to have a last name that starts with the letter D is Pierre-Louis Descheneaux practicing from 1781 to 1794. “Series S83-Pierre-Louis Descheneaux” Archives Canada (date of last access 23 January 2020) <https://archivescanada.accesstomemory.ca/pierre-louis-descheneaux>

<sup>2</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, “A ‘tone of voice peculiar to New-England’: Fugitive Slave Advertisements and the Heterogeneity of Enslaved People of African Descent in Eighteenth-Century Quebec,” *Atlantic Slavery and the Making of the Modern World: Experiences, Representations, and Legacies*, Current Anthropology, guest editors Ibrahim Thiaw and Deborah Mack, vol. 61, no. 22 (September 2020), 14 pages.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Mackey, “Appendix I: Newspaper Notices,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), p. 330.

<sup>4</sup> Scholar Frank Mackey also mentions the “coincidental” account of April 1788. A week after Caleb ran away, an enslaved person belonging to a “Mr Macnider” was admitted to the hospital Hôtel-Dieu de Quebec for almost five months. The escape and the hospital stay might be a reflection of the brutality of the Macnider brothers. See Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 539, n. 50.

<sup>5</sup> John J. McCusker, Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775: A Handbook (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 232.

<sup>6</sup> Eric W. Nye, “Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency,” University of Wyoming, (date of last access 25 January 2020) <https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson has conceptualized the idea of a Second Middle Passage to discuss the nature and impact of these multiple ocean displacements on the enslaved. See: Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 7, 34 n. 32, 85, 127.

<sup>8</sup> See: Nelson, “A ‘tone of voice peculiar to New-England’ ”.

<sup>9</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica, (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Mackey transcribes six runaway advertisements for Joe, five of which state his African birth (#’s 21, 22, 28, 30, 55). Interestingly, the one advertisement (# 54) that does not describe Joe as African born was purchased by the Sheriff James Shepherd Esq. after Joe broke out of “his Majesty’s Goal” (sic) on 18 February 1786 with a white criminal named John Peters. See, Mackey, “Appendix I: Newspaper Notices,” pp. 319, 320, 321, 322, 328-29.

<sup>11</sup> Mackey, “Appendix I: Newspaper Notices,” pp. 318-21.

<sup>12</sup> Marisa J. Fuentes, “Introduction,” Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 5.

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**Transcription: Bill of Sale for William (1786)**

Enslaved Person: William

Seller/Debtor: John Jones

Buyer/Trustee for the Creditors: James Tod

Possible "Principle Creditors": J. McGill and Pollard (Possible Partner of McGill)<sup>1</sup>

Notary: Charles Stewart<sup>2</sup>

Date: August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1786

Location: Quebec City

Source: Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

Lucy Brown

Simone Cambridge

7 August 1786

Be it Known and made manifest To all whom  
these persons may come That Mr James Tod and Mr John  
Jones both by the city of Quebec residing in Saint Peter Street  
Personally came Before the Public Notaries herein to date  
scribing and on this seventh day of August One Thousand  
Seven Hundred and Eighty Six did Enter into the \_\_\_\_?  
Convents and Agreement here as after appointed  
Whereas the said John Jones did by a certain deed bearing  
Date the second day of June last passed and before Charles  
Stewart, Notary and his Colleague assign Transfer and  
make over all his Property \_\_\_\_? to the said  
Mr James Tod in name and as a Trustee for the whole of his  
Creditors and Whereas the said John Jones had requested  
of his Principle Creditors that some \_\_\_\_? articles might  
\_\_\_\_? and that He might have the preferences of such  
articles upon finding security for the payments at such \_\_\_\_? a  
\_\_\_\_? at such request Messrs Pollard and McGill by this letter  
bearing date at Montreal the Twenty Fifth July last past  
addressed to the said Mr James Tod acquiesced on Mr Jones  
request and the said Mr Tod in consequence of such instruct-  
tion and the sums valued and a copy of said valuation decla-  
red in M. Jones which articles as after enumerated he  
has agreed to take of such confirmation. Therefore  
the said James Tod as trustee for the whole of the Creditors  
of him the said John Jones do hereby Bargain sell  
All units and Convey unto the said John Jones his Heirs  
Executors Administrators and assigns a certain Negroe  
lad called William at present residing with him the said  
John Jones. Also a certain Mare and Grey horse \_\_\_\_?  
and Ten \_\_\_\_? - the whole of said articles at present in

the possession of the said John Jones and which hereby these presents acknowledges the receipt and delivery by his subscribing hereto. To Have and to Hold all and singular the said Negroe Lad, Horses and Calash<sup>3</sup> & \_\_\_\_?  
and

## Page 2

and every of them by these presents bargain sold released \_\_\_\_?  
said and confirmed unto the said John Jones the executor administrator and assigns from hence forth and foremost this and said men The Consideration of the aforesaid hereby mentioned Presents bargained<sup>4</sup> & sold by the said John Jones for himself, his heirs Executors and Administrators Covenant promise and agree to payments that the said Mr James Tod as Trustee aforesaid after or before the Tenth day of October next to come the sum of Seventy Seven Pounds Ten Shillings Halifax Currency being the full amount sum of the valuation put upon the foresaid Promised - And Also Personally appeared and came Before the said date ascribing notaries. Mr Simon Fraser \_\_\_\_? of the City of Quebec merchant who acknowledge and sold by these \_\_\_\_?  
\_\_\_\_? acknowledged to become hereby for the payments of foresaid consideration money. Convenining Promising & signing for himself his Executors and Administrators And should the said John Jones have found in the payment of the said sum of Seventy Seven Pounds Ten shillings Halifax Currency on or before the said Tenth day of October next to pay or cause to be paid the aforesaid sum unto him the said James Tod as Trustee aforesaid. In a Testimony Whereof the said James Tod has herewith set his hand and the said John Jones and Simon Fraser set their hands to this \_\_\_\_? aforesaid in the office of Charles Stewart one of the subscribing Notaries of Quebec in Payments and Years of first before written -----

Signator 1: \_\_\_\_?<sup>5</sup>

Signator 2: J. M. Tod

Signator 3: John Jones

Signator 4: J. McGill

Signator 5: Charles Stewart

Notary

<sup>1</sup> "Pollard," may refer to Richard Pollard, a Montreal resident who had associates in common with James McGill. "Pollard, Richard," *Dictionary of Canadian Bibliography* (date of last access 27 May 2020) [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pollard\\_richard\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pollard_richard_6E.html); "McGill, James," *Dictionary of Canadian Bibliography* (date of last access 27 May 2020) [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgill\\_james\\_5F.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgill_james_5F.html)

<sup>2</sup> Charles Stewart was a notary of the Judicial District of Quebec from 1780 to 1801. He oversaw several legal affairs concerning enslaved persons. "Notaries of Quebec and Lower Canada 1760-1848," (date of last access 27 May 2020) [https://genealogyensemble.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/notaries-of-quebec-and-lower-canada-1760-](https://genealogyensemble.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/notaries-of-quebec-and-lower-canada-1760-1848.pdf)

1848(pdf. Frank Mackey, "Notes," Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 536; William Renwick Riddell, "Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France," The Journal of Negro History, vol.8, no.3 (1923), pp. 316-30.

<sup>3</sup> A calash was a small, wooden, four-person carriage with a folding top. "Calash," Merriam-Webster, (date of last access 29 March 2020), [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/calash](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/calash)

Mackey's note confirms the use of "Calash" as a common word in eighteenth-century Quebec.

Mackey, Frank, "Notes," Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). p 536, note 34.

<sup>4</sup> Hutton, Sir Richard, The Young Clerk's Guide in Four Parts. or an Exact Collection of Choice English Presidents According to the Best Forms Now Used for All Sorts of Inden (1673). This source confirms the use of "presents bargained" as a common phrase in legal documents during the eighteenth-century.

<sup>5</sup> This name could be "Pollard" as mentioned in the text. However, it appears as though the name ends with "eaux" and, therefore, could be a French or Québécois name.

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for William (1786)**

Lucy Brown

John Jones, a businessman, and landowner arrived in Quebec in 1777.<sup>1</sup> However, he, like many other merchants and businessmen, fell into incredible amounts of debt during the depression in Quebec that followed the end of the Revolutionary War. While filing for bankruptcy, Jones assigned all of his property to the merchant James Tod as the trustee for his creditors on 2 June 1786.<sup>2</sup> By traveling between Britain and Quebec during the late 1780's, Tod was able to represent the interests of other Quebec Merchants in Europe as Trustee of their property.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, John Jones appears to have made a request of James Tod, involving the sale of his property, which is unfortunately illegible but was agreed upon on July 25th. The transcribed August 7th text is the final piece to the agreement, in which Tod sells all "articles" in his possession from John Jones, with payments for the "articles" to be made by October 10th. The "Principle Creditors," who would benefit from the sale described, appear to be the Montreal slave owner and West Indian merchant James McGill and another man named "Pollard."<sup>4</sup> Among the "units" assigned to Tod, was a "certain negroe lad called William" alongside a Mare and Grey Horse, highlighting William's perceived "commodity status" as well as his objectification as a "chattel." There is little written about the enslaved boy William, other than that he was currently living with John Jones. Several other objects are also listed as part of the transfer but are regrettably indecipherable. The professional relationship between James McGill and John Jones continued in 1801 when John Jones entered into another agreement with McGill, in which Jones sold him 10,000 Acres in the Hunterstown Township.<sup>5</sup> However, both transactions appear to be unrelated, and it is never stated as to whether James McGill or "Pollard" received payment from James Tod or John Jones.

<sup>1</sup> Marianna O'Gallagher, "John Jones," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, (date of last access 29 March 2020), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jones\\_john\\_1818\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jones_john_1818_5E.html)

<sup>2</sup> Brown, George W., David M. Hayne, and Frances G. Halpenny. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography. 1801 to 1820*. University of Toronto Press, 1983. Pp 459

<sup>3</sup> Brown, Hayne, and Halpenny. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography. 1801 to 1820*. 1983. pp 820

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Hayne, and Halpenny. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography. 1801 to 1820*. 1983. Possibly "Richard Pollard"

<sup>5</sup> Brown, Hayne, and Halpenny. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography. 1801 to 1820*. 1983. pp 527

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### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for William (1786)**

Simone Cambridge

This Bill of Sale documents the transfer of the property of John Jones to his Executor James Tod on behalf of his creditors, which included James McGill. John Jones, like James Tod and James McGill, was a businessman and landowner in Quebec of Scottish background.<sup>1</sup> On 2 June 1786, Jones filed for bankruptcy and Tod was appointed as Trustee to liquidate his property and settle his debts.<sup>2</sup> This document, dated 7 August 1786, is a continuation of Jones' bankruptcy process, featuring an illegible request made by John Jones of James Tod with regard to the sale of his property. The bill of sale lists an enslaved black man, "a certain Negroe Lad called William," as chattel alongside horses and a calash.<sup>3</sup> There is little description of William, other than that he was living with his former slaveholder, John Jones, at the date of the bill of sale. William's status of bondage and objectification meant that he was legally transferable as currency at the will of his slaveholder. This forced William's connections to kin and community to be precarious as he could have been uprooted at any time. James McGill, one of the signatories of the document, is listed as a Principal Creditor of John Jones with another person named "Pollard". The business relationship between McGill and Jones continued after 1786.<sup>4</sup> In 1801, McGill bought ten thousand acres of land from Jones, however, it is unclear if the two transactions were related.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George W. Brown, David M. Hayne, and Francess G. Halpenny, "James Jones," Dictionary of Canadian Biography: 1801 to 1820 (University of Toronto Press, 1983), pp. 459, 820.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, Hayne, and Halpenny, "James Jones," pp. 459, 820.

<sup>3</sup> The use of the word "Negro" implies that the Canadian institution of slavery conflated blackness with the status of enslavement.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Hayne, and Halpenny, "James Jones," p.527.

<sup>5</sup> This land was the Hunterstown Township in Pennsylvania.  
Brown, Hayne, and Halpenny, "James Jones," p.527.

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**Transcription: Bill of Sale for Harry (1787)**

Enslaved Person: Harry

Seller: Joseph Poiré

Buyer: John Simpson

Notary: Charles Stewart

Date: December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1787

Location: Quebec City

Source: Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

Sosena Tilahun

\_\_\_\_\_  
1  
of Decem. 1787  
Sale  
Joseph Poiré  
Of a negro  
In favor  
John Simpson

Before the Public Notaries for the Province and City of Quebec \_\_\_\_\_  
subscribing Personally appeared M. Joseph Poiré Seaman or Master of  
a vessel who of his own free will and accord Confessed and  
acknowledged that for the Consideration here in after mentioned to  
have bargained, sold, assigned, confirmed, and released and by these  
presents doth hereby bargain, sell, assign, transfer, confirm and release  
unto Mr. John Simpson of the said City of Quebec Traded a certain  
negro lad called Harry of about fifteen years of age. To have and to hold  
the said negro lad by these presents sold, released, and confirmed unto  
the only proper use and behoof of him the said John Simpson His Heirs  
Executors administrators and assigns freely, \_\_\_\_\_ peaceably and  
entirely without any hindrance or disturbance whatsoever the said  
Joseph Poiré hereby declaring that he has in himself, good right full  
Power and lawfull authority to Grant Bargain sell assign and sell over  
the said negro lad called Harry, Transferred sold and \_\_\_\_\_ over unto  
him by M. Barrach Hays of the City of Montreal in the said Province of  
Quebec Merchant by Deed of Sale passed before M F. Le Guay Notary  
residing at Montreal bearing date the Seventeenth day of November  
One thousand Seven hundred and Eighty seven which said negro lad  
was purchased and acquired by him the said Barrach Hays from Samuel  
Wade of the City of New York North America Blacksmith by Deed of  
Bargain and sale bearing date the Twenty Third day of October One  
Thousand seven hundred and Seventy seven which said writings have  
been delivered up to him the said Mr John Simpson and the said M  
Joseph Poiré for himself his Heirs Executors and administrators Do  
\_\_\_\_\_ Promise and agree to and with the said John Simpson his

Executors and administrators and assigns to Warrent and Defend this present sale of the above named negro and from all claim and Demand of all and every Person or Persons whossoever or wheresoever from the day of the date hereof and for ever and also appeared before the said subscribing notaries the said Mr John Simpson. Simpson who in consideration of the said negro lad sold and transferred unto him acknowledged to have Covenanted and agreed to Pay to him the said Mr Joseph Poiré the sum of Thirty six Pounds Hallifax Currency, which said him has been fully satisfied and payed before us the said subscribing notarys [sic] the Receipt whereof the said Mr. Joseph Poiré hereby acknowledges and therefrom and of every part thereof he for himself his Executors and administrators Discharges and acquits the said Mr John Simpson his Heirs Executors Administrators and assigns from henceforth and forever In Witness whereof the said Mr Joseph Poiré and the said Mr John Simpson have to this minute Deposited in the office of Charles Stewart one of the subscribing notarys. Sit their hands at Quebec this Fourth \_\_ day of December in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven hundred and Eighty Seven.

Joseph Poiré  
John Simpson  
Cha Stewart, Not. Pub.

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<sup>1</sup> While illegible at first, it is made clear later in the document that the contract was officiated on December 4th, 1787.

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Harry (1787)**

Sosena Tilahun

The document presented here was originally written in Quebec City, on 4 December 1787. The agreement, notarized by Charles Stewart, outlines the sale of an enslaved person called Harry, by seaman Joseph Poiré to the buyer, John Simpson. The sum of thirty-six pounds in Halifax currency would signify an eleven-pound profit for Poiré who acquired the boy from Barrach Hays approximately two weeks prior, on 17 November 1787.<sup>11</sup>

Although the bill of sale refers to Harry as a Negro, this term indicated that Harry was of African descent, but did not shed light on his birth origins or ethnicity. Therefore, it is not clear whether Harry was African born or Creole (born in the Americas). However, the contextual evidence in the document seems to support the possibility that he had gone through at least one Middle Passage<sup>2</sup> and had resided in the province of Quebec before this transfer occurred. He was said to have been previously enslaved by Barrach Hays, “of the City of Montreal”<sup>3</sup> for a total of ten years (1777-1787)<sup>4</sup>. However, prior to this, he was enslaved by Samuel Wade of New York. Therefore, if Harry’s age was accurately documented as fifteen, he would have been five years old in 1777 when he was sold to Barrach Hays by Samuel Wade. This opens the distinct possibility that he was born into the Wade household and if so, since the bill of sale does not mention Harry’s parents or kin, we must consider the cruel possibility that he was sold away from his mother and perhaps both parents, at a very young age.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the contract, little importance is attributed to the description of Harry beyond him being a fifteen year old black lad. The deed explicitly states his previous masters and their trades, perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate his familiarity with particular types of labour.<sup>6</sup> Through this deed of sale, Simpson would have had the freedom to exploit Harry’s labour skills as he deemed fit.

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<sup>1</sup>. Frank Mackey, “Things As They Were,” Done With Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 108

<sup>2</sup>. The initial relocation documented in the records was from New York City to Montreal, Quebec, which may have been undertaken by ship. Though this is the only found record of relocation, Charmaine A. Nelson’s work highlights Second Middle Passages, namely between the Caribbean and Canada as a reality for many enslaved individuals.

See: Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 7, 34 n. 32, 85, 127.

<sup>3</sup>. New York records show that Barrach Hays was likely in fact Barrack Hays, the British Loyalist who emigrated “to Canada after the British withdrawal from New York”.

See: Jacob Rader Marcus, United States Jewry, 1776-1985, volume 1 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), p. 87

<sup>4</sup>. This would indicate that he was sold by Samuel Wade to the said Barrach Hays at about the age of five years old.

<sup>5</sup>. The reality of enslaved children means that Harry may have experienced the Middle Passage between Africa and New York City, a rare northern location to which slave ships from Africa arrived directly.

See: Iptee, Audra A., “African Children in the British Slave Trade During The Late Eighteenth Century,” Slavery and Abolition, vol. 27, no. 2 (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 193

<sup>6</sup>. We must consider that from his ten years enslaved under a blacksmith, Harry might have gotten familiar with such practices.

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**Transcription: Bill of Sale for Sarah (1788)**

Enslaved Person: Sarah

Seller: Jean Louis Cavilhe

Buyer: James McGill

Notary: John Gerbrand Beek.

Date: September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1788

Location: Montreal

Source: Reel M620/66, Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

Gemma Else  
Emma Ridsdale

\_\_?\_ 453 23 September 1788  
Jean Louis Cavilhe Mercht  
to  
James McGill \_\_?\_  
Sale of a Negro woman  
named Sarah

Before the underwritten Notaries Residing  
in the City of Montreal in the Province of Quebec  
duly admitted and shown Personally came and  
was present Jean Louis Cavilhe of the Saint  
Laurence suburb Merchant who Voluntarily  
declared that for and in Consideration of the  
Sum of fiftysix Pounds Lawful money of  
the Province aforesaid to him in hand paid by  
James MacGill of Said Montreal Esquire  
at or before the Executing hereof the receipt whereof  
is hereby Acknowledged to have bargained, sold,  
Released and Consigned and by these presents doth  
Bargain Sell Release and Confirm unto the Said  
James McGill a Negro Woman Named Sarah  
about the age of Twenty Five Years to have and  
to hold the said Negro Woman named Sarah  
unto the said James McGill his Executors Adminis-  
trators and assigns forever. And he the said  
Jean Louis Cavilhe for himself and his executors and  
Administrators the said Negro Woman Sarah  
against from the said Jean Louis Cavilhe his  
Executors administrators and assigns and against  
all and every person and persons whatsoever  
shall and will warrant and forever defend by  
these presents of which Negro Woman he  
the said Jean Louis Cavilhe hath put the said

James McGill in full possession by delivering (her)  
her up to him. Thus done & passed at Montreal  
aforesaid on the Twenty third day of September in  
the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred  
and eightyeight and Signed by the Said Jean Louis  
Cavilhe after being duly explained unto him in  
French by one of the said notaries and by us Notarized

Cavilhe  
J. G. Beek  
Not. Pub.  
1788

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Sarah (1788)**

Gemma Else

This bill of sale documents the transfer of an enslaved woman, referred to as Sarah, from the possession of the merchant Jean Louis Cavilhe to James McGill (1744-1813) in 1788 only one year after McGill signed a report calling for the abolition of slavery.<sup>3</sup> The bill of sale refers to Sarah as a “Negro Woman” about the age of twenty-five, a considerable age for an enslaved person for whom mortality rates were high. The term Negro was used to named enslaved people of African descent, but also those who were black and unmixed with other races. Although the term Negro give no clues about Sarah’s ethnicity or birth origin, like many enslaved blacks in New France, she may have been subjected to a Second Middle Passage before arriving in Quebec.<sup>4</sup> Sarah took on different names throughout her life and married as Charlotte Cavilhe, a free black woman, in 1802.<sup>5</sup> Changing her name upon gaining her freedom may have been a way for Charlotte to assert her identity and create distance between herself and the slave-owning James McGill.<sup>67</sup> As a formerly enslaved woman Charlotte disrupted the matrilineal order of chattel slavery and gave birth to two free sons before her death in 1809.<sup>8</sup>

James McGill founded McGill University with the donation of his Burnside Estate and a trust of £10,000, capital acquired through the sale of slave-made products.<sup>9</sup> This bill of sale makes it clear that McGill’s involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade was not limited to profiting remotely off of the tropical model of plantation slavery. He owned at least five enslaved people, black and Indigenous, at his Burnside Estate in Montreal.

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Mackey, “Still Counting,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, “Introduction,” Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (London: Routledge/Taylor Francis, 2016), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Mackey, “Still Counting,” p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> Mackey, “Still Counting,” p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, “A Tale of Two Empires: Montreal Slavery Under the French and the British,” Slavery, Geography, and Empire (London: Routledge/Taylor Francis, 2016), p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> Mackey, “Still Counting,” p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> Nelson, “A Tale of Two Empires,” p. 86.



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### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Sarah (1788)**

Emma Ridsdale

When considering documents written about enslaved people, attention should be paid to the use of language in reference to them. As representations of a marginalized group created by a dominant majority, these descriptions reveal the perceptions white people had of enslaved people rather than factual truths. Bills of sale tend to be extremely objectifying, especially in comparison to fugitive slave advertisements: the former reduce their subjects to a name, a racial identifier, and an age, while the latter are stuffed with identifying and humanizing descriptions.

<sup>1</sup> In this bill documenting the sale of a “Negro woman named Sarah” to James McGill, Sarah is given no involvement in this legal exchange; she is not a participant in a custody arrangement, she is an object being sold and purchased. This objectification is typical of the “commodification and dehumanization of the black body” central to slavery.<sup>2</sup>

The use of the phrase “to have and to hold,” which is typically associated with marriage vows today, takes on a disturbing meaning in this context. Accounts of enslaved black women record the commonality of sexual violence committed against them, and the phenomenon is known to have occurred widely throughout Transatlantic Slavery.<sup>3</sup> Using words associated with marriage to describe the ownership of Sarah foregrounds the commonplace sexual exploitation of enslaved black females by white male slave owners and others. The bill insists that McGill “defend” her, but sexual exploitation of an enslaved female would not have defied this obligation. Enslaved people were property and slave owners were free to use their property in whatever manner they wished.

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<sup>1</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, “‘Ran away from her master ... a negroe girl named Thursday’: Examining evidence of punishment, isolation, and trauma in Nova Scotia and Quebec fugitive slave advertisements,” Legal Violence and the Limits of the Law, eds. Joshua Nichols and Amy Swiffen (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Iman Cooper, “Commodification of the Black Body, Sexual Objectification and Social Hierarchies during Slavery,” The Earlham Historical Journal vol. 7, no. 2 (spring 2015), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Harriet A. Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 27-30.

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**Transcription: Bill of Sale for Rebecca and Peggy (1788)**

Enslaved Person: Rebecca, and her daughter Peggy

Seller: Mary Gill

Buyer: Elizabeth Wilkinson

Notary: Isaac Roberts and Charles Stewart

Date: December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1788

Location: Quebec City

Source: Reel M173/946, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Quebec City, Canada

Nicholas Raffoul

Bella Silverman

Before the Public Notaries for the City and Body of Quebec hereunto Subscribing \_\_?\_\_ in said City Personally appeared/approved Mrs. Mary Gill Widow of the late of the deceased Mr. William Gill of the said city of Quebec merchant and Executor to the last will and testament of her said deceased Husband bearing date the \_\_\_\_\_ day of February in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty Six and Mr. Isaac Roberts of the said city of Quebec merchant acting for account and on behalf of Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson of Machiche in the district of Montreal in the said province of Quebec When the said Mrs. Mary Gill in the character as aforesaid of her own free will and accord acknowledged and confessed to have Bargained sold Transferred and made over and by these Presents in character as aforesaid for herself her Heirs Executors and administrators Do hereby Bargain sell transfer and make over unto the said Mr. Isaac Roberts for behalf and on account of the said Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson for the consideration herein after mentioned that is to say a certain negroe woman called Rebecca aged about Twenty Five years Together with all Right title and interest to a female child procreate of the Body of her the said Negroe Girl Rebecca/aged about ten months To Have and To Hold the said negroe Girl called Rebecca with the said child procreate of her Body unto the said Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson her Heirs Executors Administrators and Assigns from the day of the sale hereof from henceforth and for ever which said sale and the property and Rights of disposal of the said Mrs. Mary Gill in character as aforementioned \_\_?\_\_ and obliges herself her Executors or Administrators to warrant and defend against all \_\_?\_\_ and \_\_?\_\_ whatever by the said negroe Girl or any other Person or persons to the contrary and that the

said Negroe Girl with the said child is and shall be henceforth and for ever the Right and Property of her the said Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson or her assigns. In Consideration of the Sale and Transfer of the said negroe Girl and her Child the said Mr. Isaac Roberts for and an account of Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson acknowledged and confessed to Have agreed to pay onto her the said Mrs. Mary Gill the sum of Forty Pounds currency was counted and paid down at the Execution hereof in presence of the said notaries the Receipt whereof is by her the said Mrs. Mary Grill hereby acknowledged and the said Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson therefrom from henceforth and for ever discharged.

In Witness for thereof the said Mrs. Mary Gill at the House of Mr. Soloman in the Lower Town of Quebec and by the said Mr. Isaac Roberts for and on the account of the said Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson set their Hands to this minute? deposited in the office of Charles Stewart Public Notary at Quebec this Thirteenth day of December One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty Eight the same having been read over and approved by each of them The two words “on the”? on the Third Line of the Page declared null and the Three? words which said \_?\_ wrote on the margin of the page declared good.

Mary Gill  
Isaac Roberts  
Charles Stewart  
Nota Publ

### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Rebecca and Peggy (1788)**

Nicholas Raffoul

English slave merchant and captain of navigation William Gill settled in Quebec before the American War of Independence and married Mary Gill (born Cawley) in 1771.<sup>1</sup> Records prove that Gill owned at least two enslaved adults, Lowcanes and Rebecca.<sup>2</sup> In 1775, a fugitive slave advertisement that William Gill published in the Quebec Gazette revealed that Lowcanes attempted an escape from the Gill residence.<sup>3</sup>

Around two years after William Gill’s death on 13 December 1788, his widow Mary Gill sold Rebecca to Elizabeth Wilkinson of Machiche, seigneur of Dumontier, Frédéric, Grand Pré, and Grosbois Ouest. When sold, Rebecca was twenty-five years old and was exchanged with her ten-month old daughter Peggy. Officially notarized by Isaac Roberts, Rebecca and Peggy were sold to Wilkinson for a sum of forty pounds, equating to around \$8,400 in today’s Canadian currency (adjusted for inflation).<sup>4</sup>

Wilkinson gained immense wealth from her romantic partner and Dutch-Canadian seigneur Conrad Gury.<sup>5</sup> Gury left a life interest in his seigneuries, movables, and immovables to Wilkinson

and passed all his properties to her upon his death in 1776. Rebecca and Peggy remained in bondage in Wilkinson's household until her death in 1794. In her will, it was stipulated that everyone she enslaved was to be transferred to Adélaïde Conradine Guty, niece of Conrad Guty.<sup>6</sup> Scarce information remains concerning the enslaved family Rebecca and Peggy or their status beyond this exchange.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 534.

<sup>2</sup> Mackey, Done with Slavery, pp. 189, 190, 319, 534.

<sup>3</sup> Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 319.

<sup>4</sup> "Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency," University of Wyoming (date of last access 26 January 2020) <https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>

<sup>5</sup> "Conrad Guty," Geni, (date of last access 26 January 2020) <https://www.geni.com/people/Conrad-Guty/6000000002441037727>

<sup>6</sup> Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 534.

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### **Analysis: Bill of Sale for Rebecca and Peggy (1788)**

Bella Silverman

The following paragraph recounts “the Negro woman” Rebecca’s “Bill of Sale” from Mrs. Mary Gill to Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson, notarized by Isaac Roberts and Charles Stewart on 13 December 1788, in Montreal, Quebec. William Gill, Mrs. Gill’s husband and a British ship captain and merchant, captained a transport of 300 enslaved peoples (Voyage ID: 90776) from Saint John, Antigua to France in 1759.

Gill<sup>1</sup> settled in Quebec and in 1771 married Mary Cawley.<sup>2</sup> Gill died in 1786.<sup>3</sup> In 1788, Mrs. Gill sold Rebecca (approximately 25-years-old) and her daughter, Peggy (10-months-old) to Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson of Machiche for forty-pounds or \$8524.93 CAD today.<sup>4</sup> Although the “Bill of Sale” does not delineate Peggy’s race, given the institutionalized rape and sexual coercion of enslaved females, there exists the possibility that Rebecca’s daughter was mixed-race and was fathered by William Gill. Ostensibly, Mrs. Gill may have sold Rebecca and Peggy to rid herself of the material reminders of her husband’s sexual violence. Mrs. Wilkinson bought and sold plots of land, as evidenced by her sale to Michel Caron in 1783; Caron paid Mrs. Wilkinson 22,000 pounds for a large piece of land in Machiche.<sup>5</sup> The death of her lover, Conrad Guky,<sup>6</sup> in 1786, left Mrs. Wilkinson with ownership of his property in Machiche, Quebec, where she remained until her passing in 1794 (Fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Guky appointed Mrs. Wilkinson as seigneuress of Dumontier, Frederic, Grand Pre, and Grobois Ouest. In her will, Mrs. Wilkinson specified that Rebecca and Peggy be given to Adelaide Conradine Guky, niece of Guky.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Richardson, Katherine Beedham, and M.M Schofield, “Liverpool Shipping and Trade, 1744-1786,” ESRC Archives, University of Essex, 1992, (date of last access 26 Jan 2020).  
<https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>.

<sup>2</sup> Upon her marriage, Mary Cawley’s changed her name to Mary Gill, as evidenced in the “Bill of Sale.”

<sup>3</sup> Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), p. 534; The “Bill of Sale” delineates the month and year of William Gill’s death as February, 1786. Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), p. 319. Notably, Gill acquired more than one enslaved person in his lifetime: on 30 November 1775, Gill published a “Run Away” advertisement in the *Quebec Gazette*, stating that “a Negro man named Lowcanes,” was missing. Considering that Lowcanes fled Gill’s home in the late fall when the weather was surely colder, it can be assumed that Gill’s treatment toward enslaved peoples was severely cruel.

<sup>4</sup> “Historical Currency Conversions,” *Future Boys* (Date of last access 26 January 2020).  
<https://futureboy.us/fsp/dollar.fsp>; Rebecca and Peggy’s price can be compared to similar transactions of the period; in South Carolina, 1802, the “Bill of Sale” for a mother (Mary) and daughter (Eliza) delineated their price at 370 dollars, \$7485.47 U.S., today. Refer to Fig. 2.

<sup>5</sup> François Pierre Sévère Lesieur Desaulniers, R. Bellemare, *Les Vieilles Familles d’Yamachichee Vol 1-2* (C.O. Beauchemin & fils, libraires-imprimeurs 256 et 258, rue Saint-Paul, 1898), p. 152.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), p. 534.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Douville, “Guky, Conrad,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, (2003) (date of last access 26 January 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), p. 534.



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**Plate List**

Figure 1: Reid Levesque Monk, Copy of Elizabeth Wilkinson's Death Certificate, (1817),  
Numérique, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

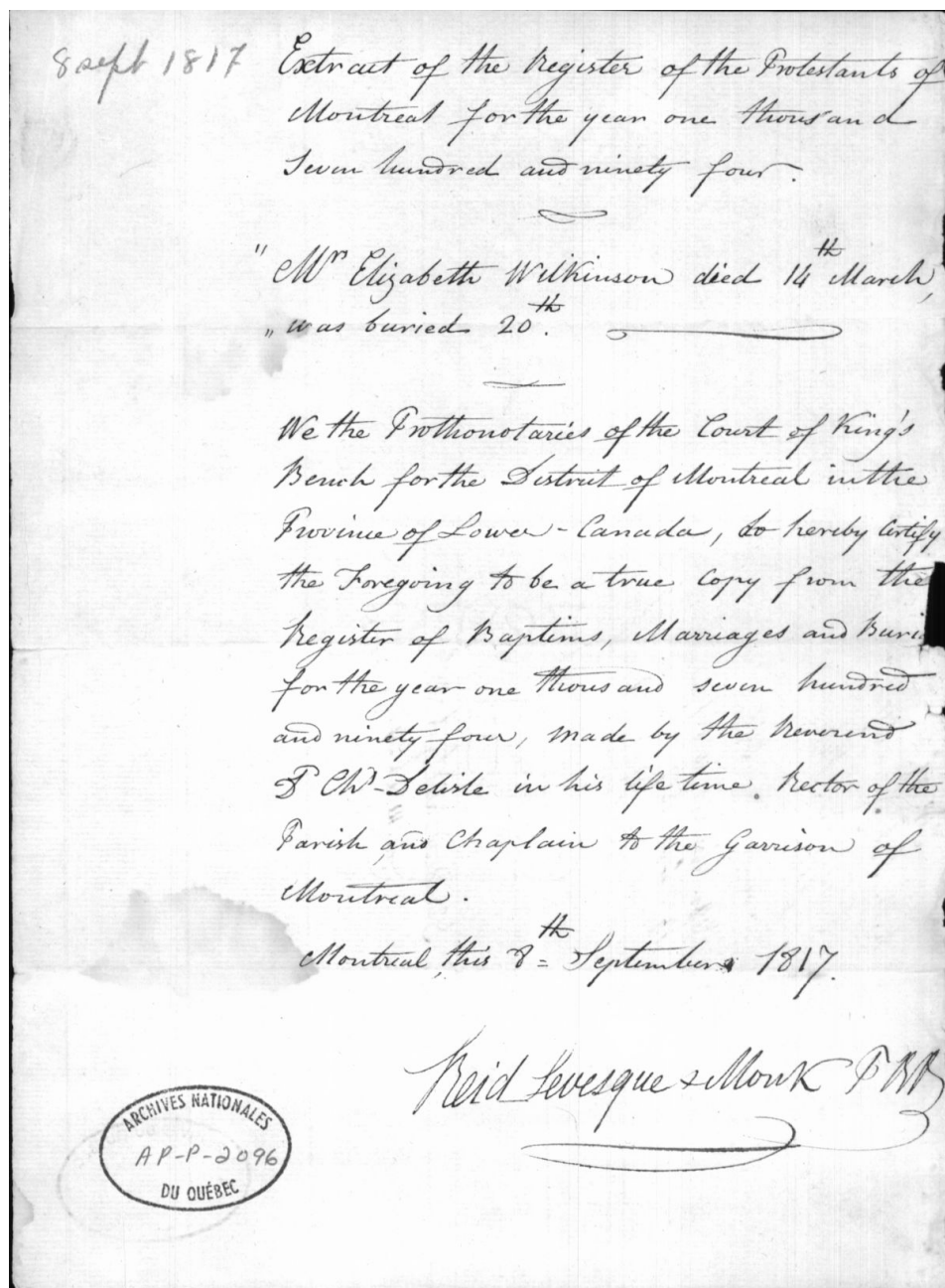


Figure 2: R.F. Chainuion Bang, Bill of Sale for Two Slaves: Mary and her daughter Eliza, to Henry Dana Ward, S.C., Northern Circuit, (2 February, 1802), American slavery documents collection, Folder 22.

