

A Columbia Family: Merchants, Slavers, Americans

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Columbia University & Slavery Course

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Daniel Echikson Discussing A Columbia Family: Merchants, Slavers, Americans: [video]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOlj3BYKkTY>

On October 1 of every year, the former slaves of St. Croix celebrated Contract Day. New labor contracts were drawn up between plantation laborers and the planters who employed them, and it became a cause for carnivalesque festivities among the workers, who had the day off. Field laborers came into town to dance, sing, and drink. Each year, “[t]here were usually several arrests for disturbing the peace and drunkenness [*sic*].” The atmosphere was, as one might imagine with the drinking and amusement, typically bawdy and emotionally charged, but Contract Day of 1878 was different. Rumors had been spreading among field laborers of recent “police brutality” and the “discontinuation of the issuance of passports” by the Danish colonial government. The town of Fredericksted, usually full of revelers, was oddly quiet. “So quiet, in fact,” explains Clifton Marsh, that the “Police Master...was moved to investigate the situation.” Odd as well was the fact that for a few weeks prior, “workers had failed to cultivate their provisional ground.” Planters and colonial officials expected protests and strikes, as these were typical. As the day progressed, however, isolated conflicts began to break

out between the police and laborers. Suddenly, large crowds of field workers, normally boisterous and merry on Contract Day, gathered in town not with rum and viol, but torch and club. Buildings burst ablaze and violence ensued. It was a revolt.[1]

Cornelia Codwise, born in 1810 to the American James Codwise and Cruzan Rebecca Codwise (née Rogers), witnessed some of the violence of the revolt firsthand.[2] She related with horror,

[o]n the Estate Grove Place there were 13 negroes who refused to join the rebels during the insurrection in the island of St. Croix the rebels were so brutal as to put a puncheon of rum in the mule pen, set it fire & throw the 13 men in the flames, they were burned to a crisp, the other two died shortly after...

Cornelia concluded with brief reflection, “what I have written is a positive fact and will show you how barbarous they are in this enlightened age.” This conclusion ought to give us pause. It, along with the letter fragment as a whole, provokes a variety of questions. While certainly the rebel laborers’ summary execution of their fellows for their refusal to participate was “brutal,” why in the first place were they engaging in “insurrection”? Slavery had ended thirty years earlier on St. Croix, in 1848. Why did the rebellious laborers choose rum, a drink made from the distilled byproducts of sugarcane, as the fuel for their fire? Why was Cornelia, who was white, able to use the words ‘rebel’ and ‘field worker’ interchangeably with the word ‘negro’? Why did Cornelia believe that this event “show[ed]” a broader trend, one indicative of how “they”—that is, St. Croix’s black laborers—were “barbarous”? How could Cornelia have considered her age “enlightened” if only thirty years before, the vast majority of St. Croix’s human beings were enslaved on the basis of the color of their skin, especially since her family owned a great number of such human beings? Perhaps Cornelia considered herself so enlightened as a consequence of her familial connection to an institution of enlightenment; she was the sister, nephew, and cousin of Columbia alumni. But finally, in the first place, why was Cornelia, the daughter of an American, on St. Croix, a small sugar-producing island then part of the Danish West Indies?[3]

To answer these questions, it turns out we need to go back further, to eighteenth-century New York City. Answering them entails an exploration into the history of the Codwise family and its transnational, centuries-long relation to slavery. And, it requires investigation into the wide-ranging ways in which Columbia's students were irrevocably entangled with slavery, the institutions formed by slavery, and the institutions supporting slavery. Because slavery was central to the lives of Columbia's students, it was central to Columbia, too. Columbia could not have existed had it not been for families like the Codwises—families who amassed their wealth by the exploitation of black slaves, who interacted socially with such slaves on a daily basis, and who engaged in a surpassingly violent politics of slavery.

The Codwises were merchants, planters, overseers, ship captains, lawyers, teachers, Danish royal subjects, British royal subjects, Northerners, Southerners, and Americans. They first appear on the historical record in New York City in the late seventeenth century, though as time passed they spread across North America to places such as Michigan, Alabama, Georgia, and of course, St. Croix. Four of them attended Columbia: Cornelia's uncle, David, attended the college and was class of 1798; her cousin, George, attended the college and was class of 1810; another one of her cousins, Alexander Hamilton, attended the college but died halfway through his studies in 1826; and her brother, George Washington, attended the medical school and was class of 1825.[4] The Codwises were in many ways representative of the other elite families of early New York City. Hence they were also representative of many of the families whose young men attended Columbia. The Codwise family, nonetheless, was especially remarkable for two reasons: historians have not studied them, and from their very beginnings in America onwards, the narratives of their lives were enmeshed in and very often defined by slavery.

King's College, later Columbia, was, according to historian Craig Stephen Wilder, a "merchants college." The vast majority of the young men it graduated were "sons of the commercial class" of New York City.[5] In addition, King's actively sought to recruit, along with the other early American institutions of higher education, the sons of rich

Southern and West Indian plantation owners. "In 1759," reports Wilder, "the trustees of King's college sent solicitations to select 'gentlemen in the several Islands in the West Indies.'" A few years later, some of the trustees actually travelled to the various West Indian islands on a recruiting mission. The young men of the West Indies were attractive to the college, and later the university, because their magnificently wealthy planter families could potentially increase the often cash-strapped college's endowment and ensure its economic solvency. Many planters' sons did attend King's and Columbia; George Washington Codwise, whose father owned a plantation on St. Croix, was one.[6] Columbia was not only a merchant's college; it was a plantation college, too. It had two sides. And the Codwise family, with its merchant activity in New York City and its plantation activity in the West Indies, represented both of these sides.

So often, however, the history of slavery is thought to be peripheral to the history of America, its universities, and its families. And when slavery is discussed in terms of its being central to these histories, mention of it usually ends at the territorial boundaries of the United States and ceases after the close of the Civil War. Woefully little has been written about the merchants of New York during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Even less has been written about their commercial and social connections to the West Indies. And what has been written of these often fails to take into account the centrality of slaves and slavery to their lives.

For example, Robert Albion's 1939 book, *The Rise of New York Port: 1815-1860*, "remains the standard account" of New York City's merchant commerce during this period.[7] While there is much to commend in this work, it is deficient in a few respects. It is especially deficient in its engagement or lack thereof with the history of slavery. Though Albion asserts, "[t]he story of a general seaport like New York cannot be limited to mere local history," for the "economic activity of the whole world passed in review along" its "wharves" and in its "countinghouses," he nonetheless barely discusses slavery.[8] But slavery was a crucial part of the worldwide economic activity in which New York took part. Such activity cannot be properly understood without reference to slavery. Unfortunately, in the few places where Albion does engage with the history of slavery, he does so problematically. The language of scientific and non-scientific racism

appears frequently throughout the book. Language reminiscent of Wilson's revisionist scholarship of the Civil War creeps into the work as well, particularly in Albion's discussion of New York's involvement in the cotton trade and his discussion of the Tappan brothers. Albion treats slavery as exterior and only tangentially related to the history of New York Port. Worse still, he often makes racist assumptions and remarks.[9]

The history of the Codwise family makes evident why Albion's account could use revision. The Codwises' lives can only be understood completely within the context of the history of slavery. Historian of the Subaltern School, Dipesh Chakrabarty, encourages historians to engage in the project of "provincializing" Europe. That is, rather than understanding the colonies and former colonies in terms of Europe, its metanarratives, and its politics, the historian ought to understand Europe in terms of its very colonies and former colonies. This is to make Europe a province.[10] Similarly, the lives of Afro-American slaves and former slaves are too frequently understood in terms of their Euro-American masters and former masters, their lives, and their politics. In this sort of history, the masters remain, to borrow Chakrabarty's phrase, the "sovereign theoretical subject[s]," and the slaves, even though they are purportedly at the center of the study, remain peripheral.[11] To develop a fuller historical understanding of the Codwises, we must, so to speak, provincialize them. Since slavery was so central to their lives, their history can only be understood through the history of slavery. This is not to show the lives of the slaves via their masters, but to show the masters via their ownership of and interaction with slaves. This is also to show Columbia through its students' connections to slavery. The Codwise family owned slaves, opined about slavery, and were at the nexus of a violent commerce built upon slavery that ran between New York City and the West Indies. Slavery lay at the center of their lives, not the periphery. Consequently, so too does it lie at the center of the history of Columbia. Columbia—through the commercial, social, and political activities of its students—was deeply implicated in the slave economy, slave society, and slave politics of not just the United States, but a large swath of North America.

The story, however, begins even before the founding of King's College in 1754. John Conrad, sometimes spelled Jan Coenraet or Jan Koenraet, is the first Codwise to appear on the historical record in America. Little documentation of his life exists. According to family legend, he immigrated from Manheim to New York City sometime before 1708.[12] In 1705, he was living in or around Bergen, New Jersey and married to a woman named Margrita Elizabeth Stelwagen. He and Margrita both belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church there, and had at least one child baptized at it.[13] By 1715, however, he had moved back to New York City and was acting as a schoolmaster.[14] John Conrad died in 1716, and his will contains no evidence that he owned slaves.[15]

Nonetheless, he must have been a relatively elite member of the two colonies. He was educated enough to be a schoolmaster, and on at least one occasion acted in an official capacity for the colony of New York: one piece of New York legislation from 1717 mandated that the colony pay John Conrad's widow, Margrita, "[t]wenty five ounces of Plate...in full discharge for Service done by her deceas'd husband...in transcribing and making a fair Copy for the use of the General Assembly of the Book of Debts Said to be due from this Colony." [16] In addition, John Conrad was a witness for the signing of a legal document that divided a 4,000 acre land patent in Bergen County, New Jersey among its patentees in 1712. Since such a large parcel of land was being divided amongst relatively few patentees (only four are mentioned in the document), it is likely that slaves worked the farms formed by the division of land.[17] Even if he was not implicated directly in slave-owning, John Conrad would likely have still taught the sons of men who did own slaves. As evidenced by the land patent, he would also have participated at least indirectly in an economy in which slaves played a role. Furthermore, the fact that the colonial government of New York delegated him to transcribe its debt records, and that he was chosen to act as a witness for the division of such a large parcel of land, suggests that he would have been a member of New York and New Jersey's economic-political elite, and thus capable of owning slaves. Regardless of the nature of John Conrad's ultimate connection to slavery, his descendants would come to be involved explicitly and directly in it through their ownership and commerce. His move to New York from Manheim and status as an

educated man enabled his descendants to eventually become both participants in the Atlantic world's slave society and involved with Columbia University.

Christopher Codwise, the son of John Conrad Codwise, was born in New York sometime towards the end of the seventeenth century. In 1725-1726, he was listed as being a felt-maker in New York City, but by 1739 and up until his death in 1742, he served as a judge in King's County. Christopher Codwise is the first member of the family whose dealings with slaves and slavery can be explicitly traced. His life reveals how slave-ownership touched on all parts of slave-owners' lives. Slave-ownership was an economic, social, and political category.[18]

Over his lifetime, Christopher owned a number of slaves. In 1724, Christopher, living in King's County, sold a "certain negro boy called Port Ryall" to Petrus Stoothof of King's County for the sum of "[t]hirty-eight pounds." [19] Christopher's wife, Penelope, sometimes called Pieterella or Petronella, was very close with a female slave of the family named Phillis Jackson. Phillis, according to a note tucked away in an Anglican Church prayer book, was born in Brooklyn into the family in or around 1740. This means that Christopher owned a number of slaves at this time; the only way Phillis could be "born in...the Codwise family" was if one or both of her parents belonged to them. Phillis, the note explains, always "retained a strong attachment to the place of her nativity, as well as to her old mistress Mrs. Penelope Codwise," and "also to Mrs. Penelope Gilford, who afterwards became her owner." [20] Penelope's daughter, also named Penelope, married Samuel Gilford in 1759. [21] The younger Penelope grew up with Phillis and eventually came to own her, probably when the elder Penelope passed away. The Gilfords lived in Manhattan, so at some point Phillis was forced to move there from Brooklyn. [22] In both Brooklyn and Manhattan, she would almost certainly have served as a domestic servant. And in Manhattan, she would have been accompanied by Samuel Gilford's two other slaves: a woman named Cuba purchased in 1760 and a boy named Prince purchased in 1763. [23] Up until the time of her death in 1826, Phillis remained with members of the Codwise family. In the note, she is remembered as an "old family servant." [24]

Phillis' story makes clear how the social lives of slaves and their owners were enmeshed in one another. The younger Penelope was about the same age as and grew up with the slave she eventually came to own. The note—though its anonymous author was a friend of the Codwises or Gilfords, and certainly not a confidant of Phillis'—emphasizes that Phillis “retained a strong attachment” to both the younger Penelope and her mother. Throughout the entirety of her life, Phillis would have been a companion and servant to the younger Penelope. When the younger Penelope moved from her family's home in Brooklyn to her husband's home in Manhattan, Phillis, willingly or unwillingly, moved with her, too. Ownership was not merely an economic category; it entailed social relationships predicated on imbalances of power between owner and slave. These relationships might have appeared to be something like friendships, and one might at first-glance be inclined to believe that Penelope and Phillis' relationship involved a sort of friendship. But it is necessary to remember that such relationships were by their nature coercive and non-reciprocal. Indeed, the note states that Phillis “was *valued* for many good qualities.”[25] She was valued; she had a market value as a consequence of her traits, skin color, and condition of servitude. Penelope's father, Christopher, could sell Port Ryall for thirty-eight pounds. And though Phillis was never sold, she very well could have been. Moreover, nothing is known about how Phillis herself felt about her relationship, only how a friend of the Gilfords or Codwises characterized it. Even if Phillis felt “strong attachment” to the Codwises and Gilfords, this attachment was felt against a backdrop of forced servitude. Slavery complicated the boundaries between economic and social relationships, for it was both. Upon her death in 1826, Phillis was interred at St. John's Chapel in Manhattan.[26] From birth until death she served at least one member of the Codwise family at any given point in time.

If slavery in New York City was a social and economic category, it was also a political one. Master and slave were bound together not just by gold and interpersonal relation, but by the politics of slavery as well. This politics was often fueled by paranoia and frequently yielded violence sanctioned by the state. Christopher Codwise sold slaves; his wife and daughter counted slaves among their life-long companions; and he was

involved in New York's highly politicized 1741 Slave Conspiracy (or Revolt) as a consequence of his ownership of a black man named Cambridge.

"Scholars," reports Wilder, "have vigorously debated the existence of the [1741] plot." Whether the trial of 1741 really uncovered a slave insurrection, or whether it was simply a moment of mass hysteria, is unclear. Regardless, it resulted in thirty-five executions and many more exiles. "On March 18," 1741, "a fire burned the roof of the governor's residence.... One week later, the roof of a house in the southwest district of the city burned." As the weeks continued to go by, a flurry of fires ensued: William Van Zant's warehouse was destroyed, Ben Thompson's house burned, arson was attempted on Joseph Murray's coach house, a house in Fort Garden erupted into flames, and Adolph Philipse's storehouse caught ablaze. As New York's white residents began increasingly to "panic," "rumors of a slave uprising swept the city." On April 21, a grand jury "comprising seventeen merchants" was summoned to investigate. Many were called to testify, and the trial stretched from weeks to months.[27]

On May 30, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, two slaves, one named Cuffee and another named Quack, were led to the stakes to be executed by burning. They had been sentenced to death for their supposed involvement in the conspiracy only a day before. As they stood waiting to be burned, they began to spout the names of other slaves which they contended were part of the conspiracy in the hopes that their lives might be spared. Their lives, however, were not spared; though they confessed, the sheriff deemed "that...carrying the negroes back [to jail] would be impracticable" with the large, jeering, bloodthirsty crowd surrounding the stakes. The executions proceeded. And as Cuffee and Quack burned, amidst their cries of pain and howls of anguish and the crackling of the fire, they continued to confess and plea for mercy intermittently. They implicated many other slaves in the hopes that they would be spared. Such testimony, according to Daniel Horsmanden, judge of the trial and author of its sole complete account, when given "in the midst of flames," was "the highest attestation" of truthfulness. Either before or while they burned to death, Cuffee or Quack named Christopher Codwise's slave, Cambridge, as an accomplice. That evening, six

slaves were jailed: Harry, Tickle (alias Will), Caesar, Cambridge, Guise (alias Galick), Tom, and Worcester.[28]

Christopher was now drawn into the trial; one of his slaves was arrested on suspicion of being a conspirator. The Codwises were not the only slave-owning family in New York to have at least one of the human beings in their possession implicated. From the time that it had first convened until the time at which Christopher's slave, Cambridge, was arrested, the grand jury had questioned or arrested slaves belonging to the Jay, Van Horne, Philipse, Gomez, Cruger, Clarkson, Rutgers, Schuyler, Duane, DePeyster, Bayard, Roosevelt, Van Cortland, and Livingston families. These families represented New York's emerging merchant and land-owning elite. Though the Codwises are not mentioned in standard histories of the event, the fact that they had slaves implicated and arrested suggests that they, too, were members of this elite. In addition, many of these families would come to be involved with the founding of King's College in 1754. Though the trial occurred some thirteen years before the creation of King's, the two were related through the involvement of the same families, and even some of the same individuals, in both.[29]

Cambridge would not remain in New York long enough to witness the founding of King's, however. He was held in jail for at least another month, and at some point during this time confessed to being part of the plot. He also accused a slave named Cajoe of being involved.[30] This represented a potential disaster for both Cambridge and Christopher. If it were decided by the Jury that he was a conspirator, Cambridge faced the existential danger of being hung, burned at the stake, or sold off into a faraway land away from family and friends. If this occurred, Christopher would have his reputation tarnished, be subject to reprimand, and also face serious economic loss. Slaves were highly valuable capital in colonial New York, and if Cambridge were deemed guilty, Christopher would not be compensated for his loss. Christopher and Cambridge's interests were aligned.

On July 10, Cambridge was arraigned before court along with Caesar and two other slaves named Frank and Toby. All pled not guilty. In court, the slaves' attorney claimed

that after Cambridge made his earlier confession, he had talked to his master, Christopher, and another slave-owner named Richard Baker, explaining that the confession he had made before...was entirely false, viz. that he had owned himself guilty..., and had accused the negro of Richard Baker, called Cajoe, through fear; and said, that he had heard some negros [*sic*] talking together in jail, that if they did not confess, they should be hanged; and that was the reason of his making that false confession.

Horsmanden, however, was unconvinced, polemicizing in a footnote that though some of the slaves might have thought that their deaths “would be a great prejudice and damage to their owners,” the “vile wretches...having once confessed their guilt, a recantation and denial of it afterwards, will scarce be thought an argument...to prove their innocence.”[31] And so, on August 1, Cambridge was re-arrested. Soon after, he was sold into slavery on Cape Francois, away from everyone he had ever known. One of the other slaves he was arraigned with, Frank, was hanged earlier in July.[32] In total, in addition to four white New Yorkers executed, “thirteen enslaved black people were burned,” “eighteen were hanged,” and a great many sold into slavery elsewhere.[33]

Only a few months later, sometime before December of 1741, Christopher died.[34] His involvement in the 1741 trial reveals how slave-owners like himself could become entangled in the political power struggles of colonial New York simply by virtue of their ownership of slaves. During the early and mid eighteenth century, New York City’s enslaved black population grew at an extraordinary rate. By 1740, slaves comprised a fifth of its population. The power, both political and economic, of those who owned slaves grew accordingly. This resulted in increased suspicion of both slaves and owners by those averse to the growing slave economy.[35]

Horsmanden, as evidenced by his assertion that slaves thought that their deaths “would be a great prejudice and damage to their owners,” recognized that during the trial, the economic interests of owners aligned with the existential interests of their slaves. By putting Cambridge on trial, Horsmanden was, in a sense, also putting Christopher on trial. And by putting the slaves of many wealthy New Yorkers on trial, Horsmanden and

those allied with him were effectively engaging in a power struggle with New York's rising slave-owning elite. Horsmanden could easily dismiss Cambridge and other slaves as "vile wretches" and deny them real justice by virtue of their skin color and position in colonial New York's slave society. He could not, however, so easily dismiss Cambridge and other slaves' well-connected and powerful owners. Cambridge served as a proxy for Christopher just as the other slaves on trial served as proxies for their respective owners. Christopher's slave-ownership was a social and economic category, and it was a political one, too. His ownership of slaves involved him in the 1741 slave conspiracy, which was not just an incident indicative of racist paranoia in early New York, but also a violent political struggle between New York's increasingly powerful merchant, slave-owning elite and those who were marginalized by the new merchant-slave economy. Christopher's ownership of human beings touched on all parts of his life: social, economic, and political. And Christopher's heavy involvement with slavery paved the way for it to increasingly define the lives of his descendants.

Christopher had two sons: George, born in 1730, and Christopher, born a few years before or after him.[36] The two grew up on their father's estate on Long Island, and like their sister, Penelope, would have interacted with slaves on a daily basis. Their dealings with slavery did not end with their youth. In 1755, the younger Christopher was living in King's county and owned four slaves: two men and two women.[37] There exists little documentation beyond this, however, of the younger Christopher's life. George, on the other hand, went on to become a "wealthy New York and West Indian merchant," and existed to a much greater extent in the historical limelight.[38] George ingratiated himself into New York's commercial elite as a young man. In 1752, at the age of only twenty-two, George was listed as the co-owner of a ship named *Fame* along with the Lansingh family, Myndert Schuyler, and Henry Holland. *The Fame* engaged in the trade between London, Madeira, Amsterdam, and New York.[39] By 1771, George Codwise was captaining ships between New York and the West Indies, specifically between New York and St. Croix. He had, during the previous years, developed a number of social connections on St. Croix, including Alexander Hamilton, who was at the time working for the Cruger family there.[40] When the Revolutionary War broke out in 1776, both George and his brother, Christopher, joined the Continental Army. George served in

New York's First Regiment as an enlisted man, and Christopher served in New York's Second Regiment as a lieutenant.[41] Both brothers survived the war. However, Christopher was badly wounded and lived for the rest of his life on a pension.[42] George, on the other hand, came out unscathed and returned to New York Port.

George's participation in the New York-West Indian trade represented a new level of involvement with the slave economy for the Codwise family. Where George's ancestors had only owned slaves in New York, George not only owned slaves, but accrued vast wealth through participation in an international commerce built around slave production.[43] Though George did not attend Columbia, he set the stage for his sons and grandsons who would. The wealth he obtained from the West Indian trade allowed him to pay for the education of his son, David, at Columbia. The social connections he developed through this commerce allowed two of his other sons, George Jr. and Christopher, to follow in his footsteps and become West Indian merchants themselves.[44] His social connections enabled another two of his sons, James and Luke, to obtain plantations and own vast numbers of people on St. Croix.[45] James and George Jr. would eventually send their sons to Columbia.[46] George's commercial activity would spread his descendants across a continent and link their lives ever closer to the lives of slaves, the institutions of slavery, and Columbia University.

By 1788, five years after the signing of the Treaty of Paris and the close of the Revolution, George was no longer simply captaining ships along the trade routes between New York and the West Indies. He was now a full-fledged merchant. He owned a great many ships traveling along this route, financed their voyages, and sold the lucrative cargoes they carried back from islands such as St. Croix. One 1788 notification he put out in a New York newspaper advertises for passengers to any of the "Neutral Islands" of the Caribbean aboard a Sloop he owned called *The Maria*. [47] In 1789, he sought to sell another sloop of his, *The Elizabeth*, emphasizing that it could hold "700 barrels" and was "well calculated for the West-Indian trade." [48] George dealt mostly in sugar and rum from St. Croix. "This day will be landed," he announced in a newspaper ad published in 1793, thirty casks of rum and ten casks of "prime sugars" from St. Croix at "Bowne's and Byvancks [sic] wharf." [49] St. Croix, along with many

other islands in the West Indies, exported essentially only partially refined sugar and sugar byproducts such as rum and molasses.[50] Sugar and its byproducts were especially labor intensive to produce. Sugarcane required extreme physical exertion and long hours of toil under the blazing West Indian sun to plow, sow, reap, and process. As a result, sugarcane was grown on large plantations worked exclusively by humans and the descendants of humans removed from Africa and then enslaved.[51] George had his ships loaded with partially refined sugar and rum on St. Croix. He then had them sailed back to New York City, where, acting as a wholesaler, he would auction off the sugar and rum to smaller retailers for distribution to and eventual consumption by everyday New Yorkers. While George would have paid the sailors who worked on his ships, the actual goods from which he derived profit were produced exclusively by slave labor. George and his family became increasingly rich while the humans half a continent away that facilitated their wealth were coerced, through violence and other means, to labor for free in miserable conditions on islands far from their ancestors' homes.

David Codwise, son of George and salutatorian of Columbia College's class of 1798, paid his student dues with this money, tethering Columbia to, among other far-off humans, the slaves of an eighty-four-square-mile island situated in the northeastern rim of the Caribbean, St. Croix.[52] These slaves' labor financed Columbia. They would not have been the only slaves to do so, either. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many of the students who attended Columbia were from families that, like David's, accumulated their wealth through West Indian commerce.[53] These families paid for their young men's tuition at Columbia with such wealth. Though slaves might not have directly built or maintained Columbia's buildings, they certainly did do so indirectly. It was the labor of slaves from all over the West Indies that allowed for Columbia's economic solvency. But slavery, for David and Columbia's other early students, was not only a far-off phenomenon made relevant as a consequence of the Atlantic world's relations of production. Like his father, grandfather, uncles, and aunts, and like many other Columbia students, David grew up with slave-servants. For much of his life, he would interact with enslaved people on a quotidian basis. And for nearly his whole life, he would be embroiled in the economics and politics of slavery.

David was born in Connecticut in 1780, though his parents resided in New York City.[54] As an old man, he recalled his youth and youthful interaction with slaves with great fondness. At the age of eighty-two, David related one anecdote from his time at Columbia to his grandniece, with whom he was quite close. In the winter of 1796, at the age of sixteen and during the midst of his studies at Columbia, David attended a “candle-dip frolic” at the “mansion” of the Rhinelander family. The candle-dip frolic, according to David’s grandniece, was an “ancient custom,” probably brought from Holland. It was a sort of highly ritualized, utilitarian ordeal coopted by festivity. Each winter, large quantities of candles needed to be made to illuminate and warm the large homes of New York’s elite. The otherwise dull task of making candles by repeatedly dripping strings in hot wax was turned into cause for festivity by inviting over the young men and women of other elite families to participate. Music was played and drink was served while all sat around a large fire and made candles. Afterwards, there was dancing and feasting.[55] The Rhinelanders owned a sugar refinery and likely would have known David’s father, George, through business.[56] Additionally, William Rhinelander was one of David’s classmates; David knew the Rhinelanders through Columbia.[57] Other young, elite New Yorkers at the frolic included members of the Rutherford, Morris, Lawrence, Livingston, Gracie, Stevens, Stuyvesant, Schuyler, Evertson, Beekman, Polhemus, and Starr families.[58]

But these were not the only people to attend the candle-dip frolic at the Rhinelander’s in ’96. At least four slaves, “big and jolly black Castor and Pollux” and “black Phyllis and Chloe,” set up the candle-making materials, served food and drink, and later played dancing music on “fiddles.”[59] The candle-dip frolic is exhibitiv of how Columbia’s students would have interacted with their family’s slaves and the slaves of fellow students in social settings outside of class. Phyllis and Chloe cooked the young revelers’ food. Castor and Pollux played music for them as they danced. David and the other students at the candle-dip frolic would have spoke with them, perhaps to ask for food or to play a particular song. Slaves not only financed students like David’s tuition; they also financed their leisure. Enslaved people of African ancestry existed for them at both ends of their lives: in the production of their families’ wealth and in the way in which

such wealth was spent and consumed. Slavery was both a personal and impersonal force in their lives.

By 1798, the year of David's graduation, slavery was beginning to disappear in New York proper. David's engagement with slavery, however, did not end with the nominal end of slavery in the place where he lived. David was salutatorian of his class of twenty-one students. Evidently an intelligent man, his success at Columbia carried over into his adult life.[60] He was admitted to the bar in 1802, but to supplement his income as a lawyer financed merchant ships between St. Croix and New York with his older brother, Christopher.[61] With the money he earned early in his life as a merchant in the West Indian trade, and with his late father's social connections (George had died in 1814), David firmly established himself among New York's socioeconomic elite, marrying Patty Livingston of the powerful Livingston family in 1811.[62] In 1835, he, along with a number of other prominent New Yorkers, formed the Farmer's Fire Insurance and Loan Company. David served as the new corporation's vice-president.[63]

Though slavery had officially ceased in New York in 1827, the money David used to help create the Farmer's Fire Insurance and Loan Company had been gained in his youth via participation in the slave economy. David earned his living later in life through professional and financial-capitalistic enterprise, but such enterprise did not represent a complete disjuncture from his past. Rather, it was made possible by his past participation in the West Indian trade. His participation in this trade; his education at Columbia; and his acquaintanceship with this community of traders—facilitated by the social connections he developed during his time at Columbia, his father's social position, and his own involvement in the slave economy—armed him with the financial capital, knowledge, and social connections necessary to exist as a successful lawyer and insurance man. The rise of modern forms of finance and free labor did not occur in a historical vacuum. As David's story demonstrates, it was the wealth generated from the old slave economy that facilitated their rise. In this way, though David neither owned slaves nor participated directly in slave-based commerce after 1820, his past engagement with slavery lived on in the way he obtained his wealth for the rest of his life. Many other Columbia students of David's era would have similarly engaged in the

slave economy in their youth only to use it to bootstrap themselves to other forms of profit later on in life.[64]

David's engagement with slavery, like his father and grandfather's, was not only social and economic. For most of his adult life, he engaged with slavery politically, too. Patty Codwise, his wife, was quite the socialite. In 1833, she was listed as being the secretary of New York's Female Bible Society.[65] In 1837, she was listed as being the first directress of the Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans.[66] Patty was also a founding member and treasurer of the Female Society for the Support of Schools in Africa. The FSSSA was a sister organization of the all-male American Colonization Society, whose stated purpose was to remove free and enslaved Americans with black skin from the United States and send them to Liberia as colonists. The constitution of the FSSSA states, in the same vein, that its goal was to "prepare and support Christian teachers for the missionary settlement off New-York in Liberia, and, as far as practicable, other portions of Africa." [67] David, like his wife, had colonizationist sympathies; in 1849, he made a donation to the African Repository, the journal published by the ACS.[68] In 1854, he attended a meeting at the Broadway tabernacle in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska act and in favor of keeping in place the Missouri Compromise.[69] Clearly, David was no radical abolitionist. He was content with the sectional status quo—to keep slavery confined to the South. Neither did he or Patty, as evidenced by their colonizationist activities, believe in the possibility of a multiracial, post-slavery society. In these regards, David and Patty were not unusual for members of New York's antebellum elite. Nor were David's beliefs unusual for a Columbia alum. What is important to note here is that even after slavery stopped playing a direct role in David and Patty's day-to-day lives, they continued to engage with it politically. They engaged with it through public discourse at gatherings, such as the one at the Tabernacle, and through their participation in supposed charitable organizations, such as the Colored Orphans Asylum and the various colonization societies.

David was connected to slavery in yet another way. In 1797, his older brother, James, married Rebecca Rogers in New York City at the house of Nicholas Cruger, a wealthy West-Indian merchant.[70] Rebecca was an orphan at the time of her marriage.

However, she had been born on St. Croix, and her father had owned a plantation and a large number of slaves there prior to his death. Upon his marriage, James, who had had constant debt problems in New York, travelled to Copenhagen, Denmark and sued for the estate and slaves of Rebecca's late father. His suit was successful. Sometime before 1810, he set out for St. Croix to become a planter. He named his plantation Mount Victory, according to his daughter, to celebrate his victorious Danish lawsuit.[71]

James' inheritance of a plantation on St. Croix represented a climax of sorts for the Codwise family's history. The Codwises were strivers; each generation that passed became wealthier than the last, and each generation had done so by further entangling itself in the economics of slavery. James' great-grandfather, John Conrad, might not have owned any slaves; he was a schoolteacher. James' grandfather, Christopher, started out as a felt-maker but ended up as a judge. He owned at least three slaves and probably more. James' father, George, became a successful merchant of goods, particularly sugar, produced by slaves. George owned an even greater number of domestic slaves than his father, Christopher. James, however, now owned hundreds of slaves and lived at the site where the sugar his father's ships had carried was produced.[72] James was not the only Codwise to become a planter on St. Croix, either; his brother, Luke, inherited a plantation there as well.[73] In four generations, the Codwise family had gone from schoolteachers in New York to an extraordinarily wealthy, transnational family implicated at every stage of sugar production, transport, and consumption, and hence every stage in the slave economy. One of James' sons, George Washington, would graduate from Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1825.[74] His dues were paid for directly by the coerced toil of human beings in the sugar fields of St. Croix.

George Washington Codwise would go on to serve as a surgeon in the U.S. Navy right up until the outbreak of the civil war.[75] The Codwises' story, however, did not end here. Sometime before 1830, James acquired another plantation on St. Croix called Mount Bethlehem.[76] He, however, was not a very successful planter. Bad weather destroyed a significant portion of his sugar crop in 1827.[77] By 1830, James was in debt to a number of foreign creditors, including the King of Denmark, and both of his

plantations were at serious risk of foreclosure.[78] He was so desperate for cash that he was forced to ask his brother, David, for a loan in 1830. This was probably not the first time James had asked his brother for a loan, and David refused to provide him with one this time around.[79] David was already raising two of James and Rebecca's children, who were sent to New York at a young age to live with him and attend school there because the educational opportunities for them on St. Croix were severely limited.[80] Evidently, West Indian planters did not only send their college-aged sons to the United States for education, they sent their younger ones, too. Rebecca missed the children she had living with David, and inquired about them in almost all of her letters to her son, George Washington.[81] She travelled a number of times from St. Croix to New York to visit them: once in 1818, once in 1826, and probably a number of other times, too. When she visited in 1818, one newspaper recorded that she brought with her "3 servants." These "servants" almost certainly would have been domestic slaves from her household on St. Croix.[82]

Rebecca and James prove that it was not just the structural forces of politics, economics, and society that bound Columbia and the city within which it was situated to the slaves of far-away islands; Columbia and the West Indies were bound by blood, by families that spanned the two. Though Rebecca lamented in a letter to George Washington that she was "separated" from him, her other sons, and other friends and family in New York by the "Atlantic," this was only a half-truth.[83] Rebecca might have been separated literally, but she was not separated figuratively. She travelled to New York a significant number of times during her lifetime. She even passed along to George Washington the New York gossip that she had heard in letters sent by her friends living in New York.[84] Indeed, Rebecca may have been separated from New York by the Atlantic, but the Atlantic—as a consequence of economic, social, and familial webs—was not so large a barrier, not so far from New York City, after all. Really, St. Croix and New York were very close. Columbia and New York's connection to slavery was not confined to the northern United States. Nor was it confined to within the territorial boundaries of the United States. Columbia was linked to slavery on a hemispheric scale by forces as abstract as economy and as concrete as family.

Even after slavery ended in New York City, Columbia remained linked to it. By the early 1840s, James had lost both of his plantations to creditors. He and Rebecca now earned a living by running a boarding house in Fredericksted, a town on the west tip of St. Croix. St. Croix's climate was at the time thought to have restorative powers, and many wealthy American invalids spent their winters there. They would have stayed at boarding houses like the Codwises'. And in fact, a number of contemporaneous articles about the health benefits of St. Croix mention James and Rebecca's boarding house.[85] James did not own nearly the number of slaves that he had as a planter. His creditors had acquired the human beings he owned along with his estates. The family, nonetheless, still owned at least seven or eight men and women to run the boarding house.[86] In 1843, James was still struggling with his finances and reported to his son, George Washington, that he planned to sell "some of my servants whom I am striving to dispose of" in order to get by.[87] James, however, would not own humans for much longer.

In 1848, the slaves of St. Croix rose up in revolt, converging on the military fort in Fredericksted and forcing the Danish governor to grant them their freedom. After the Haitian revolution some forty to fifty years earlier, this was only the second West Indian slave revolution in which slaves managed to obtain their legal freedom.[88] Since the revolt itself took place in Fredericksted, and James was, as late as 1846, a captain in the Danish Army, he almost certainly would have been involved in the military efforts to suppress the revolt.[89] While St. Croix's slaves gained their nominal freedom in the 1848 revolution, not much else changed. Afterwards, James and Rebecca returned to running their boarding house with the help of their former slaves. Two years later, in 1850, Rebecca would pass away. James lived for another eleven years before dying in 1861.[90]

From the time of his birth until the time of his death, slavery was one of the paramount forces shaping the course of James' life. Born into a family that had made a fortune in the sugar trade, James, like his younger brother David, would have socialized in his youth with the members of other elite New York families who had acquired their wealth through participation in the slave economy. Through such social interaction, James met

Rebecca, the daughter of a West Indian planter. Upon their marriage, James obtained a sizeable plantation and many hundreds of slaves. Even after James lost this plantation and most of these slaves, he was later on in his life involved in a violent insurrection precipitated by slaves' anger at and action against the inequity of St. Croix's slave society. At every turn in James' life lurked slaves and the structures built on their labor. For James—the brother, uncle, and father of Columbia students—slavery was not peripheral, but central. The course of his life can only be comprehended within the greater context of the Atlantic world's slave society, economy, and politics. Even after James died, the lives of his children and grandchildren would continue to be fundamentally affected by slavery.

The Codwises story began in New York, but it did not end there. Some of James' children would move back to the United States, at least one to the North and one to the South.[91] The violence consequent to slavery saturated the lives of James' descendants. His grandchildren would fight on both sides of the Civil War. His grandson, George, was shot in the chest and killed at Gettysburg fighting in Michigan's 24th Regiment. Another two of his grandsons, David and James, fought in Alabama's 20th Regiment and survived the war.[92] And of course, James' daughter, Cornelia, remained on St. Croix, witnessing firsthand the violence of the Labor Revolt of 1878. This revolt had a variety of causes. Chief among them was the fact that after emancipation in 1848, the island's white planters forged a regime of institutionalized racism, keeping the racial stratification of the old slave society essentially unchanged, and contributing to continuing resentment among its formerly enslaved population of African ancestry.[93] Even after slavery reached its end in the United States, it continued to frame the lives of members of the Codwise family.

What did the goings-on of the 1878 St. Croix Labor Revolt have to do with Columbia University in the City of New York? It turns out that the same history, the same families, and even the same individuals made both of them possible. Columbia and St. Croix were separated by a sea, but slavery bound them close. Columbia was a merchant college and a plantation college. The families, such as the Codwises, that sent their

sons to it made their money through participation in an economy in which humans removed from Africa and subsequently enslaved played a foundational role. These families, like the Codwises, interacted socially with slaves everyday, too. For them, slavery was not a far-off, opaque phenomena; it was their everyday lives. Finally, these families, like the Codwises, were drawn in to the politics of slavery as a result of their social and economic connections to it. This politics involved discourse and civil-social activity, such as David and his wife's charitable activity and political opining, but it was also permeated by violence. The Codwises, over the course of 150 years, were involved in no less than three violent conspiracies and revolts centering around slaves and former-slaves. The Codwise family was an American family. They were also a Columbia family. And their story can only be told properly through the lives of the slaves that they owned, interacted with, and profited off of.

Endnotes

[1] Clifford Marsh, "A Socio-Historical Analysis of the Labor Revolt of 1878 in the Danish West Indies," *Phylon*, 12 (1981), 342.

[2] 1850 St. Croix Census, St. Croix, Danish West Indies, town of Fredericksted, Record for House No. 4 in King's Street, Cornelia F. de Conick Codwise, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com*, Virgin Islands Social History Associates (VISHA), comp. *U.S. Virgin Islands Census, 1835-1911 (Danish Period)* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009).

[3] Letter Fragment About Slave Revolt, Box 1, Rebecca Codwise Uncategorized Correspondence, *Williamson Family Papers, 1776-1961*, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library, New York. Though this letter fragment is located in a folder of Rebecca Codwise's correspondence, it could not possibly be by Rebecca, who was Cornelia's mother, since she died in 1850, twenty-eight years prior to the events described. The only Codwise alive on St. Croix in 1878 was Cornelia. Thus, this letter fragment was more likely than not written by Cornelia.

[4] *Columbia University Alumni Register, 1754-1931* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 164.

[5] Craig Stephen Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and The Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 67.

[6] Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy*, 96-102.

[7] Clifton Hood, "Robert G. Albion's 'The Rise of New York Port,'" *Reviews in American History*, 27 (1999), 171.

[8] Robert G. Albion, *The Rise of New York Port* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), v.

[9] As an example of Albion's use of racist language, he repeatedly refers to slaves as "black ivory," as if they were just another good, like salted cod or tar, to be entered into

his economic-historical calculations. As an example of Albion's use of language reminiscent of Wilsonian revisionism, he reports, "the uncommercial attitude of the southerners, who found it more congenial to have Negroes raise cotton than to engage in the countinghouse routine and risks, gave New York port its opportunity." Here, Albion explains why the "southerners" came to rely on slave labor and the North on commerce in terms of how southerners *felt*. It was their "uncommercial attitude" that allowed New York, instead of a city like Charleston or Savannah, to become the cotton hub of the world. Albion also dismisses the Tappan brothers, prosperous New York merchants during the early nineteenth century, as "aggressively meddlesome" for their abolitionist activity while heaping praise on the "large number of merchants who were generous in their philanthropy and public spirit without attempting to *force reforms on others*." Albion's sympathies clearly lie with the merchants who were content to put their economic relationships before their moral or political beliefs about slavery. See Albion, *New York Port*, 339, 96, and 257 (emphasis added).

[10] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?," *Representations*, 37 (Winter, 1992), 1-26.

[11] Chakrabarty, "Artifice," 1.

[12] Cuyler Reynolds, ed., *Genealogical and Family History of Southern New York and the Hudson River Valley: A Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of a Commonwealth and the Building of a Nation* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1914), 3 vols., vol. 2, 918.

[13] Hackensack, New Jersey, Book 62, Dutch Reformed Church Records from New York and New Jersey, Holland Society of New York, New York, NY, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com, U.S., Dutch Reformed Church Records in Selected States, 1639-1989* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014).

[14] Mayor's Court Minutes, May 24, 1715 to to April 29, 1718, 26 as cited in Thomas E. Finegan, *Free Schools: A Documentary History of the Free School Movement in New York State* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1921), 656; "Roll of

Freemen of New York City, 1675-1866," *The Burghers of New Amsterdam and the Freemen of New York, 1675-1866* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1885), 94.

[15] Will and Probate Record of John Codwise, June 1, 1716, Original Records of Administrations of Estates, Inventories and Accounts (New York), 1600's-1700's, 1700-1825, New York. Surrogate's Court (Albany County), Albany, New York, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com. New York, Wills and Probate Records, 1659-1999* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015).

[16] *The Colonial Laws of the State of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*, vol. 1 (Albany: James B. Lyon, State Printer, 1894), 949.

[17] *Indenture of March 12, 1712 between Johannes Machielson, Cornelius Machielspon, John Hendrick Spier, Cornelius Lubers, and Symon Jacobson van Winkel* as transcribed in William Nelson and Charles A. Shriner, *History of Paterson and Its Environs: The Silk City*, vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1920), 107-111. For more information regarding slavery in northeastern colonial New Jersey, see Graham Russell Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth, New Jersey, 1665-1865* (Oxford: Madison House Publishers, 1997), 43-90.

[18] "Roll of Freemen," 107; Silas Wood, *A sketch of the first settlement of the several towns on Long-Island; with their political condition, to the end of the American revolution* (Brooklyn: A. Spooner, 1824/1865), 155.

[19] Instrument of slave sale from Christopher Codwise to Petrus Stoothof, Jan. 4, 1724 as printed in A. Van Doren Honeyman, "Historical Notes and Comments," *Summerset County Historical Quarterly*, 6 (1917), 311-312.

[20] The short biographic note of Phillis' life was found by J. Robert Wright and is published in J. Robert Wright, "Anglican Slaveholding in Brooklyn: Phillis Jackson and the "Elegant" American Prayer Book of 1819," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 77 (June 2008), 150-159. Wright's genealogy of the Codwise family is incorrect, however. He places the older and younger Penelopes a generation later than they ought to be. The

Penelope that married Samuel Gilford was the daughter of Penelope (sometimes Pieterella) and Christopher Codwise. Consequently, she was the *aunt*, not sister, as Wright claims she is, of George Codwise Jr.

[21] Marriage Record of Penelope Codwise and Samuel Gilford, New York, New York, NY, 1759, *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record (quarterly)*, 1938, selected extracts, p. 375, Genealogical Research Library, comp. *New York City, Marriages, 1600s-1800s* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2005).

[22] 1790 U.S. census, New York City Montgomery Ward, New York, New York, p. 76, Samuel Gilford, NARA microfilm publication M637, roll 6.

[23] Bills of Sale for Cuba and Prince, Box 3, Folder 17, *Samuel Gilford Papers, 1753-1951*, Library of the New York Historical Society, New York Historical Society, New York as cited in Wright, "Slaveholding," 157.

[24] Note published in Wright, "Slaveholding," 150-151.

[25] Note published in Wright, "Slaveholding," 150-151 (emphasis added).

[26] Wright, "Slaveholding," 158-159.

[27] Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy*, 56-58.

[28] Daniel Horsmanden, *The New York Conspiracy, Or A History of the Negro Plot, with the Journal of the Proceedings Against the Conspirators at New-York in the Years 1741-1742* (New York: Southwick & Pelsue, 1744/1810), 96-102. In Horsmanden account, Christopher's surname is sometimes spelled "Codwise" and at other times spelled "Codweise."

[29] Horsmanden, *Conspiracy*, Appendix entitled "A List of Negros committed on Account of the Conspiracy." Wilder provides the same list of families. Justice Horsmanden himself was an original trustee of King's; he donated "at least £500 to the college" and "administered the board members' oaths." Families involved in both the

founding of King's and the trial include the Philipses, Crugers, and Livingstons. See Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy*, 58 and 67-68.

[30] Horsmanden, *Conspiracy*, 208, 211, 220, and 250.

[31] Horsmanden, *Conspiracy*, 250-251.

[32] Horsmanden, *Conspiracy*, Appendix entitled "A List of Negroes committed on Account of the Conspiracy."

[33] Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy*, 60.

[34] New York County Surrogate's Court, *Abstracts of wills on file in the surrogate's Office, City of New York, Vol. III 1730-1744* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1894), 355.

[35] Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy*, 55.

[36] George Codwise Birth Record, *American Genealogical-Biographical Index*, vol. 31, p. 322, Godfrey Memorial Library, comp. *American Genealogical-Biographical Index* (AGBI) [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 1999).

[37] E.B. O'Callaghan, *Census of Slaves, 1755: Lower New York* (Albany: s.n., 1755/1850), 857.

[38] "Van Rensselaer and Allied Families," *Americana: American Historical Magazine*, 14 (1920), 291.

[39] Christopher and Evert Bancker Waste Book, *Waste book, 1741-1762*, New York Historical Society Library, New York Historical Society, New York as cited in Virginia D. Harrington, *New York Merchant on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 237.

[40] Alexander Hamilton to Nicholas Cruger, October 31, 1771, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton: Volume I, 1768-1778*, ed. Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). George and Hamilton would continue their acquaintanceship throughout lives. Hamilton served as George's lawyer in 1804,

and George named one of his sons after Hamilton. See Broadus Mitchell, *Alexander Hamilton: Youth to Maturity, 1755–1788*, Vol. I of *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Macmillan, 1957). 484.

[41] James A. Roberts, *New York in the Revolution as Colony and State* (Albany: Brandow Printing Company, 1898), 20 and 29.

[42] Pension Claim by Christopher Codwise, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com, New York, Pension Claims by Disabled Revolutionary War Veterans, 1779-1789* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014).

[43] George is not recorded on any census, thus the extent of his slave-ownership remains unclear. He did, however, own at least one woman named Nelly, whom he manumitted in in 1809; see Harry B. Yoshpe, “Record of Slave Manumissions in New York During the Colonial and Early National Periods,” *The Journal of Negro History*, 26 (Jan., 1941), 80. One of George’s sons, George Jr., was recorded on the 1800 census as owning seven slaves, a large number for a New Yorker at this time. Thus it was likely that the elder George owned a number of slaves, too; see 1800 U.S. census, Queens County, New York, town of Jamaica, p. 546, line 16, George Codwise, NARA microfilm publication M32, roll 25.

[44] “For Sale, Freight, or Charter, the ship Young Eagle,” *The New-York Evening Post*, August 25, 1802, 1; “St. Croix Rum and sugar,” *New York Gazette & General Advertiser*, May 15, 1805, 2; “Brig Alfred, Bryan, 13 days from St. Croix...,” *Public Advertiser* [New York, New York], May 27, 1807, 3; “Evening Post Marine List,” *The New-York Evening Post*, July 12, 1808, 3.

[45] James Codwise to George Washington Codwise, October 22, 1843, Box 1, James Codwise Categorized Correspondence, *Williamson Family Papers, 1776-1961*, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library, New York; “Died,” *American* [New York, New York], May 28, 1823, 2.

[46] James had one son attend, and George Jr. had two sons attend; see *Alumni Register*, 164.

[47] "For Any of the Neutral Islands," *Daily Advertiser*, December 11, 1788, 4. Neutral islands would have meant the non-British islands of the West Indies, and perhaps the non-French and non-Spanish ones, too. After the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Great Britain barred American vessels from its West Indian ports in both retaliation for revolting and adhering to the widely held mercantilist political-economic theories of the day. In general, the period between the close of the Revolution and the end of the Napoleonic Wars involved near-constant violent conflict among competing empires in the West Indies. As a consequence, which nations' ships were allowed in which nations' West Indian ports was in perpetual flux. See Albion, *New York Port*, 7.

[48] "For Sale, the Sloop Elizabeth," *Daily Advertiser*, September 30, 1789, 4.

[49] "This Day Will be Landed...", *Daily Advertiser*, September 7, 1793, 3. George was connected to the Byvancks, another wealthy New York merchant family, by the marriage of his son, George Jr., to Mary Byvanck. In 1792 the couple had their first child, also named George, who would go on to attend Columbia and graduate in 1810 only to die two years later. Another one of their sons, Alexander Hamilton, matriculated to Columbia in 1814 but died halfway through his studies in 1816; see New York City, vol. 2, Book 34, Dutch Reformed Church Records from New York and New Jersey, Holland Society of New York, New York, NY, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com, U.S., Dutch Reformed Church Records in Selected States, 1639-1989* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014); *Alumni Register*, 164; Whitehead Cornell Duyckinck, *The Duyckinck and allied families* (New York: Tobias A. Wright, 1908), 22.

[50] Neville A.T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix*, ed., B.W. Higman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 3.

[51] Sydney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 26 and 50-61.

[52] C.H. Hunt, "Death of David Codwise," *Daily Alta California*, December 23, 1864, 1.

[53] Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy*, 68-74.

[54] L. Van Alstyne, *Burying grounds of Sharon, Connecticut, Amenia and North East, New York* (Amenia: Walsh, Griffin, & Hoysradt, 1903), 17; Hunt, "David Codwise."

[55] Helen Evertson Smith, *Colonial Days & Ways as Gathered From Family Papers* (New York: The Century Co., 1900), 315-327.

[56] "Orders for Loaf or Lump Sugar," *The New-York Gazette and General Advertiser*, November 2, 1798, 4; "Rice and Tobacco, just arrived...at the sugar house," *Commercial Advertiser* [New York, New York], February 15, 1798, 1.

[57] *Alumni Register*,

[58] Smith, *Colonial Days*, 323.

[59] Smith, *Colonial Days*, 319-320. David's niece, writing in 1903, sought to put a positive spin on David's youthful interaction with slaves—sugarcoating the harsh reality of slavery by calling two of the Rhinelanders' slaves, Castor and Pollux, "jolly." Only eight years prior to the candle-dip frolic, however, one of William Rhinelanders' slaves, named Kate, ran away, prompting William to put out a runaway slave ad in the newspaper for her. Perhaps Castor and Pollux really were "jolly"; not all of the Rhinelanders' slaves were, however. See Wm. Rhinelanders, "A Negro Girl Run Away," *Daily Advertiser* [New York], July 19, 1790, 3.

[60] *Alumni Register*, 990; Hunt, "David Codwise." In 1797, as a junior at Columbia, David won an oratory contest; see "Communications," *Greenleaf's New York Journal and Patriotic Register*, May 3, 1797, 3.

[61] "At the Last October Term of the Supreme Court...," *New-York Herald*, November 17, 1802, 4; "Abstract of Merchandise Entered Since Our Last," *Ming's New-York Price-Current*, August 23, 1806, 3; Hunt, "David Codwise."

[62] "Marriage," *New York Evening Post*, June 13, 1811. Patty is sometimes referred to in sources as "Martha."

[63] "Farmer's Fire Insurance and Loan Company," *Saratoga Sentinel*, September 29, 1835, 2.

[64] David did have two “free colored persons” living in his home in 1820. They were probably former slaves of the family and now servants; see 1820 U.S. census, New York, New York, New York Ward 1, p. 12, David Codwise, NARA microfilm publication M33, roll 77.

[65] Edwin Williams, *The New-York Annual Register For the Year of Our Lord, 1833* (New York: Peter Hill, Publisher, 1833), 233.

[66] “The following is a list of officers and managers...,” *Commercial Advertiser* [New York, New York], April 19, 1837, 2.

[67] The American Colonization Society, *The African Repository and Colonial Journal*, vol. 10 (Washington: James C. Dunn, publisher, 1834), 149.

[68] The American Colonization Society, *The African Repository and Colonial Journal*, vol. 24 (Washington: James C. Dunn, publisher, 1848), 285.

[69] “The Question in the Metropolis,” *The Weekly Herald*, February 4, 1854, 38.

[70] “Married,” *Commercial Advertiser* [New York, New York], November 27, 1797, 3.

[71] “Whereas Thaddeus Rockwell, of the town of Salem...,” *Commercial Advertiser* [New York, New York], August 10, 1799, 2; Letter Fragment Father’s Inheritance, Box 1, Rebecca Codwise Uncategorized Correspondence, *Williamson Family Papers, 1776-1961*, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library, New York.

Though this letter fragment is in a folder of Rebecca’s correspondence, I have reason to believe that it was written by Rebecca’s daughter, Cornelia, since it is in the same hand as the letter fragment about the 1878 Labor Revolt; see footnote 3.

[72] In 1816, there were 202 slaves living and working on the Mount Victory Estate; see P.B. Hatchet, *Statistics Regarding Landed Properties In The Island of St. Croix from 1816 to 1857* (St. Croix: n.p., 1859), 42-43 and 75 as cited in Svend E. Hosloe, ed., *The Estates of St. Croix, 1816-1859* (n.p.: n.p., 1989), 140.

[73] Captain Thomas Southey, *Chronological History of the West Indies*, vol. 3 (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827), 304; Plantation Head tax List of Luke

Codwise, Christiansted, St. Croix, 1810, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com*. *St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Slave Plantation and Town Head Tax Lists, 1772-1821* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009); "Died," *American*.

[74] *Alumni Register*, 164.

[75] George Washington was discharged a few weeks after the first shots rang out at Fort Sumter. He and many other officers were discharged because of their advanced age. See Thomas H. Fearey, *Union College alumni in the civil war, 1861-1865* (Schenectady: n.p., 1915), 5; U.S. Naval Department, *Register of the Commissioned, Warrant, and Volunteer Officers of the Navy of the United States Including Officers of the Marine Corps and Others, to September 1, 1862* (Washington: GPO, 1862), 25.

[76] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, June 8, 1830 Box 1, Rebecca Codwise Uncategorized Correspondence, *Williamson Family Papers, 1776-1961*, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library, New York; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, September 20, 1830, *Williamson Family Papers*.

[77] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, September 6, 1827 *Williamson Family Papers*.

[78] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, June 8, 1830, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, September 20, 1830 *Williamson Family Papers*.

[79] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, June 8, 1830, *Williamson Family Papers*. James Codwise seems to have had consistent debt problems throughout his life. In 1797, a loan ticket belonging to him was destroyed, he claimed accidentally, in a fire. In 1799, while he was still living in New York, his house was foreclosed on. See "Notice," *The Diary or Loudon's Register* [New York, New York], December 26, 1797, 3; "Whereas Thaddeus Rockwell, of the town of Salem..." *Commercial Advertiser* [New York, New York].

[80] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, July 9, 1827, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, September 6, 1827, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, February 5, 1828 *Williamson Family Papers*.

[81] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, July 13, 1827, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, July 19, 1827, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, November 23, 1827, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, September 6, 1827, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, June 8, 1830, *Williamson Family Papers*.

[82] "Arrived Last Evening," *The New-York Evening Post*, May 11, 1818, 2; Passenger List of the Ship Jupiter, October 19, 1826, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com, New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010).

[83] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, July 9, 1827, *Williamson Family Papers*.

[84] Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, February 5, 1828, *Williamson Family Papers*; Rebecca Codwise to George Washington Codwise, June 8, 1830, *Williamson Family Papers*.

[85] "A Winter in the West Indies, No. III," *Commercial Advertiser* [New York, New York], October 2, 1839, 1; "St. Croix—the following from the pen of editor of the Albany Evening Journal....," *Commercial Advertiser* [New York, New York], September 16, 1845, 1.

[86] St. Croix's censuses did not record slaves. The number of slaves James owned can be approximated, however, with data from the 1850 census. This census was the first to record the island's former slaves, and a number of individuals who were not recorded as living at James' boarding house prior to '48 appear on this census with occupation titles such as "washer," "cleaner," and "baker." These individuals were

almost certainly former slaves of James who continued to live with him and work for him post-emancipation. See 1850 St. Croix Census, St. Croix, Danish West Indies, town of Fredericksted, Record for House No. 4 in King's Street, Cornelia F. de Conick Codwise.

[87] James Codwise to George Washington Codwise, October 22, 1843, Box 1, James Codwise Categorized Correspondence, *Williamson Family Papers, 1776-1961*, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library, New York.

[88] Hall, *Slave Society*, 208.

[89] 1846 St. Croix Census, St. Croix, Danish West Indies, town of Fredericksted, Record for House No. 4 in King's Street, Cornelia F. de Conick Codwise, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com*, Virgin Islands Social History Associates (VISHA), comp. *U.S. Virgin Islands Census, 1835-1911 (Danish Period)* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009).

[90] Richard Anderson, "Rebecca Rogers Codwise," *Find A Grave*, November 6, 2013, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=119890431&ref=acom>; Richard Anderson, "James Codwise," *Find A Grave*, November 6, 2013, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=119890405&ref=acom>;

[91] James' son, James R., moved to Alabama. Another one of his sons, David O., moved to Michigan. See 1850 U.S. census, Bibb County, Alabama, town of W C River, p. 4B, line 16, James R. Codwise, NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 2; 1850 U.S. census, Monroe County, Michigan, town of Ash, p. 546, line 425B, David O. Codwise, NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 358.

[92] *Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, compiled 1861–1865*, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's–1917, Record Group 94, National Archives at Washington, D.C, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com. U.S., Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012); *Muster rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, SG025006-25100*, Montgomery, Alabama, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Digital Image, *Ancestry.com. Alabama Civil War*

Muster Rolls, 1861-1865 [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010).

[93] Marsh, "Labor Revolt," 335-342.