

Bondage and Boards: Unfree Labor and the Construction of King's College

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Introduction

Manhattan, in the eyes of the early eighteenth century Dutch scholar Nicolaes van Wassenaer, was a place “full of noble forest trees and grape vines” in which “nothing is wanting but the labor and industry of man to render it one of the finest and most fruitful lands in that part of the world.”[1] The allure of the island’s untouched beauty and seemingly endless abundance of natural resources that captured the imagination of the Dutch in the seventeenth century was quickly replaced by the harsh realities of life in the ‘New’ World. The Dutch West India Company was fraught with bureaucratic inefficiencies that made governing the colonists from across the Atlantic exceedingly difficult and tensions between the Company and its citizens soon began percolating beneath the surface. Attempts to regulate the colonists’ use of timber, lime, and other natural resources were met with indifference, if not outright resistance. The introduction of African slaves and white indentured servants to the colony further provoked the already precarious social structure of New Amsterdam—disputes between the colonists and the Company over resources became conflicts over who could extract and utilize those resources.

The transition from Dutch to English rule in the latter half of the seventeenth century did little to address the divisive social and political implications of enslaved and indentured labor. Ultimately, the citizens of the province began to exploit the dichotomy between free and unfree labor, adopting new means of subversion to continuously reinforce the stratified social hierarchy. Among the participants in this system were merchants, craftsmen, and clergy members, including individuals directly involved in or affiliated with Trinity Church and King's College. The commencement for the first graduating class of King's College was held in St. Paul's Chapel, built using land donated to the vestry by merchant and slave ship owner Captain John Aspinwall. Subscription papers to finance the construction of College Hall were hand delivered by a governor of the college to prominent slave owners in the West Indies and the funds collected were used to purchase construction materials and labor. The history of King's College, and thus Columbia University, is also a history of exploitation, social stratification, and the ruling elite. By tracing the history of the building trades and their relationship to unfree labor—both in a broad sense and with respect to King's College—I will demonstrate the ways in which the College was built on the backs of many generations of enslaved and indentured people and hope that in doing so I am able to highlight the often untold stories of those who spent their lives laboring for the benefit of others.

“Prosecutions and Fines:” Control of Construction Materials in Colonial New York

The economy of New Amsterdam was a simple one, founded on the quasi-capitalist premise that labor ought to be diversified, it created a segmented society in which professional roles took precedence over personal preference. This was, in part, a reflection of the Dutch economy—as Dutch scholar Nicolaes van Wassenaer wrote in his journal in 1626, men in New Amsterdam “work there as in Holland; one trades, [...] another builds houses, the third farms.”[2]

Despite the alleged freedoms promoted by the Dutch to persuade citizens to make the long journey across the Atlantic, life in New Amsterdam was not without government regulation. Colonists who arrived on the island of Manhattan expecting to “furnish himself with land, & live rent-free, yea, with such a quantity of Land that he may weary himself walking over his fields” were likely to be disappointed.[3] While early settlers may have been able to acquire significant tracts of land from the Company, the activity on that land was subject to restrictions. In 1647, the Company granted Petrus Stuyvesant the power to appoint three building surveyors to “hinder all improper and irregular constructions, fences, palisades, posts, rails, etc.” and to ensure that all new land purchases were outfitted with “good and suitable domiciles” within nine months of acquisition.[4] The director general and council, after receiving “many complaints [...] of the chopping of firewood and cutting of timber on lands claimed by diverse of our inhabitants,” decided that enacting a resolution specifically prohibiting the above activity was necessary. The Company’s preoccupation with regulation inactivity on land points to the pivotal role productive capacity assumed for the Dutch. According to the Council, the problem stemmed from the “land-grasping inhabitants” who disregarded the terms of deed dictating that they “cultivate and improve them” and failed to sow their plot. The Company’s solution—to order “all those who [...] claim any lands, [to] properly set off and fence them in”—would allow inhabitants to “know and see what [...] lands remain still to be granted.”[5]

The settlers seemingly unceasing demand for timber created further exacerbated tensions between between the Dutch settlers and native peoples residing in the area. From the very beginning of Dutch colonization, disputes between the European interlopers and the native inhabitants were a common occurrence. During initial ‘negotiations’ between the Dutch West India Company and the Wappinger, the native people of Manhattan, the divergent perspectives of the two groups regarding the relationship between people and land tainted the legitimacy of any agreement that was reached. For the Wappinger, the land and the resources it contained were held in common, and they were unable to grasp the capitalist conception of land under which the Dutch were operating.[6] The fundamental differences between the leaders of the two groups ultimately trickled down to their members. On Long Island, which was

heavily forested at the time, the Common Council was pulled in to mediate a dispute between “John Smith and others in Hempstead” and “a Long Island Indian” who claimed that the settlers were “cutting his timber.”[7]

The tenure of Dutch rule inaugurated timber as a highly regulated and politicized resource that would frequently be a battleground for power struggles between colonial officials in New Amsterdam and Holland and later between New York and England. The friction between the Crown and her subjects in North America is apparent in the often contradictory regulations imposed on the colony by the motherland regarding the use natural resources. Land in the province of New York was “granted upon condition that the Grantee [...] cultivate three acres for every fifty granted.[8] While this may appear to be an innocuous regulation implemented in accordance with the project of colonization, it placed “the poor Planter [...] under a sad Dilemma” as he could not satisfy the terms of the agreement without violating the prohibition on “destroying the Timber that grows upon [the land].”[9] “If [the planter] does not cultivate,” wrote Cadwallader Colden, “he cannot maintain his family and he must lose his Land; if he does cultivate, he cuts down Trees, for which he is in danger of being undone by prosecutions & fines.”[10]

Timber has always been a politically fraught resource throughout New York’s colonial history, featuring especially prominently in the Crown’s territorial disputes in the Atlantic colonies. The Earl of Bellomont, in a lengthy letter to the Lords of Trade, details the “ill posture of affairs in the Province of New Yorke” resulting from “the extravagant waste of the woods in New Hampshire,” where the inhabitants were “sending Ship timber [...] to Portugall.”[11] In addition to relaying the domestic affairs of the Province, the Earl attempts to persuade the Crown to divest from its current provider of timber, Norway, and instead begin importing it from the Province, as “the King may be much cheaper furnish’d [here] than he is att [sic] present.”[12] Not only did timber from the colonies cost up to 50 percent less than the King’s own shipyards, but the supply was abundant—“with good regulation here will be a lasting store of all those things to the end of the world.”[13] The preoccupation with the timber trade prompted a number of proposed reforms aimed at keeping foreign competition out of the market. “If I were worthy to advise the same Act under great penalties bar the inhabitants,” wrote the Earl

of Bellomont, “from sending any ship timber or lumber, to any forreign [sic] country; and [...] to carry the timber to England, or elsewhere within the King’s Dominions.”[14]

By the early 1700’s, Albany fully embraced the timber industry, which facilitated the emergence of a wealthy merchant class in the aforementioned city as well as established a reliable trade route with New York. Demand for timber in the city was so great that “many yachts go during the whole summer to *New York*, having scarce any other lading than boards.”[15] In fact, the timber trade was so lucrative that “the greater part of the merchants at *Albany* have extensive estates in the country, and a great deal of wood” and those merchants fortunate enough to “have a little brook [...] do not fail to erect a saw-mill upon it.”[16]

Unfree Labor in the Building Trades

The Dutch West India Company, aware of the growing demand for unfree labor in other North American colonies, passed an ordinance in 1647 inflicting a penalty of six hundred guilders on anyone who attempted “to conceal, take along or transport beyond the jurisdiction of our government any of the Company’s servants, free traders or inhabitants of New Netherland.”[17]

Slavery has been embedded in the socioeconomic identity of Manhattan since the first Dutch ships laid claim to her shores in 1624 with the official settlement by the Dutch Republic. The arrival of the first slaves was marked by the reception of a dozen men and their wives from the West Indies roughly two years after its establishment.[18] These slaves played a vital role in cementing New Amsterdam as a viable and profitable colony—male slaves supplied the settlers with construction materials, cutting timber and burning lime, as well as manning the growing number of farms on the island.[19] As the colony was still in its infancy and lacked sufficient infrastructure, bonded labor provided a crucial source of manpower upon which the construction of New Amsterdam relied.

The use of enslaved labor by the Company was gradually incorporated into the bureaucratic fabric of colonial governance and by 1639, the Dutch had employed an “overseer of the negroes belonging to the Company” to supervise and document the activities of the enslaved labor force.[20] In a deposition given to the Secretary of New Netherland, Jacob Stoffelsen testified that the aforementioned Wouter van Twiller, the overseer, had presided over “the said negroes in building *Fort Amsterdam*” as well as utilized them in “cutting building timber and firewood [...], clearing land, [and] burning lime.”[21] These physically demanding tasks were representative of the type of labor slaves were employed in for the majority of the Dutch colonial period and were primarily valued for their importance in mitigating the colony’s under population problem.[22] Convincing people to leave their comfortable lives behind and make the long journey across the Atlantic in exchange for a plot of land in a foreign environment was not an easy sell. With few voluntary settlers and only a handful of buildings, the Company needed to secure an additional source of labor that could be used to overcome the shortage of working freemen. Indentured servants and slaves allowed the Company to minimize cost—as they did not need to pay them wages and merely needed to cover the cost of transporting them to North America—and thus proved to be a pivotal component of the Dutch plan of colonization. When the Dutch decided to settle the land in what is now Harlem, they promised the residents of that village, that the Council would assist them in “[constructing] with company’s Negroes, a good wagon road.”[23]

The demand for enslaved and bonded labor in New Amsterdam was essentially a derivative of the financial and occupational precarity of the white, middle class artisans who relied heavily on the Dutch system of a protected trading market. In a system exported from Europe to the colony in 1624, known as burgher rights, craftsmen who applied for and received the aforementioned rights claimed exclusive access to a variety of trades.[24] In 1657, the Amsterdam Board directed Stuyvesant to determine whether or not slaves are able to take up “Trades such as carpentering, bricklaying, blacksmithing . . . as it was formerly done in Brazil and is now done in Guinea and other Colonies.” The possibility of slaves assuming roles thus far reserved for skilled, white tradesmen—who constituted roughly one-fourth to one-half of the colony’s white male inhabitants[25]—sparked widespread public backlash from New Amsterdam’s freemen,

forcing Stuyvesant refuse to explore the Board's proposal on the basis that there are "no able negroes fit to learn a trade." Stuyvesant's response to the Board's attempt at cost-reduction is telling as it points to the high level of influence the select class of artisans possessed over the affairs of the colony. Vehement opposition to the mere suggestion of black slaves encroaching on their exclusive occupations is indicative of both the colonists' attitudes towards the abilities of slaves and, more importantly, their strong desire to preserve the existing stratified social hierarchy.

The reconceptualization of the slave as an instrument of capitalist domination did not occur until the mid-seventeenth century. Throughout the early years of Dutch colonial rule, the majority of slaves and indentured servants were owned by the Dutch West India Company, who exploited their labor under the guise of the common good. In fact, the Company did not even assert a monopoly on the labor of their slaves and servants, instead allowing them to seek employment from private citizens to sustain themselves so long as they completed the tasks assigned to them by the Company.

The timber industry in particular lent itself well to the use of enslaved labor as it was physically demanding and required very little skill. Plantation owners in the areas surrounding Manhattan recognized the allure of erecting saw mills and operating them with slaves and would highlight this in advertisements. In 1728, "Widdow [sic] Gordon" placed an advertisement in the *New-York Gazette* in the hopes of selling her plantation "Two Miles above Amboy Ferry, upon Rariton [sic] River."^[26] In addition to the sheer size of land to be sold, the advertisement presents the plantation as a lucrative business opportunity, noting that there in a newly built sawmill and "the Land [is] well stored with Trees suitable for Timber & Boards." Prospective buyers were also able to purchase "two Negro Men [...], and Cattle, Horses, an Ox Team, and all Utensils for Husbandry," presumably for use in the saw mill. A later advertisement placed by the New York merchant Lewis Gomez for his twelve hundred acre farm notes that not only does the parcel in question contain "two Lime-Kills, and Lime-Stone [sic] enough not above the distance of 30 or 40 Foot from the said Kill [sic]," but buyers may also purchase "four Negro Men that used to burn Lime, one Negro Woman and Three Children."^[27]

Runaway slave advertisements shed light on complex dynamic between enslaved black labor and white artisans in eighteenth century New York. One of the narratives that emerges from these advertisements is the occupational flexibility slaves exhibited. Unlike the plantation-based slave economy of the Southern colonies, the Northern urban landscape necessitated a conception of enslavement that catered to the city's interconnected and diversified economy. Rather than confine slaves to a specific task, like picking cotton or planting tobacco, masters had their slaves carry wood, fetch water, and run errands. Salvanus, a 22-year-old "Negro Man" owned by the bricklayer Richard Weston, ran away when he was "carrying in Wood for the people, to support himself." [28]

Labor for Rent: Inquire of the Master

The Dutch slave-owning tradition, grounded in the labor-intensive nature of colonialism, gave way to a highly privatized and malleable unfree labor market in the eighteenth century. The flexibility of slaves owned by the West India Company was instrumental in shaping the practice of hiring out slaves as hired unfree wage labor. One female slave, the daughter of "Big Peter, a negro belonging to the W. I. company," was bound out as an indentured servant to a private individual in 1644, signaling the gradual transition from publically- to privately-held slaves. [29] An informal slave rental system provided all the advantages of unfree labor without the high level of capital needed to purchase a slave outright, making it a lucrative option for craftsmen who did not have the financial resources to become slave owners themselves. For slave owners, the ability to loan their servants or slaves out to other merchants allowed them to recoup their initial investment as well as establish an ongoing cash flow that they could upon during times of inactivity. [30] Carpenters, builders, masons, joiners, and other craftsmen would hire slaves as unfree wage laborers to assist them in performing semiskilled tasks. John Abeel, a widely respected merchant, leased a group of slaves from Olfert Siortse in 1697 to work on a construction project. [31] In 1775, John Bailey lodged a

complaint against Jonathan Webster in the Mayor's Court, alleging that Webster owed him £57 for, amongst other things, "work done by two man-servants."^[32]

Unfree labor was not confined to black slaves—both indentured servants and apprentices were also rented out by their masters. While indentured servants and slaves lacked any legal or social means to express dissatisfaction with being rented out beyond bringing a fruitless petition to the governor, apprentices had contracts that enumerated the specific obligations of their master and were sometimes able to invoke their legal rights as a means of recourse.^[33] Daniel Roberts, a boy who was bound to baker Peter Wynkoop in June of 1791, ran away to the Almshouse where his foster mother "appear'd complaining that he was not likely to learn the trade, as his master made it a practice to hire him out to other kinds of work."^[34]

Trinity Church

Dirck Van der Burgh, a mason, was contracted by the "managr[sic] for Trinity Church" to provide them with "four good and sufficient masons" as well as "three labourers, viz Jack his own negro, Jack Jame's [sic] negro & ye negro belonging to ye french minister" to help erect the first of Trinity's chapels.^[35] Beyond the enslaved labor used in constructing the church itself, the Church profited from the division of land granted to them by the Crown and regulation of the tenants that later occupied the subdivided lots. Despite having divided up King's Farm into lots and taken in private tenants, the vestry of Trinity Church fastidiously investigated any violations of the terms of agreement or possible misuse of the land by tenants. Those who wished to settle on a lot of King's Farm were allowed to build on their land "pursuant to the articles allowed by Trinity Church," although it is never specified what those articles were.^[36] The ambiguity in the terms of the lease agreement gave the Church substantial leeway in dictating the activities of their tenants. In 1733, the Board ordered the assembly of a committee of church wardens to investigate the allegation that Cornelius Cosine, a tenant residing on Mr. Balm's plot of King's Farm, "does daily Comit [sic] great Wast

[sic] in destroying the Trees & Timber of the Said farm.”[37] The committee was subsequently instructed to determine “what will be necessary & adviseable [sic] for the Corporation to do therein to prevent further Waste and destruction of the Timber for the future” and to get the tenant to abide by the terms of his lease. Although the vestry and church wardens were clearly committed to enforcing the terms of the lease, they were unsuccessful in their attempt as the aforementioned tenant, Mr. Balm, reappears in the Vestry Minutes five years later for similar alleged offenses. This time, however, the Church recommends that he “be Sued on his Covenant” for the waste he has committed “by Cutting down Trees and Timber to repair or make all or Very great Part of the Houses.”[38] Later Vestry Minutes do not specify the outcome of the lawsuit, or if it they even pursued the case through legal channels, but it is still illustrative of the complicated power dynamic that existed between the Church and its tenants. While Cosine was the legally residing on the plot leased to him, he was beholden to the Church’s formulation of appropriate land use with respect to the natural resources contained on that land.

In addition to the adhering to the litany of municipal building ordinances, tenants on King’s Farm also had to seek permission from the Church before constructing houses or making improvements to their property. Tenants who violated the terms of their lease and failed to seek approval from the Church were subject to both legal action and a form quasi-vigilante justice invoked by the vestry. In 1747, the Vestry learned that the Browers, one of their tenants, was attempting to construct a house on their lot in an effort to legitimize their ownership claim. Instead of utilizing legal channels designed to litigate these types of property disputes, the Vestry assembled a special committee with the stated purpose of “[receiving] possession of the house and land part of the Churches farm.”[39] After cordial negotiations presumably failed, the committee resorted to mendicancy and forcefully took possession of the Browers’ house and “pulled [it] down.”[40] Despite having destroyed their house, the Vestry extended them the ‘courtesy’ of letting them “have the materialls [sic] of the house [...] if they would fetch it away.”[41] For example, in 1750, Nicholas Bayard sought and received permission to “hang a Gutter on the Southside of any House or Houses he may Build on the North side of and Adjoyning [sic] to the Church Yard.”[42]

St. Paul's Chapel

At the behest of its congregants living in the Montgomerie Ward of the city, composed of the area bounded by the modern day John Street, Pearl Street, Nassau Street, and Park Row, Trinity Church decided to open a chapel of ease on the east side of lower Manhattan. Since there were no vacant lots available in the vicinity of the proposed site, the Church found itself at a loss as it would have to purchase lots from existing tenants. One prominent congregant and resident of the Montgomerie Ward, Captain John Aspinwall, took it upon himself to secure the lots for the purpose of constructing the chapel, paying £645 for the lots in question and subsequently transferring the deeds to Trinity Church.[43] Aside from his involvement with the Episcopal Church, Aspinwall was a merchant who amassed his fortune as a captain and owner of the sloop *Two Brothers*. In 1738, he made two voyages to South Carolina—one to Charleston, the other to an unspecified port—bringing back one slave to New York on each trip.[44] After amassing a large fortune, Aspinwall retired to his country seat in Flushing where he resided until his death. Although Aspinwall himself does not appear in the census records to have owned slaves in a personal capacity, his wife, Rebecca, owned six slaves in 1800 and in 1807, she manumitted her remaining slaves, James and Troy.[45]

King's College

Although King's College was not officially founded until 1754, there had been discussion amongst Anglican church officials regarding the possibility of establishing a college in New York as early as 1703. Anneke Jans, writing on February 19 of that year, instructs the Rector and Wardens of Trinity Church to “wait upon [...] th Govr to Know what part [of King's Farme] his Lordp did design towards the Colledge which his Lordp

designs to have built.”[46] For unknown reasons, the interest in founding the college waned and was not revived until nearly fifty years later.

In keeping with a common fundraising practice of colonial colleges, the Governors announced the creation of a lottery in which people could purchase a ticket in exchange for the chance to win a portion of the money raised. James Beekman purchased two New York tickets in 1754 and another six in 1757, at a total cost of £11.[47] Without sufficient funds to proceed in constructing the college, the Governors sought to gather subscribers whose combined contributions would finance the purchase of materials and labor. Given the relatively small number of Governors and the logistical difficulties inherent in travelling to collect the monies, it was decided upon that a committee would be assembled to draw up subscription letters to be sent with the chosen governors to be delivered to London and the West Indies. The decision to nominate a member of the college leadership to represent the college’s interests in both locales reflects the astute judgement of the Governors, who knew that they were the places where the college was most likely to find wealthy donors willing to invest substantial sums of their own money. Joseph Haynes, a merchant and owner of the slave ship *Jane* which transported five slaves from Jamaica to New York in 1746,[48] donated £100 to the Governors in 1755.[49]

Hugh Wentworth and Richard Albertson provided a £500 bond to the governors of the college to be used for the construction of the college in August of 1756.[50] Hugh Wentworth was a successful master who made numerous slave voyages to the West Indies, carrying human cargo back to New York’s ports to be sold to the highest bidder. In May of 1731, he spearheaded a voyage to Navis on the ship *Mary* where he collected three slaves.[51] Seven years later he made a second voyage to the West Indies, this time to Curacao, and brought back fifteen slaves.[52] Aside from his role as facilitator in the movement of slaves from the Caribbean to New York, he was also the recipient of the precious cargo of later slave voyages undertaken by other enterprising masters. The ship *Sarah* landed in New York on May 1, 1751—only five years before Wentworth’s generous donation to the college—and unloaded nine slaves from the island of St. Christopher, subsequently delivered to their new owner, Hugh Wentworth.[53]

Five Dollars Reward.

RAN AWAY from the Subscriber, living on Bergen Point, a Negro Wench, named MARGARET, about 45 years old, she is a Yellow Wench, very bold and talkative, stout made.—Whoever will take her up and deliver her to Henry Burtill, No. 5, Broad Street, shall receive the above reward.

ANDREW GAUTIER

⚠ All persons are forbid to harbour the said Wench.

IW June 14

Andrew Gautier's Runaway Slave Advertisement. *New-York Gazette*, July 14, 1797.

Andrew Gautier, a master craftsman who was responsible for the construction of St. Paul's Chapel, provided his services to the governors of the college. In 1766, the board ordered that the Treasurer pay him "Sixteen pounds two Shillings and six pence [...] for Work done to and about the College." [54] Although the exact nature of the work Gautier performed is unclear, it is certain that he was engaged in either the construction or repair of the college buildings. In 1797, he placed an advertisement in the *New-York Gazette* offering a five dollar reward for "whoever will take up and deliver" his "Negro Wench, named Margaret" to Henry Burtill. At the time of her escape, Margaret was 45-year-old and is described by Gautier as "a Yellow Wench, very bold and talkative, stout-made." [55]

King's College's ties to slavery and the labor of unfree workers extends far beyond the institution itself. Many of the college's governors were wealthy merchants who accumulated their wealth on the backs of those in chains—whether literal or metaphorical. The extraction of labor from unfree New Yorkers was a common practice

at the time and affiliates of the college were not exempt. Robert Harpur, a vestryman at Trinity Church and later a tutor of mathematics at King's College, owned multiple female domestic servants. One of his servants, Dina, had a child who passed away while she was working for Harpur and on October 8, 1774, he gave her seven shillings "to pay for a coffin for Charley." [56] In addition to covering the cost of the coffin, Harpur also paid for the funeral expenses, including two shillings "for a pall," nine shillings to the Rector, and six shillings to "Mr Norwood Negro grave digger." [57] While Harpur's decision to pay for Charley's funeral may have emerged simply out of benevolence and compassion, the juxtaposition of the "Negro grave digger" burying the child of his indentured servant exposes the complex dynamics of the interactions between free and unfree labor in the city. As Harpur's servant, Dina received a paltry sum to compensate her for her labor; a sum that was clearly insufficient to cover the funeral costs of her child. Her reliance on her master to afford her child a dignified burial is suggestive of the subversive relationship that bound the two of them together—she was indebted to him not only in life, but also in death, *viz a viz* her child.

Conclusion

Throughout the history of Manhattan, stretching from the point of first contact to the modern day, the labor of a large number of inhabitants was rendered invisible. Toiling on behalf of their masters, slaves and bonded laborers cut down trees, burned lime, and laid the foundations of innumerable houses that dotted Manhattan's skyline. From the slaves of the Dutch West India Company to the European indentured servants of eighteenth century, unfree labor has been a constant presence in New York City—one which the governors of King's College utilized in founding what is now one of the top universities in the world.

The Dutch first introduced slavery as a tool to aid the project of colonization, using unfree labor under the auspices of the Company to overcome the challenges of underpopulation. Company-owned slaves were instrumental to constructing the infrastructure of New Amsterdam. As the Company began to lose influence, the slaves

were reclaimed by the colonists as tools of capitalist domination. Slaves became privately held assets which masters could lease out to other freemen in need of additional labor. For carpenters like Andrew Gautier and John Abeel, the highly flexible form of enslavement enabled them to cut labor costs and increase the speed with which construction projects could be completed. Although the relatively scant documentation of these transactions makes it extremely difficult to track the frequency with which masters would lease out their slaves, it is still readily apparent that it was a common practice, especially among men involved in the building trades. In the ongoing debate over reparations for the descendants of slaves, it is crucial that the complex dynamics of urban slavery be taken into account. While its presence in New York may not have been quite as visible and distinctive as in the South, unfree laborers were still exploited, mistreated, and viewed as pieces of personal property which could be bought, sold, and traded. It is in this context that King's College's ties to slavery must be examined and the dark history of the spaces it occupied brought to light. From the first commencement in St. Paul's Chapel to the modern day displacement of black residents of Harlem, Columbia has consistently profited from the subversion of black bodies. To acknowledge the role enslaved people played in enabling the elite classes to attain an education is to acknowledge the obligation Columbia has to the descendants of these laborers, one which I hope this paper has helped to illuminate.

Endnotes

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