



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania
with THE BALCH
INSTITUTE FOR
ETHNIC STUDIES

Negro Nancy. Philadelphia. 1786.

PAS Papers Box 4A Manumissions *Habeas Corpus Actions.*

Pennsylvania Js

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to Robert Fagan¹ and James Josiah² Mariner Greeting We Command you that the body of Negro Nancy in your Custody as it is said detained by whatsoever name the said [Ne]gro Nancy may be charged in the same under safe and secure conduct together with the day and cause of her being taken and detained you have before the Honorable George Bryan³ Esquire One of the Justices of our Supreme Court at his Chamber in Vine Street in the Northern Liberties of the City of Philadelphia this Second _____ day of June _____ at four of the Clock, afternoon then and there to do and Submit to whatsoever our same Justice shall consider in that behalf And have you then there this writ witness the Honorable Thomas McKean⁴ Esquire Doctor of Laws Chief Justice of our said Supreme Court at Philadelphia the Second day of June in the year of our Lord MDCCCLXXXVI

Allowed Js

Geo. Bryan

Geo Davis Jr
Edw Burd⁵ prot

* * *

¹ One "Feagan merchant" was listed as living in Philadelphia in 1785 on Penn Street between Pine and South Streets. Robert Fagan apparently had arrived in Philadelphia from St. Croix with his family and slaves late in the preceding summer. Francis White, *The Philadelphia Directory* (1785), 25.

² "James Josiah, Sea Captain" was listed as living in Philadelphia in 1785 at 407 Water Street. *Macpherson's Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 72.

³ "George Bryan, a Judge of the Supreme Court" lived at 437 Vine Street in Philadelphia in 1785. Prior to becoming a Justice on the state Supreme Court, Bryan had been a member of the state legislature and a leader of its Supreme Executive Council. His leadership was crucial to the passage of the 1780 Gradual Abolition Act. While on the Court, Bryan often sided with the cause of liberty and the aggrieved slave. *Macpherson's Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 16.

⁴ In 1785, Thomas McKean, Chief Justice of the state Supreme Court, lived at 522 Third Street in Philadelphia. *Macpherson's Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 86.

⁵ Edward Burd was the Prothonotary of the state Supreme Court. In 1785, he lived at 414 Third Street in Philadelphia. *Macpherson's Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 17.

In obedience to the within Precept, the within named James Josiah makes Return—
That the body of the within Named Negro Nancy is not in his Custody or by him
detained— That if he is on board the ship which he commands ↑named the Sancta
Cruz packet↓ it is???? he hereby offers any security which may be required, to
produce her before the Judge, as soon as conveniently may be. X.X.X. —
Philad^a June 2^d 1786 James Josiah

* * *

In obedience to the within precept the within named Robert Fagan makes return that he has Body of the within named Negro Nancy ???_ _ _ _ Robert Fagan

* * *

Habeas Corpus ad Subjiciend
Negro Nancy with
Rob^t Fagan
Discharged by Geo B.
Respublica⁶
v. }
Negro Nancy

I the within named Robert Fagan do further witness that the said Nancy was my slave at the Island of Santa Cruz⁷ one of ye West Indies Islands in North America, that having Business to transact in the State of Pennsylvania I wandered hither with my family designing merely to sojourn for some time in the same State & not to become resident there, That I brought with me on my arrival aforesaid the said Nancy on my.....on the nineteenth day of July.....in the year of our Lord 1785on the first day of June in this present year, 1785 I put the said Nancy into a Boat in the....a man with her consent with Intent to send her back to...Santa Croiz aforesaid there to.....and this is the cause of my ?? claiming the said Nancy.

Robert Fagan

* * *

Negro Nancy is discharged from
the detention of Robert Fagan, her late
Master, as a free woman. 5 July 1786

Geo. Bryan

⁶ "Respublica" is the latin expression for a republic, commonwealth, or state.

⁷ The island referred to here was actually named St. Croix. It was one of three Caribbean islands comprising the Danish West Indies.

