

## Lett. Philadelphia. 1786.

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

Copy  
writ  
Hebus Corpus  
Jonas Philips<sup>1</sup>  
for Negro Woman Let

Philadelphia County. Let\_\_

The Common Wealth of Pensilvanie to Jonas Philips of the City of Philad. Merchant Greeting – We command\_ you that the body of a Negro Woman call<sup>d</sup> Let in your custody by Whatsoever Name she is Detained together with the Day & Cause of his being taken and Detained you have before our Justices of our County Court of Common Pleas of and for our County of Philadelphia\_\_ at Philadelphia Without Delay\_\_ Then & there to submitt to. What our said Justices shall deeme Proper And have you then there this Writ\_\_ Witness. Edward Shippin<sup>2</sup> Esquire at Philadelphie the Eight Day of November in the year of our Lord one Thousand seven Hundred and Eighty five-

Attest Edward Shippen

JB Smith<sup>3</sup>

Copy

\* \* \*

John Steels  
Bond  
to Lett formerly  
at  
J. Phiipses

Philadelphia Nov<sup>r</sup>.  
13<sup>th</sup> --}

Whereas a Negroe Woman named Lett has this day ↑been↓ before the Courts of coman Plees in this City & is discharged from Jonau Philips who had her in possession as a Slave & as she is now at liberty to dispose of hir Self she has chosen to live with John Steel in New london Township in Chester County ~

<sup>1</sup> In 1785, Jonas Philips lived at 21 Market Street. *Macpherson's Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 106.

<sup>2</sup> In 1785, Edward Shippen was a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas and lived at 418 Fourth Street. *Macpherson's Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 122.

<sup>3</sup> In 1785, Jonathan B. Smith was the Prothonotary of the Court of Common Pleas and lived at 401 Third Street. *Macpherson's Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 126.

Now I the subscriber do promis to take no ~~due~~ undue advantage of hir neither in getting an indenture on hir nor sending hir out of this state or other wise Imposing on hir Ignorance but in all things using hir as a free person & paying hir suitable wages so long as she shoses to reside with me & to the true performance of this Contract I bind my self my heirs executers & administeraters in the penal sum of one hundred[? text partially covered] pound money of Pencelvania To be paid to the said Negro Woman Let on defalt of this ingagement – in witness whereof I have here unto set my hand & seal this day & year above Writen

Witness present }  
Tho<sup>s</sup> Armat<sup>4</sup>  
Joseph Moore<sup>5</sup>

John J Steel

\* \* \*

W<sup>m</sup> Rowle<sup>6</sup> Opinion –  
Respecting Negro Lett – Late  
W<sup>h</sup> John Steele

[Editor’s note: The following text runs vertically along the right-hand side of the manuscript page.]

~~Simon was sold by J. Steele to James Bond who Paid no money to John Steele & after some time Returnd him to John Steele who sold him to his Brother in Law. With whome he now Lives —~~

\* \* \*

I have considered the case of Lett a negro woman formerly in possession of Jonas Philips—

It appears to me 1. that by the decision of the Court of Commen Pleas in Philadelphia County ~~now~~ she was adjudged to be a free woman\_ I consider this as a solemn adjudication which establishes her right and is not liable to ~~↑be↓~~ overthrown by any subsequent & extraneous proceedings among third persons.  
2. Altho’ John Steel may in all probability be rendered liable in his written engagement in the nature of a bond, yet [text obscured] see how any suit could be maintained in the name of Lett and as the defendts are entitled to call for the authority by which a suit is instituted, it would be liable to be defeated unless such authority from her could be shewn\_

If the bond had been made to a third person this objection would not lie. But 3<sup>dly</sup> I think the proper method would be to find her out and with a copy of the adjudication of the Court of Commen Pleas \_ and an identification of her person I

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Armatt had been a longstanding member of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society by 1785 and served on severa committees. He resided at either 567 Second Street or at 22 Moravian Alley. *Macpherson’s Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Moore was an active member of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in the 1780s. In 1785, he lived at 30 Elbow Lane. *Macpherson’s Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 94.

<sup>6</sup> William Rawle, a young local attorney, was a critical member of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society as it re-oriented its strategy in the mid-1780s, focusing more on aggressive legal action to aid aggrieved slaves and free blacks. He often successfully sued in defense of his black clients, winning a more secure freedom for many of them. In 1785, Rawle lived at 341 Arch Street. *Macpherson’s Directory for the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia* (1785), 116.

cannot doubt any Court of Justice would decide in her favor and Stell may be freed afterwards

---- 17 Jan[text missing]

W Rowle

\* \* \*

Negro Lett  
v }  
Jonas Philips

Sept 1785 734

Hab Corp ad Subjiciend<sup>m</sup>  
& Discharge of Negro  
Lett\_\_

Philadelphia County of

I Charles Biddle Esquire Prothonotary of the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County do hereby Certify, that a Writ of Habeas Corpus, ad Subjiciendum issued out of the Prothonotarys office, by Order of one of the Judges of the same Court, conformably to the Act of Assembly, upon proper Affidavit made &c. and that it appears from the minutes of the same Habeas Corpus, on record, that on the 12<sup>th</sup> Day of November 1785, the return to the said Habeas Corpus was read (which Habeas Corpus was issued in favor of Negro Lett, against Jonas Philips): and thereupon said Negro Lett\_ was discharged by Order of Court, said return not being sufficient to detain her, and [the ↑sd Negro Lett↓ was freed?? ??? ] Liberty accordingly\_\_

Certified under my hand and  
the Seal of the said Court at  
Philadelphia this 13<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1794

Cha<sup>s</sup> Biddle