

## A bond for the manumission of a slave, 1757

### Introduction

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In 1757, New York tavern keeper Eve Scurlock freed five enslaved people in her will, citing their fidelity, service, and good behavior. Among them was a woman named Ann, to whom Scurlock also willed money, clothing, and household items. Though Scurlock's will provided for Ann's and the other peoples' freedom, a slaveholder's willed manumission did not guarantee an enslaved person's freedom. In New York, a 1730 "Act for the [more] Effectual preventing and punishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other slaves" required freed enslaved people to post a bond to the government to guarantee that they would not participate in uprisings and that they would not become a burden on the city where they lived.

Although the New York bond was a hefty amount for an enslaved person to come up with—at least £200—many states had even harsher manumission laws. In South Carolina, enslaved people freed by will or by deed were required to leave the colony within six months of their manumission or face reenslavement. Virginia legislated that no person could be freed under any circumstances whatsoever, and a 1752 Maryland law prohibited slaveholders from freeing enslaved people in a last will and testament.

This legal document records the manumission bond for Ann. The £200 bond was paid by two of Scurlock's relatives—her nephew John Vanduersen, a cordswain, and her brother Peter Burger, a cooper. Among the witnesses to the bond was Philip Livingston, a New York City alderman who would later serve as a delegate to the Continental Congress and sign the Declaration of Independence.

### Excerpt

Whereas Eve Scurloch, Late of the City of New York [Victualer] & Tavern keeper Widow Deceased by & of her Last will & testament made & Published in writing under bond & seal dated in November in the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty – among other gifts and requests in the same will mentioned did manumit set at Liberty and made free a woman Slave called Ann . . . AND WHEREAS by an act of his Excellency the Governor the Coucil and the General Assembly of this province entitled an Act for the [more] Effectual preventing and punishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other slaves, for the better regulating them and for the repealing the acts therein mentioned relating thereto passed the Twenty Ninth day of October Seventeen hundred & Thirty it was thereby Enacted among other matters and things thereby Enacted that if any master of Mistress should Manumit or Set at Liberty any Negro Indian or Mulatto slave, & such Master or Mistress so manumitting or seting at liberty or any other sufficient person for or on behalf of such Ngreo Indian or Mulatto slave should enter into Bond unto his Majesty his heirs & successors with two sureties in the sum of not less than

## A bond for the manumission of a slave, 1757

two Hundred pounds at the general sessions of the Peace for the County where such Negro Indian or Mulatto slave should Live or Reside to and save such Negro Indian or Mulatto slave from becoming or being any Charge to the City, town, parish, or place within this Colony where he she or they should at any time after such Manumission live.

### Questions for Discussion

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Read the introduction and the transcript and examine the document image in order to answer the following questions.

1. How can we explain why enslaved people such as Ann were freed only upon the death of their owner?
2. Why did the document call for a bond of £200 before Ann would receive her manumission papers?
3. Using an Internet program that can convert currency from an earlier period to a current dollar figure, determine the approximate value of the bond posted for Ann.
4. Create a mini-play in which Eve Scurlock's brother, Peter Burger, and her nephew, John Vanduersen, explain to the authorities their reason for posting the bond for Ann.
5. In what way would Ann's life change once she received her manumission papers?

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Image

City of New York. Memorandum that on the fourth day of May in the  
 thirtieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second of Great  
 Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the Faith & at a general  
 Quarter Sessions of the Peace of our said Lord the King for the City and County  
 of New York held before John Cuyler Esq. Mayor Simon Johnson Esq.  
 Recorder, Francis Pitkin, Philip Livingston, Leonard Lofgren  
 and William Conner Esq. Justices of the Peace for the  
 City and County of New York  
 Personally came John Vanderwoude of the City of New York (Vanderwoude  
 and Peter Burger of the same City coopers  
 and Acknowledged themselves <sup>Indebted</sup> unto our Sovereign Lord the King his Heirs  
 and Successors in the sum of Two Hundred pounds  
 current money of the Colony of New York to be levied of their Respective goods  
 & Chattels and Tenements for the use of our said Lord the King his Heirs &  
 Successors if Default shall be made in the Condition under written.

The Condition of this Recognizance is Such That whereas Everlastingly  
 Late of the City of New York Vanderwoude & Peter Burger Water Dealers by & of her last will &  
 Testament made & Published in writing under hand & Seal Dated in November in the year of our  
 Lord one Thousand seven Hundred & Fifty seven among other gifts & bequests in the said will mentioned  
 did manumit let at liberty and make free a certain Slave called Aaron  
 who in the Opinion of the said Justices and at the time of his Death was her proper Slave  
 as by the said Will well remaining of record duly proved & proved in the prerogative  
 Office of the province of New York M<sup>ts</sup> W<sup>ts</sup> H<sup>ts</sup> A<sup>ts</sup> by an Act of his Excellency the  
 Governor in the Council and the General Assembly of this province Enrolled and Act  
 for the more Effectual preventing and punishing the Conspiracy and Sedition of Negroes  
 and other Slaves for the better regulating them and for the repealing the acts therein  
 mentioned relating thereto passed the twenty fourth day of October seven hundred &  
 thirty it was thereby Enacted among other matters and things thereby Enacted That if any  
 master or Mistress should Manumit or let at Liberty any Negro Indian or Malatto  
 Slave of such Master or Mistress so manumitting or letting at Liberty or any other sufficient  
 person for or on behalf of such Negro Indian or Malatto Slave should enter into Bond  
 unto his Majesty his Heirs & Successors with two Sureties in the sum of not less than two  
 Hundred pounds at the general Sessions of the Peace for the County where such

Posting bond for manumission of a slave, May 5, 1757 (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC03943)



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Negro, Indian or Malatto Slave should Live or Reside to and save such Negro, Indian or Malatto Slave from becoming or being any charge to the City, town, parish, or place within this Colony where he she or they should at any time after such Manumission Live, the said Negro, Indian, or Malatto Slave should be free according to such Manumission, And if any Negro, Indian or Malatto Slave should have been made free or after making the said Act should be made free by the will or Testament of any person Deceased that then if any Executors or Executrix of any person or person Deceased or on their Neglect or refusal any other sufficient person for and on Behalf of any such Negro, Indian, or Malatto Slave should Enter into such Security as aforesaid to keep and save such Negro, Indian or Malatto Slave from becoming or being any charge to the City, town, parish, or place within this Colony where he she or they should at any time after such Manumission live, the said Negro, Indian, or Malatto Slave should be free according to the true Intent and Meaning of the will or Testament of any person or persons Deceased as aforesaid and if Security be not given in manner aforesaid such Manumission or Devise as before mentioned should be void and of none Effect as by the said Recited Act in the Tenth Section thereof doth more fully appear, If Therefore the above Bounden John Van Duerssen and Peter Burger their Heirs Executors or Administrators or either of them shall and so well and truly keep and save the ~~the~~ said Negro woman Slave called Ann from becoming and being any charge to any City, town, parish, or place within this Colony wherein she the said Negro woman Slave called Ann shall hereafter live or Reside according to the tenor Effect and true Intent and meaning of the said Recited Act then the above bond or Recognizance shall be void and of none Effect or else to remain in full force and Virtue.

I have and acknowledged the  
 Day and Year first within written I  
 John Burger W<sup>m</sup> Coventry  
 Peter Burger  
 Jas: Wilkin  
 Chas: Livingston  
 Leonard Livingston

## A bond for the manumission of a slave, 1757

### Transcript

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Posting bond for manumission of a slave, May 5, 1757 (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC03943)

City of New York      Memorandum that on the fourth day of May in the thirtieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second of Great Britain, France and Ireland King Defender of the [*strikeout*] Faith &c at a General Quarter sessions of the Peace of our said Lord the King for the City and County of New York Held before John Cruger Esq<sup>r</sup> Mayor Simon Johnson Esq<sup>r</sup> [*illegible*] Francis Gilpin, Philip Livingston, Leonard Lispenard and William Coventry Esq<sup>r</sup> aldermen & Justices of the peace for the City and County of New York.....

Personally came John Vanduersen of the City of New York, Cordwainer and – Peter Burger of the same City, cooper –  
and acknowledged themselves [*inserted*: Indebted] unto our Sovereign Lord the King his Heirs and Successors in the sum of Two Hundred pounds –  
Current money of the Colony of New York to be Levied of their Respective goods & Chattels Lands & Tenements for the use of our said Lord the King his Heirs & successors if Default shall be made in the conditions underwritten.

The Condition of this Recognizance is such That whereas Eve [*strikeout*] Scurloch, Late of the City of New York Victualer & Tavern keeper Widow Deceased by & of her Last will & testament made & Published in writing under bond & seal Dated in November in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred & Fifty – among other gifts & requests in the same will mentioned Did manumit set at Liberty and made free a woman Slave called Ann – who in the lifetime of the said Testatrix and at the time of her Death was her proper slave as by the said recited will remaining of record Duly proved approved in the prerogative office of the province of New York AND WHEREAS by an act of his Excellency the Governor the Council and the General Assembly of this province entitled an Act for the more Effectual preventing and punishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other slaves, for the better regulating them and for the repealing the acts therein mentioned relating thereto passed the Twenty Ninth day of October Seventeen hundred & Thirty it was thereby Enacted among other matters and things thereby Enacted that if any master of Mistress should Manumit or Set at Liberty any

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Negro Indian or Malatto slave, & such Master or Mistress so manumitting or seting at liberty or any other sufficient person for or on behalf of such Negro Indian or Malatto slave should enter into Bond unto his Majesty his heirs & successors with two sureties in the sum of not less than two Hundred pounds at the general sessions of the Peace for the County where such Negro [2] Negro Indian or Malatto slave should Live or Reside to and save such Negro Indian or Malatto slave from becoming or being any Charge to the City, town, parish, or place within this Colony where he she or they should at any time after such Manumission live, the said Negro, Indian, or Malatto Slave, should be free according to such Manumission, And if any negro, Indian or Malatto Slave should have Been made free or after making the said act should be made free by the will or Testament of any person Deceased that then if any Executor or Executors of any person or persons Deceased or on their Neglect or refusal any other sufficient person for and on Behalf of any such Negro, Indian, or Malatto Slave should Enter into such security as aforesaid to keep and save such Negro, Indian or Malatto Slave from becoming or being any Charge to the City, town, parish or place within this Colony where he she or they should at any time after such Manumission live, the said Negro, Indian or Malatto slave should be free according to the true Intent and Meaning of the will or Testament of any person or persons Deceased as aforesaid and if security be not given in manner aforesaid such Manumission or Devise as before mentioned should be void of none Effect as by the Said Recited act in the Tenth Section thereof doth more fully appear, If Therefore the above Bounden John Van Duerson and Peter Burger, their Heirs Executors or Administrators or Either of them shall and do well and truly keep and save the [*strikeout*] said Negro woman – Slave called Ann – from becoming and being any charge to any City, town parish, or place within this colony "wherein she the said Negro woman slave called Ann shall hereafter live or Reside according to the tenor Effect and true Intent and meaning of the Said Recited act then the above bond or Recognizance shall be Void and of none Effect or Else to remain in full force and Virtue.

Taken and acknowledged the

Day and year first within written

John Cruger, W<sup>m</sup>. Coventry

L. Johnson

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Fra<sup>s</sup>, Gilpin

Phil. Livingston

Leonard Lispenard

[*docket*]

Bond from John Van Duerson & Peter Burger Esq. of Eve Scurloch &c: To his majesty in £200

To in[*illegible*] His [*illegible*], on acc: of a negro [*inserted: woman*] Ann being Lately  
manumitted By s<sup>d</sup> Eve Scurloch

Taken in May sessions & filed [*illegible*] of may 1757