Biographies of Enslaved People who Lived or Worked inside Drayton Hall

The enslaved individuals mentioned below were recorded in Charles Drayton’s diaries (1784-1820) as having jobs and responsibilities that required them to work inside the main house at Drayton Hall. They had roles such as cooking the Draytons’ food, caring for the Draytons’ children, and running the Draytons’ household: roles that made them indispensable in the daily operations of Drayton Hall. Most of them probably lived in the cellar of the main house, though it’s possible some may have slept in other areas of the house based on their job and the Draytons’ requirements. There may have been others who lived and worked in the house as well who were either not identified by name in Charles’s diaries or whose jobs were not stated in the diaries.

While Charles’s diary entries are sometimes incredibly detailed, it’s important to remember that all of these stories are told from his point-of-view. The significance of these individuals in his and his family’s lives is clear.

Cooks

Dumplin

Dumplin was an enslaved woman who worked as a cook at Drayton Hall. She was mentioned in three diary entries written by Charles Drayton, but as a cook, Dumplin played an integral role in daily life at Drayton Hall.

The first entry in which Dumplin appeared was written on March 13, 1784. In the entry, Charles mentioned that Dumplin and six other people had been given blankets. Other plantation records indicate that people enslaved by Charles Drayton received blankets, shoes, and fabric or clothing on a rotating basis or as needed, at Mr. Drayton’s discretion.

Dumplin next appeared in the diaries 16 years later on September 14, 1800. This was the first time Charles mentioned that Dumplin was a cook. He recorded that Dumplin became ill after taking part in a traditional funerary custom by “sitting up” with the remains of a man named Jack Groom who had died the previous night. According to Charles, Dumplin “was seized with a congestion in the head, which terminated in a Palsy of the right side.” This means that Dumplin suffered some type of paralysis on the right side of her head and/or body.

A few months later, on January 20, 1801, Charles recorded Dumplin’s death in his diary: “She died of a Dropsy, from a Palsy, from a slight Apoplexy.” In other words, she died as the result of a stroke. Charles again referred to her sitting up late with Jack’s remains. It is likely that Dumplin and Jack were married, though Charles did not specify the nature of their relationship.
Mary
Mary was another cook Charles Drayton wrote about in his diaries. Mary only appeared in two diary entries, and both of them were about her death. In fact, Charles wrote two relatively long entries about her death due to the conflicting stories he heard about how Mary died. Specifically, regarding Mary’s death, Charles wrote that there were “two tales of this.”

Mary died on June 23, 1804. Charles wrote about her death for the first time when he heard about it on June 27 from Will, an enslaved man who worked as the driver on one of Charles’s plantations. Will told Charles that the plantation’s overseer, a white man hired to manage the plantation in Charles’s absence, had sent Mary to gather whortleberries, or bilberries, similar to blueberries. While picking the berries, Mary was bitten on the ankle by a snake. She was carried home, where she died.

A few days later, Charles spoke with the overseer, and the overseer told him a different story. He said Mary had asked him if she could pick the berries. Charles did not believe the overseer’s account. He wrote, “In truth, Overseer sent her.”

Sue
There is only one reference to Sue in Charles’s diaries. The entry, which ended abruptly, was written on August 20, 1817. At the time, Charles was at his seasonal residence on Sullivan’s Island. He described the arrival of a schooner, a type of boat, carrying supplies and enslaved people. First, he listed the supplies, which included turkeys and ducks. Then, he mentioned a number of people including Toby (see below) and “Bess, Sue cook’s daughter.” Sue herself was not actively involved in the entry, and it’s impossible to tell whether she was taken to Sullivan’s Island that season or not. This diary entry reflects a constant part of life for many enslaved people: forced movement from one location to another.

Toby
Toby was the cook mentioned most frequently in Charles’s diaries by far. Between January 1794 and August 1817, Toby appeared in at least 18 diary entries, which is significant considering that most people Charles wrote about by name were only mentioned in a few entries, or even just once. In general, Charles wrote about enslaved men more than enslaved women in his diaries. Since Charles’s diaries were used to record work being done and movement across properties, this was probably due to the type of work the men were assigned.

The first time Charles wrote about Toby on January 6, 1794, he said that Toby and three other men—Prince, Emanuel, and Exeter—had run away “from McLeods [sic] threats.” McLeod was an overseer Charles had hired to manage the work being done on the plantation where the men were working. All four men returned within a
month, but Charles did not write about the nature of their return. All of the men, with the exception of Emanuel, attempted to resist enslavement by running away more than once. Toby ran away at least two other times in 1804 and 1807.

As a cook, Toby may have been responsible for processing hogs. There are a couple of diary entries that allude to Toby claiming or requesting hogs. He was also assigned to assist with other jobs from time to time, such as sawing shingles.

One of the entries about Toby is unsettling but highlights the inherent violence and danger that enslaved people faced. On July 17, 1803, Toby reported to Charles that someone fired shots at him while he was traveling at night with another enslaved man. He believed the shooter was a man named Trumbull, who worked as an overseer for a Mr. Roper. Charles wrote that Trumbull had threatened to “waylay and kill” some individuals enslaved by Charles “and nobody shall know who did it.” Charles saw visible marks on a tree that confirmed shots had been fired, but he did not make any further comments in his diaries about the incident.

**Other Individuals Who Lived in Drayton Hall**

**Affy, who cared for the Drayton children**
Affy was one of the women most frequently written about in Charles’s diaries. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned woman, Affy appeared in 12 diary entries between 1784 and 1819. While her job was never overtly stated, clues from Charles’s writings about her make it clear that one of her primary jobs was to care for the Drayton children. For example, when Charles’s daughters Charlotte and Maria were sick, so was Affy. When the Drayton family traveled to their seasonal residence on Sullivan’s Island, Affy accompanied them. Another more blatant clue that she worked in the main house at Drayton Hall is found when Charles mentioned that a woman named Peggie was brought “from the field to assist Affy in the house.”

Affy was an important figure in the Draytons’ lives for at least 35 years. When Charles’s daughter Charlotte Drayton Manigault gave birth to her first child, Affy was sent to Charleston to be with Charlotte for a few weeks.

The last time Affy was mentioned in the diaries was May 27, 1819, a year before Charles’s death. Charles’s description of Affy at that time implies that she was elderly and in poor health, suffering from blindness and “congestion in the brain.”

**Billy, waiting boy-turned-driver**
Billy was an enslaved man Charles wrote about very frequently in his diaries from 1797 to 1813 and had an extraordinary story. Billy once played an important role in Charles’s daily life, but the two men’s relationship had dramatic ups and downs.
Billy was smart and ambitious, but his life was marked by tragedy and changed drastically over time.

The first entry in which Billy appeared was written on July 31, 1797: “The waiting boy Billy returned from a visit to his father Jack, Thomas Drayton’s driver at the Ocean plantation.” When Billy returned to Drayton Hall, he reported on the number of people working in the rice fields and how the Ocean Plantation operated.

Though focused on Thomas Drayton’s plantation, the entry revealed meaningful aspects of Billy’s life. He was a waiting boy, working directly for Charles Drayton and living in the main house at Drayton Hall, assisting with household tasks, helping Charles with daily needs, and potentially running errands for Charles. The entry also indicated that Billy’s father was owned by Charles’s brother. Charles never mentioned Billy’s mother or other family, but families that lived separately from one another were a common reality in enslaved people’s lives. There is no record of how frequently Billy was permitted to see his father. Note that the word “boy” in this entry does not necessarily mean Billy was a child. The word “boy” was often used to describe African American men who held service roles.

The next noteworthy entry about Billy was written on September 11, 1803, when Charles accused him of stealing a jug of rum and a bottle of wine from a closet in Charles’s Sullivan’s Island home, indicating that Billy was still working very closely with the Drayton family and had access to their private living spaces. Billy was “chastised” for the act, meaning that he received physical punishment.

That night, Billy ran away. Charles said he took some clothes with him: “shirts, a new jacket and overall of corduroy thicket, and white vest, and long blue coat.” This sounds very specific, but it was extremely common for enslavers to describe what clothing runaways were wearing or what they took with them, as it could assist with identifying them.

A couple of days later, on September 15, Billy was brought back to Sullivan’s Island by George (see below), Charles’s enslaved butler. Charles did not describe how Billy was caught or if he returned on his own, but he did describe Billy’s explanation for running away. Billy told Charles he had left to raise money to replace the items taken from the closet. He asked his friends for money or items that could be sold. When that failed, he sold his own watch for $5.00. In a time when most enslaved people had little or no personal belongings, a $5.00 watch was likely very precious to him. With the money he’d gotten for the watch, Billy purchased some brandy to replace the rum and wine.

Then, Billy made a proposal to Charles: he wanted to hire himself out. He wanted to be allowed to take jobs in Charleston and live away from Drayton Hall, and he would pay Charles $300.00 per year. He would pay for his own food, lodging, and clothing. Charles asked him how he’d make the money, and Billy told him he could make up to $20.00 per job by cooking, attending at entertainments, driving coaches, and
tailoring, or making and repairing men's clothes. He told Charles he had no intention of running away, but Charles was unsure. He was worried Billy may not make the payments or that he may leave altogether.

Charles talked the situation over with George. Following their conversation, Charles wrote, “George thinks as I do that he would make an excellent driver, as his father Jack.” And within a few months, Billy was sent from Drayton Hall to Charles’s plantation Jehosse to learn to be a driver.

On Charles's properties, enslaved drivers worked alongside paid white overseers who were the onsite managers of the plantations. Overseers came and went regularly, but drivers often held their jobs for many years. A driver held a high level of authority on a plantation. Billy was now in charge of other people and the work they were doing. He had to make sure other enslaved people completed their daily tasks, he had to report to Charles regularly, and, even though he was enslaved himself, he shared responsibility for providing physical punishment to enslaved workers with the plantation’s overseer.

Billy worked at Jehosse for a couple of years before he appeared in Charles’s diary again in March 1806, when Charles accused him of allowing some kind of “illicit trade.” Charles didn’t provide a detailed explanation of what happened, but he thought the rice crop was under-accounted for.

By the next year, in April 1807, Billy was removed from the position of driver. He ran away and didn’t return for a couple of months. He may have been moved to another plantation when he returned, and he ran away from that property as well. Three months later, he returned with two other men enslaved by Charles Drayton: Toby and Seaboy. Charles said the three had joined a group of armed runaways at the head of the Stono River.

Soon after, many individuals accused of participating in the armed group—whom Charles now referred to as prisoners—were tried for their involvement. It was illegal for enslaved people to assemble or have weapons. A committee was created to plan and execute trials for the enslaved people, who had no legal rights. One of the people tried and punished for his involvement was Billy.

On January 11, 1808, Charles wrote: “Billy brought to DH [Drayton Hall] to be sent to Workhouse according to his sentence. There to remain until May and to receive a flagellation every 16th day.” The Workhouse was a place in Charleston where enslaved people were sent to receive corporal punishment. It was adjacent to the Old City Jail and was also known as the Sugar House. After spending several months receiving physical punishment and performing hard labor in the Workhouse, Billy was a changed man, and Charles’s writings about him changed.

Billy was not mentioned in the diaries again until August of 1808 when Charles sent him to learn how to be a carpenter under the direction of the foreman, or
supervisor, of a group of carpenters Charles owned: Quash. Like George, Quash was a man Charles felt that he knew very well and whom he trusted a great deal. Billy worked as a carpenter for several years, a job he’d never done before. Charles no longer wrote about conversations with Billy, nor did he ever mention Billy attempting to run away again.

George, the butler, and Fanny, his daughter
In his diaries, Charles Drayton mentioned over 190 enslaved people by name. Many of them were only mentioned once, but others appeared multiple times. George and Fanny are a family who represent both of those extremes.

George was one of the people Charles wrote about the most in his diaries. Working as the butler in Drayton Hall, George supervised and managed other enslaved individuals working in the house, and he also kept the household running smoothly, ensured errands were taken care of, and assisted Charles by managing shipments of food, drink, crops, and other items coming to or being taken from Drayton Hall. He also had access to locked areas, such as a potato cellar, that other people did not.

Charles saw George as someone he trusted very much. The two men spent a lot of time together, and Charles entrusted George with jobs that required him to travel and made him privy to important business, personal, and financial information. George attended to traditional butler responsibilities like decanting wine, but he also assisted with other skilled jobs, such as providing routine maintenance for one of the boats Charles owned.

George may have known Charles’s mother, Charlotta Bull Drayton, who died when Charles was a baby. In one diary entry, Charles said George gave “an account of my good Mothers [sic] extreme severity.” It’s unclear just what he meant by “severity,” but it does indicate that George had known her, or at least knew enough about her to share with Charles.

When George died on May 1, 1817, Charles wrote a long entry about his death. Charles usually recorded deaths in his diaries, but such entries were generally very straightforward. However, when George died, Charles took some time to reflect on his loss: “Poor George, my Bustler [another word for butler], died! The death of a long-timed Deputy is a great loss: even tho [sic] not very active. A mutual knowledge of tempers, & customs, & long association, create affections; the cessations of which leave a blank in our routines in life, not soon filled up.” Charles had lost someone who knew everything about him and his life and who he’d known for a very long time—potentially his whole life. Nevertheless, while his relationship with George was important, it was also extremely complex: in the eyes of the law, George was Charles’s property.

Charles did not write about George having a wife, and the only child Charles mentioned in his diaries was George’s daughter, Fanny. Charles did not say what
Fanny’s role in the household was. In fact, Fanny’s name only appeared in one entry, and it was written to record her death on May 17, 1817. However, the language Charles used in the entry is telling. Echoing his sentiment that George’s death had left a blank in his life, Charles wrote, “Fanny, George’s daughter, died child-bearing. She too made a blank.”

**Peggie**
Peggie was an enslaved woman who worked in the main house at Drayton Hall, at least on occasion. She appeared in 6 of Charles’s diary entries between 1797 and 1812. Charles did not specifically mention who Peggie’s husband was, but she had at least 3 sons. Their names were never explicitly stated either, but she may have been related to two enslaved men or boys named Cimon and James.

Like Affy, Billy, George, and others, Peggie sometimes traveled to the Draytons’ home on Sullivan’s Island when Charles and his children resided there during the summer and fall.

Since Peggie did not work exclusively in the main house, it’s unknown whether or not she and her family lived there.