

“I & my old Woman, here Master, are the two oldest Negres in Mr Carters Estate.”

Tom Gumby to Carter family tutor Philip Vickers Fithian
July 8, 1774

NOMINI'S OTHER GREAT FAMILY

So said the aged slave Tom Gumby to Philip Fithian in 1774, before regaling him with one story after another from his long life. Having first worked in the Corotoman tobacco fields in the 1690s, Gumby had become a valued house servant by the 1720s.

He carried letters on horseback and mill goods by wagon for Robert “King” Carter and also went fishing with his sons. “King” Carter willed Tom and wife Kate to Robert Carter III, whom they served in Williamsburg before finishing their days in a house beside Carter’s garden at Nomini Hall.

Gumby shared eggs, watermelons and other produce with Fithian, who recorded a history of the

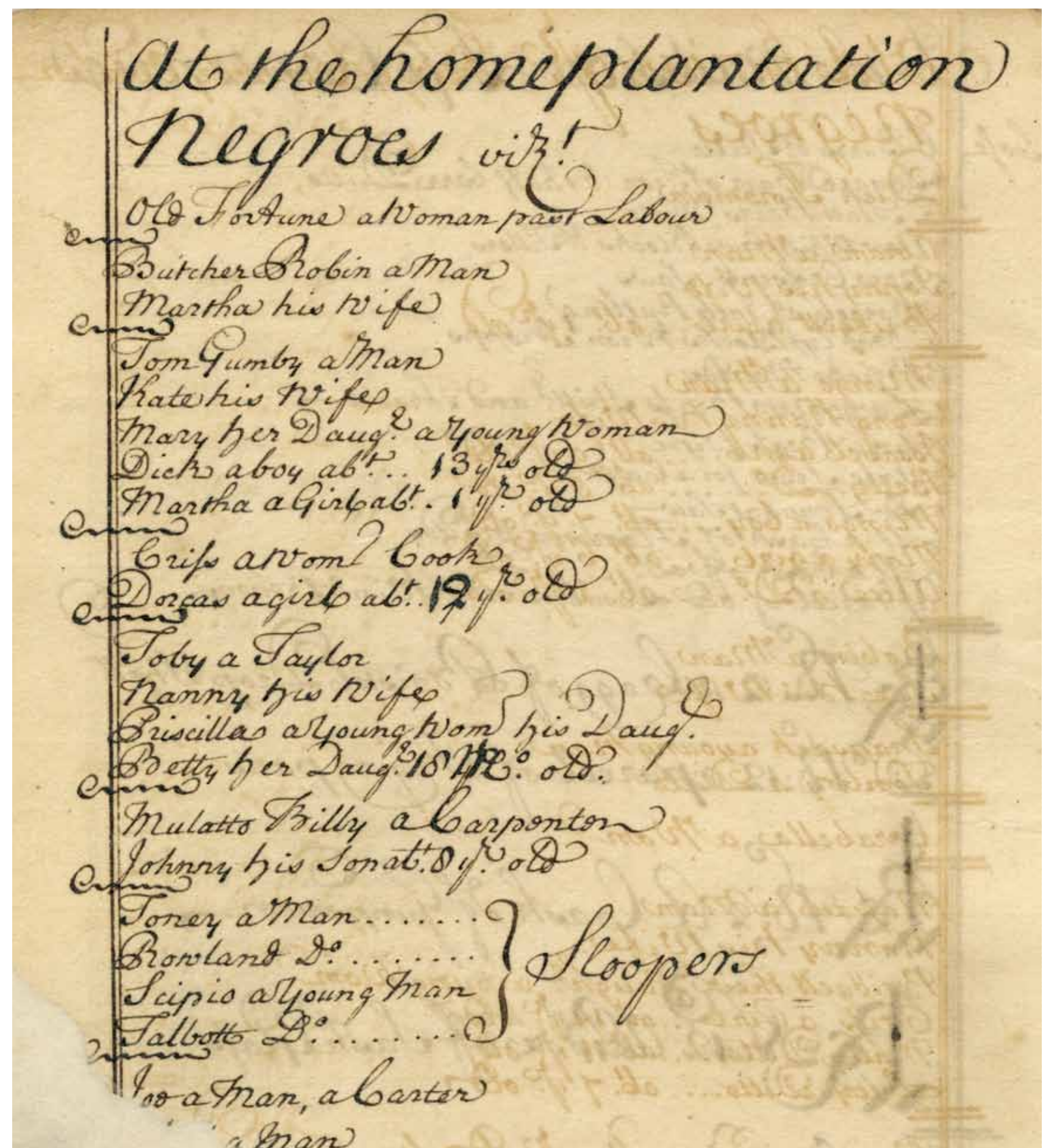
venerable family one day in July 1774: “I drew off this morning for Dadda Gumby a List of his Children, & their respective ages - He himself is 94 - For this office I had as many Thanks, as I have had blessings before now from a Beggar for Sixpence - Thank you, thank you, thank you Master, was the language of the old Greyheaded pair.” Tom Gumby would die by 1782, his wife Kate in 1790.



Robert Carter House, Williamsburg

From 1761 to 1772 Robert Carter III lived in this house near the Governor’s Palace in Williamsburg with his family and several slaves from Nomini Hall, including Tom Gumby. Carrying messages and goods for Carter and residing in Williamsburg gave Gumby opportunities for mobility and interaction with the outside world that most of Carter’s slaves did not have, but it may also have isolated him from family members still at Nomini.

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Estate Inventory for Robert “King” Carter, 1732–1733

Tom Gumby, his wife Kate and their children appear in this listing of enslaved people living at Robert “King” Carter’s Corotoman (“home”) plantation in 1732–1733. Except for Mary, whom Carter willed to his son Charles, the Gumby family moved to Nomini Hall as part of Robert Carter III’s estate.

Virginia Historical Society