

Charity Castle Courage & Survival

Charity Castle, an enslaved woman, was given to Harriet Chew as a wedding gift when she married Charles Carroll, Jr. (1775 - 1825). Charity went to work for Harriet at Homewood, the Carroll estate outside Baltimore, Maryland. After Harriet and Charles became estranged, Charity accompanied her mistress back to Philadelphia. In 1814, Charity Castle was at the center of a legal dispute involving the Pennsylvania Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery. The 1780 law stated that any enslaved person who was “retained” in the state for more than six months would become free. Charles Carroll, Jr. wrote to insist that Charity be returned to Homewood in order to keep her in bondage. The night before her departure, she suffered an accident that rendered her incapable of travel. Her following elongated stay in Pennsylvania allowed her to sue for her freedom, resulting in a series of heated correspondence between Chew and a number of his legal colleagues. Unfortunately, it is unknown if Charity won the battle for her freedom.



Harriet Chew Carroll (1775 - 1861) Strength & Persistence



Harriet Chew was considered beautiful, intelligent, and charming. At the age of 25, she married into the wealthy Carroll Family of Maryland. Harriet and her new husband, Charles Carroll, Jr., lived at Homewood, a fine country house built for them outside of Baltimore. For the first years, the marriage seemed happy, and Harriet and Charles, Jr. had five children. Sometime around 1809-1810, Charles Carroll, Jr. slipped into chronic alcoholism, becoming abusive to his family, as well as others. Sophia, Harriet's sister, wrote in 1812 that,

“I greatly fear that some interference will become necessary to resque [sic] her from becoming a victim to her sensibility-to her illrequited affection.”

Harriet began to make frequent trips with her children to Philadelphia. By 1816, Charles Carroll, Sr. and Harriet's family agreed that an official separation was necessary. Harriet received \$4,000 per year stipend, six freed but indentured African American servants and furniture. Charles Carroll, Jr. died in 1825, having never achieved any sustained sobriety. Harriet never remarried and continued to live in Philadelphia where she died in 1861.

above left: Harriet Chew