

Tench Ringgold (1776-1844), First Owner of DACOR Bacon House A Biography¹

Terence Walz

This study of the life and career of Tench Ringgold is in three parts. His career as marshal of the District of Columbia has already been posted and forms Part 2 of this series.² Part 1 deals with the formative years up to 1818 when he was appointed marshal by the president and confirmed by the Senate; Part 3 will deal with his final years after he lost that appointment in 1831.

Part 1 **Searching for a Career: Ringgold in Washington to 1818**

Tench Ringgold played an important role in the early days of Washington's political and social life, a man who was on first-name terms with presidents, judges, politicians and the socially prominent citizens of the city. Originally from Chestertown, Maryland, he came from a well-known Eastern Shore family who set out to make a name for himself and to marry well. He came to live in Georgetown when he was 20 years old, and within three years married the first of his wives, the daughter of the wealthy Maryland planter and former governor of Maryland, Thomas Sim Lee, who built a fine house on what is now M Street in Georgetown and an estate in



The Thomas Sim Lee House. Georgetown, 3001-03 M Street, built ca. 1794, where Tench may have lived with his first wife in the early years of their marriage.

Photo: Courtesy Library of Congress.

Frederick County which was worked by more than 200 slaves. Mary Christian Lee Ringgold, called Molly by her family and friends, was raised a Catholic and seems to have been in poor health most of her life. Nevertheless, she bore five children: Mary Digges Galloway (1800), Benjamin (1802), Eliza Lee (1806), Sarah Brooke Lee (1809), and Anna Maria (1811). She died in 1813, two years after the birth of her last child. Two years later, Tench was married a second time to Mary Aylet Lee, eldest daughter of a Virginia plantocrat, Thomas Ludwell Lee, of “Coton” plantation, Loudon County, Virginia, and a distant cousin of the first. Thomas had died in 1807, so Mary and her six sisters were brought up in reduced circumstances by her formidable mother, Fanny Carter Lee, granddaughter of Robert “King” Carter of Shirley Plantation (Virginia). Also known by her pet name Molly, she bore him two children, Thomas Lee (1817) and Catherine Sidney Lee (1818). She, too, suffered poor health and died young, aged 32. While married to her, he built DACOR House on F and 18th Street in 1825, which today is one of the most noted federal period houses still standing in Washington. After the second Molly Ringgold’s death, Tench remained a widower, perhaps unintentionally, for the rest of his life.³

The Ringolds established themselves as in Maryland in the seventeenth century and became prosperous as planters and merchants. Thomas Ringgold, Sr. (1715-1772), established



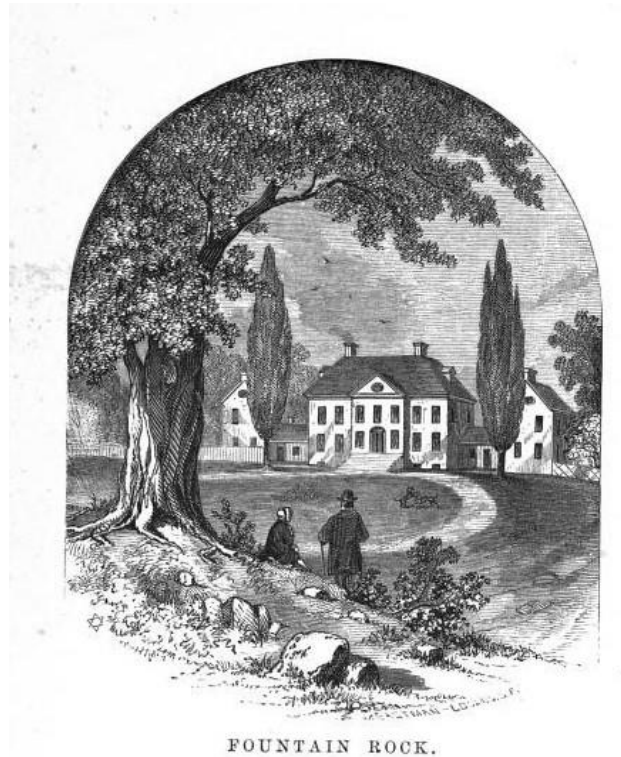
Thomas Ringgold, Sr., grandfather of Tench.
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, ca. 1773, after his death (1772).
Now hanging in the Chestertown Room, Baltimore Art Museum
(removed from the Ringgold House in Chestertown in 1922).



Mrs. Thomas Ringgold, Sr., born Anna Maria Earle,
painted by Charles Willson Peale, ca 1773, after the death of her husband in 1772.
She was the grandmother of Tench Ringgold.
Courtesy Baltimore Museum of Art

the family fortune by trading in tobacco, Black captives and British convicts. His only son, Thomas Ringgold, Jr. (1744-76), the father of Tench, followed in his father's footsteps; he also hosted General Washington on trips to and from Philadelphia.⁴ He owned twelve enslaved men and women, employed in his home and business, and shared the ownership of eight others with his business partner, the wealthy merchant Samuel Galloway whose home was across the bay at Tulip Hill at West River.⁵ He died when Tench, who had been born March 6, 1776,⁶ was an infant, and after spending his formative years in Chestertown, living in the family home,⁷ Tench, his mother, Mary Galloway Ringgold, his older brothers and sisters moved in the early 1790s to a vast estate the family secured in western Maryland in 1776, not far from Hagerstown.⁸ Tench would have been fourteen or sixteen years old. The estate was in an area known as Marsh Hundred and called Conococheague Manor – amounting to some 15,000 acres -- through which the Conococheague Creek flowed before joining the Potomac near Williamsport. When old Mrs. Ringgold died in 1805, she left a will freeing eleven of the family enslaved workers, with much of the estate passing into the hands of the oldest son, Thomas Ringgold (III), who exhibited an unsteady character.⁹ When he did not immediately free her slaves as specified, Samuel and Tench as executors went to court to enforce it.¹⁰ The struggle over control of the estate, which included many properties outside Washington County, Maryland, remained a tangled mess when

it was contested after his death in 1818 by Thomas Ringgold's widow, Mary Gittings Ringgold, and went on for years.¹¹ In due course the manor house, now registered in the name of Samuel Ringgold, was renamed Fountain Rock, and Samuel is said to have commissioned Benjamin Latrobe to design it.¹² Samuel gained local renown in the Maryland militia, rising to the rank of



Fountain Rock manor, from the Frontispiece, George Hay Ringgold, *Fountain Rock, Amy Wier, & other metrical pastimes* (1860). George H. Ringgold was the son of Samuel and his second wife, Marie Antoinette Hay.

brigadier general. He also served as a representative in the Maryland state legislature and later as a United States congressman in Washington, beginning in 1810 for four terms.

Fourteen years older than Tench, Samuel mentored and counseled his brother for many years. Samuel persuaded him to join him for a period in Philadelphia when Tench was in his teens. While there, Samuel met and married in 1792 Maria Cadwalader, the daughter of a wealthy banker and Revolutionary general, John Cadwalader. Maria had been brought up by her uncle Philemon Dickinson after the death of her father. Dickinson served in the U.S. Senate when Philadelphia was capital of the United States during 1792-1800.¹³ During this period, Tench worked as an assistant in a large Philadelphia firm where he learned the elements of accounting and business.¹⁴ Tench maintained long friendships from his stay in Philadelphia and in later years would often make visits there, usually for business purposes.

Back in Maryland, Tench was allotted 1,200 - 1,500 acres of the Ringgold estate, which was known variously as the “Reserves” or “Ringgold Manor” in early years and later as “Salubria,” on which he constructed a house and smaller structures.¹⁵ The area was given the name Montserado in the Washington County Circuit Court land deeds, wherein sales of parts of the estate were recorded during the years 1802 and 1807.¹⁶ In 1803, Tench paid Maryland state property taxes on it and on thirty-four enslaved laborers, then valued at £885.¹⁷ Later when he offered them for sale prior to moving permanently to the District of Columbia, he listed their qualifications:¹⁸

Among whom are, several good and complete road waggoners, a rough carpenter, good stackers and cradlers,¹⁹ young women who have been accustomed to work in the house and field, and likely boys, none of whom are younger than 12 years—Farmers and others who wish to purchase valuable slaves, have an opportunity now of providing themselves with such as are seldom offered for sale, as those I shall sell are all young, have good characters in the neighborhood, and are equal to any negroes in Maryland in value.

One of those enslaved people was a young man named Harry who ran for his freedom in 1803; Tench posted a “reward” advertisement in the local *Maryland Herald and Hager’s-Town Weekly Advertiser* for a month beginning May 11. It is not known whether he was ever recaptured. According to the advertisement, he was clothed in an “old pair of drab coloured

Twenty Dollars Reward.

RAN away on Monday the 2d inst. from the subscriber, living within two miles of Hager’s-Town, Washington county, Maryland, a young Negro called HARRY, about 21 or 22 years old, very black complexion, five feet nine or ten inches high; had on when he absconded an old pair of drab coloured cloth trowsers, an old shirt much worn, and a pair of thick double soled shoes with nails in them. The above reward will be paid by the subscriber, to any person who will apprehend said Negro, and deliver him to me, or confine him in jail, so that I may get him again, provided he is taken out of this county; or *Five Dollars* if apprehended within it.

TENCH RINGGOLD.

Tench advertised for Harry, an escaped enslaved field hand who fled for freedom in 1803.

cloth trowsers, an old shirt much worn, and a pair of thick doubled-soled [sic] shoes with nails in them.”²⁰ This miserable garb may have been the typical wardrobe of Ringgold’s field hands.

On the farm he cultivated grains and maintained a flock of sheep, thirty head of black cattle, and a number of Berkshire hogs then known as “Parkinson’s imported breed.”²¹ During the first decade of the nineteenth century, while attending business and raising a family in Georgetown, he traveled back and forth to his estate outside Hagerstown, thus joining a large number of early Washingtonians who split their time between rural properties and a home in the city.²²

Settling in the District of Columbia

An early reference to Tench in Washington appears in Mrs. William Thornton’s diary for the year 1800 in which she says he negotiated on behalf of his brother Samuel the purchase of half the rights to a mare owned by her husband, the architect of the U.S. Capitol, Woodlawn Plantation and Octagon House, for 120 guineas, promising to give Thornton half of the foals she bred. (Thornton was already famous for racing horses.)²³ It is known that both Samuel and Tench were breeding horses on their estates in Maryland, a past time they enjoyed with a number of prominent Washingtonians. Among the horses Samuel bred was “May-Duke,” a thoroughbred later sold to Tench and Henry Strause. Strause, a wealthy Hagerstown merchant, advertised in 1811 that May-Duke would “stand for mares” in the summer season. Among the other “celebrated horses” Tench owned were “Catoctin” and “North Star,” both of which he decided to sell in 1810.²⁴ Tench’s ties to Washington County were close enough during the early years of the nineteenth century that he ran for Maryland Assembly in 1804, was elected a delegate from Washington County and attended the sessions of the General Assembly between 1804 and 1807.

After alternating between Georgetown and Hagerstown during his early married years between 1799 and 1810,²⁵ he decided to focus on a career in Washington (City). There may have been several reasons for this decision. One may have been the exhaustion of the land from over-cultivation of tobacco and other crops;²⁶ another may have been the realization that a political career, similar to his brother’s, was not as appealing as he might have hoped: he was elected a third time as a delegate in 1807 but did not attend the sessions. It appears he was not re-elected in 1808. Moreover, it may have been true that Molly Ringgold was unwilling to settle on his estate as she was never in good health. An early decision was to ask President Madison, who may already have been acquainted with the Ringgold brothers,²⁷ for a job – any kind of job – in the administration. He listed among his qualifications his strong support for him in the 1808

political campaign and his experience in “a regular apprenticeship to one of the most respectable commercial houses in Philadelphia.” He continued in his application, “I am acquainted with accounts, and the details of business.”²⁸ About this time he joined a group of leading Washington citizens to form the Columbia Society for the Promotion of Domestic Economy, an early precursor of what later became state agricultural and industrial fairs, which offered cash premiums for the best domestic manufacturers and improved livestock.²⁹ He joined other citizens of the city in sending a letter to Thomas Jefferson as he was stepping down from the presidency in March 1809 congratulating him on his achievements while in the office. The letter was signed by John Mason (son of George Mason, author of the Bill of Rights) on behalf of the group and published in the *National Intelligencer*.³⁰ In short, he was emerging as a person with ambitions to play a larger role among the men making up the new government.

Ringgold also positioned himself to undertake new commercial adventures, and in this he seemed to have exhibited a greater willingness than knack in business skill. Announcing in newspaper advertisements in 1810 that he was ready to take on “new pursuits,” he offered his estate “Salubria” for sale, including the house, livestock (cattle, sheep, hogs), plough horses, prized thoroughbreds and thirty enslaved workers.³¹ However, he did not attract a buyer, so several months later he mortgaged his property, including eighteen of his workers, for a \$2,000 line of credit from Philip Barton Key, the uncle of Francis Scott Key, a successful Washington lawyer and congressman from Maryland and later judge, made through the Bank of Columbia in Georgetown.³² The purpose of the loan, the mortgage deed makes clear, was for “an establishment he [Ringgold] is about to commence in Washington City for the purposes of making money.” This was a reference to the rope walk he opened in 1810 near Buzzard’s Point on the Anacostia. In June of that year, he purchased with Nathaniel Heath for \$550³³ a lot on the corner of 8th and B Street (Southeast) and commissioned the well-known architect George Hadfield to design it.³⁴ Rope would have been supplied to the nearby Navy Yard, then the navy’s largest shipbuilding and ship-fitting facility. Yarns were supplied from various sources, most



View of Washington from beyond the Navy Yard by George Cooke, 1834.
The ropewalk would have been to the left of the dock area.

probably from nearby Virginia but also Kentucky.³⁵ In another scheme, toward the end of 1811 he and Robert Brent, the first mayor of Washington and a long-time friend, contracted with Daniel French of New York to purchase a brick-making machine that could manufacture 26,000 bricks within a twelve-hour period. The total outlay, payable over a six-month period once the machine had demonstrated its capacity, was \$5,000. During this time, he advertised in the *Intelligencer* for laborers to work in his brickyard, offering “liberal wages during the brick-making season.”³⁶ It is not known whether the machine purchase went through, but for the next five years his brickyard was in operation.

Sometime before 1809, he and Samuel bought a tavern in Havre de Grace which served travelers going between Baltimore and Philadelphia. In 1809 they placed advertisements offering to rent it.³⁷ Then they joined forces with a group of proprietors establishing a new fast stagecoach and ferry line running between Baltimore and Philadelphia that left Fountain Inn in Baltimore at three a.m. in the morning and arrived at the Shakespeare Hotel in Philadelphia that evening. Rest stops and stops for meals were planned at five places, including a breakfast stop at Havre de Grace at the tavern that Tench and Samuel owned³⁸ before taking the ferry the brothers also owned across the Chesapeake to the other side.³⁹

During the War of 1812, the British torched both the town of Havre de Grace and the property where the ferries landed, at what must have been a great loss to the brothers’ finances.

In 1813 they sold their rights to the ferry crossings to William B. Stokes, who later grew rich from the business.⁴⁰ However, the initial success in these adventures allowed Tench to pay off the line of credit to Key dating to 1810 and not lose ownership of his land and use of his slaves.

Thus, Tench Ringgold had his hand in several Washington enterprises during the early days of the national capital, and in this he joined a number of leading citizens in investing in new businesses. John Mason and Benjamin Stoddert were both in business, including banking, while sometimes also taking a government salary.⁴¹ Some of the investments by these well-known citizens, probably including Ringgold, as has been indicated above, did not turn out well. But considering his growing field of operations in Washington, it is not surprising that in 1814, Ringgold announced in an advertisement in the *National Intelligencer* that he was once more selling “all or part of my estate” of 1,500 acres in Washington County⁴² thereby ending his ties to western Maryland and cementing those with the District.

The War of 1812, however, cost him dearly, not only of properties in Havre de Grace and in land on the other side of the bay, but closer to home, in Washington. In late August 1814, the British arrived in Washington and his and Heath’s ropewalk on the Anacostia was burned down. It had been a money-making property: just two months before the British arrived, Heath had sold him his portion of the ropewalk for \$5,500⁴³ and Tench had taken out an advertisement in the local papers seeking twelve “good spinners” at the ropewalk.⁴⁴

In the face of his business ups and down, despite repeated efforts to turn one of them into a financial success, Tench turned for help to James Monroe, whom he may have come to know from his time as Secretary of State under Madison, beginning in 1811 but whom he may have become better acquainted after the marriage in 1813 of his brother Samuel to Maria Antoinette Hay, the daughter of George Hay, a well-known Virginia lawyer and judge, friend of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. (Hay’s second wife was Monroe’s daughter Elizabeth.) He had been given an additional appointment as Secretary of War in 1814, Madison hoping, perhaps, that Monroe’s organizational skills and military background would help salvage the U.S. military situation in Washington which was reeling from the British burning of its chief buildings. Shortly after his appointment, Tench was invited by acting secretary Monroe to join the accounting office of the department of war as a clerk. This period in his career is usually unmentioned in the biography or biographical sketches of Ringgold.⁴⁵ During his stay in the war department, he assisted Monroe in obtaining loans from banks since the treasury of the

government had completely dried up. Huge amounts were negotiated by Monroe from various banks including those in the District of Columbia, which were prompted by Gen. Jackson's desperate need for money to pay his troops in New Orleans. Tench's familiarity with the local banks must have come in handy.⁴⁶

Tench's wife, Mary Christian Ringgold, always in poor health,⁴⁷ died in late November 1813. A mahogany coffin was fashioned for her by William King, the Georgetown furniture maker, and her funeral sermon was delivered at Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown on December 1.⁴⁸ Tench was now a widower with five children to raise. Her illness and death may have prompted the manumission of a slave named Monica Brown in 1814⁴⁹ and contributed to the decision to send his son Benjamin to board at Georgetown College during 1813, 1814 and 1815.⁵⁰

At the end of October 1815, Ringgold found a new wife, Mary Aylett Lee, whose deceased father, Thomas Ludwell Lee, owned a large plantation in Loudoun County called "Coton."⁵¹ The estate was being managed by his widow, Fanny Carter Lee, who struggled to pay off the debts left by her husband. In the years after his death in 1807, Fanny sold off bits and pieces of the estate, some in Stafford County, some in Loudoun, including enslaved workers and livestock, while also raising six or seven daughters, including Mary Aylett, her third eldest. Mary, known as "Molly," had little to offer a future husband other than her excellent name and connections to the landed gentry of Virginia, including Tench's co-commissioner Richard Bland Lee.⁵² Tench was fourteen or fifteen years older than Mary. They took up rented quarters in a house on F Street, between 19th and 20th Streets, which Tench in a letter to his brother called his "little box."⁵³ The new Mrs. Ringgold gave birth to Catherine Sidney Lee Ringgold⁵⁴ in 1817 and to Thomas Lee Ringgold in 1818.

By 1816, Tench remained in deep financial difficulties despite his entrepreneurial efforts. Three years earlier he had applied for a fresh line of credit, this time for \$10,000, from the Bank of Columbia that was backed by John Threlkeld, another prominent Georgetown citizen,⁵⁵ and once again mortgaged property in Washington County, Maryland with the enslaved work force nominally attached.⁵⁶ Pressure to pay off the debt and the loss of the ropewalk may have forced him to sell the brick-yard and its enslaved workers which he did in early 1816, with this announcement appearing in the Georgetown *Federal Republican* and the Washington City *Daily National Intelligencer*.⁵⁷

FOR SALE.

THE subscriber intending to discontinue his brick yard establishment, will dispose of all the sheds, materials and implements necessary for carrying on the manufacture of bricks, as well as the property thereto attached, consisting of nine lots on which there is erected a comfortable brick house for the use of the yard.

Also, about thirty valuable negroes, consisting of young men and boys of different ages and sizes, among whom there are five complete rope-makers, several brick moulders, temperers, wheelers, off-bearers and boys, who have been accustomed to waiting on a family. In addition to the above I will sell two families of negroes, equal in value and good qualities to any slaves in the district, consisting of two men, their wives and children.

Most of the above slaves having been long in my possession, and being all faithful servants, will be allowed by me to choose their masters. Terms (which will be accommodating) will be made known by application to

TENCH HINGGOLD.

January 27—31

Advertisement, *Daily National Intelligencer*, January 27 and 30, 1816, announcing the sale of his brickyard and enslaved laborers.

These men, women and children were once a part of the community of enslaved fieldhands and workers from his estate in western Maryland who had been brought to Washington and taught to new work skills. Some had labored in his brickyard; others may earlier have worked in his ropewalk. The conditions Tench set for the sale of the slaves – “having been long in my possession, and being all faithful servants, [they] will be allowed by me to choose their masters” – is unusual but not unknown. Similar conditions were set by Clement Dorsey, a slaveowner from another well-known Maryland family and member of the U. S. Congress (1825-31), when he offered his enslaved workers for sale on condition that “they... be sold in families, and to those masters only, to whom they are willing to go.”⁵⁸ Whether Tench lived up to his word is unknown. Around this time – sometime before 1817 when the deed was registered – a group of eighteen slaves, perhaps some drawn from this group, were sold by him and a partner named J. Loockerman to one John K. Smith, who then resold them to Leonard H. Johns of Georgetown.⁵⁹ One of the families mentioned in the advertisement may have been

Paul and Nelly and their children, Barnet and Polly, and perhaps as many as four other youngsters. More about the enslaved in the discussion below of Tench's household staff.

The brickyard not proving a success, Tench – ever the entrepreneur and optimist – decided to go into the tanning business, advertising “Spanish sole leather” and hides at his “currying shop in Washington on 26th Street”⁶⁰ – probably not far from the bridge over Rock Creek leading into Georgetown. In a letter to his brother in October 1816, he mentioned he had just returned from Philadelphia purchasing hides for the tannery; he told him he had “little doubt I shall succeed in making money from this new occupation of mine.”⁶¹

* * * * *

During the British sacking of Washington in 1814, Ringgold, now well-known in Washington, helped plan Madison's escape route out of the city and then accompanied Monroe and Madison to refuge in Virginia.⁶² Perhaps for his role in this disaster and in light of his earnest if plighted industriousness, he was rewarded by being appointed one of three commissioners, along with Richard Bland Lee and John Van Ness, later mayor of Washington, to restore the public buildings the British had gutted. That position required correspondence with President Madison (as well as Thomas Jefferson) to keep them informed of progress and additional construction expenses.⁶³ The commission expired after a year but offered a stipend of \$1,500 for which Tench must have been grateful. The Ringgold brothers had a knack at befriending presidents and their families, and maintained warm relations with the Madisons, the Monroes (especially) and the John Quincy Adamses.

With new responsibilities as head of a household with five young children, a new wife and not long afterward two small children, Tench petitioned President Madison in 1816 to appoint him secretary of Indian Affairs, again mentioning his “business experience in Philadelphia in business on a large scale.”⁶⁴ In any event, he withdrew his name from consideration a month later in light of the “pecuniary misfortunes to which I have lately been exposed.”⁶⁵ These difficulties no doubt related to the protracted lawsuit brought by Mary Gittings Ringgold, the wife and then widow of Thomas, the eldest of the Ringgold brothers, against Tench and Samuel Ringgold over their management as trustees of Thomas Ringgold properties in Maryland and Virginia.⁶⁶ From the suit and other documents, it is evident that by

1816 Ringgold was in fact in dire financial difficulties. According to a document filed with the Circuit Court of Western Maryland, he owed \$40,000 or more to the Bank of Columbia⁶⁷ and \$30,000 “or thereabouts” as a trustee of the Thomas Ringgold estate and additional sums in various notes, accounts and other instruments to other persons, including to Philip Barton Key who still had money due to him from a line of credit established in 1813 that remained unpaid. In order to escape certain bankruptcy, he prevailed upon his brother, Samuel, to underwrite his debts in return for taking over all of his land, houses, and improved lots in Washington County.⁶⁸ Thus Ringgold’s last ties, other than social, ended with that part of Maryland.

When his first wife’s father, Thomas Sim Lee, died at his country estate of Needwood Forest (in Frederick County, Maryland) in 1819, Tench, now remarried, was not mentioned in his former father-in-law’s will. As owner of more than a hundred slaves, Lee left these to his three-surviving offspring: William (fifteen slaves), John (fifty) and Eliza (Lee) Horsey (thirty-one), all of whom ran their own estates. Property in Georgetown was given to each of the grandchildren sired by Tench and the deceased Molly Lee Ringgold, some of which later came in handy when Tench needed to borrow money to build his new house on F Street. One provision in Lee’s will did mention Tench: a \$500 outstanding debt. This was consigned to Tench’s eldest daughter, Mary Digges Galloway Ringgold.⁶⁹

Whatever his financial straits and the embarrassment it might have caused, it did not prevent Tench from applying to President Madison for another job at the end of 1817, this time for the U.S. marshal’s position for the District of Columbia which he had heard would be vacated in the coming spring.⁷⁰ In the next few months, he enlisted more than a dozen well-known Washingtonians to endorse his application, including Henry Clay⁷¹ and in April 1818, the appointment was defacto, although the Senate did not confirm his appointment until it next met, in January 1819.⁷² This began a significant new chapter in Tench’s life and is dealt with in Part 2 of this biography.

*Ringgold, His Houses and Domestic Staff*⁷³

Ringgold and his family had a full household of support. According to the 1820 census, it included twenty-nine people: eleven whites and eighteen enslaved men, women and children.⁷⁴ The whites were: five males, six females; the enslaved, nine males and nine females, of which seven were under the age of fourteen and therefore children; and the remaining eleven men and

women were old enough to work. Of the names of the enslaved, we know at this time only one, a woman named Betsy, who had been given to the Ringgolds in 1806 by Molly Ringgold's father, Thomas Sim Lee, and who stayed in the family until she died. She bore a daughter named Louisa in 1822, who was described in emancipation petitions filed in 1862 as "accomplished House Servant & Cook & seamstress" and "always in perfect health & free from any blemish."⁷⁵ Louisa's mother Betsy, who died before she could be emancipated by law, may also have been the cook of the household. The census of this period does not disclose the names of slaves. It is unlikely that Monica Brown, who had been manumitted in 1814 and freed in 1817, would have remained in the house. No one with that name is listed in the 1820 Washington census or in the 1822 Washington Directory.

However, we know the names of eighteen of his enslaved workers – those who were mortgaged to Philip Key in 1810. In an addendum of the mortgage document filed with the District of Columbia archives is a list of those people:⁷⁶

Stephen, 28
Paul, 30 (seems to be married to Nelly below)
John, 22
Isaac, 25
Sal (Sally), 40
Monica, 25
Charity, 27
Eleanor, 25 (Nelly?)
Letitia, 16
Henry, 16
Amos, 13
Juliet, 14
John, 13 (son of Paul and Nelly?)
Bill, 12
Jim, 7
Stephen, 6
Barnet, 6 (son of Paul and Nelly?)
Polly, 9 (daughter of Paul and Nelly)

Of these individuals, Monica, then aged 25, is undoubtedly Monica Brown, freed in 1817. Others, such as "the Negro John," "Negro Stephen," Paul and Nelly, who were married, and several of their children including Barnet, Polly, and perhaps others became "co-owned with Tench's erstwhile partner, J. Loockerman, and then sold to John K. Smith in 1817 who in turn sold the whole group of them to Leonard H. Johns for \$10,500."⁷⁷ Another of the men in this list

may have died in 1815, when a mahogany coffin was made for him by the Georgetown furniture maker, William King.⁷⁸

Also to be mentioned among the enslaved, although perhaps not among those in the above list, was a boy who later called himself William Henry Ringgold. He was born in 1817 or 1821 in Maryland or the District and claimed to be the son of Tench Ringgold when he remarried in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1851. For his remarkable story, see my article, “William Henry Ringgold, aka Thomas H. Ringgold.”⁷⁹ There is no independent reference to him in any document relating to the Ringolds that I have seen, but relations between white masters and Black enslaved women was commonplace, and Ringgold’s example would not have been exceptional. Also, among the Ringgold enslaved household would have been John and Henrietta (Henie) Belt, who in 1816 gave birth to twins. They were baptized Thomas and Mary at Trinity Catholic Church in Georgetown. It is possible that their parents were the property of the late Molly Ringgold who had been given her by her grandfather when she was four years old.⁸⁰

The numbers of enslaved people in the Ringgold household fluctuated over time, but in 1820, the eighteen listed in the household may have included some of those listed in the mortgage document. In 1824, Tench was taxed on fourteen enslaved persons (eight men, six women), but boys and girls under the age of fourteen would have been considered children and excluded from the tax. Among them would have been a young man named Ben Dorsey, who when aged 24 fled the Ringgold household in 1825 for freedom “up North.” Ringgold, offering a reward of \$100 for his capture, described him as having an appearance distinguished by a “open countenance,” with “remarkably small and white teeth” with “very black” complexion who “generally smiles when spoken to.” He was wearing “a black wool hat, a blue cloth close bodied coat, white waistcoat, and coarse linen pantaloons” – in other words, Ben was working as Tench’s coachman or waiter.⁸¹

In his study of the Octagon House, art historian Orlando Ridout indicates that from ten to twelve enslaved people worked for the wealthy planter Tayloe family during their residence in the city. There was no separate “slave quarters” among the appurtenances of that property – unlike at Decatur House, built twenty years later (1818, though some appurtenances were added later) -- so the enslaved men and women lived, worked and slept in the basement level rooms, except one of the ladies’ maids who slept outside the bedroom door of the mistress of the house.⁸² There may have been a similar arrangement at the Ringgold house, although when he

built his new house in 1824-25, it did contain several out-houses that might have served as quarters for enslaved members of the household. Both the laundry room and kitchen were on the ground level floor, and it is likely that some of the enslaved lived there and possibly in spare rooms in the top floor, which in the original house on F Street had dormers when first built.⁸³

In the Ringgold household, with two adults and seven children to answer to or look after, there was much work for enslaved servants. Women and girls would have been responsible for keeping the house warmed in the winter, provisioning the larder, sewing and cooking, and attending the five daughters in the family, the eldest, Mary Digges Galloway Ringgold, being twenty years in 1820, and two youngest aged three and two. The older enslaved males would have had duties in the stables -- with the coach, carry-all, and horses -- or been assigned work in one of Ringgold's various enterprises, the tanning business or to brickmaking concern located on the edge of Georgetown. Others would have worked as waiters in the dining room during mealtimes. All the enslaved would have been busy during the entertainments that the Ringgolds occasionally hosted, parties around Christmas and New Year's that were attended by Washington society and guests, such as his brother Samuel and his new wife or James Monroe and his wife and daughter when they visited once the new house was finished in 1825.

¹ Other than a weak Wikipedia entry on Tench Ringgold, the only other biography that exists is a pathbreaking article by David Turk, "Firebrand"; he is the historian (since 2001) of the US Marshals Service (USMS) <http://dcchs.org/Articles/RinggoldsArticle.pdf>; see also Calderhead, *DACOR Bacon House*, chap. 3, 38-47.

² "Tench Ringgold, Washington's "Controversial" Marshal, 1818-1831" posted August 19, 2024: https://www.dacorbacon.org/academic_library.php.

³ Sally Sprigg Carroll, second occupant of the house Ringgold built, recalled in the 1880s, that while visiting Sally Ringgold in the house in 1829, she learned that Tench had hoped to marry a third time -- the sister of Dr. John Moylan Thomas who was wooing his daughter, Sally Ringgold. Miss Thomas refused him. Maine Historical Society Library, John Marshall Brown Papers, Box 18A, Folder 1, "Carroll Family," dated January 1883, written on "Headquarters, First Infantry Regiment, Maine Volunteer Militia" stationery.

⁴ George Washington diary entry for 13 May 1773, "Supped and lodgd at Mr. Ringold," <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/01-03-02-0003-0010-0013>.

⁵ A biography of Thomas Ringgold: <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000426/html/am426--695.html>.

⁶ According to the Ringgold family Bible: George Adolphus Hanson, *Old Kent: The Eastern Shore of Maryland ; Notes Illustrative of the Most Ancient Records of Kent County, Maryland, and of the Parishes of St. Paul's, Shrewsbury and I.U. and Genealogical Histories of Old and Distinguished Families of Maryland, and Their Connections by Marriage, &c., with an Introduction* (Baltimore: John P. Des Forges, 1876), 240. This differs from the birthdate on his gravestone in the Congressional Cemetery (March 3, 1777).

⁷ The Hynson-Ringgolds House, now the home of the president of Washington College.

⁸ John Thomas Sharf, *History of Western Maryland: Being a History of Frederick, Montgomery, Carroll, Washington, Allegany, and Garrett Counties from the Earliest Period to the Present Day; Including Biographical Sketches of Their*

Representative Men, vol.1 (Clearfield Company and Willow Bend Books, Baltimore and Westminster, MD 1995), 68-69. Other prominent Maryland families obtained similarly large estates at about the same time: William Fitzhugh, Nathaniel Rochester, Charles Carroll of Duddington, Ortho Williams, Frisby Tilghman, and others.

⁹ He wrote an odd letter to Thomas Jefferson in 1811, and as the editor of the archive of Jefferson's letters posted on Founders Online explained in a footnote, his brother Samuel thought him as "quite a madman" with "no friend who can control him": <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-03-02-0510>.

¹⁰ Washington County Circuit Court, Book R, p. 505, recorded December 14, 1805.

¹¹ It was settled in 1826: *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Maryland and in the High Court of Chancery of Maryland, from First Harris & McHenry's Reports to First Maryland Reports [1658-1851]*, vol. 12 (Baltimore, Md.: Curlander, 1883), 9 – 58.

¹² Sharf, *History of Western Maryland*, 1023-24. The family cemetery is mentioned as the burial site of most of the Ringgold brothers.

¹³ Benjamin Kohl, "The Cadwalader Epilogue," *Old Kent Magazine* 19:3 (2002), 1, 4.

¹⁴ The firm has not been identified.

¹⁵ Cannot verify the existence of the house.

¹⁶ Found in the Maryland State Archives online.

¹⁷ Washington County, Taxes, Marsh Hundred, page 4, part a (<http://whilbr.org/itemdetail.aspx?idEntry=5130&dtPointer=9>.) and Washington County, Taxes (Marsh Hundred - Slaves, page 4, part b (<http://whilbr.org/itemdetail.aspx?idEntry=5131>)). The pound-dollar equivalence may have been \$4.44 to £1.

¹⁸ *Hornet* (Frederick, Md), March 14, 1810, p. 2.

¹⁹ Ones who use a broad scythe.

²⁰ *Maryland Herald and Hager's-Town Weekly Advertiser*, May 11, 1803, p. 3, and reprinted May 18, 25, and June 1.

²¹ E. J. Hooper et al, eds., *The Western Farmer and Gardener: Devoted to Agriculture, Horticulture, Gardening, the Flower Garden, Cattle Raising, Etc* (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. James, 1850), p. 493. These hogs were first known as Bedford hogs.

²² Examples include John Tayloe of Octagon House and Mt. Airy; Thomas Sim Lee or Needwood Plantation (Frederick, MD) and Georgetown; Benjamin Stoddert, who traveled between his estate in Maryland and his townhouse in Georgetown.

²³ "Diary of Mrs. William Thornton, 1801-03," *Columbia Historical Society* (Washington, D.C.), 1907, p. 110.

²⁴ May-Duke: *Hagers-town Gazette*, June 11, 1811, p. 4; Catoctin and North Star: (Frederick, Md) *Hornet*, March 14, 1810, p. 2; no information can be found on Catoctin, but North Star "stood for several seasons" at Conestoga Bridge, Lancaster, kept (owned) by D. Witmore (Witmer): *Hornet*, April 4, 1810, p. 2.

²⁵ Tench does not appear in the 1800 census (the 1810 for the District is lost). He and his wife may have been living with Thomas Sim Lee, his father-in-law, in his Georgetown residence which in 1800 housed 14 whites and 40 slaves. The residence was located at 3001-03 M Street.

²⁶ Max L. Grivno, "There Slavery Cannot Dwell": Agriculture and Labor in Northern Maryland, 1790-1860." Phd. Dissertation, History, University of Maryland, 2007, p. 50: <https://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/handle/1903/7259/umi-umd-4659.pdf>.

²⁷ There are four letters written by the oldest brother, Thomas Ringgold, to Thomas Jefferson, according to the Founders Online website.

²⁸ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4037>

²⁹ *National Intelligencer*, 29 March 1809. On the society, *The American Register, Or General Repository of History, Politics and Science*, Vol. 7, (C. & A. Conrad, 1811), 181-83 on the original meeting. Tench was one of the corresponding members for the District of Columbia along with John Mason.

³⁰ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-01-02-0011>.

³¹ *Hornet* (Frederick MD), March 14, 1810, p. 2.

³² DC Archives, Property Deeds, Liber X. 23, new page 230; a copy of the document was also registered with the (Maryland State Archives), Washington County Court (Land Records, Original), 1808-1810, T, p. 0691-2, MSA CE 67-18, dated 26 January 1810. He could draw \$2,000 on the line of credit. Two years later he was nominated, along with other Washington worthies, to be one of the commissioners of the bank, but he was not elected: <http://www.genealogytrails.com/washdc/books/cenhistchp10.html>.

³³ DC Archives, Property Records, Liber Z, 25, new page 63; the seller was Daniel Carroll of Duddington; his partnership with Heath lasted only two years: *National Intelligencer*, December 12, 1812 (notice of dissolution of partnership).

³⁴ George S. Hunsberger, "The Architectural Career of George Hadfield," *Records of the Columbia Hist. Soc. of Washington*, vol. 51/52 (1951/52), 57; Julia King, *George Hadfield: Architect of the Federal City* (London: Routledge, 2017), 214. It was burned by the British in 1814.

³⁵ On the hemp industry in Virginia: G. Melvin Herndon, "War-Inspired Industry: The Manufacture of Hemp in Virginia during the Revolution," in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 74:3 (July 1966), 301-11 (I am grateful to John Ross for this reference); "Receipt from Ringgold and Heath" *The Papers of Henry Clay: Secretary of State 1825*, vol. 1 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), 695; on his wife's "ill health," <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4037>.

³⁶ D.C. Archives, Agreement between Daniel French, Robert Brent and Tench Ringgold, Property Records, Liber A.B. 27, new page 314, dated 11 November 1811; *National Intelligencer*, May 9, 1811.

³⁷ *Republican Star* (Baltimore), August 15, 1809, p. 1.

³⁸ Heidi L. Glatfelter, *Havre de Grace in the War of 1812: Fire on the Chesapeake* (Arcadia Publishing, 2013); Calderhead, 40.

³⁹ "Baltimore and Philadelphia New Line Expedition," *National Intelligencer*, June 15, 1811, p. 4 for one advertisement.

⁴⁰ For the contract selling ownership of the ferry line two years later, Washington Historical Society, Tench Ringgold Papers, MS0223, dated May 11, 1813. See Swepson Earle, *The Chesapeake Bay Country* (Baltimore: Thomsen-Ellis Company, 1923), 246. The property that the Ringgolds owned was occupied by Commodore John Rodgers, who played a commanding role in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812, and it is said it was burned for revenge against him. Commodore Rodgers' house on Lafayette Square was built in 1830/31. See <http://www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/washington/homes/homes-william-h-sewards-house/>.

⁴¹ See Ridout, *Building the Octagon*, 99-100.

⁴² September 10, 1814.

⁴³ D.C. Archives, Property and Land Records, Liber A.H.33, new page 51.

⁴⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 30, 1814.

⁴⁵ The exception is Wilhelmus B. Bryan, *A History of the National Capital from Its Foundation Through the Period of the Adoption of the Organic Act* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1914-1916), 2: 57.

⁴⁶ In 1826, Tench provided testimony to a congressional House committee about the loans made by Monroe, indicating his own role in the War Department during 1816-17: U. S. Government, House, Reports of Committees: 16th Congress, 1st Session - 49th Congress, 1st Session, Volume 1 (1828), Report No. 76, pp. 19-23; this testimony was also published in the *Richmond Enquirer*, 9 May 1826, p. 4.

⁴⁷ His wife's "ill health" is mentioned in his letter to Madison in 1809:

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4037>.

⁴⁸ Jane Donovan and Carlton Fletcher, *William King's Mortality Books*, vol. 1 (1795-1832) (Bowie, MD, Heritage Press, 2001), 210; *National Intelligencer*, November 30, 1813.

⁴⁹ Manumitted on March 4, 1814 after serving another three years: Rogers, *Freedom and Slavery Documents*, vol. 2, p. 133, #144. It was not uncommon to free a slave for service at such a time: John Threlkeld, the erstwhile mayor of Georgetown freed one of his slaves Threlkeld frees Lucy, age 39, "in consideration of her faithful and tender attention to my mother to whom she had always officiated as waiting maid with great attention and fidelity." (DC Liber L11 (1804), f.37): <https://gloverparkhistory.com/population/slaves-population/slaves-of-john-threlkeld/>.

⁵⁰ Georgetown University Archives, "Georgetown College rosters, including servants and slaves, 1805-1816," Georgetown Slavery Archive, accessed December 27, 2018, <https://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/140>. See also the Diary of Father John McElroy, 1813-1821, entries for February 8, 1813 and July 8, 1813, in which Ben Ringgold's entry into the college is noted. Tench paid \$100 for Ben to eat dinner at the college and take classes; presumably the fee rose when Ben became a full time boarder in the summer of 1813.

⁵¹ Of it, only fragments of memory exist. African Americans marched from the area of Coton, also known as Landsdowne, and Belmont plantations, both owned by Thomas Ludwell Lee and Ludwell Lee, to honor the slaves

who once worked there: <https://wtop.com/loudoun-county/2017/11/march-walking-tour-honor-slaves-two-va-plantations/slide/1/>

⁵² The slow disintegration of the plantation can be followed in advertisements in city and county newspapers that carried ads of plots and acreage being offered, including the mill at the head of Goose Creek that empties in Loudoun County into the Potomac. *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, January 15, 1808, p. 1; *Washingtonian*, February 20, 1810, p. 4; *Alexandria Daily Gazette and Commercial & Political*, July 22, 1811, p. 1; *Alexandria Gazette*, November 11, 1813, p. 4; Tench's new marriage: *National Intelligencer*, November 9, 1815, p. 3.

⁵³ For source, see footnote 37 above; according to the 1822 Washington Directory, Ringgold was living on the south side of F Street between 19th and 20th Streets.

⁵⁴ Known as Sidney, she was the mother of the future chief justice of the Supreme Court, Edward Douglass White.

⁵⁵ On him and the enslaved people he owned, <https://gloverparkhistory.com/population/slaves-population/slaves-of-john-threlkeld/>.

⁵⁶ DC Archives, Land Records, Liber A.E.30, new pp. 167-69.

⁵⁷ *Daily National Intelligencer*, January 27 and 30, 1816, and *Federal Republican*, February 2, 1816.

⁵⁸ *National Intelligencer*, November 7, 1826, p. 1

⁵⁹ Rogers, *Freedom and Slavery Documents*, vol. 1, p. 180, #413. The price was \$10,500. J. Loockerman, perhaps from an old Eastern Shore of Maryland, cannot be identified; Leonard H. Johns built the Williams-Addison house at 1645 31st Street, Georgetown:

<https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/1645%2031st%20Street%20NW%20-%20Williams-Addison%20House%20Amendment.pdf>.

⁶⁰ *Daily National Intelligencer*, October 21, 1816 and December 9, 1816, p. 1.

⁶¹ Tench Ringgold to Gen. Samuel Ringgold, October 14, 1816, in Edward Greenway Collection MS 23-004-R-S-oversize, Special Collections, The Milton S Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University

⁶² I follow the research of Tim McGrath, *James Monroe: A Life* (New York: Dutton, 2020), 340-41; see also Anthony S. Pitch, *The Burning of Washington* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 96.

⁶³ For letters to Madison, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4281>,

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4754>,

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4762>,

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4921>,

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4945>.

⁶⁴ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-4959>. Curiously nothing was said about his experience working in the finance department of the Department of War in 1814.

⁶⁵ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-01-02-5028>

⁶⁶ S. and T. Ringgold vs M. Ringgold et al and M. Ringgold vs S. and T. Ringgold et al in *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Maryland and in the High Court of Chancery of Maryland, from First Harris & McHenry's Reports to First Maryland Reports [1658-1851]*, Vol. 12, (Baltimore, M. Curlander, 1883), 9 – 58. Some of these properties included Hopewell, a tract of land on the Chester River in Kent County in 1807: *Federal Gazette* (Baltimore), July 10, 1807, p. 4; and Prospect Hill, a farm and estate north of Baltimore built by Thomas that was offered for sale in 1809 (with enslaved workers): *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore), December 28, 1809, p. 4. Both were offered for sale by Samuel and Tench as trustees of Thomas's estate.

⁶⁷ The bank directors never instituted good procedures for loans and the bank failed in 1826: Charles E. Howe, "The Financial Institutions of Washington City in its Early Days," *Records of the Columbia Hist. Soc. of Washington*, vol. 8 (1905), 1-42.

⁶⁸ Maryland State Archives, Washington County Court, Land Records, Original, 1815-1817, vol. BB, p. 0144, MSA CE 67-23. It may have been a contributing factor of the enormous debt that Samuel Ringgold left when he died in 1829. On his legacy, Anikis, xii-xiii.

⁶⁹ The Will is published in full in Edmund Lee, *Lee*, 307-310.

⁷⁰ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-01-02-0166>. The letter is dated December 24, 1817, but it must be an error of December 24, 1816, since Monroe became president in March 1817

⁷¹ Among them John Van Ness, Dr. Henry Huntt, the well-known physician to the presidents and Ringgold's future son-in-law; Col. George Boyd, private secretary to the secretary of war, whose wife was the sister of Mr. John Quincy Adams; Thomas Beall; Buckner Thurston, judge serving on the US Circuit Court (nominated by Madison);

George Bomford, engineer who worked on the restoration of the Capitol and later Chief of Ordnance of the U.S. Army; William Brent, lawyer and later congressman from Louisiana;

⁷² *National Messenger* (Georgetown), January 15, 1819, p. 3.

⁷³ My original research on the enslaved staff was published on the web: <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/the-enslaved-household-of-tench-ringgold>.

⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that the Tayloes made do with 10-12 slaves at any given time.

⁷⁵ *Executive Documents, House of Representatives*, Vol. 9, no. 42, "Petitions filed with compensation allowed for each slave," p. 42. Petition filed by Mary Digges Galloway Ringgold.

⁷⁶ DC Archives, Land Property Records, Liber X.23, new page no. 320, dated January 29, 1810

⁷⁷ Rogers, *Freedom and Slavery Documents*, vol. 1, 180, #413. Johns, one of the early settlers of Georgetown, was the builder of the Williams-Addison House on 31st Street, Georgetown, later owned by Alfred Friendly, a well-known Georgetown site:

<https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Williams%2520Addison%2520adm.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Jane Donovan and Carlton Fletcher, *William King's Mortality Books* (Heritage Books, 2001), vol. 1 (1795-1832), 210.

⁷⁹ <https://freedomstoriespv.wordpress.com/william-henry-ringgold-aka-thomas-h-ringgold/>.

⁸⁰ Baptism Records of the Trinity Church, Georgetown, p. 62, image no. 163, <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/556990>. I am grateful to Catherine N. Ball for this information. For the will of Ignatius Digges, grandfather of Molly Lee: <https://www.colonial-settlers-md-va.us/getperson.php?personID=113792&tree=Tree1>.

⁸¹ *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 22, 1825.

⁸² Ridout, *Building the Octagon*, 106-07; sleeping bag on display on the second floor of the Octagon House during a visit in 2019.

⁸³ Beyer Blinder Belle, *DACOR Bacon House: Historic Structure Report* (October 2021), 50-51.