

Excerpt from:

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Kate vs Bridges (1769)

Peter vs Bridges (1769)

Kate and Peter were brother and sister. Their mother, Dido, and father, Abraham, were identified as an Indian and a Negro, respectively, in the church records of their marriage in 1744.¹ They belonged to James Bridges, Moody's father who died in 1747.² The probate inventory listed only toddler Peter, valued at £20.³ His parents and his newborn sister Kate were apparently sold at about the same time as James Bridges' death to a "Mr Martins" of Andover. A second sister, Rose, was born in 1750. By 1769, Moody Bridges owned both Kate and Peter. They had received some schooling as both signed their writs in a confident hand, the only slaves in the freedom suits to have signed their writ with anything other than a mark.⁴

The arbitrators who judged the brother and sister cases were three prominent men in Andover who likely knew of Dido's free Indian status. Bridges must have expected that they would declare Kate and Peter as free. It is likely then that the suits were arranged between Kate and

¹ Indian slavery had been effectively ended after King Phillip's War although many Indians, particularly women, continued as servants in Massachusetts households. Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 211.

² "Andover, Births, Marriages, Deaths and Intentions, 1701 - 1803," *Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620 - 1988*, ancestry.com, accessed April 30, 2018, <http://Ancestry.com>.

³ "James Bridges, Andover, August 10, 1747, Probate No. 3299," *Essex County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1638-1881*, *AmericanAncestors.org*, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.americanancestors.org/DB515/r/244921460>.

⁴ *Kate vs Bridges*, September 1769, ECCP Docket No. 15, Massachusetts SJC Archives, Boston, MA (hereafter *Kate vs Bridges* September 1769 ECCP#15) and *Peter vs Bridges* September 1769 ECCP#14.

Peter and Bridges to give both young people their legal freedom at minimal expense to Bridges. The arbitrators awarded Kate and Peter each a few shillings short of one pound, a very inexpensive charge for Bridges.⁵ Andover's vital records show that Kate married Pompey, also a "free negro" in 1771, while Peter remained in Andover or had left and returned by 1807 so Bridges might still have had use of their labor, presumably under a paid arrangement.

⁵ *Peter vs Bridges* September 1769 ECCP#14 and *Kate vs Bridges* September 1769 ECCP#15.