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The Slave Trader Turned Banker

Experience in the slave trade equipped Liverpool merchant Thomas Leyland with the financial skills and money to create what is now the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank of China. With money from merchant trading and Caribbean adventures, Leyland used the medium of letters to build an ocean-spanning business. Analysis of these records reveals how, over his decades-long career, Leyland experimented with financial products and legal tools that later formed the foundation of his bank.

On December 9, 1786, Leyland wrote to Charles Wilson, the captain of Leyland's slave ship the *Enterprize*. The ship was sailing from the Immawaboe slave fortress in present-day Ghana to the slave markets of Kingston, Jamaica. A captive had escaped from a previous voyage of the *Enterprize*, and now one of Leyland's competitors was selling the fugitive in the Caribbean:

Captain Brown, in the [ship] *Vulture*, deliver[ed] to them a Negro man that run away from the *Enterprize*, and they then expected to sell him at Tobago for £40. Story [sic.] but have favored us with no account since – pray inquire what is become of him.

With best wishes for your health, yours – Thomas Leyland¹

From the comfortable distance of Liverpool, Bristol, and London, Leyland's letters describe bodies neither he nor co-investors would ever see some 4,500 miles away in Jamaica, Grenada, St. Vincent, Barbados. In an age before telegraphs, steamships, and rapid communication between distant parts of the British Empire, Leyland needed to produce a

¹ Letter to Captain Wilson of the *Enterprize*, December 9, 1786, in *Letter Book of Thomas Leyland: May 1786 to September 1788*, Liverpool Record Office, folio 199 (page 246), accessed through British Online Archives on April 8, 2023, <https://microform.digital/boa/collections/5/volumes/28/the-thomas-leyland-records>

paper trail to carry out his orders and link together his investments on each corner of the slave trade. Examination of his account books at the Clements Library at University of Michigan document the slave ship *Hannah*'s journey in 1789-1790 and the ship *Jenny*'s journey in 1792-1793. Both months-long journeys began in Liverpool, sailed for West Africa, exchanged guns and cloth for human cargo, sold their captives in Kingston, Jamaica, and then sailed home to Britain. The letter book of Leyland's correspondence in the Liverpool Record Office contains 780 handwritten pages of 2,262 letters. The letter book existed primarily as a legal instrument to record for the record what Leyland said to others for later reference or in the event a contract was later broken. Before being sent, each letter Leyland wrote was manually copied by his assistant into this book. Close reading of these two documents in parallel – the ship manifest and the letter book – unpacks the mechanics and finances of Leyland's operation turned modern bank.

Thomas Leyland was a banker, trader, millionaire, and three times Mayor of Liverpool. Born 1752 to working class family of limited means, little land, and no royal titles, he chanced upon wealth when in 1776 he won £20,000 in the lottery. He was only twenty-four. This wealth he first invested in merchant ships to sell consumer goods and transport the likes of oats, peas, wheat, oatmeal, bacon, hogs, and lard from farmers in Ireland to consumers in Britain.² By 1783, with profits from these businesses, Leyland turned to the risk-intensive capital required launch slave voyages, purchasing captives on the West African coast and selling them to cotton and sugar plantations in the Caribbean. His ~70 recorded slaving voyages transported an estimated 22,365 captives to the Americas, of whom

² John Hughes, "Chapter XIV: Leyland and Bullins," in *Liverpool Banks & Bankers, 1760-1837: A history of the circumstances which gave rise to the industry and of the men who founded and developed it* (London: Henry Young & Sons, 1906), pp.169-82.

about one in ten died during the months-long voyage. By his death in 1827, Leyland had amassed a fortune of some £600,000.³

These thousands of letters in his book did not once claim – as a moral cover for their profit motives – that such African bodies were being saved from a darker fate of certain death from their African captors. These letters never claimed either that slavery was justified. Nor did Leyland use the cover of Christianity and the Christian language of missionary work to justify in his letters what he did to these Africans. His few written comments on the subject do not even recognize the need to justify slavery, the slave trade, or his role in it.⁴ Instead, the letters present the trafficking of human cargo in matter-of-fact language. In one day's correspondence and from the same desk, Leyland ordered his agents to landscape the lawn of his country house, purchase grain from Ireland, deliver rum to an associate, and sell Africans in Jamaica. The tone of Leyland's writing in flowing cursive script and flowery prose does not change, whether discussing matters as banal as drapery or as life changing as human trafficking. From Liverpool, Leyland managed business but at no point had he ever seen or inspected the human products he was buying, and nor did his London colleagues – on whose orders the Caribbean branch office bought slaves. In this way, these letters all describe slaves in the abstract, as bodies, cargo, and profits per head sold. While it is not possible to intuit Leyland's intentions and feelings about slavery from his slave ship manifests and letter books, it is possible to reconstruct the mechanisms through which he managed the slave trade.

³ Biography of Thomas Leyland by British Online Archives.

⁴ Sowande' M. Muskatem, "Imagined Bodies," in *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2016), pp. 36-54.



*Watercolor by W.P. Gray of Leyland & Bullins bank on York Street in Liverpool in 1807. The bank's offices are to the right, with Thomas Leyland's family residence on the left. In rear was a warehouse that stored before sale goods purchased from Europe, rum from the Caribbean, and oats from Ireland. The building still survives unchanged since the 18th century and, as of September 2022, is now home to a fashion bridal store and luxury watch repair.*⁵

1. Preparing a Slave Ship

From the comfort of his home office on York Street in Liverpool, shown above, Thomas Leyland secured potential buyers: He sent letters to colleagues in Liverpool and London, to the offices of corporations that bought slaves for cotton and sugar plantations in the Caribbean. These letters informed each corporation that a slave ship carrying a certain

⁵ W.P. Gray, "Watercolour of the offices of Leyland and Bullins in Liverpool, UK," *Digital Collections of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, accessed April 10, 2023, <https://history.hsbc.com/collections/global-archives/leyland-and-bullins/records-relating-to-bank-buildings-2/1703841>.

number of captives would arrive by some estimated date. These letter were formulaic in character, such as this letter he sent to James Baillie of London on August 13, 1788: “We shall be much obliged to you for your guarantee for your friends at Grenada, Dominica, & St. Vincent for the sale of the ship *Christopher*’s cargo. Captain Maxwell, who we expect to arrive in Barbados in December next with 250 to 270 Angola Negroes.”⁶

If the corporation was interested, they likely sent two letters at about the same time as each other. The first letter reply from James Baillie to Leyland confirmed his interest. The second letter was sent aboard a cargo ship, departing from London to the Caribbean, instructing Ballie’s branch office “friends” in Grenada to purchase slaves from Leyland’s ship that would arrive “in December next.” The ship carried in its hold food, consumer goods, clothes, and anything else needed to run a Caribbean plantation. It also often contained, as ballast to weigh down the ship and fill in extra space in the hold, bricks and materials later used for Caribbean buildings.

Leyland then proceeded to organize a slave ship. He first sent letters to manufacturers requesting fabric, silk, and other consumer goods. These would be loaded onto the *Hannah* and exchanged for slaves. Around March 18, 1788, for instance, Leyland sent the *Hannah*’s Captain Charles Wilson to a certain manufacturer, Mr. Rawhuson of Manchester, to buy silk and cotton:

I request you will now order from Mather & Co. 200 silk & cotton romalls, red, white, blue, and with as little yellow in as possible, provided the price does not exceed about 14, the price heretofore paid by Caton, who has explained to me how much preferable you will find this article in your trade.⁷

⁶ Letter from Thomas Leyland to James Baillie of Grenada, August 13, 1788, folio 732 (page 779), accessed through Liverpool Record Office.

⁷ Letter from Thomas Leyland to cloth manufacturer Mr. Rawhuson of Manchester, March 18 to 20, 1788, folio 596 (page 643).

Caton was a British agent experienced with West African slave trading outposts. His knowledge of African culture familiarized him with what types and colors of cloth would be easiest and most attractive to sell: silks with “as little yellow in as possible.” In a previous letter, Caton must have communicated to Leyland the products Leyland should order Captain Wilson to buy from Manchester.

After assembling all goods Leyland needed – about 27 barrels of rum, fabric, and other goods aboard the *Hannah* – Leyland drafted a detailed letter to Captain Wilson on June 30, 1789. The ship manifest listed the items contained within each barrel. Within the “butte” – or small barrel – number 13 was 40 dozen cotton romalls and 40 dozen cotton pieces of fabric. These had been quite likely acquired from Mr. Rawhuson of Manchester in response to Mr. Caton’s request the previous year. The *Hannah* also carried guns, ammunition, rum, and various consumer goods. This letter also suggested to Captain Wilson the ideal purchase and resale prices. The instructions also listed the names and locations of branch office buyers in the Caribbean, whose bosses in Britain’s head offices previously expressed their interest to Leyland in purchasing Africans.

Investors

Thomas Leyland $\frac{2}{3}$ stake
 Thomas Molyneux $\frac{1}{3}$ stake

Crew 27 total

1 Captain William Stringer
 3 Mates
 1 Surgeon
 1 Carpenter
 1 Cooper
 1 Boatswain
 1 Steward
 1 Cook
 17 Seamen

Slaves 266 total

102 Men
 28 Men Boys
 24 Boys
 64 Women
 11 Women Girls
 29 Girls
 8 Unspecified for crew's use

Sales of 250 Slaves Imported in the Ship Jenny, Captain William Stringer, from Angola on account of Thomas Leyland & Co. Merchants in Liverpool

		Men	Men Boys	Boys	Women	Women Girls	Girls	Total	Duty	10% on Sales
June 5	Richardson	4		4				8	100.00	10.00
	Peter Taylor	2						2	100.00	10.00
	John Gifford	3						3	100.00	10.00
	John Williams	2						2	100.00	10.00
	John Nicholson	1						1	100.00	10.00
	John Ross	2						2	100.00	10.00
	William Bullock	2						2	100.00	10.00
	George Pennington	1		1				2	100.00	10.00
	John			1	2			3	100.00	10.00
	John	1						1	100.00	10.00
	John Murray			3				3	100.00	10.00
	John Crawford	5						5	100.00	10.00
	John Smith	2		1				3	100.00	10.00
	John Smith	2		1				3	100.00	10.00
	John Smith	2	2	1				5	100.00	10.00
	Richard	3		1				4	100.00	10.00
	David			1				1	100.00	10.00
	John			1				1	100.00	10.00
	John			1				1	100.00	10.00
	John			1				1	100.00	10.00
	John	2		3				5	100.00	10.00
	John	2						2	100.00	10.00
	John	14						14	100.00	10.00
	John			1				1	100.00	10.00
	John	3		1				4	100.00	10.00
	John	2		1				3	100.00	10.00
	John	1						1	100.00	10.00

*“Sales of 250 slaves imported in the ship Jenny, Captain William Stringer, from Angola on account of Thomas Leyland & Co., merchants in Liverpool”*⁸ Investor Thomas Leyland received a $\frac{2}{3}$ rd stake in the profits, while his cousin by marriage, Thomas Molyneux, received $\frac{1}{3}$ rd. Rather than listing captives by name, the center six columns list the number of slaves in each of six age categories: men, men-boys, boys, women, women-girls, and girls.

2. Managing a Slave Ship

Ship manifests from the Transcontinental Slave Trade, instructions from English merchants to ship captains, and from plantation owners to their purchasers all describe the bodies of captured peoples, their desired attributes, their height, gender, age, and physique. The letter of instructions, for instance, owner-investor Leyland to Captain Wilson of the *Hannah* described in 1789: “It is most certain the healthy, young, and beautiful Negroes of that Country stand the only chance of being carried to a market in good condition.” In

⁸ Thomas Leyland Company account books for the *Jenny*’s 1789-1790 voyage, University of Michigan: William L. Clements Library.

addition, consider “humanity and utmost tenderness to the Negroes, as particularly conducive to the prosperity of the voyage.”⁹ This voyage ultimately sold 294 West Africans into slavery in Jamaica in exchange for cash profit, 20 pounds of log wood, 77 casks of sugar, and dozens of promissory notes for Leyland to present to London investors for reimbursement.

“Tenderness” and “humanity” did not code for the best interests and desires of the captives. Instead, these words code for Leyland’s desire that the captives were treated just well enough that as many as possible survive the *Hannah*’s 37-day transatlantic journey to make it to market.¹⁰

The letters from British corporations to their respective branch offices arrived in the Caribbean before Leyland’s slave ship. Letters from England to the Caribbean took about two months to travel by ship. Between departure from London, arrival in West Africa, purchases in West Africa, and sailing to the Caribbean, Leyland’s voyage took several months. Therefore, by the time Leyland’s ship arrived in the Caribbean, buyers in the branch offices knew who to look for and prepare for purchase.

Upon arrival, Leyland negotiated prices with the auction houses of Michell & Daggers for the *Hannah*’s voyage, and Lindo & Lake for the *Jenny*’s voyage. Each of these merchants had Caribbean and London dual offices. Some of the slaves died in transport, on average eight percent for Leyland’s voyages, though the *Jenny* and *Hannah* manifests at the Clements neglected to mention deaths. Others might be too sick to sell at their original price. In the delicate negotiations between buyers and sellers, Leyland sometimes was paid more or less than he had hoped. Leyland usually asked his ships to sell first in Barbados, St. Vincent, and the easternmost Caribbean islands. These were the Caribbean islands closest to West Africa. If failing to secure his desired prices from purchasers in these markets, he instructed

⁹ Thomas Leyland Company account books for the *Jenny* 1792-1793, University of Michigan: William L. Clements Library.

¹⁰ Ibid., *Hannah*.

his ships to sail 1,200 miles further west to Jamaica. The onward sail to Jamaica was always a risk because more slaves may die in transit, and he must hold his human cargo longer before sale. As Leyland wrote to Captain Wilson in a letter deposited with Leyland's agent in Barbados: "Rather than accept of a low average [in Barbados] for a choice cargo by all means proceed to Jamaica, after you have touched at St. Vincent Grenada. Be careful to let us hear from Barbados what island you make choice of."¹¹ In this way, purchasers in the eastern Caribbean had first pick of prime slaves over purchasers in the western Caribbean.

Leyland timed his voyages and adjusted the ship's contents in response to his predictions of market demand. Cotton prices and slave prices fluctuated seasonally. For some voyages, it was more profitable to exchange slaves for Caribbean cotton and rum, particularly if cotton was selling for high prices in British markets. For other voyages, promissory notes were preferable. For instance, as Leyland wrote to Captain Wilson on December 9, 1786: "We wish you to fill the ship with cotton of good quality if it can be got cheap, the present high prices cannot continue and we beg you will not agree to take any other produce on any consideration, so much money is likely to be lost by it."¹²

The endeavor was immensely profitable. For instance, in the 1792-93 voyage of the *Jenny*, Leyland bought 5,940 yards of printed India cotton fabric from the area of Manchester worth about £234, or £1 per 25 yards of fabric. In his instructions to the ship captain, Leyland instructed this fabric to be bartered with Africans in exchange for slaves. The captain should offer 15 yards of fabric, worth just under £1, for "full grown slaves" and proportionately smaller denominations of fabric for female and child slaves.

In these same instructions, Leyland asked each slave to be sold for, on average, £46 in the Caribbean, effectively yielding a return of £45 per slave of the 250 slaves aboard the

¹¹ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, August 31, 1788, folio 755 (page 802).

¹² Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, December 9, 1786, folio 202 (page 249).

Jenny. This voyage alone, based on purchasing slaves for £234 worth of fabric, yielded a gross income £13,500 from the sale of these same slaves. Of this £13,500, most went to labor costs, materials, and paying the captain and crew. The remaining ~£4,000 became Leyland's profit.

In this way, slaves were cheap to buy through barter in West Africa. A single ship could contain within it enough consumer goods to fill the entire ship with slaves. Slaves were profitable to sell in the Caribbean. They sold for upwards of ten times their purchase price in West Africa. This created a problem: If slaves were exchanged for cotton and rum, the volume and value of cotton and rum they were exchanged for would be far too large to fit in the ship.

Leyland therefore secured letters of promise. The ship manifest recorded the names of who bought slaves, the quantity purchased, and the price paid in Kingston, Jamaica markets. Both Daggers & Co. and Lindo & Lake notarized both purchase lists for the *Hannah* and *Jenny* respectively. Local plantation owners made some purchases in cash, cotton, and rum. Other times, they paid in promissory notes that were more liquid as assets. These letters of promise were sent aboard the ship returning to England. Leyland had to trust that these letters were good, and that British corporations like Baillie & Co. would make good on their promise to refund. Trust was key. For instance, as Leyland wrote to Charles Wilson on August 31, 1788: "If you should be obliged to go to Jamaica you may apply to Messrs. Hibbert & Co as well as to Mr. Lindo, because their house in London will accept their bills."

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¹³ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, August 31, 1788, folio 755 (page 802).



Associate of Thomas Leyland Sir Michael Cromie & Co.'s Ten-Guinea Promissory Note: "Promise to pay to Mr. Peter Robinsen [sic.] or bearer on demand **TEN GUINEAS**, after received **LIVERPOOL** 29 day of July 1801" ¹⁴

3. Selling Slaves and Cashing In

Shortage of specie currency in Caribbean and dangers of transporting money over long distances motivated Leyland to rely on handshake agreements, promissory notes, and checks. Upon the ship's return to Liverpool, Leyland began to collect payment. When promissory arrived notes in Liverpool, Leyland shared these letters with his colleagues in the corporations, to demand payment from them for the slaves their branch offices just purchased. These corporations had the funds to pay Leyland because they, too, had sent ships to the Caribbean, ships that returned to Britain with the products of slave labor. These colonial products were sold in British markets and the profits kept in British banks for slavers like Leyland to draw on whenever they had promissory notes. Similar practices of promissory notes played out across the antebellum United States, such as the 1809 case of

¹⁴ "Sir Michael Cromie & Co.'s Ten-Guinea Promissory Note," in *Liverpool Banks & Bankers, 1760-1837*, pp.160.

John Franklin. He brought two slaves by flatboat from Tennessee and sold them in Louisiana for letters of exchange. But when Franklin presented these letters of exchange back north to a bank in Baltimore, he was refused payment.¹⁵ Leyland rarely faced comparable difficulties when seeking reimbursement, for as he warned Captain Wilson on December 9, 1786: “Be very particularly in your agreements with the house who sells your cargo, of by that means all disputes or any disappointment may be avoided.”¹⁶ Leyland must have learned the dangers of promissory notes from hard experience. For instance, on August 9, 1788 he wrote to Joseph Barton of Mark Lane in London to ask: “I now enclose Captain Swainston’s protest, which I hope will enable you to settle the average on the ship. [...] Favor me with these accounts as soon as possible.”¹⁷ Upon receiving an unsatisfactory response, Leyland again presented an affidavit to Joseph Barton on September 11, 1788. Leyland scolded Barton that: “I much fear after payment of the bond debts.”¹⁸

Leyland’s letters to ship captains also warned them to make no underhand deals or any profits that cut out Leyland as middleman: “It is hereby understood and agreed upon that you are not to be concerned in your purchase or otherwise receiving onboard any slave or slaves or goods or to allow any other person onboard to have such dealings directly or indirectly on your or their accounts, under forfeiture of the whole amount of your coast

¹⁵ Joshua D. Rothman, “Chapter 1: Origins 1789-1815,” in *The Ledger and the Chain: How Domestic Slave Traders Shaped America* (New York: Basic Books, 2021), pp. 9-13.

¹⁶ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, December 9, 1786, folio 202 (page 249).

¹⁷ Letter from Thomas Leyland to William Barton of Barbados & Joseph Barton of London, August 9, 1788, folio 726 (page 773).

¹⁸ Letter from Thomas Leyland to William Barton of Barbados & Joseph Barton of London, September 11, 1788, folio 777 (page 824).

commission and privilege.”¹⁹ For instance, Captain Wilson once overstepped and made purchases in West Africa in excess of what Leyland had budgeted. Leyland scolded Captain Wilson in a March 30, 1787 letter: “We have given notice in writing to your agent Mr. Peter Freeland, for you know we have always made a strict exception against any private trade. [...] The necessity for it does not appear at present, and you would no doubt have left the coast sooner if you had confined your purchase to the original cargo.”²⁰

Some 500 names of individual correspondents were mentioned across Leyland’s letter book in Liverpool. Over 69 recorded slave voyages from 1783 to 1791, he employed some 28 captains over 18 ships. With the sole exception of Charles Wilson, Leyland tended not to re-employ the same captain on the same ship with the same crew for the same destinations.²¹ The reason for mixing up captains, ships, and destinations is not clear. It may reflect unpredictable market demands for slaves and cotton. Or it may reflect a desire to keep communications anonymous, to ensure that sellers and buyers remained relatively anonymous to each other, and therefore had to remain honest to Leyland’s instructions.

The span of an ocean allowed Leyland to comfortably collect profits from captives he never saw in chains. But these same physical distances also made communication and reimbursement difficult. London merchants had to commit to buying slaves in Caribbean markets they never saw. Liverpool slavers had to delegate responsibility and give instructions to captains like Charles Wilson, who could disappear and fall out of communication with Leyland for months at a time. Caribbean branch offices had to buy slaves and draw up

¹⁹ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson on June 30, 1789, “Ship *Hannah*, 2nd Voyage Account Book, July 3, 1789 – December 6, 1790,” Clements Library: University of Michigan.

²⁰ Letter from Thomas Leyland, March 30, 1787, folio 316 (page 363).

²¹ SlaveVoyages, Rice University, 2018. Search term: Leyland.

<https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database> (accessed March 20, 2023).

promissory notes, hoping that the London head offices could make good the promises. At each stage of the journey, as the Liverpool letters reveal, there was financial risk. This reveals what is known in economics as the “agent-principle problem,” which says there is a conflict of priorities between the owner of an asset and the person to whom its management has been delegated.

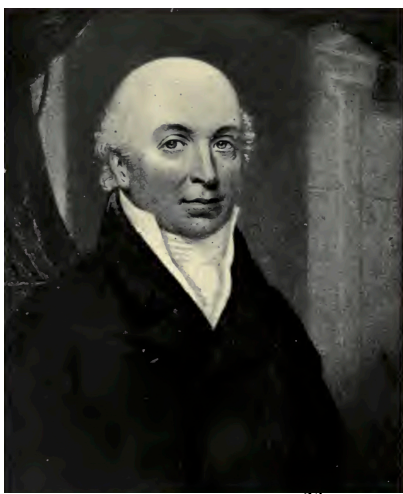
Leyland responded to these risks through financial instruments: he was co-investor in several ships at a time, in the event that if any one adventure failed or sunk at sea, his investments were not all in one place. He left an extensive paper trail in the event that, if someone did not pay him, he could draw up an affidavit. His most useful tool, however, was the promissory note. This served two main advantages: Firstly, they allowed Caribbean planters to buy slaves on credit before the planting season, to work these slaves on credit during the planting season, and then to pay off the debt with income from selling the products of slave labor after the planting season. Secondly, these notes insulated Leyland from market insecurities: if a ship sunk at sea, if raw materials from the Caribbean sold in England for less than expected, if specie currency was stolen in the process of transfer. Notes were more liquid assets than raw materials, easier to transport, and easier to resell to debt collectors.

For instance, before entering banking, Leyland experimented with using slaves as collateral on loans. In short, the planter agreed to repay him in increments of 6, 12, or 18 months later, based on future profits. As Leyland wrote to the *Hannah*'s Captain Wilson on August 4, 1788

We hope you will be at or near Barbadoes by the time this letter can reach that island with a cargo of healthy Negroes in the sale of which you will please to make the best bargain you possibly can with the factor for our advantage. [...] Mr. James Baille of Grenada led us to understand, while he was here, that his house would give bills at 9, 12, 15 & 18 months sight with which alone we should be satisfied. [...] Agree for the bills for the remaining sum to be at the usual dates, in equal proportions, and don't allow him to extend the

last payment to a long date in consideration of giving you either specie or cotton.²²

The reputation of Leyland's captain was at stake because he must transmit back to Leyland and British corporations promissory notes that were valid and vetted. As Leyland's on the ground agent, he had to observe the health of slaves and ensure they were sold to Caribbean agents at market value. Furthermore, this system of debt required Leyland to build up long-term relationships and ways to assess creditworthiness. In an age before modern credit scores, trust, handshake agreements, and the trader's reputation in the community was key.



Thomas Leyland²³



Leyland associate Christopher Bullin²⁴

4. Leyland Turned Benefactor and Banker

Was Leyland heartless and intentionally evil, or was he merely indifferent to the plight of Africans? *Citizens of the World* by historian David Hancock describes the outlook of Liverpool's slavers. "At the ends of their lives the associates were self-consciously patrons, concerned to look beyond their personal lives and fortune to the greater wealth of

²² Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, August 4, 1788, folio 718 (page 765).

²³ Artist unknown, "Portrait of Thomas Leyland," in *Liverpool Banks & Bankers, 1760-1837*, pp. 168.

²⁴ Ibid., "Portrait of Christopher Bullin," pp. 174.

their communities. This is heavy with irony.”²⁵ Bristol slaver Edward Colston, whose statue was pulled down in spring 2020 by George Floyd protestors, spent the later years of his life donating to charities. Colston’s tomb monument and epitaph in Bristol’s Anglican All Saints’ Church enumerates the exact numbers of British paupers he helped, as well as the names of all the schools and hospitals he founded. The total donated came to about £15,000, or equivalent to the profit from about only four slaving voyages out of an estimated 200 voyages Colston organized over his life. Colston’s epitaph concludes: “This great and pious Benefactor was known to have done many other excellent Charities, and what He did in Secret is believed to be, not inferior, to what He did in Publick.”²⁶ Similarly, Leyland in Liverpool later turned to public service and seems to have made it is his life’s work to stamp out the unethical business practices of other Liverpool merchants and small business owners in the public market stalls. As a biographer describes Leyland’s life in the 1906 book

Liverpool Banks & Bankers:

There was no more strenuous supporter of the rights of the people against the oppression of the middleman than Thomas Leyland. Whether he remembered his own early struggles, or whether his sense of justice was keen, we do not know. But for the engrosser, the forestaller, the regrater he had no mercy. He, during his mayoralty of the memorable year 1814-15, made his name a terror to these evil-doers. Thomas Leyland was accustomed to visit the markets personally, and brought to justice those guilty of these offences.²⁷

It is quite possible that Leyland did not conceive of himself as wrong or unethical but rather the bounds of his and Colston’s charity did not extend to the Africans, or more simply that it

²⁵ David Hancock, “Introduction,” in *Citizens of the World: London merchants and the integration of the British Atlantic community, 1735-1785* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 18.

²⁶ Username “WendyHarris1955,” “Bristol – All Saints Church Monument to Edward Colston (1636-1721),” *flickr.com* photo sharing website, photographed March 18, 2013, accessed April 8, 2023,

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/pefkosmad/8594112989/in/photostream/>.

²⁷ John Hughes, “Thomas Leyland,” in *Liverpool Banks & Bankers, 1760-1837*, pp.174.

did not occur to him that his African captives had humanity. It remains, however, near impossible to intuit Leyland's psychology and intentions from his records that survive. What remains clear, though, is the desire for profit.

This desire for profit highlights what Hannah Arendt would later describe as the "banality of evil." This claim comes from her observations of Adolf Eichmann's 1961 trial on evidence this Nazi bureaucrat coordinated the schedules, numbers of prisoners per car, and transport details of Jews sent to extermination camps. The banality of evil is Arendt's idea that, as much as evil can take the form of the sadist and slave ship captain, evil more often takes the form of the bureaucrat who can read a letter from a higher authority, carry out orders, and absolve themselves of guilt through claims they were merely following orders.²⁸ The implication is that a slave ship investor like Thomas Leyland did not, in fact, have to be sadistic to commit evil.

There was in Leyland's career and visible in his letter book, a keen sense of the protestant work ethic, of frugality, of following up with customers for even the smallest of expenses, and of reimbursing employees and partners for any invoices they presented him. In an age before standardized international banking practices, and in a time when most Liverpool merchants borrowed from each other rather than from banks, Leyland's reputation in the community as reliable and trustworthy was key to present and future business. As Hughes and Rankin describe, most early Liverpool banks started as no more than a desk and ledger in a merchant's back office:

Our predecessors were frugal, too. It was told of the above Mr. Leyland that when the Bank was in York Street and he one winter's evening in his dwelling-house next door, a customer was ushered in. The old gentleman who was sitting in darkness assumed that the purpose of the call was to bank some belated cash, and promptly lit a candle. Finding, however, that the client had

²⁸ Hannah Arendt, "Duties of a Law-Abiding Citizen," in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), pp. 135-150.

only come to discuss a loan in private, he said: ‘Ah, well, we can quite as well talk that over in the dark,’ and promptly blew the candle out.²⁹

After abolition of Transatlantic Slave Trade in 1806, Leyland used profits from slave sales to establish Leyland & Bullins Bank in 1807. His partner was his nephew and fellow slave ship merchant Richard Bullin. Leyland & Bullins operated continuously in Liverpool as an independent and family-owned bank. Leyland & Bullins was then acquired in 1901 by North & South Wales Bank, which was in turn acquired by the London Joint City & Midland Bank in 1908. From about 1918 to 1934, Midland ranked as the world’s largest bank by number of customer deposits. Midland bank built its headquarters opposite the street from the Bank of England.

Midland Bank, sitting on the edge of bankruptcy in 1992, was in turn acquired by the *Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation* (HSBC). The pending end of British colonial rule of and support for Hong Kong in 1997 represented a risk to HSBC’s interests. HSBC therefore hoped that acquisition of Midland would help it establish a stronger foothold for its expansion and return from Hong Kong to the British homeland. Two centuries after slavery, the records of Leyland & Bullins are now stored in the basement archives of HSBC.³⁰ As the conversation continues on reparations for slavery, the question remains: What are the duties and responsibilities of corporations today who were built and funded on the profits of slave labor?

²⁹ John Rankin, “Chapter XVI: Retrospective and Discursive Reminiscences of Commercial Liverpool Sixty Years Ago,” in *A History of our Firm Being some account of the firm of Pollock, Gilmour & Co. and its offshoots and connections 1804-1920*, Liverpool: Henry Young & Sons Limited, 1921).

³⁰ “About this Collection of Leyland & Bullins,” *Digital Collections of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, accessed April 10, 2023, <https://history.hsbc.com/collections/global-archives/leyland-and-bullins>.

Timeline:

- 1783 Leyland's first slave voyage
- 1806 Leyland's last slave voyage; Transatlantic Slave Trade abolished
- 1807 Leyland & Bullins created with slave trade profits
- 1901 Merged with North & South Wales Bank
- 1908 Merged with Midland Bank
- 1992 Merged with HSBC
- Today The records from Leyland's slave trading and banking operations are stored in the basement archives of HSBC's headquarters in London's Canary Wharf financial district.

Transcriptions from Clements Library:

Ship *Jenny*, 1st Voyage Account Book, November 24, 1792 – May 18, 1793³¹

Jenny: 2 voyages from 1789 to 1794

Liverpool, November the 24, 1792

Captain William Stringer

Sir,

Our Ship *Jenny* being read for sea we appoint you to the command of her and you are to proceed immediately for the River Laire on Coast of Angola without calling at any place whatever on your passage out. We have shipped a cargo on board of her which we consign to you for sale and returns; it is well assorted for the Trade at Emboma where you are to barter it for prime negroes and ivory and we have no doubt you may begin your purchase at fifteen India for full grown slaves of which description procure all in your power those being best calculated for the Jamaica market where you may perhaps sell the present voyage.

Do not however prolong your stay in the Congo on any consideration the reason being extreme hazardous and sickly, and at the same time use every precaution to preserve the health of your officers and crew; strict discipline and a rigid command will contribute much to the comfort of the negroes to whom you must always shew every indulgence in your power and by these means bring them to a market in good condition.

As soon as you have completed the purchase and provided every necessity for the middle passage proceed to the Island of Barbados where you will find letters in the care of Mr. William Barton for your instruction in the Sale of the Cargo, but if any event should be the cause of your not receiving our further orders call upon Miller & Scott and Gaffey & Wise of S. Vincent and Arnold Bruce & Co and James Bailie & Co of Grenada with any of whom you may stay if they secure to us an average of £46 sterling with the benefit of a sale, otherwise you are to go on to Kingston Jamaica and there apply to John Hinole, Lindo & Lake, of William Daggers & Co, where we hope you will sell at a higher price than can be obtained to Windward.

³¹ "Ship *Jenny*, 1st Voyage, November 7, 1792-May 18, 1793," Thomas Leyland Company account books (1789-1790, 1792-1793), University of Michigan: Clements Library. Scanned online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/leylandt/leylandt.0001.002/1> (accessed March 20, 2023).

The bills get drawn in sums of about £500 each two thirds of the amount payable to Thomas Leyland and the remaining one third payable to Thomas Molyneux. You are to receive from the Factor who sells the cargo in the West Indies your coast comm of £2 in £102 on in the gross sales and £4 in £104 on the remaining amount; your comm. Of £2 in £102, your officers privilege slaves and the surgeons head money being first deducted. Your chief mate William Maxwell is to receive one slave on an average with the cargo and your surgeon is to get the same privilege as Mr. Maxwell with one shilling currency as head money on every slave sold in consideration of which emoluments you are not to convey out any private adventure or suffer any person on board to buy any slave or slaves or goods on your or their accounts under a forfeiture of your entire commissions and wages arising on the present voyage.

In case of your death, Mr. William Maxwell is to succeed you in the command and strictly follow these orders. Wishing you a happy and a short voyage.

We remain sir, your sincere friends

On your return to this port hoist white flags at the fore and main top gallant masthead, which will be answered at the light house of a blue flag on the pole next to the house to the northward.

Ship *Hannah*, 2nd Voyage Account Book, July 3, 1789 – December 6, 1790 ³²

Hannah: 6 voyages from 1789 to 1794

Liverpool 30 June 1789

Captain Charles Wilson

Sir,

Our ship the *Hannah* being now ready for sea you are to proceed in the command of her for New Callabar River in Africa without calling at any place whatever and with the utmost expedition.

The following invoice will give you the quality and value of a well assorted cargo onboard of her which we consign to you for sale and returns; you are to barter it on your arrival at New Callabar for prime slaves and ivory, in the choice of which you cannot be too particular, for it is most certain the healthy, young, and beautiful negroes of that country stand the only chance of being carried to a market in good condition.

At the same time we depend on your using great dispatch in your purchase, you are now acquainted with every turn among the traders and the extraordinary power of Amacree, and we request you will establish every possible advantage with them immediately on your arrival, that we may have the benefit and satisfaction of your soon leaving the river with an unexceptionable cargo.

³² “Ship *Hannah*, 2nd Voyage, July 3, 1789-December 6, 1790,” Thomas Leyland Company account books (1789-1790, 1792-1793), University of Michigan: Clements Library. Scanned online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/leylandt/leylandt.0001.001/1> (accessed March 20, 2023).

We always consider the greatest regularity in your command onboard, harmony and good temper among your officers, sobriety in the crew, humanity and the utmost tenderness to the negroes, as particularly conducive to the prosperity of the voyage, and we trust you will not fail to exercise that authority which will secure to us such agreeable reflections and to yourself a lasting good character as an African commander.

On your departure from New Callabar make the best of your way for the Island of Barbados and if you do not find letters from us there in the care of Messrs Barton and Sibbald proceed without the loss of a moment for Kingston in Jamaica and on your arrival at that place deliver your cargo of negroes into the possession of Messrs William Daggers & Co to be sold to the best advantage for our account from the house which sells the slaves you will receive your coast comm. £4 in £104 on gross slaves, first deducting the mates, surgeons, and your privilege slaves, with two average slaves on every one hundred sold in the West Indies, and £5 amount subject to the ships articles, your chief mate Rob Martin is to have two privilege slaves on an average with the cargo and your surgeon is to have the same privilege of two slaves on an average with one shilling currency as head money on each slaves sold in consideration of which it is hereby understood and agreed upon that you are not to be concerned in your purchase or otherwise receiving onboard any slave or slaves or goods or to allow any other person onboard to have such dealings directly or indirectly on your or their accounts, under forfeiture of the whole amount of your coast commission and privilege.

In case of your death Mr. Robert Martin your Chief Mate is to succeed in the command and to follow these orders but we hope you will enjoy good health and have a happy voyage.

We are sir your most obedient servants.

On your arrival off the Port of Liverpool hoist white flags at the fore and main top gallant mastheads which will be answered at the light house by a broad pennant on the first pole from the house to the northward.

Transcriptions from Liverpool Record Office:

The most important sources are the two Thomas Leyland account books in the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. The pages and instructions list the names of Leyland's colleagues. But the books are incomplete; they do not illustrate correspondence on other legs of the triangular slave trade journey, or Leyland's communication with other merchants to make possible this journey.

Transcription of the account book, however, gives us names of correspondents from the ship *Hannah*'s journey in 1789-1790 and the ship *Jenny*'s journey in 1792-1793. The Letter Book of Leyland's correspondence in the Liverpool Record Office is 780 handwritten pages of 2,262 letters. The book is not organized by theme or searchable by key word. But the book's index on opening pages lists in alphabetical order the name of each person he corresponded with at this time, and the corresponding page number within the volume on which this letter is found. In this way, the two volumes from the Clements give us names to search for in the Liverpool Record Office. The table below lists the main people from the Clements records whose correspondence appears in the Liverpool letter book:

Transcribed contents from Liverpool letter book:

Letter book fills the archival gaps and questions that the ship manifest raises.

Name from volumes in the Clements:	Folio in letter book	Page in PDF of scanned document
Captain William Stringer	None	
Miller & Scott of S. Vincent	None	
Gaffey & Wise of S. Vincent	None	
Arnold Bruce of Grenada	None	
James Bailie of Grenada	732	779
	762	809
John Hinole of Kingston	None	
Lindo & Lake of Kingston	None	
William Daggers of Kingston	None	
William Barton of Barbados & London	726	773
	777	824
Sibbald of Barbados	None	
Partner Thomas Molyneux	None	
Captain Charles Wilson	32	79
of the Ships <i>Enterprize</i> and <i>Hannah</i>	63	110
	199	246
	202	249
	316	363
	596	643
	718	765
	741	788
	755	802
Chief Mate William Maxwell		
of the Ship Christopher	763	810
Chief Mate Rob Martin	None	

Leyland requests James Baillie head office communicate to Baillie branch office to buy slaves from Leyland:³³

James Baillie & Co. London
Liverpool 13 Aug 1788

We shall be much obliged to you for your guarantee for your friends at Grenada, Dominica, & St. Vincent for the sale of the ship *Christopher's* cargo. Captain Maxwell, who we expect to arrive in Barbados in December next with 250 to 270 Angola Negroes.

Leyland demands London investor Dan Rucker promise to buy from him:³⁴

Inv. Any & Henry Dan Rucker London

Mr. James Penny has favored me with your address and communicated that you gave him a guarantee for Messrs. Rae of hand of Grenada for the disposal of two small African cargos, but that neither of that happened to sell at that island. I shall therefore be much obliged to you for a like guarantee for two ships which I expect to arrives at Barbadoes about November or December next viz. the *Hannah*.

Captain Wilson, with near upon 420 Negroes and the Christopher Captain Maxwell with 250-270 – upon receipt of which I will write out to Barbadoes to each of these captains to offer their cargoes to Messrs. Rae of hand for sale. - TL

Leyland tells *Hannah* Captain Wilson to sell his slaves through Baillie. Leyland then lets Baillie know that Wilson will arrive:³⁵

Geo Baillie & Co. St Vincent
Liverpool 31 August 1788

We beg leave to inform you that our ship *Hannah* Captain Charles Wilson, with about 400 New Callabar Negroes, may be expected to arrive at Barbadoes in November and the Christopher Captain George Maxwell with about 260 Angola Negroes in Dcember next and we think it probable both ships will call on you to offer their cargoes for sale, if therefore you could advise each captain of the prospect at your market it may facilitate the business, and we shall be happy to hear that you find it eligible to sell or both of them.

We have addressed our orders for Captain Wilson & Captain Maxwell to the care of Messrs. Barton & Sibbald at Barbadoes and we are respectfully sir yours. - TL

³³ Letter from Thomas Leyland to James Baillie of Grenada, August 13, 1788, folio 732 (page 779).

³⁴ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Henry Dan Rucker of London, August 13 or 14, 1788, folio 733 (page 780).

³⁵ Letter from Thomas Leyland to George Baillie of Grenada, August 31, 1788, folio 762 (page 809).

Leyland demands reimbursement from London investor for past purchase:³⁶

Joseph Barton, Mark Lane London
Liverpool 9 Aug 1788

I now enclose Captain Swainston's protest which I hope will enable you to settle the average on the ship *Gustaff*, at the same time please to get a return of premium on the over insurance on Mrs. Collins share, and favor me with these accounts as soon as possible as well as an abstract of your account since Mr. Manley's death, specifying any demands you may have against the owners of the ships *Manley* and *Gustaff* or *Delamere*, it being my intention to pay them in full.

I am yours Manley
Sir yours - TL

Leyland to William Barton of Barbados & Joseph Barton of London:³⁷

Joseph Barton London
Liverpool 11 September 1788

I have received your favor of the 30 ultimo, and I now annex an affidavit which I can have no doubt will entitle Mrs. Colling to a return of premium on £150 over insured on her share of the Ship *Gustaff*, and I request you will furnish me with an account there and of the average as soon as possible. I much fear after payment of the bond debts, and the ships creditors the dividend upon Mr. Manley's remaining debts of ships creditors for £51 against the owners of the ship and if you make it appear to be right Mrs. Manley will now remit that sum.
- TL

Leyland to Capstick Neilson & Co. of Dominica:³⁸

Liverpool 10 July 1786
& the Nancy Capt. Bradley, copy of the any, Capt. Teller

We have received your favors of the 20 November, 6 December, 1 January, 1 February, & 30 May and we have paid Messrs. John & Thomas Hodgson for the 2355.2 dollars Mr. Nagle remitted & the *Enterprize* more than our demand.

We are perfectly satisfied with the sale of that cargo, and we beg you will accept our best thanks for your attention to our interest. We hope soon to receive an account of the Negro man you left at Tobago, and the charges on the boat you were so good to send home by Captain Brown. Captain Wilson sailed on the 3 July for Annamaboe, in the *Enterprize* and we have directed him to proceed to your house, we have however very little expectation that you can reach a price for these Negroes, in which case, he must go to Jamaica. His cargo will entitle him to bring 450 to 500 Negroes to market, and it should happen you can dispose of them to advantage we will accept of silver on the term of the last voyage or bills on your

³⁶ Letter from Thomas Leyland to William Barton of Barbados & Joseph Barton of London, August 9, 1788, folio 726 (page 773).

³⁷ Letter from Thomas Leyland to William Barton of Barbados & Joseph Barton of London, September 11, 1788, folio 777 (page 824).

³⁸ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Capstick Neilson & Co. Dominica, July 10, 1786, folio 33 (page 80).

friends here at 9.12.15 & 18 month sight, and we will have liberty in our insurance to proceed from Dominica to any place whatever.

- TL&Co

Leyland informs Captain Wilson of the profits other ships are getting for the slaves they sell:³⁹

of the Ship *Enterprize*, Sierra Leone

Mr. Fisher has promised to forward this along with his letters by the ship *Bloom*, and by that means we hope it will be duly delivered.

Accounts from Trinidad a few days ago mention the arrival of a small London ship there called the *Spy*, from Immawaboe with 415 Negroes, which she purchase at 7 ¼ & 9 ¼ cunces, and early in February no alteration in prices had taken place, we therefore request you will proceed down to Cape Le Hoe by Immawaboe without a moment's delay and there dispose of your cargo while these favorable terms continue.

We are sorry to see by Mr. Fisher's accounts, tobacco & rum were in no demand to Windward, still we hope from your influence and exertions we shall not be disappointed at Sierra Leone.

- TL & Co.

-

Leyland advises Captain Wilson on best sales practices:⁴⁰

Captain Charles Wilson of the *Enterprize*, Dominica

Liverpool 9 December 1786

Copy of the backhouse [illegible] original on the packet

We received your letter of the 6 September from Sierra Leon a few days ago & the James, Captain Mount, and we are happy in the prospect of your reaching Immawaboe by the end of that month. On receipt of this we desire you will proceed without loss of time to Kingston in Jamaica, and on your arrival there apply to Messrs Michell & Daggers for our further orders. By letters of the 5 October from that island we are much flattered, Negroes were by then very ill wanted, of some of the first Gold Coast cargoes are expected to average of £45 per head cash, and from their great prospect of a crop and plenty of provisions most likely Negroes will continue in the same demand. If your ship can be filled with cotton at a moderate price and the remainder in cash, we mean to offer the sale of your cargo to Messrs. Mitchell & Daggers on these terms, but if you are obliged to sell for bills we have a guarantee for Messrs. Hibbert Stephens & Raester, ad we like their security better than any other, we have likewise guarantees for Messrs Mures of Dunlop & Mr. Alexander Linds, and in case of need pray consult Messrs Michell & Daggers as to any of these people, but don't accept of any produce in payment except cotton and that only at what may be considered a moderate price. Messrs. Capstick & Co in their letters of the 7 February last informed us of Captain Brown, in the *Vulture*, delivering to them a Negro man that run away from the *Enterprize*, and they then expected to sell him at Tobago for £40. Story [sic.] but have favored us with no account since – pray inquire what is become of him. With best wishes for your health, yours – TL&Co.

³⁹ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Charles Wilson, July 8 to 10, 1786, folio 32 (page 79).

⁴⁰ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Charles Wilson, December 9, 1786, folio 199 (page 246).

Leyland advises Captain Wilson on best sales practices:⁴¹

Captain Charles Wilson of the Ship *Enterprize*, Jamaica
 Liverpool 9 December 1786

We wrote to you of this date to Dominica to which we can add but little. We hope you may arrive at Jamaica in a lucky moment, and if you can secure a sale for specie it will be most agreeable, if Messrs Michell & Daggers undertake such a matter they are to charge only 2 ½ & coast commission on the sale and the same on the returns, but if you are obliged to sell with any other house by all means give Hilberts a preference (if their offer is equal to which you may expect from their neighbors for whom we have guarantees) because can depend on their security, and any bills you agree for, get drawn in equal proportions, one half payable to Mos. Benson and the other to Thomas Leyland. We wish you to fill the ship with cotton of good quality if it can be got cheap, the present high prices cannot continue and we beg you will not agree to take any other produce on any consideration, so much money is likely to be lost by it. If you cannot bargain for the cotton in part of our remittance, we hope you will succeed in a full freight home, which eases an inset considerably, and we have no doubt of your usual frugality in your disbursements at Jamaica. Be very particularly in your agreements with the house who sells your cargo, of by that means all disputes or any disappointment may be avoided, and consult Messrs Michell & Daggers in every case where you may wish for assistance or a second opinion.
 - TL&Co

Leyland to Captain Wilson reminds him of his duty to engage in no private trade:⁴²

Captain Charles Wilson & the packet of the ship *Enterprize*, Jamaica
 Liverpool 30 March 1787

We have received your letter of the 17 December from Annamaboe, and we are sorry your trade there was likely to be attended with great delay, and the purchase on much higher terms than was lately expected. We hope however you will reach Jamaica by the end of next month & we have now only to inform you we shall accept and pay the bills you have drawn for “something more than one thousand pounds sterling in barter for 150 oz gold and 44 punts rum” on our own accounts, of which we have given notice in writing to your agent Mr. Peter Freeland, for you know we have always made a strict exception against any private trade. The increase you have thus made in your cargo we have not doubt was from the best motive and tho the necessity for it does not appear at present, and you would no doubt have left the coast sooner if you had confined your purchase to the original cargo, we are perfectly satisfied to bear the risk of the returns for the abovementioned barter.

Messrs Hilberts made a most tedious sale and a low average of the Mungos cargo, but we hope you will arrive to a better market and be able to obtain more advantageous terms, we continue to wish for returns in cotton, specie, or bills at as short a sight as in your power.

⁴¹ Letter from Thomas Leyland, December 9, 1786 folio 202 (page 249).

⁴² Letter from Thomas Leyland, March 30, 1787, folio 316 (page 363).

Leyland to Peter Freeland promises reimbursement for Charles Wilson's unexpected purchases in West Africa:⁴³

Peter Freeland, Liverpool

We have received a letter this day from Captain Charles Wilson of our ship the *Enterprize* dated at Annamaboe the 17 December 1786 advising of his drafts on us for "something more than one thousand pounds sterling in barter for gold & rum." We have therefore to inform you, as his agents, that we shall accept and pay the above bills for our own accounts (Captain Wilson being excluded for any private trade, on his or any other persons account, as it common in the African trade) and we further declare that any merchandize or Negroes in return for the above bills gold or rum, are to be at our wish and for our accounts.

- TL&Co

Leyland advises Captain Wilson on strategies and financial tools to sell slaves:⁴⁴

Captain Charles Wilson to the care of Mr. Rawhuson, Manchester

In the place of the 100 silk brawls & 100 ½ ells in your abstract, I request you will now order from Mather & Co. 200 silk & cotton romalls, red, white, blue, and with a little yellow in as possible, provided the price does not exceed about 14, the price heretofore paid by cotton, who has explained to me how much preferable you will find this article in your trade.

- TL&Co

Leyland to Captain Charles Wilson:⁴⁵

Captain Charles Wilson of the ship *Hannah* from Africa – to the care of Messrs Barton & Sibbald, Barbadoes

Liverpool 4 August 1788

We hope you will be at or near Barbadoes by the time this letter can reach that island with a cargo of healthy Negroes in the sale of which you will please to make the best bargain you possibly can with the factor for our advantage. We inclose copies of the guarantees we have obtained for Grenada, St. Vincent, Dominica, & Jamaica and you are to stop at the best market, Messrs Barton & Sibbald of Barbadoes will most likely give you some useful information, and you will we expect to find letters in their care from Grenada advising you of the prospect there, to which island we desire you will proceed without loss of time and close with Messrs Munro, McDonald, McFarlane, & Co. if they agree to give you as good terms in average payments as you can procure from their neighbours.

Mr. James Baille of Grenada led us to understand, while he was here, that his house would give bills at 9, 12, 15 & 18 months sight with which alone we should be satisfied, or if you can agree for your ship to be filled with good clean cotton at a little over or under two hundred Livres & one hundred little pounds weight and bills at the above periods in equal proportions for the balance you may accept of it taking care to get the bills drawn one half of the amount payable to Mos. Benson, in sums of not more than £500 each, and the remaining one half to Thomas Leyland, in the like sums exactly. Cotton is very high in the West Indies at present but by the time you arrive it may be very low, there being an uncommon large

⁴³ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Peter Freeland of Liverpool, December 17, 1786, folio 317 (page 364).

⁴⁴ Letter from Thomas Leyland to cloth manufacturer Mr. Rawhuson of Manchester, March 17 to 20, 1788, folio 596 (page 643).

⁴⁵ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, August 4, 1788, folio 718 (page 765).

quantity on hand in this country and no demands, & from the increase in the growth of it and the quantities now brought from the East Indies it is not likely to be dear again soon. If you should be under the necessity of going down to Jamaica you will there sell with Alex Lindo Esq. and make as favorable an agreement for us as you can, if he will give you specie in payment take it, but not subject to any discount as some other ships have allowed to him, or if he will fill your ship with cotton at about 18 & 19. You may accept of it, but in either of these cases agree for the bills for the remaining sum to be at the usual dates, in equal proportions, and don't allow him to extend the last payment to a long date in consideration of giving you either specie or cotton. Make your stay in the West Indies as short as you can and your disbursements as moderate as possible, the greatest reason being useful in the trade.

Leyland tells Captain Wilson which London offices have the best credit to reimburse Leyland for slave sales made in the Caribbean:⁴⁶

Captain Charles Wilson of the ship *Hannah* from Africa – to the care of Messrs. Barton & Sibbald, Barbadoes
Liverpool 18 August 1788

Inclosed you have a copy of what we had the pleasure of writing to you on the 4 event and of a guarantee we have since obtained for Messrs. Rae & Shand of Grenada, with whom we wish you to sell in preference to any other house, if they secure to you as good an average and as short bills as any of their neighbours propose. Their house in London is of the first repute, and we do not know that they have yet sold any Guineamen, which may perhaps induce them to use more than common exertion with your cargo. But if you fail in procuring very satisfactory prices and payments, then you will proceed to Jamaica as we have already directed, tho we should prefer a good sale at Grenada if it can be obtained from any of the three houses there for which we have guarantees.

- TL&Co

Leyland asks Captain Wilson to keep sailing west to Jamaica if merchants in Grenada do not offer a good price:⁴⁷

Captain Charles Wilson of the ship *Hannah* to the care of Messrs Barton & Sibbald, Barbadoes
Liverpool 31 August 1788

We wrote to you on the 4 & 18 curved [?] the last for the purpose of devising that you should give the sale of your cargo to Messrs. Rae & Hand of Grenada in preference to any other house whatever, provided they secured to you as favorable payments as any of their neighbours, and a satisfactory average, all of which we can confirm. But you must take care to manage this with some address to avoid any offense to Messrs Baillie & Co or Messrs Mur[illegible]. The sale at Grenada by our last accounts are very low, and if you do not receive flattering advises from that island perhaps you may find a good market at St. Vincent which in that case make trial of, but rather than accept of a low average for a choice cargo by all means proceed to Jamaica, after you have touched at St. Vincent Grenada. Be careful to let us hear from Barbadoes what island you make choice of that we may in case of need make some further insurance and have the satisfaction of knowing the fate of your voyage.

⁴⁶ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, August 18, 1788, folio 741 (page 788).

⁴⁷ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Wilson, August 31, 1788, folio 755 (page 802).

- TL&Co

P.S. If you should be obliged to go to Jamaica you may apply to Messrs. Hibbert & Co as well as to Mr. Lindo, because their house in London will accept their bills.

Leyland informs Captain Maxwell who he should sell the ship of slaves to, based on promises from the Caribbean buyers' agents and bosses in London:⁴⁸

Captain George Maxwell of the ship *Christopher*
Liverpool 31 August 1788

We have procured guarantees for the sale of the ship *Christopher*'s cargo of Negroes for undermentioned houses viz.

Messrs George Baillie & Co.	
Kean & Robinson	of St Vincent

Jennings, Arnold, & Bruce	
Sam Chollet & Co.	of Dominica
Campbell, Baillie, & Co.	

Munro, McDowall, McFarlane, & Co.	
Rae & Shand	of Grenada

And on your arrival at Barbadoes you are to proceed without loss of time to St Vincent, and there close with George Baillie & Co. if they will secure to you an average of £35 sterling please or upwards bills at nine, twelve, and fifteen months sight in equal proportions, you may use Messrs Kean & Robinson as the means of bringing Baillie & Co to your own terms, but you will please to observe that you are not to sell with them whatever favorable average or bills they may offer, and if Baillie & Co. cannot take up your cargo on the above mentioned terms then you must proceed to Dominica and there first call upon Messrs Sam Chollet & co and afterwards on Jennings, Arnold, & Bruce and accept of the best offer provided it is a more advantageous one than you could get at St. Vincent, but if this should not be the case at Dominica, then you can return to St. Vincent and take what Baillie & Co would have given you there. We shall be best pleased with Sam Chollet & Co's sale of your cargo if you can bind them to a good terms as any of their neighbours would give, because we think their security in London the best. The Grenada market is at present a bad one and likely to continue crowded, but if you should find any letters at Barbadoes promising a great average and short payment we request you will proceed to any of the houses aforementioned who make you such a proposal, except Messrs Kean & Robinson of St. Vincent, and take care to get the bills drawn for the neat proceeds, three fourths of the amount to Thomas Leyland and the remaining one fourth to Thomas Molyneux in drafts not exceeding £500 each. If the house who sells you will fill your ship with good clean cotton at or under the one hundred livres & one hundred little pounds and give bills in equal proportions for the remaining amount you may accept of it. Be as frugal in your disbursements in the West Indies as you possibly can & proceed home without the loss of one moment of time, and be careful to transit to us one set of the bills by the first opportunity.

- TL&Co.

⁴⁸ Letter from Thomas Leyland to Captain Maxwell, August 31, 1788, folio 763 (page 810).

Thomas Leyland's recorded voyages:

Note the variety of ships and ship captains. Leyland was rarely the sole owner or investor in a ship. Rather, he was usually co-owner and co-investor in a scheme that distributed risk in the frequent event that a ship voyage failed or its captain died. Leyland's formulaic letters to ship captains conclude with a formulaic phrase that reveals both the risks of slave voyages and the expendable nature of slave ship sailors and slaves alike: "In case of your death, ___ is to succeed you in the command and strictly follow these orders."⁴⁹

Times Employed	Ship	Times Employed	Captain
16	<i>Enterprize</i>	7	George Maxwell
7	<i>Lottery</i>	6	Charles Wilson
6	<i>Christopher</i>	6	William Brown
6	<i>Hannah</i>	5	William Young
6	<i>Ned</i>	5	John Heron
6	<i>Louisa</i>	5	John Whittle
5	<i>Kitty</i>	5	Caesar Lawson
3	<i>Earl of Liverpool</i>	4	William Stringer
3	<i>Tom</i>	3	Charles Molyneux
3	<i>Ellen</i>	3	Roger Leathom
2	<i>Jenny</i>	3	John Brine
2	<i>Toms</i>	3	George Bernard
2	<i>Fortune</i>	3	John Reddie
1	<i>Harlequin</i>	2	Joseph Fayrer
1	<i>Madam Pookata</i>	2	Thomas Lowe
1	<i>Golden Age</i>	2	Charles Watt
1	<i>Fanny</i>	2	Charles Kneal
1	<i>Spitfire</i>	2	Thomas Harney
		1	John Simmons
		1	John Molyneux
		1	Radcliffe Shimmins
		1	James Galt
		1	John Bellis
		1	Thomas W Egerton
		1	James Martin
		1	Hugh Bridson
		1	R Kelly
		1	Archibald Kennan

⁴⁹ SlaveVoyages, Rice University, 2018. Search term: Leyland.
<https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database> (accessed March 20, 2023).

All voyages funded in whole or in part by Thomas Leyland:⁵⁰

	Total captives	Total voyages For which this statistic is recorded.	Average
Captives embarked	24,303	69	352.2
Captives disembarked	22,425	69	325
Percentage of captives embarked who died during crossing		20	5.9%
Duration of captives' crossing (in days)		21	49.8
Percentage male		36	63.1%
Percentage children		29	11.6%
Tonnage of vessel		71	242.7

⁵⁰ Ibid.

All Voyages by the *Hannah* and *Jenny* for Leyland:

As found from the Slave Voyages website. The two voyages documented in the Clements Library collection are highlighted on table in **bold**.⁵¹

Year arrived with slaves	Vessel name	Place where vessel's voyage began	Principal place where captives were purchased	Principal place where captives were landed	Captives arrived at 1st port	Captain's name
1789	<i>Hannah</i>	Liverpool	New Calabar	Grenada, place unspecified	351	Charles Wilson
1789	<i>Hannah</i>	Liverpool	Bight of Biafra and Gulf of Guinea Islands, port unspecified	Kingston	303	Charles Wilson
1791	<i>Hannah</i>	Liverpool	Bonny	St. Vincent, port unspecified	316	William Young
1792	<i>Hannah</i>	Liverpool	Congo River	Grenada, place unspecified	331	William Young
1793	<i>Hannah</i>	Liverpool	Ambriz	Kingston	304	William Young
1793	<i>Jenny</i>	Liverpool	West Central Africa and St. Helena, port unspecified	Kingston	269	William Stringer
1794	<i>Hannah</i>	Liverpool				Stringer
1794	<i>Jenny</i>	Liverpool				William Stringer

⁵¹ SlaveVoyages, Rice University, 2018. Search term: Leyland.
<https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database> (accessed March 20, 2023).