



**A Brief History of African Americans in Newark, New Jersey: Their Presence,  
Their Institutions, and Their Struggle for Freedom from Colonial Times**

**In Support of Building a Harriet Tubman Monument in Newark, New Jersey**

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In the different learned professions, our colored friends here [in Newark, New Jersey], have had many obstacles to contend with.... In the law, the failure of the last legislature, to confirm the nomination of Commissioners to amend the jurisprudence of the State, has ... placed another barrier to their advancement as Lawyers and Judges. ... In medicine, the restrictions by the laws of the State, which favor the old school, in preference to Homoeopathy and the Botanic system to the latter of which they are inclined, give no encouragement for them to go into the healing act.

—OLIM [A.B. Thompson], 1852<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

As the epigraph above shows, Black people in Newark, New Jersey, have had many structural and institutional barriers to contend with. Specifically, the excerpt is a *rare* acknowledgement by a leading white Newark resident of the challenges that Black Newarkers had to deal with, dating back to the city's colonial period. The purpose of this historical piece of writing, therefore, is

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<sup>1</sup> OLIM [A. B. Thompson], "African Antiquities," *The Newark Mercury* (Newark, N.J.), No. 2, Thursday Morning, May 20, 1852, p.2 c5-6 (see article No. 1 in the Monday, April 26, 1852, morning edition of said newspaper). In an introductory note to the editor of this newspaper, OLIM (identified by William A. Whitehead as A. B. Thompson) wrote: "The following paper [i.e., the African Antiquities] was prepared by the author, to be read before the [New Jersey] Historical Society, in reply to an interrogatory contained in one of their circulars, to this effect. 'Can you furnish any biographical sketches, memoirs, or notices of *any kind*, of eminent Jerseymen—Clergymen, Lawyers, Physicians, Judges, Legislators, or *Public Benefactors of any class*?' It is obvious that the subject of our paper embraced within the scope of that interrogatory; yet we have been declined by the Society, (although with the greatest suavity and some fine compliments) for what reason we cannot imagine, unless they suspect us of some 'sinister motives, or canister designs,' of which we are innocent. We therefore present ourselves to the Mercury, confident of receiving justice there."

Although the title and tone of Thompson's articles read *condescending and racist*, the contents contain several revealing information about the lives of people of African descent in Newark in early the 19th century—information that need to be explored, studied, and made accessible to the greater public. It is on the authority of William A. Whitehead (a founding member of the New Jersey Historical Society and contemporary author of invaluable books on the early history of New Jersey) that A. B. Thompson is hereby cited as the rightful author of the said articles. For details about Whitehead's attribution, see the table of contents section of one of his several volumes of scrapbooks, titled "Miscellaneous Historical and Biographical Relating to New Jersey (SB 94)," in Manuscript Group 1494, available at the New Jersey Historical Society (NJHS).

An additional note of interest: According to Greg Guderian (an authority on the life and work of William A. Whitehead), A. B. [Alexander Baldwin] Thompson was a Georgian native, who graduated from Yale University in 1831 and lived in Newark in the early 1840s, prior to his election to membership of the NJHS in September 1849. Thompson died in Newark on May 8, 1859. For his death notice, see *The Sentinel of Freedom*, May 10, 1859, p.3. And for his obituary, see *Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University, Deceased from July 1859, to July 1870* (New Haven, C.T.: Turtle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1870), 11.

threefold. The first is to attempt to “flag” the disturbing lack of knowledge of the deep historical roots of people of African descent in the City of Newark and to highlight the contributions that they have made to the growth and development of New Jersey’s institutions and ideals, despite the structural and systemic barriers they encountered. The second objective is to try to update our knowledge and understanding of New Jersey’s Underground Railroad (U.G.R.R.) networks—the organized efforts by like-minded Black and White abolitionist activists that assisted fugitive slaves in their dash for freedom<sup>2</sup>—and to highlight Newark’s role in that movement. The third intention is to provide a summary of abolitionist endeavors from the viewpoint of Newark’s Black abolitionist activists and to showcase the forces of reaction that obstructed their pursuit of happiness, human and civil rights in the city. The overall goal is to demonstrate the pivotal roles that Black Newarkers played in the U.G.R.R. movement, and to do so in support of the city’s decision to build a monument to honor Harriet Tubman and Newark Black liberation heritage.<sup>3</sup>

Stated another way, the essence of this historical sketch is to highlight the fact that Black abolitionist activists built, agitated, and operated U.G.R.R. institutions and networks in Newark, and the aim of this piece of writing is to demonstrate understanding of, and appreciation for their contributions as *active organizers* of the struggle to liberate themselves and free their community

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<sup>2</sup> See Benjamin Quarles’ introductory text to the Arno Press and The New York Times’ 1968 reprint of Wilbur H. Siebert’s *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1898). See also Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promise Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), Kristen T. Oertel, *Harriet Tubman: Slavery, the Civil War, and Civil Rights in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), 5.

<sup>3</sup> On Thursday, June 17, 2021, the Mayor of Newark, New Jersey, Ras Baraka, announced the city’s decision to rename its Washington Park in honor of Harriet Tubman’s “heroic efforts leading enslaved Africans to freedom via the Underground Railroad.” For details, see City of Newark News, “Mayor Baraka Announces Harriet Tubman Monument Design Winner; Nina Cooke John’s Design Will Replace Christopher Columbus Monument,” June 17, 2021. <https://www.newarknj.gov/news/mayor-baraka-announces-harriet-tubman-monument-design-winner-nina-cooke-johns-design-will-replace-christopher-columbus-monument>; Noah Cohen, “Newark Picks Harriet Tubman Monument Design to Replace Christopher Columbus Statue,” June 18, 2021. <https://www.nj.com/esssex/2021/06/newark-picks-harriet-tubman-monument-design-to-replace-christopher-columbus-statue.html>.

and country from the scourge of enslavement and racial prejudice. The Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark, for instance, was founded in 1834 by local Black clergy and working-class Blacks for that purpose.<sup>4</sup> But as Benjamin Quarles, the distinguished African American scholar on the history of Black abolitionism noted more than five decades ago, out of about 3,200 entries in the “Directory of the Names of Underground Railroad Operators” that Wilbur H. Siebert, the undisputed authority on the history of the Underground Railroad, identified in his book *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (1898), only 143 were noted as “Black” even though more people of African descent played major roles in the movement.<sup>5</sup> It is in the context of these underrepresented roles that this historical research seeks to highlight the contributions of Newark abolitionists of African descent. Newark’s Black abolitionists understood the relations between slavery and racial prejudice, and at the heart of their struggle for freedom was their insightful commitment to fostering strong institutions instead of building strong individuals as a more enduring way to secure a collective future. It was with such a conviction that they served on the forefront of what Clement Alexander Price referred to as the “crusade for racial justice.”<sup>6</sup>

The paper surveys the African American experience in Newark, broadly, linking the earliest known forms of the Black crusade against enslavement and marginalization in the city to

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<sup>4</sup> The Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark was one of the first antislavery organizations in the country. It was founded in the same year as those of Rochester, N.Y., and Nantucket and Lexington, M.A. Its constitution was drafted within six days, by a five-member committee made up of Rev. Henry Drayton, Peter Johnson, Elijah Smith, Daniel Haden, and Jacob Wheeler, and adopted on May 9, 1834. For details, see “Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark,” in C. Peter Ripley (ed.), *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. III: The United States, 1830-1846* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991): 132-135; Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 29.

<sup>5</sup> Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 144-145. For the directory of names, see Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1898), 403-438.

<sup>6</sup> Clement A. Price, *Freedom Not Far Distant: A Documentary History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey* (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Society, 1980), xiii. On Black Newarkers’ roles in said crusade, see “Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark,” in C. Peter Ripley (ed.), *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. III*. See also Charles W. Wesley, “The Negro in the Organization of Abolition,” *Phylon*, Vol. 2, no. 3 (1941): 223-235.

the Black Power Movement of the mid-20th century to the Black Lives Matter Movement of our time. It does so to remind us of two important lessons. The first is that freedom is an “essentially contested concept”—what historian Carl L. Becker called a “magic but elusive word”—that each generation of freedom seekers must reshape to their own liking.<sup>7</sup> As Coretta Scott King, the wife of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. rightly reminded us, “One never completes the job of freedom and liberation. One victory leads to the next challenge.”<sup>8</sup> The second lesson is that time present and time future are in dialogue with time past, and however bright our future might seem, we should never afford to forget our past, for the past is a prologue to the future.

### **Fugitive Abolitionism: An Earliest Act of Resistance Against Slavery in Newark, N. J.**

While no one is sure of when or how the first Africans arrived in Newark, New Jersey,<sup>9</sup> we know enough to establish the fact that they were present just six miles away in Elizabethtown—New Jersey’s first colonial capital—as early as 1682. Philip Carteret (1639-1682), the first proprietary governor of the province, not only encouraged African slavery in the colony from the onset, but he owned enslaved Africans himself. We know about this from his last will and testament (dated December 10, 1682) in which he bequeathed to his wife all of his “Negroes and other servants excepting Black Jack,” whom he had declared to be set “free from servitude from and after the

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<sup>7</sup> For a thorough historical treatment of an American account of freedom as “a tale of debates, disagreements, and struggles rather than a set of timeless categories or an evolutionary narrative toward a predetermined goal,” see Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1998), xiv; Carl L. Becker, *New Liberty for Old* (New Haven, 1941), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Coretta Scot King, “The Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Church in Action,” *Theology Today*, Vol. 65 (2008), 11.

<sup>9</sup> The major historical works on the City of Newark are virtually silent on when and how the first Africans came to Newark. See, for instance, Joseph Atkinson’s *The History of Newark, New Jersey, Being a Narrative of Its Progress, From the Settlement in May 1666, by Immigrants from Connecticut, to the Present Time, Including a Sketch of the Press of Newark, from 1791 to 1878* (Newark, N.J.: William B. Guild, 1878) and Frank John Urquhart’s *A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey: Embracing Practically Two and a Half Centuries, 1666-1913* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1913), vols. 1-3. See also Price, *Freedom Not Far Distant*.

day” of his burial. We also know that in 1675 when Carteret’s government recorded lands distributed according to the terms of the first constitution of the province (i.e., *The Concessions and Agreement of the Lord Proprietors*, 1664), Captain John Berry (deputy governor of the province), for instance, was awarded a vast tract of land for 32 enslaved Africans<sup>10</sup> he brought from the then British colony of Barbados to his new residence in New Barbadoes, located around the Hackensack River and Newark Bay. Stated another way, *The Concessions and Agreement* laid the economic and social foundations upon which a slave society would develop. It did so by guaranteeing free tracts of land to early settlers who imported enslaved people into the province.

The earliest known reference to African presence in Newark that we are aware of is recorded in Azariah Crane’s will, dated February 10, 1721, probated on January 12, 1730. His “personal property” included a silver bowl (donated to the Church of Christ in Newark) and an enslaved Black man named James, bequeathed to his youngest son, John. It is *likely* that Africans were present in Newark earlier than 1721, as African slavery was practiced in such contemporaneous New Jersey settlements as Elizabethtown in Essex County, where Governor Carteret lived and owned enslaved Africans, and Shrewsbury in Monmouth County, where Col. Lewis Morris—a prominent political figure in New Jersey and New York—owned more than sixty of them by 1680.<sup>11</sup> The fact that African slavery was instituted in the earliest English-speaking settlements

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<sup>10</sup> The original constitutional provisions for land distribution in New Jersey were of colossal importance to the institutionalization of African slavery in the province. To speed up the planting of the province, the constitution offered—among other conditions—every *freeman* a land bounty of 75 acres for every enslaved person (male or female above the age of 14 years) brought into the colony by the time Governor Carteret arrived to assume office. For details, see Aaron Leaming and Jacob Spicer, *The Grants, Concessions, and Original Constitutions of the Province of New Jersey ...* (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1758), 21. See also Henry Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, Vol. I (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), 5. For the records of the earliest distribution of land, see East Jersey Deeds, Book 3, New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, N.J.

<sup>11</sup> For details about Colonel Lewis Morris’ slaveholding history, see Price, *Freedom Not Far Distant*, 2; Eugene R. Sheridan, ed., *The Papers of Lewis Morris, Volume I: 1698-1730* (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Society, 1991), xx; xxx; John Robert Strassburger, “The Origins and Establishment of the Morris Family in the Society and Politics of New York and New Jersey, 1630-1746.” Ph.D. Dissertation (Princeton University, 1976), 95-97.

around Newark, one wonders what (if any) could have prevented the early settlers of the city from engaging in the practice, which was known and established in the New Haven Colony, CT, where they migrated from.<sup>12</sup> In other words, if importing enslaved people was an essential condition for access to free land in proprietary New Jersey, what could have prevented the early settlers of Newark from taking advantage of the said constitutional provision? Perhaps a purposefully meticulous review of the earliest surviving documents relating to the history of Newark and New Jersey—with a *focus on the experience of people of African descent*—might help settle conclusively the issue of when and how Africans first arrived in Newark.<sup>13</sup>

What is certain, however, is that people of African descent have been in Newark long before and long after the outbreak of the American Revolution. And their experience, like those of other people of African descent across the country, has been a history of struggle against enslavement, racial prejudice, and marginalization. One of the earliest forms of open resistance against this system of oppression, broadly understood, was posed by “fugitive slave abolitionists”<sup>14</sup> (i.e., enslaved people who escaped from their owners’ service). Running away from a slaveowner’s service was the most documented form of self-liberation from bondage. The practice began soon

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<sup>12</sup> Mary H. Mitchell, “Slavery in Connecticut and Especially in New Haven,” *New Haven Colony Historical Society*, vol. 10, no. 292 (1951), 286; Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, Vol. I, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> A more *intentional review* of original documents relating to colonial New Jersey is necessary to make the telling of the early history of the state *complete*. This is because we cannot advance knowledge by relying authoritatively on existing published documents for the study of the colonial experience. Editors and publishers of these documents probably overlooked, regarded as “marginal,” and/or failed to notice critical references to the earliest experiences of people of African origin. A case in point is a published excerpt of a March 24, 1727/8, letter from David Rycroft of Barbados to John Parker and Andrew Johnstone (merchants) of Perth Amboy, where references to Rycroft’s enslaved people in Perth Amboy were not included. The editors published only the part of the letter relating to the governor of the colony, John Montgomerie. For details, see William A. Whitehead (ed.), *Documents relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey*, Vol. 5 (Newark, N.J.: Daily Advertiser Printing House, 1882), 183-184. For Rycroft’s original letter, see Manuscript Group 7, N.J. I: No. 118, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J.

<sup>14</sup> The act of escaping from a slaveowner should be construed as “self-liberating” endeavors by fugitive slave abolitionists. For an introductory statement about fugitive slave cultures and conditions in New Jersey, see James Amemasor, “‘Will Likely Endeavor to Pass for Free’: Runaway Slave Advertisements in New Jersey Newspapers, 1777-1808,” an unpublished project grant narrative submitted to the New Jersey Historical Commission in 2019.

after the institution of slavery in the New World and was such a worrying trend in the province of New Jersey that laws were passed as early as 1694 to regulate it. By 1713, a new law required that any enslaved person found over five miles from the owner's home without a written pass or authority of the owner should be whipped on the bare back and returned, and those from other provinces should be flogged and jailed; rewards were specified for those who took them up.<sup>15</sup>

The earliest known evidence of fugitive slave abolitionism in Newark that we are aware of appeared in the form of a flight notice in the October 31, 1748, issue of *The New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post Boy*, a weekly newspaper published in the province of New York. It was about a 35-year-old Black man named Charles, who ran away from his enslaver Emanuel Cocker, a vestryman, and a petitioner for the charter for Trinity Episcopal Church in Newark in 1746.<sup>16</sup> According to the notice, Charles took with him personal items, including a red jacket with white metal buttons, an old felt hat, a new Tow shirt, and old trowsers. Cocker offered to pay three pounds to whoever would secure Charles for him to reclaim (fig. 1).<sup>17</sup> The notice, reprinted six more times, was indicative of Cocker's determination to repossess Charles. We do not know whether Charles remained a free person or whether he was captured. While we may

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<sup>15</sup> Marion Gleason McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves (1619-1865) by Marion Gleason McDougall, Prepared under the Direction of Albert Bushnell Hart* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1891); John Hope Franklin, "A Brief History of the Negro in the United States," in *The American Negro Reference Book*, ed. John P. Davis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966: 1-95; Willie Lee Rose, ed., *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1976). For the 1694 law, see Leaming and Jacob Spicer, *The Grants, Concessions*, 340-342. For the 1713 law, see *Acts of the General Assembly of the Province of New Jersey from the Surrender of the Government to Queen Anne*, 26-32.

<sup>16</sup> Atkinson, *The History of Newark*, 163. Trinity Cathedral in Newark (N.J.), *Two Hundred Years of Old Trinity*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> It must be noted that New Jersey did not have a continuously printed newspaper until about two and half years following the Declaration of Independence. As a result, New Jersey relied on New York City and Philadelphia for news and for advertisements. The first continuously published newspaper in the state was the *New Jersey Gazette*, printed by Isaac Colins in Burlington, starting on December 5, 1777. The lack of newspapers in pre-Revolutionary New Jersey might explain why there are limited New Jersey slavery-related advertisements.

never know that, we can imagine the feeling of terror and anxiety that might have clouded his life and thought as a fugitive running to preserve his unalienable rights endowed by his Creator.

Run-away about three Weeks ago, from Emanuel Cocker, of Newark, in East-New-Jersey, a Negro Man named Charles, aged about 35 Years, and speaks broken English: Had on when he went away, a red Jacket with white Metal Buttons, an old Felt Hat, a new Tow Shirt, and old Trowsers. Whoever takes up and secures the said Negro, so that his Master may have him again, shall have Three Pounds Reward, and all reasonable Charges paid

EMANUEL COCKER.

—*The N. Y. Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post Boy, Nov. 28, 1748.*

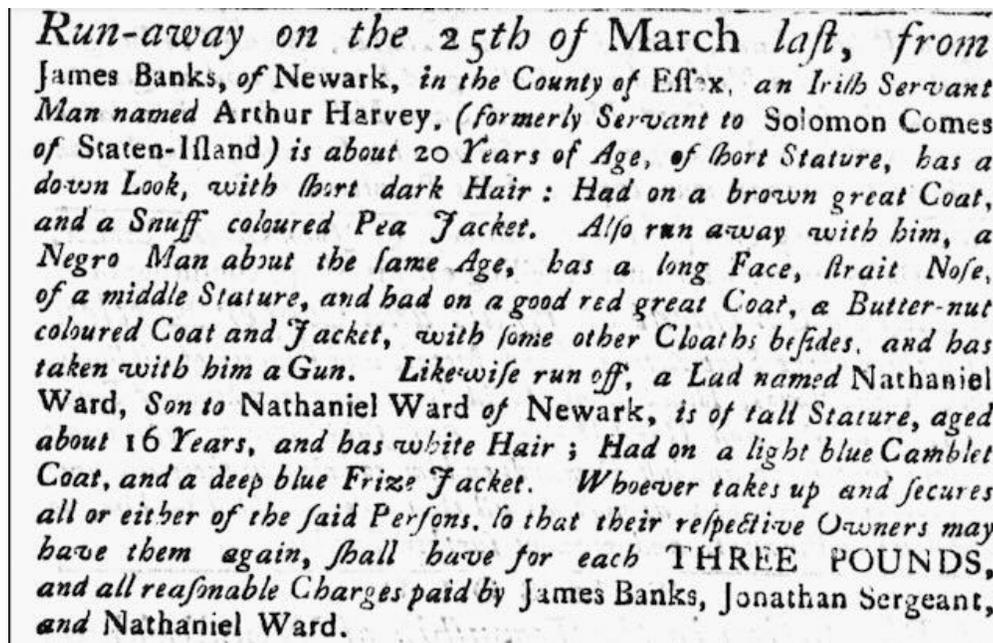
Fig. 1. A fugitive slave notice, first printed in October 31, 1748, issue of the said newspaper.

Similar flight advertisements relating to Newark were published in newspapers in the 1750s and beyond. One such notice was about a 20-year-old unnamed Black man, who ran away (in the company of an Irish male servant) from either James Banks or Jonathan Sergeant. James Banks probably owned Newark's earliest known tavern, the Rising Sun, located at North Canal and River streets (later relocated to what is now Clinton Avenue, near the south-end of Lincoln Park). It was under the roof of this tavern that St. John's No. 1, the first lodge of Free Masons in New Jersey (and the sixth in the United States), was organized on May 13, 1761.<sup>18</sup> Among the

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<sup>18</sup> See Urquhart, *A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey*, 233-238; 420-421. See also Joseph Hough, *Origin of Masonry in the State of New Jersey and the Entire Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, from Its First Organization, A. L. 5786, Compiled from Authentic Sources* (Trenton, N.J.: Joseph Hough, Murphy & Betchel Printers, 1870), xii-xiii.

personal items the self-liberated man was reported to have taken away were “a good great red coat, a Butter-nut coloured Coat and Jacket” and a gun (fig. 2).



*Run-away on the 25th of March last, from James Banks, of Newark, in the County of Essex, an Irish Servant Man named Arthur Harvey, (formerly Servant to Solomon Comes of Staten-Island) is about 20 Years of Age, of short Stature, has a down Look, with short dark Hair: Had on a brown great Coat, and a Snuff coloured Pea Jacket. Also run away with him, a Negro Man about the same Age, has a long Face, strait Nose, of a middle Stature, and had on a good red great Coat, a Butter-nut coloured Coat and Jacket, with some other Cloaths besides, and has taken with him a Gun. Likewise run off, a Lad named Nathaniel Ward, Son to Nathaniel Ward of Newark, is of tall Stature, aged about 16 Years, and has white Hair; Had on a light blue Camblet Coat, and a deep blue Frize Jacket. Whoever takes up and secures all or either of the said Persons, so that their respective Owners may have them again, shall have for each THREE POUNDS, and all reasonable Charges paid by James Banks, Jonathan Sergeant, and Nathaniel Ward.*

Fig. 2. Fugitive slave ad. *The New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post Boy*, April 2, 1750

Another advertisement of interest to us was about a 26-year-old male of African ancestry. It was published in the December 23, 1758, issue of *The New-York Gazette*. An earlier notice in the October 9, 1758, edition of *The New York Mercury* identified the said fugitive as “Bristol.” He was reported to speak “good English” and “plays well on the Violin.” He had on when he went away “a Jersey Provincial Coat, red Jacket, and wide Trowser.” His enslaver, Benjamin Williams of Newark, offered to pay 40 shillings in reward for his capture and return (fig. 3).

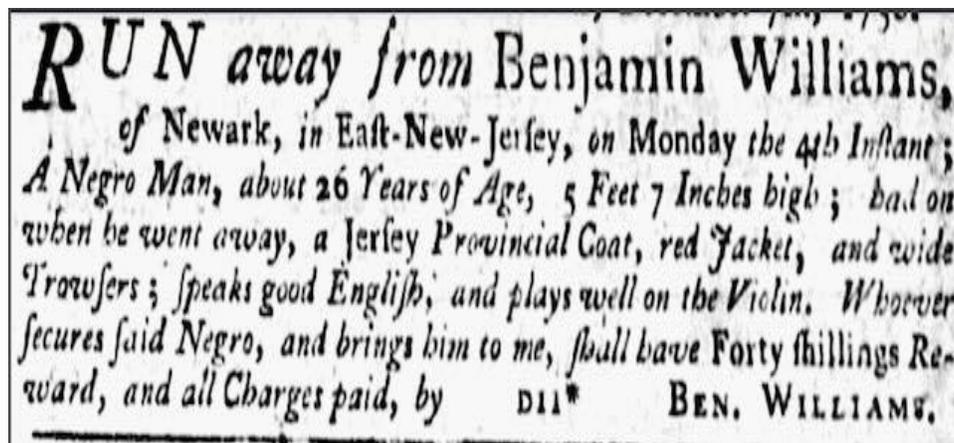


Fig. 3. A fugitive slave notice, *The New-York Gazette*, December 23, 1758.

These early fugitive slave acts of resistance against enslavement in Newark set a trend for how successive generations of enslaved men and women in the city struggled for freedom and liberty during and after the American Revolution.

### **Post-Revolutionary War Fugitive Abolitionism in Newark**

Fugitive slave abolitionism continued to be a major issue for slave owners and non-slaveholders after the Revolutionary War. It was the basis of one of the slavery-related compromises written into the 1787 U.S. Constitution. Referred to as the Fugitive Slave Clause by scholars, Article IV, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution required officials entrusted with judicial power in the state or territory where a fugitive slave was arrested to deliver up on claim to the person to whom the fugitive labor was due. This was a critical condition on which the slaveholding states consented to the Constitution. Fugitive slave activism was also the basis of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. Titled "An Act respecting fugitives from justice, and persons escaping from the service of their owners," Congress passed the 1793 law to make the Fugitive Slave Clause operative.<sup>19</sup> So was

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<sup>19</sup> *The Constitution of the United States, with the Acts of Congress, Relating to Slavery, Embracing the Constitution, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, the Missouri Compromise Act of 1820, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, and the Nebraska and Kansas Bill, Carefully Compiled* (D. M. Dewey Rochester, 1854), 16-17; Paul Finkelman, "Chief Justice Hornblower of New Jersey and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793," in *Slavery and the Law*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1997), 116.

the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, described as “the strictest fugitive slave measure ever enacted;”<sup>20</sup> Congress enacted this law to amend and supplement the 1793 act.

In effect, while the American Revolution advanced ideals of universal human equality, it left intact the economic and social underpinnings of slavery. Those ideals nevertheless had their effects on all sides: enslaved people, slaveholders, abolitionists, and slave hunters all had to grapple with the promise and reality of freedom in a post-Revolutionary landscape.<sup>21</sup> A case in Newark was in reference to a flight advertisement published in the August 25, 1791, edition of the city’s first newspaper, *Woods’s Newark Gazette*.<sup>22</sup> It was about a 27-year-old enslaved Black man named Jack. His enslaver was Abner Ward, a subscriber to the building fund of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark in 1786.<sup>23</sup> Like other notices, runaway ad contains physical descriptions of Jack, a list of items he went away with, and the monetary reward Ward was willing to pay whoever would capture the self-liberated man for him to repossess (fig. 4).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, “A Federal Assault: African Americans and the Impact of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850,” in *Slavery and the Law*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Madison, WI.: Madison House, 1997), 144.

<sup>21</sup> See Amemasor, “Will Likely Endeavor to Pass for Free.”

<sup>22</sup> The first issue of Newark’s first newspaper, *Woods’s Newark Gazette*, was printed on May 19, 1791. It was founded and printed by John Woods. The city’s second oldest newspaper, *The Sentinel of Freedom*, was started on October 5, 1796. These newspapers are valuable sources for the study of slavery in 19th century New Jersey.

<sup>23</sup> Abner Ward, whose house was reported to have been located at south-west corner of Nesbit and High (now MLK Blvd) streets, was said to have owned an enslaved Black man “who was so notoriously bad” that Ward “put on his neck an iron collar, with iron horns protruding from two sides.” The enslaved person was reported to have been sold to a slaveholder in Augusta, Georgia, prior to 1820. For details, see “Newark as It Was,” No. 19, *Newark Daily Advertiser*, April 8, 1864. Abner Ward is also on record to have emancipated an enslaved woman, Flora Van Winkle (aged about twenty years old), in July 1805. For details, see Essex County Slave Records: Book A of Certificates and Deeds of Manumissions, May 25, 1805, to September 5, 1817.

<sup>24</sup> The same notice appeared in the September 12, 1792, issue of the Elizabethtown-based *New Jersey Journal*. A slightly modified version was published in other local newspapers between the years.

**Four Dollars Reward.**  
**R**ANAWAY from the subscriber, on the 13th inst. a Negro Man, named JACK, about 27 years of age, 6 feet high, well set, and not very black, his teeth small and yellow: He had on a short coat, light coloured and striped jacket, tow trousers, and a wool hat. Whoever takes up and secures said Negro, so that his master may get him again, shall receive the above reward and all reasonable charges paid by  
 ABNER WARD.  
 Newark, August 24, 1791.

Fig. 4. An escape notice about Jack, *Woods's Newark Gazette*, Aug. 25, 1791.

One could see from the above notice, for instance, that both men and women engaged in fugitive abolitionism in Newark. While some escaped singly, others did so in pairs or in groups, sometimes in the company of a person of the opposite sex. A case in reference was about a 40-year-old woman named Phillis, who was “supposed” to have been led away by a *free* Black man, James Ocus, in late October 1793. The subscriber to the ad, Jediah Crane of Newark, was willing to pay fifteen dollars in reward to whoever would take up and return Phillis to him (fig. 5).

**Fifteen Dollars Reward.**  
**R**UNAWAY from the subscriber on the night of the 24th ult. a negro woman (about 40 years of age) by the name of Phillis—she is of middle size—yellow complexion—took with her two striped linnen and one callicoe short gown, two long collicoe gowns and a durant cloak; four petticoats, their colours are brown, blue, striped lindsy and blue moreen. It is supposed she was led away by a free negro (or mulatto) fellow known, in this town, by the name of James Ocus; he is about 5 feet 6 inches high, walks crooked, wears a blue coat with red facings, fustian jacket and trowsers and white hat. Whoever will take up said wench and return her to the subscriber shall have the above reward.  
 Jediah Crane.  
 Newark, November 5, 1793. 30 if

Fig. 5. Fugitive slave notice, *Woods's Newark Gazette & Patterson Advertiser*, Nov. 6, 1793.

Two vital lessons could be deduced from the above flight advertisement (fig. 5). The first has to do with the personal risk that James Ocus had taken to liberate Phillis from bondage. As a *well-known free* Black man in Newark, Ocus could have been “gratified” with whatever social and material advantages his status offered him in a society with slaves. Apparently, he was not contented with those social and material trappings of life and might have been conscious of the fragility of the boundaries of his personal liberty in an ecosystem of slavery and racial prejudice, and thus found it important to help by way of risking his own *freedom* in the service of getting Phillis out of bondage. About six years later, Ocus’ kind of endeavor—fanned by events far and near—alarmed the white Newark community into devising measures to regulate the lives of Black Newarkers. A newspaper notice to that effect appeared in early January 1801 (fig. 6).

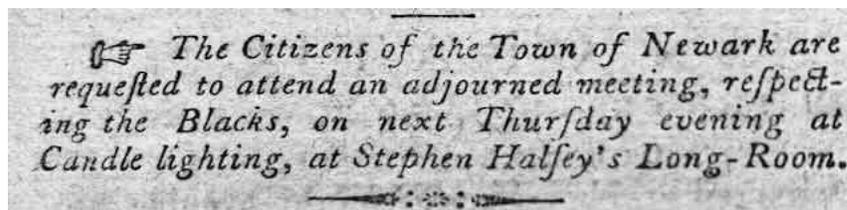


Fig. 6. A meeting notice regarding Blacks in Newark; *Sentinel of Freedom*, January 7, 1801.

In essence, the notice was primarily about finding ways to prevent free Blacks and their enslaved counterparts from meeting at their own will. The efforts of the likes of Phillis and Ocus to realize the ideals of universal human equality spawned by the American Revolution terrified the white citizens of Newark. Their uneasiness was exacerbated by the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), which led to the founding of the first Black government in the Western Hemisphere. As the Frenchman François Alexandre Frédéric de La Rochenfaucald-Liancourt observed during his travels across the United States between 1795 and 1797, the Haitian Revolution induced an influx of families from the island to Newark, many of whom were employed in the town’s

burgeoning leather industry.<sup>25</sup> Although those refugees were probably not of African descent, their experience of revolutionary violence in Haiti and the inflow of news from the island during the time period might have been so concerning to the white Newark community.

But the intensity and impact of the Haitian Revolution were felt beyond American cities and towns such as Newark. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. recently noted, “If the Haitian Revolution ... fought and won by black slaves ... struck fear in the hearts of slave owners everywhere, it struck a loud and electrifying chord with African slaves in America.”<sup>26</sup> The depth of that fear explains why slaveholders and statesmen in the United States referred to Haiti’s independence as a “Black Menace.”<sup>27</sup> Thomas Jefferson, for instance, was frightened by Haiti’s strength and was quite apprehensive about Black seamen who traveled to and from the island. Black seamen were despised because they constituted the conduits of information between Blacks in America and Blacks in the rest of the Atlantic world. And because Haiti symbolized a successful slave revolt, “Black Jacks” (as Black seamen in the age of sail were referred to) were considered a potential source of Black revolutionary ideas in the United States. The fear of similar slave revolts in the country made Jefferson, for instance, write to James Madison on February 12, 1799, when the government of President John Adams reinstated trade between the United States and France and her dependencies, including Haiti. His letter reads, in part: “We may expect therefore black crews, & supercargoes & missionaries then [from revolutionary St. Dominique] into the southern

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<sup>25</sup> Urquhart’s *A History of the City of Newark*, Vol. 1, pp. 381-382.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Did African-American Slaves Rebel?” April 22, 2013. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/did-african-american-slaves-rebel/>. Slave revolts in parts of the United States heightened White Americans’ fear across the country. For instance, Gabriel Prosser’s planned revolt in 1800 in Richmond, Virginia, increased negative sentiments toward free and enslaved Blacks.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph E. Harris, “A Comparative Approach to the Study of the African Diaspora,” in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph, E. Harris (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982), 114.

states; & when that leven begins to work, I would gladly compound with a great part of our northern country, if they would honestly stand neuter. If this combustion can be introduced among us under any veil whatever, we have to fear it.”<sup>28</sup>

Those deep-rooted fears about the Haitian Revolution were expressed by Newark leaders, as well. And they did so several years after the revolution ended. In an address to the New York Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, for instance, U.S. Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen (future mayor of Newark and future president of Rutgers University) evoked the fear of a potential African American uprising in the country, citing the Haitian Revolution as a source of inspiration, and argued for support for the colonization scheme (discussed later) instead of immediate abolition of slavery. His address reads, in part:

The scenes once enacted, and that too within memory of the present generation, in the island of St. Domingo [Haiti], depict but too fearfully the consequences of premature abolition .... Twenty four states, five sixths of whose inhabitants are white, and who are knit together by a bond of political union, are threatened ... to be driven back to a state of anarchy, commotion and civil war. The political fabrick [sic] erected with so much care, and at expense of so many lives and so much treasure, will be prostrated in the dust. The institutions under which we have become a great and happy people will be subverted, and disaffection and hostility assume their place.<sup>29</sup>

While Frelinghuysen celebrated the happiness of the white majority population of the country, he failed to put himself in the shoes of the unhappy minority on whose back the knit national bond of political union was constructed. Stated another way, “the institutions under which we have become a great and happy people” (i.e., the 1787 Constitution of the United States) would not have been possible without the slavery related compromises embedded in the document. Clearly,

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford, Vol. VII, 1795-1801* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Son, 1896), 349. See a version of this quotation in W. Jeffery Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 40.

<sup>29</sup> Theodore Frelinghuysen, *Review of Anti-Slavery Publications, and Defence of Colonization Society* (New York: West & Throw, 1833), 70-71.

the nightmare that Haiti symbolized, alongside many other Black-induced fears underscored Newark leaders' opposition to any movement calling for immediate abolition of slavery.

The second lesson that could be deduced from figure 5 above is that James Ocus' risky undertaking could be interpreted as a precursor to 19th century organized Black abolitionist movement in Newark and elsewhere in the North. Driven by the conviction that the institution of slavery was the ecosystem that fostered racial prejudice, racial inequality, and marginalization, Black abolitionists resolved not to reform the system, but to dismantle it. C. Peter Ripley's commentary about Andrew Harris' address to nearly 5,000 abolitionists at Broadway Tabernacle in New York on May 7, 1839, makes that clear. He wrote:

At the heart of the black abolitionist message lay an understanding of the connection between slavery and racial prejudice. According to many black leaders, slavery promoted racism, which in turn was used to justify inequality in the North as well as slavery in the South. Black abolitionists denounced this link as the wellspring of oppression. This understanding strengthened free black identification with the slave. By ending slavery, northern blacks expected to increase their own freedom.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed James Ocus, a *free Black man*, clearly identified with the plight of Phillis, an *enslaved Black woman*. It was this connection that strengthened the former's resolve to risk his freedom in assisting the latter. Thus, to consider James Ocus as an early U.G.R.R. "conductor" may not be a hyperbole. It could be noted that his action was an expression of his awareness that slavery and racial prejudice limited the boundaries of his personal freedom. This insight into the connection between slavery and racial inequality guided and shaped the Black abolitionist movement. It was an awareness based on the conviction that the institution of slavery was a threat to the personal and collective freedom of every free person of African descent—free and/or enslaved.

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<sup>30</sup> See "Speech by Andrew Harris Delivered at the Broadway Tabernacle New York, New York, May 7, 1839," in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, Vol. III, ed., C. Peter Ripley, 294.

One may not fail to notice from the flight advertisements discussed thus far that no single self-assertive deed of resistance against the institution of slavery was more meaningful among the enslaved or more troubling among slaveowners than that of running away.<sup>31</sup> A clear case in early 19th century Newark was that of WILL, a 49-year-old enslaved Black man whose dash for freedom on July 26, 1799, was advertised as late as February 9, 1802, in Newark's second oldest newspaper, *The Sentinel of Freedom*, whose motto ironically reads "the Rights of Man." In the notice, WILL was reported to have been seen in Providence, Rhode Island, and later in Lyme, Connecticut, but upon being pursued, left the area, and was speculated to be hiding in other parts along the northeastern Atlantic seaboard. His enslaver, David Banks, was a subscriber to the First Presbyterian Church of Newark building fund and a Justice of the Peace in and for the County of Essex.<sup>32</sup> "All masters of vessels and other persons," the flight notice reads, in part, "are forbid taking away said slave, or harboring him at their peril, under the penalty of one hundred pounds." A message appended at the end of the notice requested of newspaper printers in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Vermont to publish the advertisement for additional two or three weeks (fig. 7). Per the terms of the Fugitive Slave Clause and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, officials entrusted with judicial power in a state where WILL's arrest would be effected, would be required to deliver him up on claim by David Banks or his agent.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the notice was printed a few more weeks in the Newark-based *The Sentinel of Freedom*, the *Bee* of New

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<sup>31</sup> Graham R. Hodges and Alan E. Brown, eds., *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1994); Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974).

<sup>32</sup> Atkinson, *The History of Newark*, 332; see also, Essex County Slave Records: Book A of Certificates and Deeds of Manumissions, May 25, 1805, to September 5, 1817.

<sup>33</sup> Finkelman, "Chief Justice Hornblower of New Jersey and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793."

London, CT, and the *Rhode-Island Republican*, published in New Port, RI. The last known print appeared on March 3, 1802, bringing the publicly announced notice for WILL's capture and return to 950 days from the day he was reported to have escaped.

Like many other fugitive slave abolitionists, we do not know whether WILL was ever captured and returned to David Banks or whether he remained a self-liberated man for the rest of his life. No evidence has been found to that effect, which is not unusual. The general lack of information about fugitives is due to the fact that they were often not identified with their full names (if they had them at all) in the notices; most were identified with only their first names and their racial signifiers (e.g., "a Negro woman by the name of Phillis"). Others were nameless individuals alluded to only in racial terms (e.g., "a Negro Man, about 26 years of age"). Some wittingly went by multiple, overlapping names and identities, of which their owners were aware. A case in point appeared in the August 26, 1800, issue of *The Sentinel of Freedom*, in which the subscriber (residing in Hardyston Township, N.J.) advertised that his self-liberated Black man LEONARD often called himself "Leonard Hornbeck or Hardenberg." Also, a Black freedom seeker from Westfield, New Jersey, was identified as Jacob in the notice about his escape, but the subscriber to the ad noted that the said fugitive was commonly called Yok.<sup>34</sup> All of these varying identities (and lack thereof) present challenges to researchers in their efforts to find additional information about fugitive abolitionists and their post-escape life experiences.

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<sup>34</sup> See *The New-Jersey Journal, and Political Intelligencer*, December 14, 1791.



Fig. 7. *The Sentinel of Freedom* (Newark, N.J.) February 9, 1802.

What we do know about WILL is that his resolve to obtain his freedom was just as strong as David Banks' determination to reclaim him. Apparently, Banks did not think more than 900 days of WILL's absence was a good enough time to give up hope of getting back the self-liberated man. But if his determination appeared to be irrevocable, WILL's willpower was absolute, which reminds us of a statement by the renowned African writer, Chinua Achebe that since hunters have learned to shoot without missing their mark, birds have also learned to fly without perching.<sup>35</sup> In other words, WILL's resolve to be a free man teaches us that freedom and liberty are never a gift to be handed to any one; they are a victory that must be won. To paraphrase historian Keith Jenkins, freedom is never for itself; it is always for someone.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Penguin Books, 1959).

<sup>36</sup> Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 17.

About a week after the above-referenced January 7, 1801, newspaper notice for a public meeting regarding Black Newarkers (fig. 6) was published, white Newark citizens adopted a series of measures to regulate the lives of people of African descent in the town—measures that aimed to prevent: 1) “unlawful residence in the Town of free Negroes or such as falsely declare themselves to be free;” 2) “negro slaves from meeting together in an illegal manner;” 3) “unlawful absence [of Blacks] from their owners after 10 o’clock at night;” and 4) “persons unlawfully dealing with or employing Negro slaves” (see fig. 8 below). The measures were deemed necessary because the white inhabitants of the town felt that the freedom seeking activism of the likes of James Ocus, Phillis, and WILL were giving them anxiety.<sup>37</sup> Induced by that kind of apprehension, they elected fifteen leading citizens to form a Black regulatory committee. To consolidate the measures, the committee members (some of whom owned or facilitated the buying and selling of enslaved people) were asked to meet at the house of Archer Gifford.<sup>38</sup> To help the committee carry out the said measures, the meeting resolved that the citizens of the town be encouraged to assist the members in effecting the objects of their appointment. The chairman of the meeting, Colonel Samuel Hay, was asked to ensure that the

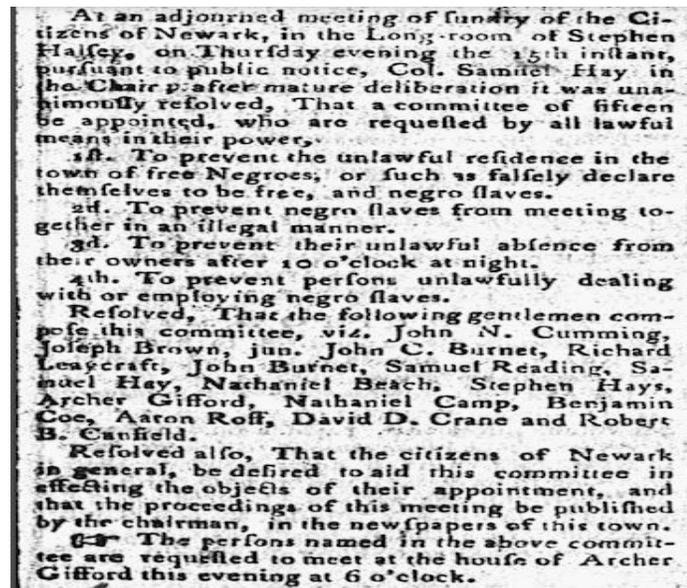
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<sup>37</sup> Although the Black population in New Jersey lagged considerably after 1800, relative to the overall growth of the state population, Black people’s presence still served as a source of anxiety in New Jersey towns such as Newark. The lag of African American population was due, in part, to a state law—An Act Respecting Slaves—passed in 1798, which required that any “‘Negro or other slave’ who came into this state without a license should be subject to arrest. All free Negroes already in the state were require to have a written certificate of freedom from their masters, and all free Negroes already in the state had to have such a certificate in their possession at all times.” For a detailed analysis of the 1798 law, see Lee Calligaro, “The Negro’s Legal Status in Pre-Civil War New Jersey,” *New Jersey Journal*, Vol. 85, No. 3 & 4 (1967), 168.

<sup>38</sup> The Black regulatory committee members were John N. Cumming, Joseph Brown, Jr., John C. Burnet, Richard Leaycraft, John Burnet, Samuel Reading, Samuel Hay, Nathaniel Beach, Stephen Hays, Archer Gifford, Nathaniel Camp, Benjamin Coe, Aaron Roff, David D. Crane, and Robert B. Canfield. Among the committee members who owned enslaved people were John N. Cumming, Benjamin Coe, and David D. Crane. Archer Gifford’s house was a very important meeting place and business center in the town. In May 1797, for instance, a 9-year old girl, who was reported to have “lived three years in a very descent family, and a boy of 2 years old, as active as any of his age,” were advertised “be sold all together, or the girl or boy separate as, may best suit purchasers: if not sold at private sale before the first of June, will be set at auction at the house of Mr. Archer Gifford in Newark.” See “Want of Employ Only, For Sale,” *The New-Jersey Journal*, May 17, 1797.

proceedings (fig. 8) were published in the only newspaper of the town, *The Sentinel of Freedom*.

Making the Black regulatory measures and the list of committee members available is an important step in the ongoing efforts to decolonize the history of Newark.



At an adjourned meeting of sundry of the Citizens of Newark, in the Long-room of Stephen Halsey, on Thursday evening the 15<sup>th</sup> instant, pursuant to public notice, Col. Samuel Hay in the Chair: after mature deliberation it was unanimously resolved, That a committee of fifteen be appointed, who are requested by all lawful means in their power,

- 1<sup>st</sup>. To prevent the unlawful residence in the town of free Negroes; or such as falsely declare themselves to be free, and negro slaves.
- 2<sup>d</sup>. To prevent negro slaves from meeting together in an illegal manner.
- 3<sup>d</sup>. To prevent their unlawful absence from their owners after 10 o'clock at night.
- 4<sup>th</sup>. To prevent persons unlawfully dealing with or employing negro slaves.

Resolved, That the following gentlemen compose this committee, viz. John N. Cumming, Joseph Brown, jun. John C. Burnet, Richard Leaycraft, John Burnet, Samuel Reading, Samuel Hay, Nathaniel Beach, Stephen Hays, Archer Gifford, Nathaniel Camp, Benjamin Coe, Aaron Ross, David D. Crane and Robert B. Canfield.

Resolved also, That the citizens of Newark in general, be desired to aid this committee in effecting the objects of their appointment, and that the proceedings of this meeting be published by the chairman, in the newspapers of this town.

6<sup>th</sup> The persons named in the above committee are requested to meet at the house of Archer Gifford this evening at 6 o'clock.

Fig. 8. Measures to regulate Blacks in Newark, *Sentinel of Freedom*, January 20, 1801.

On an equally important note, the resolve of the self-liberated men and women and their former owners (in particular, the resolve of both WILL and his enslaver, David Banks) reveal in uncertain terms how fugitive abolitionists and slaveholders responded to the promise and reality of the American Revolution in Newark and elsewhere. To slaveowners, the escape of an enslaved person was a loss of *valuable property* and the *weakening of the institution of slavery*. But to the enslaved, it was the *most effective individual tool* against enslavement. In other words, fugitive abolitionism was an unequivocal statement by fugitive abolitionists that being free and hungry is better than living in a slave master's luxury, but in chains. As a renowned freedom fighter of African descent neatly stated in the mid-20th century: "It is far better to be free to

govern or misgovern yourself than to be governed by anybody else.”<sup>39</sup> The struggle of both known and unknown self-liberated Black men and women of Newark, including Charles, Bristol, Phillis, WILL, and those who assisted them (e.g., James Ocus) to free themselves and their loved ones from enslavement was not different from the labors and commitment of Harriet Tubman, a self-liberated abolitionist herself. It was their dramatic yearning for freedom that stirred the public conscience until slavery died its final legal death across the country in 1865/66.<sup>40</sup>

Of all the sources that are available for the study of slavery, flight notices provide more visceral and cerebral interpretive openings into slaveholders’ and enslaved people’s reactions to the ideals of freedom.<sup>41</sup> What we know about fugitive slave cultures come primarily from what slaveowners had to say, mostly by way of such notices. The ads are descriptive images that were meant to help capture the self-liberated men and women for their owners to reclaim. As such, they are an honest lens through which we can begin to address existing legacies of slavery and marginalization. That is because almost “the only depictions of black people” in early America were “images in slave auction ads or runaway ads.”<sup>42</sup> As descriptive images, flight ads provide unadulterated means of getting the moral dimensions of the legacy of slavery, racial prejudice, and racial profiling into the public consciousness.<sup>43</sup> They can be used by students, educators,

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<sup>39</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), ix.

<sup>40</sup> The relevance of the lives and legacies of fugitive slave abolitionists to the story of American freedom are best captured by Franklin B. Sanborn when he wrote: “It was said long ago that the true romance of America was not in the fortunes of the Indian, where Cooper sought it, nor in New England character, where Judd found it, nor in the social contrasts of Virginia planters, as Thackeray imagined, but in the story of fugitive slaves.” Quoted in Sarah Bradford, *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People* (Bedford, MA.: Applewood Books, 1869), 106-107.

<sup>41</sup> Amemason, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Star-Ledger Editorial Board (Editorial), “N.J. 5th Grade 'Slave Auction' Assignment A Worthy Lesson,” *Star-Ledger*, March 16, 2017 (updated January 16, 2019), available from [https://www.nj.com/opinion/2017/03/teaching\\_the\\_truth\\_about\\_americas\\_original\\_sin\\_edi.html](https://www.nj.com/opinion/2017/03/teaching_the_truth_about_americas_original_sin_edi.html).

<sup>43</sup> Amemason, 2019.

curriculum developers, and the public to increase awareness of the history and legacy of slavery in Newark and to appreciate the struggle for the cause of freedom and liberty in the city.<sup>44</sup>

That flight advertisements are a treasured source of interpreting the African American historical experience because they contain information not available elsewhere is an irrefutable statement. They reveal to us what slaveowners would not have said about their enslaved people in normal times. But through such notices—induced by the endeavors of self-liberated men and women themselves—we get to know a lot more about the geography of enslavement and the names, gender, age, occupation, language skills, personality traits, and motivations of enslaved people—vital pieces of information that are not available elsewhere. In brief, flight notices provide a valuable window into how fugitive slave cultures shaped Newark and New Jersey’s history. Making them available to educators, students, heritage site interpreters, poets, and the general reading public can be the beginning of the long-deferred process of humanizing enslaved people and finding ways to heal the Black community. Such might present an opportunity to repair relationships and honor ancestry.<sup>45</sup> In other words, giving greater public attention to fugitive slave advertisements is a powerful and enduring way to “engage with the riddles of the past in order to try to heal its injuries.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> An excellent example of the kind of work that could be done in this direction is a 13-page pamphlet of verse, prepared by Ed. Belding for the Daughters of the American Revolution. It is titled “Minority Perceptions of Freedom in and Around New Brunswick During the American Revolution (in Verse).”

<sup>45</sup> Makungu Akinyela, “Reparations: Repairing Relationships and Honouring Ancestry,” *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work: African American Perspectives: Healing Past and Present*, No. 2 (2002): 45-49.

<sup>46</sup> James Amemasor, quoted in Mark Wyman, “Master’s Student Keynote U.K. Conference,” *Today & Tomorrow*, Illinois State University History Department Newsletter, vol. 28, no. 1 (Fall 2003), 2. Available from <https://history.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/department-newsletters/fall03.pdf>; See also James Amemasor, “Opening the Door of Return,” *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work: African American Perspectives: Healing Past and Present*, No. 2 (2002), 60-63.

## **Black Newarkers and the American Revolution**

If the interrogatory had embraced military men, we have a plenty of them here [in Newark, N.J.], who have been in the service of their country at Sandy Hook and great fighting characters in the bargain. *There are some old veterans among the colored people, who fought in the Revolution*, and General Jackson did not mean any of them, when he said that he knew there were a great many old [T]ories who were drawing pensions.

—A. B. Thompson<sup>47</sup>

When the clarion call for American independence from Britain sounded in 1776, it sounded loud in the hearts and minds of most of the inhabitants of the 13 original colonies. But for people of African descent across the land, the freedom bells rang loudest. As Benjamin Quarles rightly noted, in the Revolutionary War the Black American “was a participant and a symbol. He was active on the battlefronts and behind the lines; in his expectations and in the gains he registered during the war, he personified the goal of the freedom in whose name the struggle was waged.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, people of Africans origin (free and enslaved) participated in the Revolutionary War on both sides of the struggle. They did so with the hope that their services might enhance their chances of personal and community freedom. It is not for any other reason that 755 soldiers of African descent were reported to be included in the Continental Army as of August 24, 1778. And they served with distinction.<sup>49</sup>

Like their counterparts across the land, people of African descent in and of Newark saw the American struggle as an opportunity to advance their unalienable rights as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. Some engaged in direct military service while others provided

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<sup>47</sup> See Thompson, “African Antiquities,” No 2, 1852. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>48</sup> Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), vii. For a brief entry on people of African descent in the war, see Mark Mayo Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: David McKay Company, 1969), 775-777.

<sup>49</sup> Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, 775.

non-military services for the cause of freedom. For instance, Hagar, a Black woman born into slavery in Newark and raised in Stamford, CT, cooked dinner for General George Washington in June 1775, when he stopped at Weed's Tavern on his way to the headquarters of the American army in Cambridge, MA.<sup>50</sup> Cudjo Banquante (also known as Jack Cudjo), a native-born African enslaved by Benjamin Coe of Newark, was one of the known Black soldiers who risked their lives in the hope of realizing their freedom. Banquante served in the war as a replacement for Benjamin Coe, who was too old to fight against the British. He served with the Continental Army and distinguished himself in the First Battle of Brandywine, the Battle of Germantown, the Battle of Valley Forge, and the Battle of Monmouth. He also fought defending Elizabethtown in 1778 and Paulus Hook (now Jersey City) in 1779. And he participated in the Battle of Yorktown in Virginia, in 1781.<sup>51</sup> Like other persons of African descent who participated in war, Banquante probably saw the national struggle as an opportunity to liberate himself and his people from racialized slavery in Newark.

In recognition of his distinguished service, Banquante was emancipated and awarded a parcel of land on High Street (now Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd) bounded by Mercer and William streets in Newark.<sup>52</sup> He utilized his land in ways that was redeeming of his freedom: he

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<sup>50</sup> William C. Neil, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, 163-164; Thomas Fleming, *The Forgotten Victory: The Battle for New Jersey-1780* (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1973), 133-134. See also William Cooper Nell, *Services of Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812*; Philip S. Foner, *Blacks in the American Revolution* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1976).

<sup>51</sup> Atkinson, *The History of Newark*, 117; Price, *Freedom Not Far Distant*, 53; 71; Charles F. Cummings, "Slavery in New Jersey: A Shame that Spanned 300 Centuries," *The Star-Ledger* (Newark), February 10, 2000; Kofi Ayim, *Jack Cudjo: Newark's Revolutionary Soldier and First Black Businessman* (Reedbuck, Inc., 2011); Fleming, *The Forgotten Victory*, 133-134. For a recent review of the role of people of African descent in the American Revolution, Giles R. Wright, "Moving Toward Breaking the Chains: Black New Jersey and the American Revolution," in *New Jersey in the American Revolution* (ed.), Barbara J. Mitnick (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Rivergate Books, 2005): 113-137.

<sup>52</sup> Ayim, *Jack Cudjo*, p. 38; Price, *Freedom Not Far Distant*, 53. For the shape and dimensions of Banquante's land, see *Map of Estates of Benjamin Coe, Benjamin Coe, Sayers Coe* (Map 346), NJHS.

became a businessman, owning a plants and flower garden on his property. An 1800 land deed involving Aaron Crane and his mother Abigail Crane, on one hand, and George Scriba of New York, on the other hand, references Cudjo Banquente's horticulture garden as an important landmark. The deed reads, in part:

All that tract or parcel of land and premises herein after ... described, situate, lying and being in the Township of Newark, in the County of Essex, State of New Jersey. Buttled and Bounded as follows: Beginning on the West side of high [street] at the North East corner of George Scriba's land, thence running along the said high street to the East corner of Cudjo Banquante's garden, thence running along the south of said Cudjo's line Capt. Moses Baldwin to the North East corner of Benjamin Coe's land ....<sup>53</sup>

For the property of a formerly enslaved person to be referenced as a major landmark in an 1800 land deed is a considerable achievement. Banquente died testate in 1823, leaving to his "well beloved wife" Mary Cudjo and his children a real estate consisting of a house and a lot on High Street. His death, recorded in the Trinity Church (Newark) Parish Register (1813-1845), reads: "March 5, 1823, Buried Jack Cudjo a black aged probably about 100 years."<sup>54</sup> A monument in honor of him and others who were buried in the Trinity Church cemetery lays in front of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. As the late City of Newark Historian and Director of the New Jersey Information Center (located at the Newark Public Library), Charles F. Cummings, noted

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<sup>53</sup> See Essex County, New Jersey, Deed Book G., p. 245-246.

<sup>54</sup> See Box 19 of Manuscript Group 882, Trinity Cathedral in Newark, New Jersey Historical Society. An 1864 newspaper article about a few African American families of Newark reads: "... On the west side of High [Street] below William Street there were three small dwellings, occupied by colored families. ... Next to below Michael was a negro family by the name Cudjo; they owned their house and lot. The patriarch of the family was a native African; he had been a slave to Benjamin Coe. In the Revolutionary War he took the place of his master in the ranks as a soldier, for which service Mr. Coe gave him his freedom. He died at a very advanced age, leaving a family of children. He made claim to royal blood, being, as he said, the son of an African King. He was a quiet, orderly man. Whether his descendants have become extinct, or have gone back to Africa to claim their prerogative to the royal right, is not known—the name is not known among us. That neighborhood was known by the name 'Guinea.'" For details, see "Newark as It Was—No. 19," *Newark Daily Advertiser*, April 8, 1864.

in one of his series of newspaper articles about Newark, “Jack Cudjo/Cudjo Banquante is a perfect transitional figure who bridges Newark’s gap between slavery and freedom.”<sup>55</sup>

As far as we know, Cudjo Banquante remains the best known (and the only documented) Black Revolutionary War soldier from Newark. But he was not the only one of African descent from the city to have served in that war. As the excerpt at the beginning of this section shows, there were “*some old veterans among the colored people [in Newark] who fought in the Revolution,*” and whom Gen. Jackson did not include in his reference to the “great many old [T]ories who were drawing pensions.”<sup>56</sup> This statement reinforces Miriam V. Studley’s research findings when she noted in 1975 that “a single clipping in New Jersey Information File” at the New Jersey Information Center “refers to a Newark organization of descendants of Black persons who served in the Revolution.”<sup>57</sup> Although Studley noted that she was unable to learn anything more about the said organization, both her statement and that of A. B. Thompson are good reminders that the unknown and untold stories of Black Revolutionary soldiers from Newark must be investigated and documented to make Newark’s revolutionary stories of American freedom complete and inclusive. Doing so is a great task, but one that must be done, however long and tedious it might take.

### **African American Community in 19th Century Newark**

Thomas Thomson (previously known as Tom Bees) was once owned by Hercules Daniel Bize, a Swiss immigrant. Thomas Thomson “was one of

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<sup>55</sup> Charles F. Cummings, “Blacks in New Jersey: The Journey Toward Economic Freedom,” *Star-Ledger*, February 17, 2000. Republished at <https://knowingnewark.npl.org/blacks-in-new-jersey-the-journey-toward-economic-freedom/> (accessed March 20, 2022).

<sup>56</sup> See Thompson, “African Antiquities,” No 2, 1852. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>57</sup> Miriam V. Studley was a librarian at the Newark Public Library. For details about her research findings, see her six-page typescript/handwritten notes titled “Jack Cutjoe or Cutjoe Banquantue,” available at the New Jersey Information Center, Newark Public Library.

the original stage proprietors, and he kept at the business so long as they drove two horses, but when they got to driving four, he gave up.”

—A. B. Thompson

A look at the first known census records of Newark, dated 1826—compiled by Isaac Nichols, town assessor—reveals statistical information about free and enslaved Black people in the town.<sup>58</sup> Among those free Blacks were property-owning men and women engaged in civic-minded duties and responsibilities.<sup>59</sup> The local tax records of the period (1817-1850) corroborate the evidence of free, tax-paying Black property men and women, although they were denied the right to vote as early as 1807<sup>60</sup> – a reminder of the phrase “taxation without representation.” They included Jack Cudjo, Peter Cudjo, Abraham Cudjo, Thomas Thompson, Henry Cook, John O’Fake, Cato Montgomery, Betty Goosbeck, Samuel Baldwin, and Benjamin Freeman. Others were James Ray, Henry Thompson, Jim Jackson, Charles Berry, Benjamin Woodruff, Benjamin Hides, Rachel Wiggins, Daniel van Marter, Titus Vanderbuck, and Cuff Boudinot. For many of these free Blacks, freedom was precious, but not absolute. Although their freedom did not include the right to vote, it did include the right to work and be compensated, however constrained that was. And because of that a significant number of them were able to find something very rare in the 19th century: economic prosperity. As a result, their networks of

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<sup>58</sup> See the census records, see *The First Jubilee of American Independence, and Tributes to the Illustrious Adam and Jefferson, Newark, N.J.* (Newark, N.J.: M. Lyon and Co., 1826), 33-36.

<sup>59</sup> See Manuscript Group 264, Newark, New Jersey Census Book, New Jersey Historical Society.

<sup>60</sup> New Jersey’s 1776 Constitution states that “all freeholders, and householders, inhabitants of this colony, who are worth fifty pounds clear estate in the same, shall be admitted to vote for representatives in Assembly, and also for all other public officers that shall be elected by the people.” And we have evidence of women and people of African descent voting in New Jersey in 1797 and 1800, for instance. See Manuscript Group 895, Bedminster Township, New Jersey, Voting Register, 1797-1803, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

family and friends allowed them to deploy their social capital in support of the struggle for freedom in Newark, a tradition that continued until slavery's statutory death in New Jersey.

The early 19th century free Blacks were not only civic minded taxpayers, they were also business entrepreneurs. Thus, the history of African Americans' struggle for freedom and equality in Newark will be incomplete without a reference to the community they fostered through their business capacity building in the post-Revolutionary War period. Many of those successful entrepreneurs were formerly enslaved people. As noted earlier, Cudjo Banquante was one of the earliest known Black business owners in Newark. Another notable entrepreneur of the time was Thomas Thomson (previously known as Tom Bees), who like Cudjo Banquante, was a formerly enslaved person. His enslaver was Hercules Daniel Bize, a native of Bern, Switzerland, who for several years prior to settling in Newark, was an eminent merchant in St. Eustatia Island.<sup>61</sup> A member of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Newark, Bize died testate on March 8, 1800, in Newark. Per his obituary, Bize probably bequeathed some of his wealth to Thomas.<sup>62</sup> As Teresa Vega pointed out, after Bize died "Thomas became a successful stagecoach owner/driver and property owner. Before 1810, he owned three homes, a stagecoach, and horses

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<sup>61</sup> According to Bize's obituary, his funeral was attended by "many respectable inhabitants" of Newark and "several gentlemen of the vicinity." He "died possessed of great opulence, the principal part of which will be enjoyed by two Daughters of his residing in England. By his will he bequeathed valuable legacies to diverse persons in this country; to a young lady, particularly, in New-York he has given *twenty-five thousand dollars*; and to the poor of the place of his birth, New-York, Philadelphia and Newark he has not been altogether unmindful. It is to be regretted, that, with our exemplary Washington, he had not, out of his abundance wealth, endowed some of our *seminaries of learning*. It is hoped, however, this laudable conduct of our departed Chief, will have such an impressive effect upon the sick, that some of them, at least will do themselves the honor to "GOAND DO LIKEWISE!" For details, see *The Sentinel of Freedom*, March 18, 1800, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> At the time of his death, "Bize he owned three negroes – Thomas (afterwards known as Thomas Thompson), Lizzie and her son Benjamin. At Mr. Bize's death they all became free; Thomas became a very respectable man, and the owner of some property and a stage and horses, with which he carried passengers daily between Newark and New York." See "Newark as it Was" – No. 12, *Newark Daily Advertiser* (Newark, N.J.), December 29, 1863, p.2 c3.

and was Newark's richest Free Person of Color."<sup>63</sup> Vega's statement supports A. B. Thompson's excerpt that Thomas Thompson, indeed, "was one of the original stage proprietors" in Newark.



Fig. 9. *The Sentinel of Freedom* (Newark, N.J.), July 22, 1817.

Indeed, in July 1817, Thomas Thompson advertised a "new" stage line that he operated between Newark and New York (fig. 9). The headline of the ad seems to suggest that Thomas was in this business earlier than 1817. A similar ad of his appeared in the March 6, 1821, edition of the *Sentinel of Freedom*, and was republished for three additional weeks. Advertising his business entity in the town's only newspaper of the time was a testament to Thomas Thompson's economic freedom and social standing. Such was also a reflection of a collective racial pride. As a writer noted in an 1863 newspaper article, Thomas Thompson was "a very trusty and honest man, very genteel in his attire, and the very quintessence of politeness – no man could make a more graceful bow, and he required from all persons all the polite civilities and attentions shown

<sup>63</sup> Teresa Vega, "From Slave to Stagecoach Owner: Thomas Thompson," *Radiant Roots, Boricua Branches* (blog), December 26, 2013. <http://radiantrootsboricuabranches.com/from-slave-to-stagecoach-owner-thomas-thompson/>.

to the most respectable citizens.”<sup>64</sup> It was those success stories and commanding social capital that reinforced the often-stated argument by Black leaders and abolitionists that the African is capable of success and will do far more in an enabling environment.

Black stagecoach operators were essential to the U.G.R.R. networks in Newark. Some of them, including Adam B. Ray Sr. and John King, for instance, were abolitionist leaders who operated between Newark and other towns and cities. Transporting persons along the ride to New York City, Jersey City, Hoboken and other major towns gave them the “perfect cover” to assist fugitive slaves on their route to freedom.<sup>65</sup> For instance, in 1842 Junius C. Morel, an abolitionist activist and teacher at the Plane Street Colored Church in Newark, directed a freedom seeker from Newark to Stephen Myers, a well-known abolitionist and U.G.R.R. agent in New York.<sup>66</sup> But transporting enslaved people into freedom was not the preserve of coachmen alone. We may recall, for instance, the story of James Ocus, the well-known free Black man, who was suspected of leading Jediah Crane’s enslaved Black woman, Phillis, dash for freedom. We can cautiously argue, therefore, that before the term “Underground Railroad” acquired its wide usage, free Black Newarkers were engaged in *transporting* fugitive slaves into freedom.

Despite unending structural and institutional barriers Black people encountered, the tradition of Black entrepreneurship in Newark continued through the early 20th century, becoming relatively vibrant during the era of the Great Migration, when Newark saw a large increase in African American population from 3,311 (i.e., 2.4 percent of city’s total population)

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<sup>64</sup> See “Newark as it Was” – No. 12, *Newark Daily Advertiser* (Newark, N.J.), December 29, 1863, p.2 c3-4.

<sup>65</sup> Vega, “From Slave to Stagecoach Owner.”

<sup>66</sup> *The Northern Star, and Freedman’s Advocate* (Albany, N.Y.), December 8, 1842.

in 1880 to 45,760 in 1940 (being 10.7 percent of the city’s total population).<sup>67</sup> *The Classified Directory of Negro Business Interests and Professions of Essex County* (compiled by Ralph W. Nixon for the Bureau of Negro Intelligence, headquartered in Newark) lists a number of those businesses. They included distributors of Black-owned newspapers and periodicals, funeral homes, dressmaking shops, furniture stores, advertising services, grocery stores, hairdressing and beauty parlors, business brokers, printers and publishers, insurance brokers, opticians, lawyers, and physicians and surgeons. One such business was the Northern Life Insurance Company, founded in 1925, constituting the third life insurance company in Newark at the time. As the president of the company, Harry H. Pace (a Georgia native), explained in January 1925, the Northern Life Insurance Company “is owned by and is conducted by and for colored people!” The story of how it started—including the \$100,000 capital stock the organizers had to raise to meet the deadline of incorporation, and the general indifference and hostility they encountered—is very inspiring (see fig. 10, headline of the founding story). In brief, one may argue—and rightly so—that Black-owned businesses offered Newark’s African American community the undeniable gateway to civic and political liberation. Cudjo Banquente and Thomas Thompson were well respected early 19th century Black business pioneers. Perhaps we know a lot more about them because of their entrepreneurship.

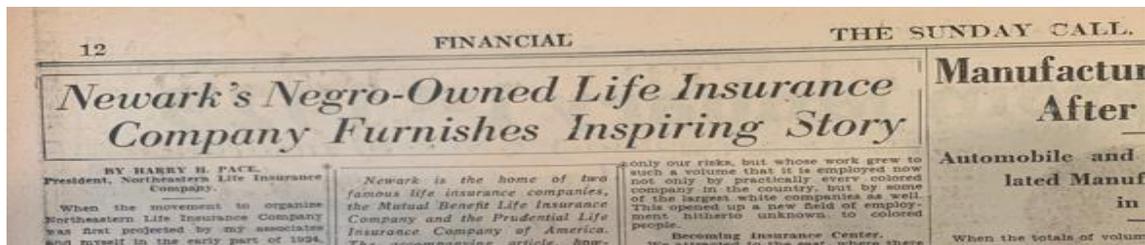


Fig. 10. Northeastern Life Insurance, Harry H. Pace (President) - *The Sunday Call*, January 6, 1925.

<sup>67</sup> Clement A. Price, “The Struggle to Desegregate Newark: Black Militancy in New Jersey, 1932-1947,” *New Jersey History*, Vol. 99 (Fall/Winter, 1981), 216.

## Newark's African American Abolitionist Organizations

### **a) Black-Owned and Black-Controlled Religious Institutions**

Religion has always provided the most conspicuous space for African Americans to create community and fight injustice. It is for this reason that Carter G. Woodson wrote in 1939: “A definitive history of the Negro Church ... would leave practically no phase of the history of the Negro in America untouched.”<sup>68</sup> And it is for this reason that the history of the struggle for freedom and racial equality in Newark will be incomplete without a recognition of the critical roles that Black-owned and Black-controlled religious organizations played. Suffice it to say that African American churches in Newark were multifaceted sites for racial pride, education, community organizing, and fundraising for Black liberation.

The pre-Civil War African American religious organizations in Newark were the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church (founded in 1822), the African Presbyterian Church on Plane Street (also known as Plane Street Colored Presbyterian Church, founded in 1831), the Second African Methodist (listed in *Newark Directory* of 1844/45), and African Episcopal (also known as St. Philips Episcopal Church, founded in 1848). Bishop Christopher Rush (1777-1873) of New York City and Abraham and John A. King were founding members of the A.M.E. Zion Church. The founders of the Plane Street Colored Church included members of the Thompson and King families of Newark.<sup>69</sup> Emma Amelia O’Fake and Jeremiah G. Evans were among the founders of the African Episcopal (St. Philips) Church.<sup>70</sup> In 1830, Jacob Dublin King, “the most

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<sup>68</sup> Carter G. Woodson, “The Negro Church, an All-Comprehending Institution,” *Negro History Bulletin*, No. 3, Issue 1 (October 1939), 7. For a comprehensive anthology on the subject, see Milton C. Senertt (ed.), *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd edition (Dunham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> Teresa Vega, “The Underground Railroad that Jacob King Built in Newark,” *Radiant Roots, Boricua Branches* (blog), January 4, 2014. <http://radiantrootsboricuabranches.com/the-underground-railroad-house-that-jacob-d-king-built-in-newark/>.

<sup>70</sup> See Manuscript Group 1515, O’Fake-Lynch Family Papers, New Jersey Historical Society.

active abolitionist, serving during the late 1850s as treasurer of the Relief Association,”<sup>71</sup> built an U.G.R.R. house at 70 Warren Street,<sup>72</sup> just a block from the A.M.E. Church (located at 67 Academy Street), bounded by the Morris Canal (now Raymond Blvd) and Plane Street (now University Avenue) and about a few meters from the Plane Street Colored Church (132 Plane Street). The site of the A.M.E. Zion Church (also called the “African Church on Academy”) is where the parking lot of Essex County College is located (south-western corner of University Ave and Raymond Blvd). The location of the King house and the Plane Street Colored Church is the current site of Rutgers University-Newark’s Frederick Douglass Athletics Field. By 1855, St. Philips Episcopal Church was located at 429 High Street (now Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd), bounded by New Street, where Rutgers-Newark Paul Robeson Center appears to stand.

Those African American religious organizations were born out of Black people’s moral and spiritual resistance to slavery, racial injustice and domination. The Plane Street Colored Church, for instance, had its roots in the First Presbyterian Church of Newark, founded in 1666. Black Presbyterians left that church to establish their own because of ill-treatment they were subjected to. Members of the St. Philips Church were African American Episcopalians who left Trinity Church to establish their own. They were the first Black-owned Episcopal church in the city. Located within the same vicinity (the area surrounding Rutgers University-Newark and Essex County College parking lot), the three churches (fig. 11) broadly served as the principal

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<sup>71</sup> See footnote 4 to the “Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark,” in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionists Papers*, Vol. III, p. 135.

<sup>72</sup> The October 30, 1937, issue of *The Sunday Call* (Newark, N.J.) carried an article (with images) that referred to the Jacob D. King house as “a safe haven for runaway slaves.” In a newspaper report about the death and funeral of Ellen Cornelia King, the last child of Jacob Dublin King, the writer noted in 1936: “Miss King was sentimental and often pointed with pride that the sidewalk of her home still remain some relics of the underground methods used then to aid escaping slaves from the South.” For details, see “Her Funeral to Be in Birthplace,” *The Sunday Call* (Newark, N.J.), December 13, 1936, Part I, p. 18 c1; “House Where She was Born Still Shelters Newarker, 92,” *The Sunday Call* (Newark, N.J.), September 11, 1932, Part III, p.5 c6-8.

outlets for social, cultural, and spiritual organization against slavery and racial injustice.<sup>73</sup> They made it possible for Newark’s Black abolitionists to come into regular contact with other Black clergy and abolitionist activists along the eastern Atlantic seaboard.

A.M.E Zion Church (67 Academy Street)

Plane Street Colored Church (132 Plane Street)

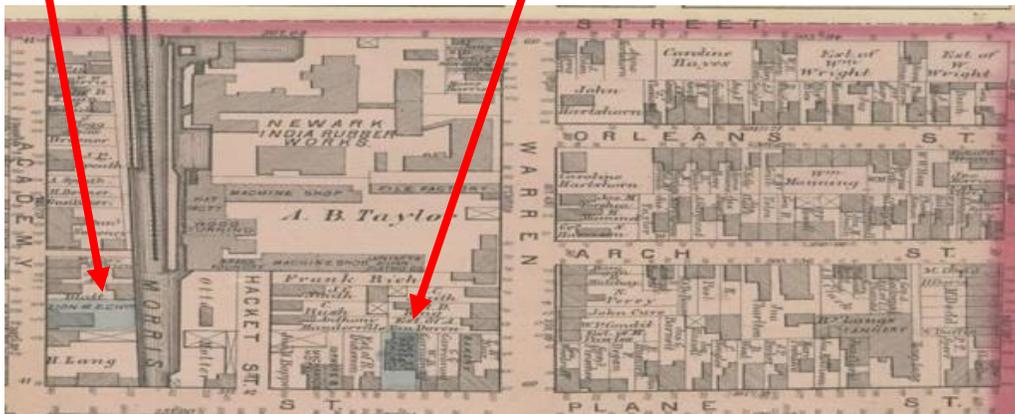


Fig. 11. An 1873 map showing the sites of the first and second Black-owned churches in Newark.<sup>74</sup>

To foster the goals of their communities, 19th century African American religious leaders had to operate strategically between spaces, sometimes relying on the support of sympathetic white Christian leaders such as Theodore Frelinghuysen. As a result, the role of the Black minister was critical to Black liberation. Because their services often required traveling between communities, they served as conduits of information and ideas for community organizing involving free Blacks in Newark and those in the nearby cities. Adam Ray Sr. and John King, for instance, were Black religious leaders and coachmen in Newark “who worked with Christopher Rush to initiate the New York African Free School in Manhattan” to “empower young Black students for personal and collective freedom.”<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Noelle Lorraine Williams, “Black Power: 19th Century: Newark’s First African American Rebellion” (Virtual Exhibition, 2021). <https://blackpower19thcentury.com/home>.

<sup>74</sup> G. M. Hopkins, *Combined Atlas of the State of New Jersey and the City of Newark: From Actual Survey of Official Records and Private Plans* (Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, 1873).

<sup>75</sup> Williams, “Black Power: 19th Century: Newark’s First African American Rebellion.”

It must be pointed out that the geographic area described above was largely an African American enclave, with numerous Black-owned homes and businesses in the neighborhood, dating back to early 19th century. Members of the King and Ray families, for instance, lived on Academy Street, which runs parallel to Bank Street. Some of their businesses were located on Bank Street (also called Fiddlers Lane for Jim Riggs, a fiddler). Thomas Thompson's July 16, 1817, stagecoach business ad (fig. 9 above) shows that he lived and ran his enterprise on Bank Street. Another example of a Black-owned business, Peter P. O'Fake's Dancing Academy, was located at 9 Bank Street. In 1836, the African Presbyterian Church was located at 92 Bank Street. Making these historical details known to the larger Rutgers University-Newark community might help with the institution's ongoing efforts to contextualize and decolonize Newark's history, repair relationships, and address racial reparations.<sup>76</sup>

#### **b) The Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark & Relief Society**

I will say a few words in relation to slaves who have passed through this city. There was one sent to our office by Mr. Morrell of Newark. We put him on board of a canal boat, paid his passage to Oswego, and furnished him with money to go into Canada, without calling on the vigilance committee for one cent. We assisted two slaves that were sent to our office by William Garner of Elizabethtown [N.J.]; we furnished them with money for Canada by the way of Lake Champlain.

—*The Northern Star* (Albany, N.Y.), December 8, 1842.

If the Black churches were the centers of spiritual organization for African American freedom, Newark's Black-denominated anti-slavery organizations were the civic and *political arms* that pushed the struggle for liberation across the region. Understanding that slavery provided the wellspring for racial prejudice and discrimination, free Blacks of Newark worked tirelessly to

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<sup>76</sup> Rutgers-Newark Joins National Mellon Foundation Project to Address Racial Reparations. January 27, 2021. <https://sasn.rutgers.edu/news-events/news/rutgers-newark-joins-national-mellon-foundation-project-address-racial-reparations>.

end the institution. They did so, “determined to use all godly, holy and lawful means, to undo our heavy burden, and to break every yoke, that the oppressed may go free.”<sup>77</sup> As noted previously, the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark (an auxiliary to American Anti-Slavery Society) was the pivotal organization in the struggle. It was organized on May 3, 1834, with immediatist abolitionist principles.<sup>78</sup> The founding officers were Rev. Henry Drayton (President, and pastor of A.M.E. Zion Church), John D. Closson (Vice President and Newark agent of New York-based abolitionist newspaper, *Emancipator*), Abraham B. Ray (Secretary), Benjamin B. Woodruff (Treasurer), and Peter Johnson, Pompy Prall and Jacob D. King (Counsellors). The 1837 and 1838 annual reports of the American Anti-Slavery Society show that a Colored Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society existed in Newark, with Adam Ray as secretary.<sup>79</sup> Operating from the Plane Street Colored Church and the U.G.R.R. station at 70 Warren Street (fig.12),<sup>80</sup> the Colored Anti-Slavery Society served as the key institution around which Newark’s Black political abolitionism twisted and turned. Junius C. Morrell, the Black abolitionist activist, was a teacher at the Colored School when he directed the freedom seeker from Newark to Stephen Myers in New York.

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<sup>77</sup> See “Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark,” 133, in Ripley, Vol. III.

<sup>78</sup> See “Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark,” 132-137, in Ripley, Vol. III.

<sup>79</sup> *Fourth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society ... Meeting Held in the City of New York, on the 9th of May 1837 ...* (New York: William S. Dorr, 1837), 134. See also *Fifth Annual Report*, 145.

<sup>80</sup> For details about the Underground Railroad House, see “Her Funeral to Be in Birthplace;” “House Where She was Born Still Shelters Newarker, 92.”



Fig. 12. Jacob D. King house, built in 1830—a “haven for runaway slaves.”

Alongside the Colored Anti-Slavery Society, Newark Black abolitionists established a local Relief Society (women included as members) in support of the Underground Railroad operations. Its primary purpose was to raise funds to assist freedom seekers and arrange their passage to the North. As *The Weekly Anglo-African* reported in 1859, the Relief Society at Plane Street Church in Newark had “charge of the north station of the U.G.R.R.”<sup>81</sup> It was the dynamic activism of the Newark abolitionist community and their institutions that attracted the nationally recognized abolitionist and social reformer Frederick Douglass to visit and speak at the Plane Street Colored Church in April 1849. He visited Newark for two related reasons: to promote his newspaper, *The North Star*, and to rally the vibrant Black abolitionist community for the broader anti-slavery crusade.<sup>82</sup> Other important Black leaders who visited the Black institutions included James McCune and Henry Highland Garnet.

<sup>81</sup> See *Weekly Anglo-American*, October 15, 1859; Ripley, Vol. III, Document 9, “Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark,” 135.

<sup>82</sup> There appears to be four Black-owned churches in Newark, by the time Frederick Douglass visited the city. They were at the following locations: 1st African Presbyterian (132 Plane Street), 1st African Methodist Episcopal (67 Academy Street), 2nd African Methodist (36 Catharine Street), and 1st African Episcopal (St. Philips, 72 Mulberry

Equally important was the role of independent press in the Black abolitionist struggle. Black-controlled press gave Black abolitionists a public voice dedicated to the cause of African American freedom. The need for such a voice explains why Samuel E. Cornish and John B. Russwurm started *Freedom's Journal*, the first African American newspaper in the United States, in 1827. In 1837, when Cornish (who pastored the Plane Street Colored Church in 1840-1844) assumed editorship of the *Weekly Advocate*, he proudly renamed the newspaper *The Colored American*. In his inaugural issue of the paper on March 4, 1837, Cornish explained why it was important for the Black abolitionist community to have an independent press: to energize northern Blacks, address their specific circumstances, and enlist the sympathy of the nation to the cause of African American liberation. It was Cornish's efforts at Black-owned press (starting with *Freedom's Journal*) that paved the way for such successful Black-owned newspapers as the *Weekly Advocate* and Frederick Douglass' *North Star*. As Benjamin Quarles pointed out, the pre-Civil War Black-owned newspapers "struck one note in common—that of freedom" and love, respect, and glory in their own nature.<sup>83</sup> Antislavery newspapers had relatively large circulation in Black communities. As pointed out earlier John D. Closson, Vice President of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark was the local agent of the American Anti-slavery Society newspaper, *Emancipator*, founded in 1833.<sup>84</sup>

### **c) The Colored School and Desegregation of Education in Newark**

According to the first known census records of Newark—conducted ten years before Newark was incorporated as a city in 1836—there were about 8,017 people living in the municipality.

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at Market Street); see *Newark Directory*, 1849/50. Not much is known about the 2nd African Methodist. See also, Noelle Lorraine Williams, "Application to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom."

<sup>83</sup> Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 86.

<sup>84</sup> Wesley, "The Negro in the Organization of Abolition," 227.

Among them were about 511 free and enslaved people of African descent,<sup>85</sup> out of an estimated total Black population of 800-900, divided between A. M. E. Zion and the Colored Presbyterian churches.<sup>86</sup> Among them were barbers, coachmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, and teachers. The need to educate the children of this growing free Black population (by *instilling* in them a sense of self-worth, racial dignity, and anti-slavery values) in a racially discriminatory society, predated the incorporation of the city. The “Colored School,” as it was then known, appears to have been an offshoot of a Sabbath School for Colored People, established in the Newark Academy in the early 1800s.<sup>87</sup> In 1828, two Black community leaders—Abraham King and John King—played a role in securing funding from the town for the instruction of Black children. The need to instill anti-slavery principles in young Black children was best expressed in the preamble to the Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark. It reads, in part:

[O]ur fathers have been held in bondage in the United States, two hundred years, and kept in ignorance, blindness, and gross darkness, by the lovers of filthy lucre ... after the lapse of nearly sixty years ... [i.e., about 60 years after the Declaration of Independence], ... upwards of two million of our colored brethren, are still held in bondage.<sup>88</sup>

Rev. Henry Drayton, the first president of the Newark Colored Anti-Slavery Society and pastor of the A.M.E. Zion Church, was the teacher at the Colored School in 1836. By 1851, the school was reorganized in the basement of the Plane Street Colored Church, with E. H. Freeman, a Black man, as the principal. In 1864, James M. Baxter, a Black educator from Philadelphia was

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<sup>85</sup> See the census records, see *The First Jubilee of American Independence, and Tributes to the Illustrious Adam and Jefferson, Newark, N.J.* (Newark, N.J.: M. Lyon and Co., 1826), 33-36.

<sup>86</sup> A report referencing the total Black population of Newark in 1836 is attributed to John J. Miter, cited in Marion Thompson Wright, “Mr. Baxter’s School,” *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1941), 122-123.

<sup>87</sup> See Manuscript Group 1003, “Sabbath School for Colored People in the New Academy, Female Department, Newark, N.J., Reports, 1819-1822,” New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

<sup>88</sup> See Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, Vol. III, 132.

appointed principal of the school. He held the post until his death in 1909. It was during his time at the Colored School that Newark High School was desegregated, with Irene Pataquam Mulford becoming the first person of African heritage to enroll at the desegregated school. Although she was admitted, she had to “sit alone in the last seat” because it was not possible for a Black student at the time to sit next to a white student.<sup>89</sup>

### **Newark-based Predominantly White Anti-Slavery Societies**

#### **a) New Jersey State & Essex County Anti-Slavery Societies**

It is important to note that the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark was in existence five years before the New Jersey State Anti-Slavery Society and its Essex County subsidiary were founded. The New Jersey State and Essex County anti-slavery societies were Newark-based organizations, but they were predominantly white establishments, with a few Black membership. For instance, Samuel E. Cornish (pastor of Plane Street Colored Church in 1840) was a member of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>90</sup> Rev. Samuel Ringgold Ward (1817- ca. 1866), the militant black abolitionist who lived and taught at the Colored School in Newark from 1835-1839, was a friend of William F. Gardner, member and secretary to the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society. Meetings of the county society were usually held in the First Free Presbyterian Church (located 15 Clinton Street), known as a stronghold of abolitionism.<sup>91</sup> These mostly white anti-slavery societies played important roles in the abolitionist movement. For instance, Rev. Dr.

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<sup>89</sup> Wright, “Mr. Baxter School,” 116-133; Marion Thompson Wright, *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), 153.

<sup>90</sup> See Manuscript Group 187, Essex County Anti-Slavery Society Records, New Jersey Historical Society.

<sup>91</sup> “Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel P. Rogers,” June 27, 1840, in Ripley, Vol. III., 342. For information about Essex County Anti-Slavery Society meetings, see Manuscript Group 187, Essex County Anti-Slavery Society Records, New Jersey Historical Society.

William R. Weeks, pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, was one of the first vice presidents of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Also, a pastor of the First Free Presbyterian Church, Rev. Charles Beecher (brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe—author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) proposed civil disobedience to slave laws in his 1851 book, *The Duty of Disobedience to Wicked Laws: A Sermon on the Fugitive Slave Law*. Long before the 1850s, white anti-slavery activists—led by nationally recognized abolitionists, including Sarah Grimké and her sister Angelina Emily Grimké—organized in Newark.<sup>92</sup>

Although the mostly white anti-slavery organizations made important contributions to ending slavery, it must be noted that they were largely abolitionists, but non-integrationist societies. Many of their members were active in the colonization movements, which advocated for removal of Blacks to Liberia. As Samuel Ringgold Ward noted in 1840, there were too many white abolitionists who “best love the colored man at a distance.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, members of those societies abhorred slavery and advocated for Black suffrage, but they were largely not promoters of Black equality. Not only were they accused of not opposing “negro-pewism” in the churches (one of the reasons why the Plane Street Colored Church broke away from the First Presbyterian Church), but they were also accused of rebuking their members for associating with Black abolitionists. This was the case in 1840 at the First Free Presbyterian Church (the mostly white abolitionist church), where William F. Gardner (a white abolitionist bookkeeper, bill collector, friend of Samuel Ringgold Ward and an advocate for Black suffrage) was rebuked for sitting at service with Rev. John A. Williams, pastor of the A.M.E. Zion Church.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Catherine H. Birney, *The Grimké Sisters: Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First Women Advocate of Abolition and Women's Rights* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1969), 170; first published in 1885.

<sup>93</sup> See “Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel P. Rogers,” June 27, 1840, in Ripley, Vol. III, 340.

<sup>94</sup> See “Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel P. Rogers,” June 27, 1840, in Ripley, Vol. III., 341-342.

Arguably, what concerned white abolitionists the most was the political leverage that slavery offered Southern states over Northern states. A resolution adopted at the 1840 annual meeting of the New Jersey State Anti-Slavery Society in Trenton supports this conclusion. It reads, in part: “That the Federal ratio of Representation, by which every five slaves are counted as three free men, is unjust and unequal, inasmuch as it gives to property-holders of a certain description an influence in our national counsels to which they have no claim.”<sup>95</sup> Samuel Ringgold Ward made a similar observation two months earlier, in letter to the editor of New York-based *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, when he wrote:

From my own observation and painful experience, I am enabled to say, that a large proportion of the professed friends of the slave, the professed and recorded believers in the doctrine of immediate emancipation, give encouragement to prejudice against color, at the polls, in the social circle, and in the church.<sup>96</sup>

In brief, the political trappings that slavery provided slave states was the major concern of most white abolitionists, who, as Samuel Ringgold Ward put it, “love the colored man at a distance.” The exactly was what the American Colonization Society represents.

#### **b) The American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States**

To better understand the difference in orientation between Black abolitionists and their mostly white counterparts, one would have to understand the formation and purpose of the American Colonization Society (ACS), officially known as American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States. The ACS was founded as a national organization in Washington D.C., in 1816, with state chapters and local auxiliaries across the country, and with

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<sup>95</sup> The quote is contained in a circular letter signed by Alex N. Dougherty (President of the New Jersey State Anti-Slavery Society) to Philemon Dickerson concerning the congressional representation of slave and free states. See Manuscript Group 13, Mahlon Dickerson (1770-1853) and Philemon Dickerson (1788-1862) Papers, New Jersey Historical Society.

<sup>96</sup> See “Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel P. Rogers,” June 27, 1840, in Ripley, Vol. III., 340-341.

the goal of removing free Blacks and emancipated slaves gradually and imperceptibly to Liberia, West Africa. New Jersey natives, Rev. Dr. Robert Finley (1772-1817)<sup>97</sup> of Princeton (pastor of Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church) and his brother-in-law Elias Boudinot Caldwell (1776-1825) of Elizabethtown (Clerk of U.S. Supreme Court) played leading roles in founding the national society. By the early 1830s, the ACS “ranked among the nation’s most important organizations,” for it “penetrated every section of the country, establishing seventeen state societies and over two hundred local auxiliaries.”<sup>98</sup> As noted earlier, the members were largely antislavery advocates, but they certainly were non-integrationists, for their principal objective was to remove free Blacks and emancipated slaves beyond the reach of mixture with whites. Thomas Jefferson, one of the earliest advocates for removing Black people, wrote in 1787:

Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second [step] is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.<sup>99</sup>

In a nutshell, members of the mostly white anti-slavery societies, ACS included, generally did not consider Black people (free and enslaved) as their equals and did not want them to remain in the country. The New Jersey chapter of the ACS, headquartered in Newark in 1840s and 1850s, had notable anti-slavery advocates in the city. They included Joseph C. Hornblower (who served as Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, 1832-1846), William Halsey (Newark’s first mayor), Theodore Frelinghuysen (U.S. Senator, 2nd mayor of Newark, and 7th president of

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<sup>97</sup> Isaac V. Brown, *Memoirs of the Rev. Robert Finley, D. D., Late Pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation at Basking Ridge, New Jersey, and President of Franklin College, Located at Athens, in the State of Georgia; With Brief Sketches of Some of His Contemporaries, and Numerous Notes* (New-Brunswick: Terhune & Letson, 1819), 61-62.

<sup>98</sup> Ripley, *Black Abolitionists Papers*, Vol. III, 90.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1787), 228-233.

Rutgers University), John P. Jackson (lawyer and politician), and Joseph P. Bradley (future Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court), whose judicial interpretations of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution contributed largely to ending Reconstruction.<sup>100</sup>

It must be pointed out that while some African Americans supported Black emigration to Canada, Haiti, Trinidad, and other places, they wanted it to be led by Black leaders and activists. As a result, several of them met in conference in Philadelphia in 1817 to protest the ACS agenda. Among them were leaders from Newark’s abolitionist and anti-colonization community, some of whom actively took part in Black political gatherings known as Colored Conventions, beginning in 1830. Peter Petit, Charles Anderson and Adam Ray represented the Newark Black community at the first of such conventions.<sup>101</sup> Led by Samuel E. Cornish—leader in many Black liberation organizations, including the New York Committee of Vigilance—Newark Black abolitionists and anti-colonization advocates conveyed the general resolve of Black people against the colonization scheme to Newark-based ACS leaders, Theodore Frelinghuysen and Benjamin Butler, in an 1840 letter. The letter was titled *The Colonization Scheme Considered, in Its Rejection by the Colored People, in Its Tendency to Uphold Caste, in Its Unfitness for Christianizing and Civilizing the Aborigines of Africa, and Putting a Stop to the African Slave Trade* (1840). Through such activities, Black Newarkers voiced their desire to remain in their country of birth and be accorded equal rights and protection of the law. As a result of such activism, Newark acquired a reputation as a stronghold of Black abolitionism, thereby attracted leading abolitionists from other parts of the country, Frederick Douglass included.

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<sup>100</sup> Ruth A. Whiteside, “Justice Joseph Bradley and the Reconstruction Amendments,” Ph.D. Dissertation (Rice University, 1981); Jonathan Lurie, “Mr. Justice Bradley: A Reassessment,” *Seton Hall Law Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1986), 365.

<sup>101</sup> *Minutes and Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the People of Color, Held by Adjournments in the City of Philadelphia, From the Sixth to the Eleventh of June, Inclusive, 1831* (Philadelphia, 1831), 7.

## **Newark: A Stronghold of Trans(national) Abolitionism**

### **a) Newark Abolitionists and the Southern Economy**

Newark was a workshop for slaveowners; it shod the South, supplied it with saddles, bridles, whips and harnesses, built the carriages in which the gentry rode, wove cloth, made hats and ground flour for the use of Dixie.

—Harry Emerson Wildes<sup>102</sup>

These, said he, [holding up a parcel of whips,] are WHIPS FOR SLAVES! made at Newark, N.J., a small city in this neighborhood, whose citizens labor for the southern market, and to which, during the late commercial pressure, one or more millions of dollars of protested paper was returned from the slave States.

—Lewis Tappan<sup>103</sup>

“Geography” and “follow the money” are two important phrases that are often used to advice on how to study and understand the past. In that context, the extracts above shed three perspectives on how geography and economics shaped the history of slavery and abolition in New Jersey, in general, and in Newark, in particular. First, the quotes help to explain why abolitionists and underground railroad activists faced more daunting task in New Jersey, despite the passage of the gradual abolition of slavery law in 1804. Geographically speaking, New Jersey is both a northern

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<sup>102</sup> Harry Emerson Wildes, *Twin Rivers: The Raritan and the Passaic* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1943), 297. The earliest use of the phrase that I came across was by Charles Merriam Knapp, in his book, *New Jersey Politics During the Period of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Geneva, N.Y.: W. F. Humphrey, 1924), p. 2, in which he wrote: “Newark was the sixth city of the United States in order of manufacturing, with a product valued at \$22,647,496, annually, from an investment capital of \$11,926,540. Newark, though situated at the north, was essentially a southern workshop. For about two-thirds of a century the shoemakers of Newark shod the south, its planters and its plantation hands, to a large extent. For generations, the bulk of the carriages, saddlery, harness, and clothing manufactured in Newark found a ready and profitable market south of Mason and Dixie lines. And so it was to a greater or lesser extent with all other industries. Newark, therefore, was substantially interested in the south.” Knapp cited Atkinson (1878), p. 239; *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1861, p. 514. Another estimate, Knapp noted, “was that nearly three-fourths of Newark’s manufactures found a market in the south.” For details, see Knapp, p.3. See also, Frank Urquhart, Vol. 2, 679.

<sup>103</sup> This quote, an excerpt of a resolution attributed to Lewis Tappan, a New York abolitionist and executive committee member of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the 1830s. For details, see *Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society*, 19.

state and a southern state. The borders of the State extend further south than any other northeastern state (with its southern tip well below the City of Baltimore).<sup>104</sup> In the cultural, political, and economic scheme of things, New Jersey was a “free state” and a “slave state” at the same time; the institution of slavery—introduced into the province in 1664 via *The Concessions and Agreement of the Lords Proprietors*—did not end until January 23, 1866.

That the economy of New Jersey’s largest city had strong ties to the Southern economy explains why geography and economics are critical to understanding the history of slavery and abolitionism in Newark. Nothing captures Newark’s pro-Southern sentiments more forcefully than an 1839 resolution of a public meeting attended by leading politicians, industrialists, and merchants of the city. Presided over by the mayor of the City, Colonel James Miller (third mayor in office), the meeting appointed ten prominent citizens as vice presidents (Moses Bigelow, Andrew Rankin, Isaac Baldwin, J. C. Hedenberg, Joseph A. Halsey, William Wright, Charles Taylor, James Mitchell, William Garthwaite, and Isaac Meeker); four Secretaries (Peter S. Duryer, William Shugard, Edwin Van Antwerp, and Harley Watson); and a six member committee—made up of Caleb H. Shipman, David Smith, Rodney Wilbur, Stephen Congar, F.B. Betts, and John S. Darcy—to draft its resolutions. The preamble and resolutions, subsequently adopted without any dissenting opinion, are worth quoting, in detail:

We, merchants, manufacturers, mechanics, and inhabitants of the City of Newark, in the State of New Jersey, knowing the situation and appreciating the feelings of our fellow citizens in the Southern States, deem it expedient to promulgate our sentiments in relation to the unwarranted schemes and nefarious acts of the advocates of the immediate Abolition of Slavery . . . .

Resolved that the avowed ulterior objects of some of the leading Abolitionists—the entire abolition of domestic slavery—the political and social equality of the colored population—the intermarriage of the white and colored races—and the practical

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<sup>104</sup> Giles R. Wright, *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History* (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1988), 15.

amalgamation of the two races into one people, with the same rights, privileges, laws and government, are viewed by us with the most unmitigated contempt and abhorrence: that we regard them as too impracticable to be attempted, too absurd to be countenanced, and too atrocious to be upheld, and that the men who avow, maintain and defend them, are pursuing a course destructive to the best interest of the American people.

Resolved, finally, That the subject of slavery appertains to the slave holding states alone—that the question of its duration or abolition belongs exclusively to them—and that the meddling interference is uncalled for by any considerations of public justice or public policy.<sup>105</sup>

These resolutions explain the dynamism of anti-abolition sentiments in Newark. The leading political and business class of different shades of opinions were opposed to abolition because the city produced almost all industrial products that Southern states needed. They include large quantity of leather goods for enslaved men, women, and children. Newark's reputation as a center of industry and manufacturing dates to the early 19th century. As its largest markets were in the South, it was believed that doing anything to bring the institution of slavery to an end might injure the city's commerce with the South. As a newspaper advertisement in July 1805 shows (fig. 13), a Newark businessman, David C. Baldwin, residing in Springfield, N.J. (about ten miles from Newark) needed 3,000 pairs of "men's coarse shoes" to "answer the Southern market."<sup>106</sup> Without a doubt, the advertisement was aimed at shoe manufacturers in Newark, for the township was the major center for the manufacture of leather products. Moses Newell Combs is credited as the first person to open the first shoemaking factory in Newark, located on Market Street, near Plane Street (now University Ave). He was also reported to be the first industrialist

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<sup>105</sup> "Public Meeting in Newark," *Newark Daily Advertiser*, Thursday Evening, May 16, 1839.

<sup>106</sup> David C. Baldwin was a businessman in Newark prior to moving to Springfield, N.J., probably because his wife hailed from there. The *Sentinel of Freedom* reported his marriage on January 18, 1803, as follows: "On Saturday evening last, at Springfield, Mr. David C. Baldwin, of this town, to Miss [Polley] Wooley, daughter of Abraham Wooley, Esq. of that place." About six months prior to his marriage, David C. Baldwin was reported to have purchased a store formerly belonging to Joseph T. Baldwin of Newark. See June 15, 1802, issue of the *Sentinel of Freedom*. David C. Baldwin also served as editor and proprietor of one of Newark's short-lived newspapers, the *Republican Herald* (January-March 1805). See *Sentinel of Freedom*, January 1, 1805; Urquhart, Vol. II, 777-778.

to sell an “order for 200 sealskin shoes in Savannah, Georgia, in 1790.” This was “the first reported manufacturing of shoes for a market outside of Newark.”<sup>107</sup>

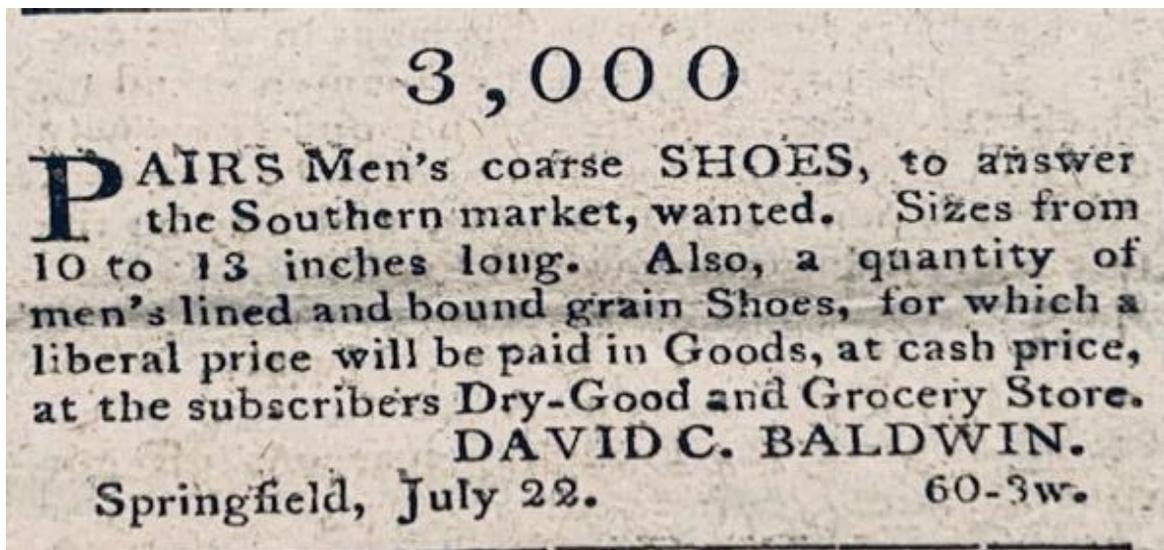


Fig. 13. “Men’s coarse shoes, to answer the Southern market,” *The Sentinel of Freedom*, July 30, 1805.

Secondly, the quotes at the beginning of the section, with the resolutions cited above, help to explain why the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark was determined “to use all godly, holy and lawful means, to undo” the burden of slavery, and why Newark political leaders, merchants, and manufacturers found abolitionists’ determination abhorrent. The contrast between the South providing the largest market for Newark’s industrial products and Newark’s deference to the South, in terms of sustaining the institution of slavery, gave abolitionists in general, and Black abolitionists, in particular, the perfect motivation and focus and organize to “uproot” the institution of slavery in its totality. Specifically, Black abolitionists saw Newark’s determination to help sustain the growth of a slavery economy as a call to duty. As noted earlier, at the heart of the Black abolitionist crusade was the profound understanding of the link between

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<sup>107</sup> For details, see Lloyd Turner, “Newark: City of Destiny,” an undated pamphlet, produced around the 350th founding anniversary of the City of Newark in 2016.

slavery, racial prejudice, and racism. Many Black leaders believed—and rightly so—that slavery was the fountainhead of racial bigotry in the deep North as well as slavery in the South. Thus, by ending slavery, northern Blacks expected to increase the boundaries of their own freedom.<sup>108</sup>

Thirdly, Newark’s support for slavery helps to explain why the city attracted several Black abolitionist activists from far and near (see the next section), many of whom came to live in the city and contributed in diverse ways to ending slavery and strengthening the state’s institutions and ideals. Others visited to rally support for the anti-slavery cause.

#### **b) Newark Attracted Trans(national) Abolitionists**

As noted earlier, the quotes by Harry Wildes and Lewis Tappan help to explain why the City of Newark attracted attention of abolitionists from across northeastern and southeastern states of the United States. A few of such individuals are briefly profiled below. For instance, Christopher Rush who helped to establish the A.M.E. Zion Church in Newark was born in Craven County, North Carolina. He moved to New York in 1798, became a member of the church there in 1803, and was ordained in 1822. John S. Mars (1804-1884), a Black A.M.E. Zion clergyman from Connecticut, served as pastor of the Newark church in the 1830s.<sup>109</sup> Prior to settling in Newark, Mars served the New York Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church and the A.M.E. Zion congregations in Fishkill and Poughkeepsie, New York.

Rev. Henry Drayton (d. 1837), a minister of the A.M.E. Church, was born in Charleston, South Carolina. He attended the founding convention of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, in 1816, and later left to join the A.M.E. Zion Church. After serving a year in

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<sup>108</sup> Robert C. Dick, *Black Protest: Issues and Tactics* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1974), 199-206.

<sup>109</sup> See “Jehiel C. Beman to Joshua Leavitt, 10 August 1844,” in C. Peter Ripley (ed.), *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, Vol. III., p. 450-454. John S. Mars reportedly lived in Newark in 1839-1840 (see Newark City Directory).

prison for his involvement in the Denmark Vesey revolt, he escaped up North, eventually settling in Newark, where he played leading roles in the Black community's struggle for freedom. He was the founding president of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark. Prior to settling in Newark, Drayton served as superintendent of the First Colored Wesleyan Methodist Church in New York City. He also itinerated in Hartford, CT. While in Newark, he led the city's Black abolitionist delegation to the 4th Annual Colored Convention in Philadelphia, in 1834.

Samuel E. Cornish (1795-1858), pastor of Plane Street Colored Church (1840-1844) and leader in the Black abolitionist movement, was born in Sussex County, Delaware. At the age of twenty, he relocated to Philadelphia, then to New York, in 1821. Ordained in 1822, he ministered Presbyterian churches in New York and Philadelphia. Before settling in Newark in 1840, he lived in Belleville, N.J., for about two years. In addition to his pastoral work, Cornish was a journalist, publisher, and national leader in the abolitionist movement. He co-founded the *Freedom's Journal* and edited *The Colored American*.

Rev. Samuel Ringgold Ward (1817- ca. 1866), who needs no further introduction in this write-up, spent a significant amount of time in the Newark abolitionist community. Born into slavery in Maryland, Ward escaped with his parents—William and Anne Ward—to New Jersey, then relocated to New York City in 1826, following a threat of kidnapping by slave hunters. As noted earlier, Ward lived in Newark, where and taught at the Colored School and was active in the Colored Anti-Slavery Society. It was in Newark that he developed and his distinguished transnational career and reputation as a militant abolitionist. He spent time in Canada and Britain, where he published his *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada & England*, proceeds from which allowed him to retire in Jamaica.

Rev. John A. Williams (1805-?), pastor of A.M.E. Zion Church and leader in the Newark, Black community, was born into slavery near Baltimore. Around 1820, he escaped from slavery and served time itinerating in New Jersey and New York before pastoring the Newark church. Upon leaving Newark, he served several patronages in Pennsylvania.<sup>110</sup>

Rev. Elymas Payson Rogers (1815-1861), an educator, poet, and pastor of Plane Street Colored Church of Newark (1846-1860), was born in Madison, Connecticut, where he “grew up with a strong sense of African identity.”<sup>111</sup> He studied at abolitionist schools in New York and taught at Rochester, where he was active in the abolitionist movement. There he met and married his wife Harriet E. Sherman. Rogers also taught at Trenton and studied Theology there until 1844. Prior to pastoring the church in Newark, Rogers served Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church in Princeton. In Newark, he was a leading voice in the abolitionist movement and under his pastorage, the Plane Street Church blossomed. In 1859, he joined the African Civilization Society, with hopes of doing missionary work in West Africa. In late 1860, he visited Sierra Leone and died the following year in Liberia.<sup>112</sup>

These are just a few of the leading Black abolitionists who migrated to Newark, largely because of the city’s Black community’s activism and the fact that Newark had strong ties with the Southern economy and a deference to slavery and racial prejudice. This attraction might have explained why nationally recognized white abolitionists such as Theodore Dwight Weld and the

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<sup>110</sup> “Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel P. Rogers,” June 27, 1840, in Ripley, Vol. III., 342.

<sup>111</sup> See “Report by the Committee on a National Press of the National Convention of Colored People and their Friends,” Presented at the Liberty Street Presbyterian Church, Troy, New York, October 6, 1847. In Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, Vol. IV, p. 13.

<sup>112</sup> Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, Vol. IV, p. 13.

Grimke sisters (Sarah and Angelina) settled in Belleville, New Jersey—five miles away from Newark—in 1840 and helped to organize abolitionist activities in the city.

### **Black Literary and Performing Arts and the Pursuit of Freedom in Newark**

The creative arts and expressions of people of African descent in Newark formed a major part of the struggle for African American's freedom and dignity in the city. Their fashionable dances and creative rhythms reflected the 18th century writer and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano's statement that African people are "almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets."<sup>113</sup> That was the case with John H. O'Fake (1818-1901), who was listed in the *Newark Directory* (1850/51) as "a music teacher" residing at 47 Bank Street in Newark. In the O'Fake's family papers at the New Jersey Historical Society, John H. O'Fake is described as a "prominent dancing master and music teacher in Newark." His brother, Peter P. O'Fake (d. 1884) also taught music and ran a dancing academy (fig. 14), with lessons on piano, violin, cello, viola, and guitar. Peter's father, Charles M. O'Fake (d. 1869) was a musician himself. John H. O'Fake's son, John Peter O'Fake (1876-1949) also taught music in the City of Newark. In brief, the O'Fakes were a clan of musicians who instructed the socially prominent New Jerseyans in the "graceful dances of the day."<sup>114</sup>

But creative ingenuity and entrepreneurship were not confined to only the men in the O'Fake family; the women played equally important roles in advancing the pride and freedom of African Americans. For instance, Mrs. Susan S. Brown – a member of the O'Fake family who

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<sup>113</sup> *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African: Written by Himself* (London, T. Wilkins, 1789), 10.

<sup>114</sup> See Box OS 5 of Manuscript Group 1515, O'Fake-Lynch Family Papers, 1861-1941, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J. See also Amy Ellis Nutt, "When Ordinary was Extraordinary: In the face of Southern Slavery, Some Northern Blacks Lived a Middle-class Life," *Star-Ledger* (Newark, N.J.) February 1, 2001.

died at the age of 68 in 1914 – owned and operated a hair dressing parlor in Jersey City. She received her training in his father’s parlor in Newark at the very young age of twelve years. Her products included jewelry, watch fobs, and chains made out of hair. Her patrons included people from the best families in Jersey City, Newark, and New York City. Among them were the Tiffanys and Havemeyers of New York City.<sup>115</sup> Another member of the family, Mrs. Catherine M. Lynch, served as secretary of the management board of the Colored Home for the Aged, Essex County, N.J. for 32 years until her death in 1911.<sup>116</sup>

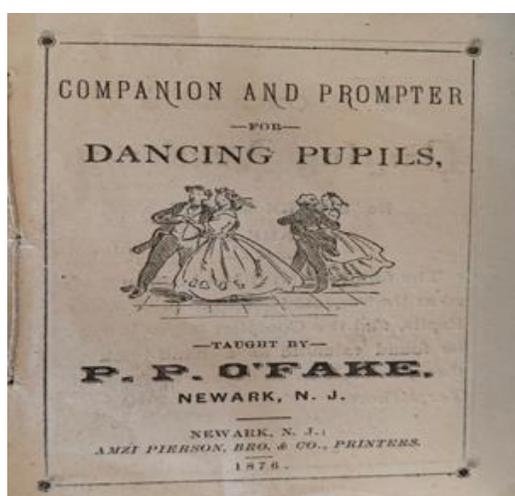


Fig. 13. Peter P. O’Fake’s Dancing Academy, 9 Academy Street, Newark, N.J.

There is no doubt that the O’Fakes used their musical talents and creative energy to elevate the sense of pride and dignity of the African American community to a higher position. But they were not the first 19th century Black Newarkers to be associated with elevating their race through creative and fashionable music. According to A. B. Thompson, an old Black man named Jim Riggs (who lived in the early 1800s in “an old red house” on Bank Street—then

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<sup>115</sup> See “Mrs. S. L. Brown, Hair Dresser, Dead,” *The Jersey Journal* (Jersey City, N.J.), July 18, 1914, p.5.

<sup>116</sup> A tablet in honor of Mrs. Lynch was unveiled at the Colored Home for the Aged, 83 Mount Pleasant Ave, in Montclair, N.J. For details, see a newspaper clipping titled, “Unveil Tablet to Mrs. Lunch,” *Herald News*, November 2, 1911, located in Manuscript Group 1515, Box 1, Folder 8.

known as “Fiddlers Lane” in honor of Jim Riggs) “devoted himself to the amusements of the day.” As A. B. Thompson explained, Riggs was the “Musician General” of Fiddler Lane and “whenever an entertainment of a festive kind was given, his services were indispensable.”

Thompson’s reflection on Jim Riggs’ musical genius is worth quoting further:

‘Music, heavenly maid, was young,’ then. The only instruments in his line, known, were the fiddle and the ram-rods. This last contrivance is beyond the comprehension of many professors of music of the present day. It consisted of two ram-rods suspended by a string and struck immediately and alternately, by a file. While Jim was in all his glory, certain fashionable people, with lofty notions, induced Mr. Boston and another colored gentleman to come from New York, with fiddles and tambourines. The triangle next and the ‘Musician General’ found his ‘occupation gone.’

He took it to heart and did not live long after .... It has been a noble achievement by Mr. O’Fake and his associates to introduce a new era in the musical world, and they have elevated their race, in these accomplishments, to a higher position, than they have before held since the first settlement of the State.... Good old Jim Riggs, may he rest in peace!<sup>117</sup>

That Jim Riggs’ creative orchestrations were beyond the comprehension of many teachers and professors of music of the time may not be an understatement of the musical skills of African people, as Olaudah Equiano correctly observed in 1789. Those creative skills are what Newark native, Amiri Baraka the renowned poet and author of music history and criticism, has analyzed in his celebrated book, *The Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963), a work that traces the nature and evolution of African American music. As Baraka rightly put it:

[A]s I began to get into the history of the music, I found that this was impossible without, at the same time, getting deeper into the history of the people. That it was the history of the Afro-American people as text, as tale, as story, as exposition, narrative, or what have you, that the music was the score, the actually expressed creative orchestration, reflection, of Afro-American life, our words, the libretto, to those actual, lived lives. That the music was an orchestrated, vocalized, hummed, chanted, blown, beaten, scatted, corollary confirmation of the history .... That the music was explaining the history as the history was explaining the music. And that both were expressions of and reflections of the people.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Thompson, “African Antiquities,” No. 1, p.2 c6.

<sup>118</sup> Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), *The Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Quill, 1963), ix-x.

Like their religious experiences, a definitive study of African American music would leave virtually no segment of the African American experience untouched.<sup>119</sup> The music, as Baraka has demonstrated, is the complete expression and reflections of the African American experience. That includes their struggles for freedom and liberty in Newark.

Early 19th century Newark Blacks were also known for their poetic rhythms. As noted by A. B. Thompson, Thomas Duker, a black Frenchman from the West Indies (known affectionately as “Barber General”), kept a cake shop on the corner of where the old bank once stood, where young people frequented. A poem on his shop read:

Thomas Duker’s always ready,  
Something for the hungry belly

Duker’s poetry skills must have served his business quite well, but poetry was also used as a tool for abolitionism in Newark. For instance, the lyrical skills of members of the Black community were on display when Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Elymas Payson Rogers, pastor of Plane Street Colored Church, publicly attacked the federal legislation with a long, anti-slavery poem that he wrote and performed at antislavery gatherings across the region. Titled “A Poem on the Fugitive Slave Law,” Rogers’ work fearlessly encouraged civil resistance and celebrates fugitive abolitionists (male and females) and operators of the U.G.R.R networks.

Rogers might have had Harriet Tubman, the iconic fugitive abolitionist, in mind when he wrote the piece. The poem reads, in part:

But whence that voice, so soft, so clear,  
So musical within my ear?  
It says “We’ll every power defy  
Beneath which helpless women sigh,  
And seek to mitigate their grief,  
And toil and pray for their relief.  
We will for fugitives provide,

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<sup>119</sup> Woodson, “The Negro Church, an All-Comprehending Institution.”

We will the trembling outcast hide:  
This will we do while we have breath,  
Fearless of prisons, chains, or death.”  
This voice is from the female band  
Who are united heart and hand  
With all the truly good and brave,  
To aid the poor absconding slave.  
Those earthly angels ever hold  
An office which appears two-fold.  
For they not only act their part  
But, like sweet music, cheer the heart  
Of those who labor by their side,  
If faith, or hope, or zeal, subside.

Will faithful woman then betray  
The fugitive, or turn away  
From him her true and willing feet,  
And thus contemptibly retreat?  
To acts so base, man may consent;  
But woman is no recreant.<sup>120</sup>

If 19th century Black Newarkers were great musicians and poets, who dedicated themselves to the cause of freedom and racial justice, so were their 20th and 21st century descendants. Amiri Baraka (author of books of essays, drama, and poetry) personifies their activism and poetic sensibilities.<sup>121</sup>

### **The Search for Freedom and Justice after Slavery**

On January 23, 1866, Governor Marcus L. Ward (a Newark native), who lived near Washington Park, secured New Jersey’s ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, when he signed, in his first official act as governor, a constitutional amendment that abolished slavery

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<sup>120</sup> Elymas Payson Rogers, *A Poem on the Fugitive Slave Law* (Newark, N. J.: A. Stephen Holbrook, 1855);  
Republished at <https://allpoetry.com/A-Poem-On-The-Fugitive-Slave-Law>.

<sup>121</sup> For an analysis of Baraka’s work, see William J. Harris, *The Poetry and Poetics of Amiri Baraka: The Jazz Aesthetic* (Columbia, MO: Columbia University Press, 1985).

*forever* in New Jersey.<sup>122</sup> As a New Jersey newspaper of the period described it, the ratification was “a setting of the Broad Seal of New Jersey to the Magna Charta of Liberty for the Black Man as well as the White Man.”<sup>123</sup> But the struggle for the dignity of Black lives did not end, as the cells of racial prejudice continued to reproduce themselves in Newark and beyond. It was in this context that in 1869, Black leaders Charles H. Thompson (pastor of Plane Street Colored Church) and Abraham Conover filed a test suit in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit to regain the right of Black men to vote.<sup>124</sup> The suit failed but in 1875 Black men gained the constitutional right to vote in New Jersey.

At the national level, however, the constitutional and civil rights of African Americans—rights enshrined in the Reconstruction Amendments—came under attack by way of federal judges’ interpretations of those rights. One of those judges was Joseph P. Bradley, a Newarker by 1836 who was later appointed as associate justice of U.S. Supreme Court. Regarded as “the most analytic and the most disciplined mind on the Court in the 1870s and 1880s,” Justice Bradley’s opinions on the Civil War era amendments contributed immeasurably to the end of Reconstruction.<sup>125</sup> Stated another way, Bradley’s influence and “tightly reasoned” legal and judicial opinions favored the pre-Civil War social order. That was not surprising because as noted earlier, Bradley was a member of the New Jersey branch of the Newark-based American Colonization Society, whose members were antislavery advocates, but not racial

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<sup>122</sup> See “Governor Ward’s First Official Act,” *Rahway Advocate & Times*, January 26, 1866; “The Constitutional Amendment,” *Rahway Advocate & Times*, January 26, 1866.

<sup>123</sup> “The Amendment,” *Elizabeth (N.J.) Journal*, January 23, 1866.

<sup>124</sup> Teresa Vega, “Our Abolitionist Ancestors: Newark Born and Bred,” *Radiant Roots, Boricua Branches* (blog), March 31, 2019. <http://radiantrootsboricuabranches.com/category/rev-charles-h-thompson/>.

<sup>125</sup> Ruth A. Whiteside, “Justice Joseph Bradley and the Reconstruction Amendments.”

integrationists.<sup>126</sup> In that sense, Bradley’s legal and judicial contributions to chipping away the civil rights enshrined in the amendments must be viewed within his ‘fixed principles’ on slavery—principles he had developed at a very early age and nurtured while in Newark. In 1835, while studying at Rutgers College (now Rutgers University), Bradley wrote an essay entitled, “Principles Must Be Fixed,” in which he stated:

[T]he subject of slavery and its influence upon our country, until by a careful comparison of the arguments that each sect and party on the subject of slavery bring forward, he is able to decide what is to be done in relation to slavery. Then having once satisfied himself, he will always be ready with reason for the opinions ... and if ... ever called upon to act in relation to the subject he will know how to act and not act blindly.<sup>127</sup>

Then in 1844/45, while practicing law in Newark, Bradley got a chance to test his “fixed principles” about slavery and its influence on the county. That year, New Jersey adopted a new constitution, Article I of which reads, in part: “All men are by nature free and independent, and have certain natural and unalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness.”<sup>128</sup> Abolitionists decided to test the new constitution by filing two slavery-related cases in the New Jersey Supreme Court, in what became known as *State v. Post* (or New Jersey Slave Case of 1845). Joseph P. Bradley and Abraham O. Zabriskie of Bergen County represented the proslavery establishment. In their submissions, Zabriskie insisted that the free

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<sup>126</sup> Born in upstate New York, Bradley came to Newark sometime in 1836 after graduating from Rutgers College. He studied and practiced law in the city, leading to his appointment to the U.S. Supreme. One reference that Bradley made to himself as a member of the American Colonization Society appears in an 1862 draft letter that he wrote in response to an inquiry from a group of independent German voters in Newark, who sought his position on the burning issue of the time – slavery.

<sup>127</sup> Joseph P. Bradley, Quinton A. Keasby, William Draper Lewis, and Charles Bradley, *Miscellaneous Writings of the Late Hon. Joseph P. Bradley: ... and a Review of His “Judicial Record,” by William Draper Lewis ... and an Account of His “Dissenting Opinions,” by Late A. Q. Keasby*, Edited by Charles Bradley (Newark, N.J.: L. J. Hardham, 1902), 302-303.

<sup>128</sup> *Proceedings of the New Jersey State Constitutional Convention of 1844, Compiled and Edited by New Jersey Writers’ Project of the Work Progress Administration* (New Jersey State House Commission, 1942), xlviii.

and independent clause of the 1844 Constitution was “a mere political abstract,” with Bradley declaring that the said first article was “‘a mere political formula’ that Americans had used to justify their repudiation of English rule”<sup>129</sup>—an article that did not refer to slavery, he argued. In brief, Zabriskie and Bradley argued that the 1844 Constitution did not end slavery in the state, a position the Court upheld, with Chief Justice Hornblower (Bradley’s father in-law) dissenting.

About twenty-five years after that historic ruling, Bradley was nominated, appointed, and confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court. He carried with him to the court his long-held and well tested “fixed principles” on the question of slavery—principles that came to him handy in his interpretations of the Reconstruction Amendments. That marked the beginning of the end of constitutional rights of African Americans and the reemergence of state sectioned segregation.

Bradley’s most defining contributions to the legal history of the country are sketched out in this paper to highlight his connection to Newark and to draw attention to the fact that: 1) he studied and practiced law in Newark; 2) he married from a prominent Newark family; 3) he got appointed to the nation’s highest court from Newark; and 4) his mortal remains were buried in Newark. Bradley was a Newarker with extraordinary legacy—a legacy that upended African American’s struggle for full recognition of their human and civil rights.

Faced with those broad judicial setbacks, African Americans in Newark continued to push the boundaries for their civil and political rights. In 1914, for instance, Grace Baxter Fenderson (daughter of James M. Baxter) co-founded the Newark Chapter of the NAACP to intensify the local struggle for freedom. Grace Baxter Fenderson and Blanche Harris were part of Newark African American women who fought for women’s suffrage, which was granted, and

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<sup>129</sup> Quoted from Daniel R. Ernst, “Legal Positivism, Abolitionist Litigation, and the New Jersey Slave Case of 1845,” *Law and History Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1986): 337-366.

guaranteed in the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Despite those relative progress, segregation and discrimination continued in Newark. The city hospitals, for instance, had no place for Black doctors and nurses to train. Forced to flee the South by the Ku Klux Klan because of his demand for greater African American representation in the medical field, specifically the management of the Tuskegee Veterans Administration Hospital in Virginia (the first VA hospital in the country), Dr. John A. Kenney (1874-1950)—Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver’s former physician—opened New Jersey’s first Black-owned and Black administered hospital in Newark, in 1927. The Kenney Memorial Hospital, located on West Kenney Street, provided space where Black doctors and nurses could practice. Clement Price wrote about racial segregation in Newark in the 1930s and 1940s when he noted:

[W]ith the exception of the public school system, which was desegregated in the early twentieth century, most other public agencies in the city were segregated in some form. The same may be said about private establishments. Racial segregation flourished in downtown Newark. Major theaters along Broad and Market streets restricted Black patrons to jim-crow sections. Those who attempted to challenge this indignity were ejected from the premises.<sup>130</sup>

Organized and sustained attempts to desegregate Newark set the ground for the civil rights militancy of the 1960s. Such was the social and historical circumstances that led to the Newark Rebellion of 1967.<sup>131</sup> The street battles of those five days in July, the most intense of which took place on Springfield Ave, the principal commercial street from the 1940s, serves as a reminder of the continuing struggle for racial justice for people of African descent, shaped in recent times by the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM). The historical paradox of Springfield Ave (known in

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<sup>130</sup> Clement A. Price, “The Struggle to Desegregate Newark: Black Militancy in New Jersey, 1932-1947,” *New Jersey History*, Vol. 99 (Fall/Winter, 1981), 219-220.

<sup>131</sup> Ronald Parambo, *No Cause for Indictment: An Autopsy for Newark; with an Introduction by Warren Slut and Afterword by Fred Bruning* (Hoboken, NJ.: Melville House, 2007); Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

earlier times as Newark and Springfield Turnpike)—being the busiest commercial street and “the hardest hit area”<sup>132</sup> during the 1967 rebellion—was that it was constructed in the early 19th century with enslaved labor. Entries in Sayers Coe’s daybook (dated 1806-1864) regarding the building of the said turnpike include payments for construction services (e.g., carting of wood, cutting of stone, scrapping of turnpikes) rendered by enslaved people owned by descendants of Benjamin Coe (Cudjo Banquente’s enslaver).<sup>133</sup> A May 24, 1818, entry reads: “To scrapping the Turnpike with three team of self Peter and Tom.” A receipt glued into the rear of the daybook shows that Benjamin Coe (one of the sons of Cudjo’s enslaver) bought Tom from Harmonous Speer in 1809 for \$190. Reflecting on the paradox of the history of Springfield Turnpike and incorporating the vital lessons in our public policies and deliberations is necessary to help repair relationships, honor ancestry, and build a more inclusive community.<sup>134</sup>

### **Newark in the Context of Harriet Tubman’s Life and Legacy**

As noted in the introductory section of this historical sketch, building a monument in Newark to honor Harriet Tubman and the Black liberation heritage requires reviewing the history of Black abolitionism in the city and doing so within the timeline of the eventful life and legacy of the honoree. Tubman was born into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland, around 1820. Early signs of her resistance to slavery were on display by the time she was in her teens, when she intervened to prevent a plantation overseer from whipping an enslaved Black man who had

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<sup>132</sup> Springfield Ave remains a major link to Newark’s western suburbs. For a brief description of how it was badly hit during the rebellion, see Reginald Roberts, “Fall of Springfield Ave: 1967 Riots Send a Major Newark Artery on 20-Year Slide,” *The Star-Ledger* (Newark, N.J.), July 16, 1987, p.32.

<sup>133</sup> Sayers Coe (b. 1772) was one of Benjamin Coe’s eight children. He lived in Newark, inherited his father’s extensive land holdings, and earned a living as a farmer. For details, Manuscript Group 89, Sayers Coe (1772-1851), Farmer Records, 1793-1911, New Jersey Historical Society.

<sup>134</sup> Akinyela, “Reparations: Repairing Relationships and Honouring Ancestry.”

attempted to run away.<sup>135</sup> In 1849, Tubman escaped from slavery and first settled in Pennsylvania, from where she went back to the South several times to rescue others. Given New Jersey’s geographical closeness to Pennsylvania, we can cautiously assume that Tubman’s rescue of others from slavery and her speaking engagements to those interested in abolition, brought her to New Jersey frequently. We know, however, that she spent time working in southern New Jersey to earn money for her rescue missions. A museum dedicated to her life and legacy is in Cape May, NJ, where she lived and worked several summers to help fund her missions to guide enslaved people to freedom.<sup>136</sup>

We do not know whether Tubman ever visited Newark; in fact, Newark was not a “friendly” abolitionist city for a nationally advertised fugitive abolitionist like Tubman to visit.<sup>137</sup> But we know that Black abolitionists built and operated an U.G.R.R. station and organizations in the city and can safely assume that Black Newark abolitionists were familiar with Tubman and the role she played in rescuing enslaved people from bondage. Even if we are aware of no documented evidence of Tubman ever coming to Newark, geography should not be the main determinant in honoring a transformative figure, particularly one that helped in spectacular ways to dismantle an institution that kept generations of people of African descent enslaved and deprived of their

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<sup>135</sup> Sarah Bradford, *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People* (Bedford, MA.: Applewood Books, 1869), 109; Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promise Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004).

<sup>136</sup> Tubman’s friend and fellow abolitionist leader Franklin B. Sanborn informs us that “From Cape May, in the fall of 1852, she [Tubman] went back once more to Maryland, and brought away nine more fugitives. Up to this time she expended chiefly her own money in these expeditions—money which she had earned by hard work in the drudgery of the kitchen.” For details, see Bradford, *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People*, 113.

<sup>137</sup> The general debate in Newark during the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854, for instance, centered around the “fear of having Newark placed in a disagreeable light before the South.” For two newspaper opinions about this concern in the city, see “Newark—Its Trade and Its Principles,” *Newark Daily Mercury*, Saturday Morning, May 20, 1854, and “Newark Merchants and the South,” *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May 18, 1854, p.2 c2.

humanity.<sup>138</sup> Doing so would amount to trying to confine Tubman's values to hard geographical places instead of honoring her in spatial terms. And such will contradict the fact that several of Newark streets, for instance, are named in honor of statesmen who never set foot in Newark.

Harriet Tubman deserves to be honored in any public space across the United States. One of her significant accomplishments is that she was the first American woman to help plan and execute a military operation that freed more than 700 enslaved people. The 19th century was as unaccustomed to thinking of women as military leaders as the 20th and 21st centuries. A Harriet Tubman Monument in Newark will provide us the opportunity to salute Harriet Tubman as a feminist icon whose bravery, fortitude, and intelligence demonstrate that those characteristics are not limited to men. It will give New Jerseyans an opportunity to learn about Tubman and the pivotal role she played in the cause of African American freedom. The monument will inspire further examination of the national narrative of justice, freedom, rights, and the effect of slavery. Newark, established in 1666, was, like most cities in pre-Civil War New Jersey, dependent upon slave labor. The Tubman Monument will draw greater attention to the history and legacy of slavery in Newark and the role that African Americans played in the U.G.R.R. and abolitionist movement in the city. More importantly, it will assist us in understanding the connection of our past to citizenship and justice. A monumental inscription of Tubman's accomplishments and philosophy in Newark will be as daring in the 21st century as they were in the 19th century. Such will serve as catalyst for educators and the general public to draw connections between the two centuries in ascertaining how much our societies have changed from the era of enslavement.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>138</sup> Kristen T. Oertel, *Harriet Tubman: Slavery, the Civil War, and Civil Rights in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016).

This brief write-up about Black people’s struggle for freedom in Newark aims to demonstrate that African people have been in the city from its colonial days and have been contributing to its diversity and vitality as well as shaping and giving meaning to the nation’s founding principles. Freedom—the United States’ most treasured principle—is better understood when examined within the context of the African American experience.<sup>139</sup> Among the nation’s foremost crusaders for freedom was Harriet Tubman, a larger-than-life abolitionist who could not hold her peace about slavery. She was the best known U.G.R.R. conductor, for as a fellow fugitive abolitionist and national figure Frederick Douglass testified to her in 1868, “the midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism .... Much that you have done would seem improbable to those who do not know you as I know you.”<sup>140</sup> Like the Black abolitionists of Newark, Tubman was not a self-interested person; she devoted her life to helping others gain their freedom from bondage. A Tubman monument in the city will be symbolic of her relevance to the United States’ most treasured concern, and one of many monuments and parks dedicated to the iconic freedom fighter. Such a monument will be a

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<sup>139</sup> Nikole Hannah-Jones et al., *The 1619 Project: A New Origin* (New York: One World, 2021), Price, 1980.

<sup>140</sup> Frederick Douglass’ letter to Harriet Tubman, published in Sarah Bradford, *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People* (Bedford, MA.: Applewood Books, 1869), 135.

The said letter, due to the difficulty of fitting it easily in the main text, is worthy of quoting it at length here: It reads: “DEAR HARRIET: I am glad to know that the story of your eventful life has been written by a kind lady, and that the same is soon to be published. You ask for what you do not need when you call upon me for a word of commendation. I need such words from you far more than you can need them from me, especially where your superior labors and devotion to the cause of the lately enslaved of our land are known as I know them. The difference between us is very marked. Most that I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in public, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day—you in the night. I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by the multitude, while the most that you have done has been witnessed by a few trembling, scarred, and foot-sore bondmen and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage, and whose heartfelt “*God bless you*” has been your only reward. The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism. Excepting John Brown—of sacred memory—I know of no one who has willingly encountered more perils and hardships to serve our enslaved people than you have. Much that you have done would seem improbable to those who do not know you as I know you. It is to me a great pleasure and a great privilege to bear testimony to your character and your works, and to say to those to whom you may come, that I regard you in every way truthful and trustworthy. Your friend, FREDERICK DOUGLASS.”

solid recognition of the work by the city’s Black and white abolitionists. More importantly, the Tubman Monument will offer opportunity to little Black boys and little Black girls of Newark to know the character and pride of their ancestors. As abolitionist Franklin B. Sanborn noted in 1868, Tubman had “accomplished her purposes with a coolness, foresight, patience and wisdom, which in a *white man* would have raised him to the highest pitch of reputation.”<sup>141</sup> Specifically, the Tubman Monument will be a permanent reminder and a source of reinforcement of the essence of Maya Angelou’s celebrated poem, “Still I Rise”—a poem that reads, in part:

Out of the huts of history’s shame, I rise  
Up from the past that’s rooted in pain, I rise ...  
Leaving behind the nights of terror and fear, I rise ...  
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear, I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
*I am the dream and the hope of the slave.*

In short, the Harriet Tubman Monument in Newark will be important for visitors to the site to know that the story of American freedom is an open-ended struggle that ebbs and flows with the times, and that they, too, have a role to play in making our country live up to its promise of freedom and equality for all.

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<sup>141</sup> F. B. Sanborn, cited Bradford, *Harriet Tubman*, 137.

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