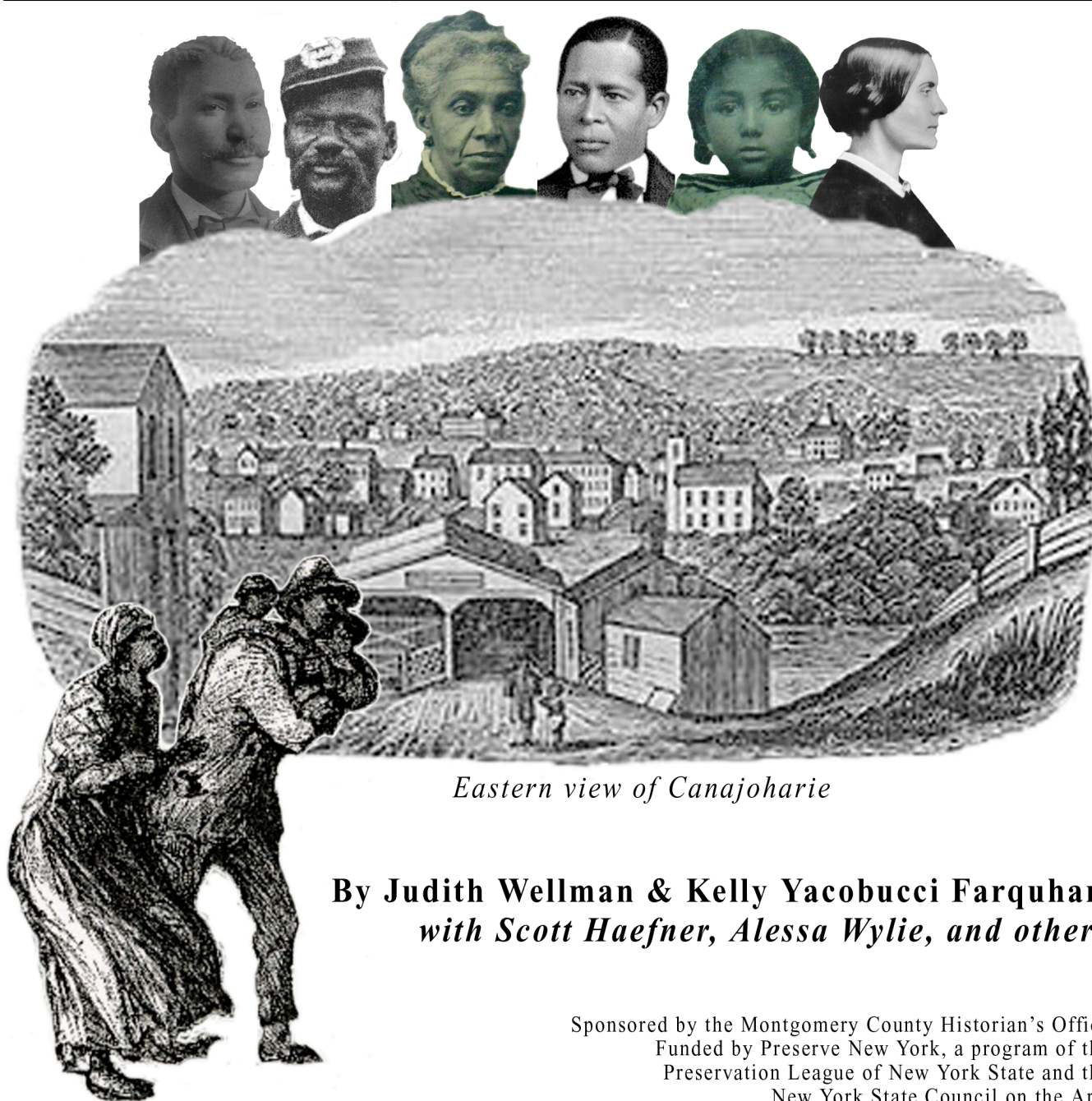


UNCOVERING
THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
Abolitionism, and
African American Life
in Montgomery County, New York, 1820-1890



Eastern view of Canajoharie

By Judith Wellman & Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar,
with Scott Haefner, Alessa Wylie, and others

Sponsored by the Montgomery County Historian's Office
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Photos on cover, left to right:
Chester Bromley Hoke, Mohawk Street, Canajoharie
Jeremiah Nutt, born in slavery, veteran of the N.Y. 115th Regiment
Eunice Van Horn Phillips, Canajoharie
Nicholas Van Alstine, Lutheran abolitionist minister, Fordsbush
Elizabeth Phillips as a child, Mohawk Street, Canajoharie
Susan B. Anthony, teacher in Canajoharie

The "eastern view of Canajoharie" is taken from John W. Barber's
Pictorial History of the State of New York (Cooperstown, NY: H. & Phinney, 1846).

Picture of freedom seekers was cut from
"Twenty-eight fugitives escaping from the eastern shore of Maryland,"
William Still, *Underground Railroad*, page 102

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Montgomery County Printing Department

**Uncovering the Underground Railroad,
Abolitionism, and African American Life in
Montgomery County, New York, 1820-1880**

**Judith Wellman and Kelly Farquhar, with
Scott Haefner, Alessa Wylie, Ryan Weitz, and others
October 2011**

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PREFACE

In 1886, Thomas James was eighty-two years old, living in Rochester, New York, as a respected minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and founder of churches in Rochester, Ithaca, Syracuse, and elsewhere. Born in Canajoharie, New York, in 1804, Tom was the third of four children, all born in slavery. He never knew his father, but until he was eight years old, he lived with his mother, brothers, and sisters on the farms of Asa Kimball, in the high hills south of the village of Canajoharie.

By the time he wrote his autobiography, Thomas James had lived a free man for sixty-five years, but he still vividly remembered his early life in slavery, and he was still angry at the injustice of it. He wrote about the pain of losing his family, the experience of working in slavery, and the humiliation of being traded as property. In 1812, when James was only eight years old, he lost his mother and two older siblings to a slave sale. His mother at first hid in the attic, refusing to leave. She was taken away, bound hand and foot. Although they went only as far as the nearby hamlet of Smithtown (now Auriesville), James never saw her again.¹

Until he was seventeen years old, Tom continued to work as a farmhand for Asa Kimball, “a well-to-do but rough farmer, a skeptic in religious matters, but of better heart than address; for he treated me well.” After Kimball’s death in a runaway accident, Tom was sold along with rest of Asa Kimball’s property to Cromwell Bartlett, Kimball’s son-in-law. Bartlett traded him shortly thereafter for “a yoke of steers, a colt and some additional property” to George H. Hess. Tom remembered Hess as “a wealthy farmer in the vicinity of Fort Plain.” Most likely, this was where Hess took his new slave Tom to a rural hillside area south of the village of Fort Plain. Today, a roadside sign identifies an irregular string of houses along the old Cherry Valley-Canajoharie Turnpike as “Hessville,” where George Hess lies buried in an ill-kempt cemetery far off the road, surrounded by a meadow.

Tom stayed with Hess only three months, from March to June 1821. Hess worked Tom hard. When he threatened to whip him, Tom had had enough. He decided to run away. In June, when the grass was high in the meadow and the clover sweet in the fields, Tom “arose in the night” and left slavery forever. Did he travel directly north to Fort Plain in the Mohawk Valley, along the Cherry Valley-Canajoharie turnpike? Or did he walk west along the high road to find food and shelter from other enslaved people or from European American church people in Frey’s Bush or Fordsbush, who reputedly helped runaways? We will most likely never know. We do know, however, that at some point he followed “the newly staked line of the Erie Canal” westward, sleeping in barns and begging food from local farmers. No one stopped him, and no one questioned him, not even the workers who were digging the new canal. A week later, he reached Lockport, in Niagara County, where “a colored man” took him to Youngstown, at the junction of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. There he crossed to Canada on the ferry, and he was free.

While this survey did not locate the specific farms on which Thomas James lived in (and escaped from) slavery, it did find deeds, wills, and gravestones relating to his enslavers. It also revealed more than three dozen existing sites relating to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and the lives of African Americans, both enslaved and free. Many more remain to be researched.

Understanding the experience of African Americans in Montgomery County demands an understanding of its key geographic position, as a funnel from east to west; its multicultural population, incorporating European Americans from England, Scotland, Holland, and Germany, as well as African Americans, mostly from the west coast of Africa through eastern New York State; its function as a rich agricultural region and an early area for the industrial revolution; the place of slavery as a key economic and social institution, underlying the county’s development from the

¹ Thomas Gordon, *Gazetteer of New York State*, 1836.

colonial period to the early nineteenth century; and the importance of the county's resistance to slavery through abolitionism and the Underground Railroad.

Unlike counties in central, western, and northern New York, Montgomery County incorporated hundreds of enslaved people and free people of color in its population. According to the printed census for 1810, 712 local people were enslaved, 1.7 percent of the total population of 41,214. After freedom officially came to all enslaved people in New York State on July 4, 1827, newly free citizens of color in Montgomery County often stayed near the only homes they had ever known. They and their descendants continued to raise their children, attend churches and schools, and find work in farms, factories, and service positions up and down the Mohawk Valley.

In a few documented instances, such as that of Thomas James, people escaped from slavery in and through Montgomery County before the end of slavery in New York State in 1827. After the 1820s, new transportation routes through Montgomery County (especially the canal and railroad) brought many people escaping from slavery in the South. Most of them traveled through Montgomery County, headed for places farther west in New York State, Canada, and beyond. A few people, however, got off the stage or the wagon or the canal boat or the train and settled on Montgomery County farms and cities. In 1850, for example, five African Americans in Montgomery County listed their birthplaces as a southern state. The Herod family, for example—William, Nancy, and their 11-year-old daughter Harriet—all born in Maryland, lived in the Town of Amsterdam in 1850. They could have been legally manumitted, of course, but they, like many if not most southern-born African Americans, were likely to have left slavery without legal permission.

Before freedom seekers reached Montgomery County, they often came north from New York City, where they received help from an organized vigilance committee. Taking steamboats north along the Hudson River to Albany, they might be greeted by Stephen and Harriet Myers, African Americans who kept a safe house that is now a historic site; Abel Brown, a European American abolitionist and Underground Railroad activist; or others associated with the eastern New York network.

Often, they left Albany headed for the home of Ellis and Ruth Clizbe at Rock City, a mill site in the Town of Amsterdam, north of the current City of Amsterdam. This was the most important and best-documented Underground Railroad area in Montgomery County, by far. African Americans such as the Dennis family also lived in Rock City, which became a haven for freedom seekers such as Jane Walker, twenty years old, born in Tennessee, who lived with the Dennis family in 1855.

A handful of other sites in Montgomery County have oral traditions related to the Underground Railroad. Some of these, such as the Mereness house in Ames (Town of Canajoharie) and the barn (now demolished) behind the Methodist Church in Frey's Bush (Town of Minden), are listed here as possible safe houses. Others, such as the Voorhees House (now Halcyon Mills Bed and Breakfast) and the Beekman Mill in St. Johnsville remain intriguing possibilities but so far lack direct evidence of any involvement in the Underground Railroad.

All of these Underground Railroad travelers and helpers were sustained by networks of organized abolitionists (which included both African Americans and European Americans, often linked by family and religious ties), as well as by African American communities. In Montgomery County, as through most of New York State, abolitionists organized formally in the mid-1830s. The first local society in Montgomery County was organized at the Presbyterian Church in Hagaman, Town of Amsterdam, in 1836. The first Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society meeting met in 1837 in the old county courthouse in Johnstown, New York. Churches took sides in the controversy, and many of them split over the issue. Lutheran abolitionists centered in Fordsbush (Town of Minden), for example, withdrew to form a new antislavery Franckean Synod, and several Presbyterian abolitionists withdrew from the First Presbyterian Church at Hagaman's Mills/Manny's Corners in the Town of Amsterdam and also from the Second Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam

Village to protest what they perceived to be its lukewarm commitment to antislavery. African Americans belonged to many of these churches. Many African Americans were buried in church or public cemeteries throughout the county, including those founded by Dutch, German, and English settlers. In Canajoharie, a small group of African Americans formed the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, known as the “freedom church” for its commitment to abolitionism.

This essay outlines the story of all of these Montgomery County residents—including those who lived in slavery, those who escaped from slavery and their helpers on the Underground Railroad, and the generation of abolitionists--both European American and African American--who devoted their lives to making real the ideal of liberty.

This report includes a preface and context statement, descriptions of documented sites (with addresses, photographs, and a discussion of significance), several databases, a note on our sources and methods, and a brief bibliography. The report is thoroughly documented and ready for incorporation into planning documents, National Register nominations, tour brochures, exhibits, curriculum units, websites, and tours. Future steps may include:

1. **National Register of Historic Places.** Nominate several sites to the National Register of Historic Places. While many sites important to this story have burned (including the most important Underground Railroad site in Montgomery County, the Ellis and Ruth Clizbe House in Rock City, Town of Amsterdam, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fordsbush), other sites such may be listed for their importance to abolitionism and/or African American life.

Listing on the National Register does not limit what individual owners can do with their property. It does, however, give honorary status to significant sites and may protect such sites from encroachment by state or federal projects. In some cases, especially for properties in private hands that may be developed for commercial use, it may open the possibility for future tax benefits. In the case of properties owned by not-for-profits, National Register listing may open the possibility for grants.²

For specific suggestions of sites that might be nominated to the National Register, see Appendix II.

2. **The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor** is now on the National Park Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom listing. This may open opportunities for funding for communities along the Erie Canal.³

² For more information about the National Register of Historic Places, see www.nps.gov/nr/.

³ For further information, including site map and funding opportunities, see Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, www.eriecanalway.org/index.htm.



Site Map, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

www.eriecanalway.org/index.htm.

3. **Tours.** Like several other counties (including Oswego, Cayuga, Oneida, and Madison), Wayne County could develop a driving tour based on sites relating to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life. These tours could be available both as hard copy brochures and online.
4. **Curriculum materials.** Douglas Kaufman has developed a model curriculum unit for the Underground Railroad and abolitionism in the Town of Amsterdam. Other teachers may also wish to develop lesson plans relating to specific people, events, or communities. Model curriculum units based on similar themes from other counties include "The M'Clintock House: A Home to the Women's Rights Movement" (prepared by Women's Rights National Historical Park), and "Thomas James: Freedom Seeker," prepared by Lori Stoudt and Walter Gable, Seneca County Historian (www.co.seneca.ny.us/history/ugrr/Curriculum_Unit_Thomas_James.pdf).⁴
5. **Exhibits.** An exhibit highlighting these stories and buildings could be developed directly from this report.
6. **Talks and Booklets.** Kelly Farquhar, Montgomery County historian, has already given many talks relating to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in Montgomery County. These could be expanded and published, perhaps with the help of a foundation such as the Furthermore Foundation.
7. **National Women's History Project Act.** Passed by Congress in April 2009, this Act authorizes a women's rights history trail through upstate New York. Many sites uncovered in this Montgomery County survey relate not only to abolitionism, the Underground Railroad, and African American life but also to the birth of the women's rights movement. These include the site of the Canajoharie Academy (original building

⁴ Women's Rights National Historical Park, "The M'Clintock House: A Home to the Women's Rights Movement," www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/76mclintock/76mclintock.htm; Lori Stoudt and Walter Gable, "Thomas James: Freedom Seeker," (www.co.seneca.ny.us/history/ugrr/Curriculum_Unit_Thomas_James.pdf). For other examples, see the National Register of Historic Places: Teaching with Historic Places, nps.gov/nr/twhp.

now demolished) where Susan B. Anthony taught in the late 1840s and Diefendorf Hall in Fort Plain, where Stanton and Anthony talked about universal suffrage in 1867.

Acknowledgements

This report is neither the beginning nor the end of an exploration of the UGRR, abolitionism, and African American life in Montgomery County. Before this project started, Kelly Farquhar, passionately committed to this work, had already started a remarkable research base—including a database of all African Americans listed in the U.S. and New York State census records from 1850 to 1880. Kelly has been working on this topic for many years and has a detailed knowledge of African American families in this area. In Amsterdam, Douglas Kaufman developed a curriculum unit that is a model for others who may want to teach about these topics.

Alessa Wylie and Scott Haefner worked on research and fieldwork throughout this study. In addition, Alessa Wylie was our database manager, creating and tending the project database as it grew and changed, and she and her husband generously shared their beautiful home in Amsterdam. Ryan Weitz, Village Historian of Fultonville, researched the *Albany Patriot*, the Lark and Margaret Mead house, and many other topics. We were also lucky to have a student intern, Carrie Freese, who helped with research and photography.



Scott Haefner, Kelly Farquhar, Alessa Wylie

We are extremely grateful to local and family historians in Montgomery and Fulton Counties, who shared leads and sources throughout this project. Skip Barshied, in particular, was an outstanding source of information, from beginning to end. Missy Zaleski generously shared documents from her ancestors, the Putmans. Peter Betz, Fulton County Historian, provided a wealth of ideas and background, especially on the Putman family. Beverly Guiffre, Village of Fonda Historian, and Eileen Chambers, Village of Fort Plain Historian, found key photos. Ryan Weitz, Village of Fultonville Historian, was immensely helpful at many stages of this project, especially in identifying the home of Lark and Margaret Mead.

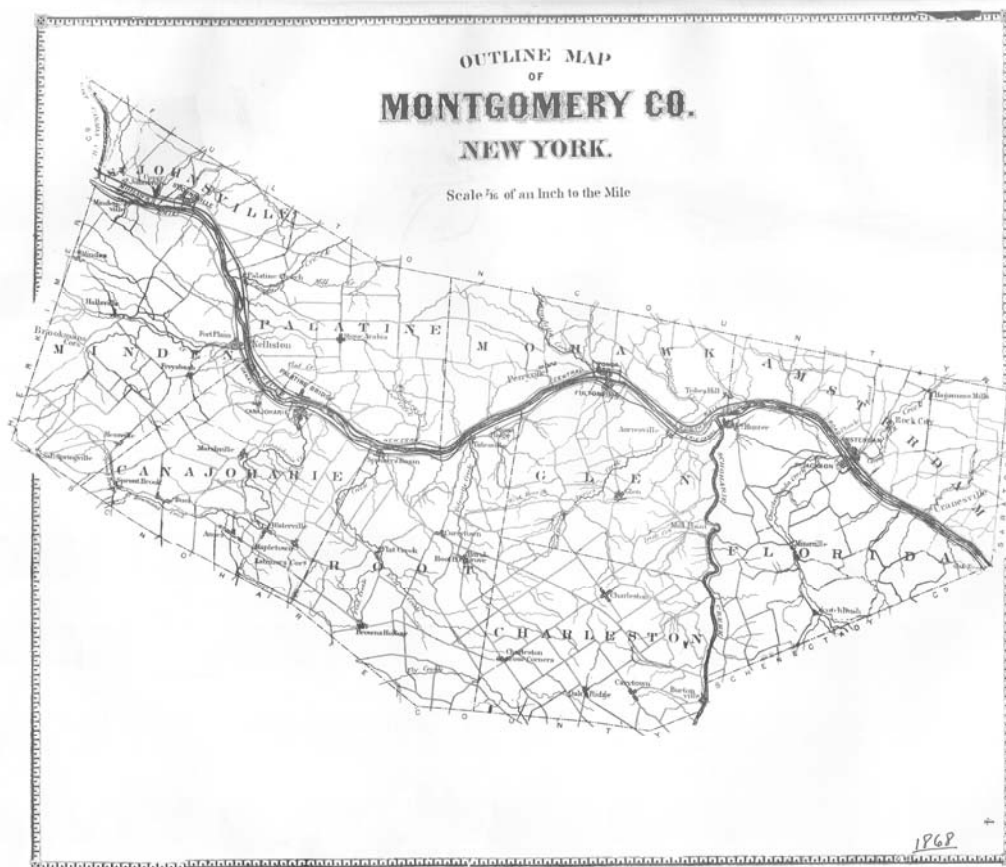
Immense thanks to the Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, who sponsored this report, and also to Preserve New York—a program funded by the New York State Council on the Arts and administered by the Preservation League of New York State—which funded this effort. This could not have happened without you.

Judith Wellman
Kelly Farquhar
October 2011

SLAVERY, THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, ABOLITIONISM, AND AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, 1820-1880

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Visitors to Montgomery County today are often surprised by three main features of this county. First, Montgomery County is exceptionally wide from east to west (forty-seven miles) and narrow from north to south (twenty miles). The county's shape and size reflects the immense impact of the nation's east-west transportation revolution on the county. Montgomery County was intensely affected by rapid growth in new transportation systems. Before 1837, the northern part of Montgomery County encompassed what is now Fulton County, rising to the foothills of the Adirondacks. The Erie Canal gave the county a new east-west orientation. It traversed Montgomery County on the south side of the Mohawk River and, after 1836, the railroad transformed the north side of the river. The older geographic orientation, based on water access along the Mohawk River and networks of turnpikes that connected river ports to trading centers north and south, realigned around the newly dominant east-west corridor. In 1836, to take advantage of these transportation changes, Montgomery County built a new courthouse, an impressive stone Greek Revival building just south of the new railroad, in Fonda. Residents in the northern part of the county, however, remained focused on the old county seat at Johnstown, home of Sir William Johnson, British Superintendent for Indian Affairs for the Northern Colonies, four miles north of Fonda. In 1837, they formed Fulton County, reclaiming the courthouse at Johnstown. The division left Montgomery County with ten townships, strung out in a narrow band east and west along the river, canal, and railroad.



Montgomery County, 1868.

Second, like residents themselves, visitors today are amazed at this county's landscape. It is breathtakingly beautiful, with soaring hills sweeping up from the wide Mohawk Valley over lushly productive fields of grain, patches of forest, and pastures dotted with cattle. At a place called the Noses, just east of Canajoharie, the Adirondack Mountains in the north and the Appalachians in the south almost touch, separated only by the broad Mohawk River. Dotting the banks of the river are a series of villages, first inhabited by Mohawk Indians and then by early European Americans, that grew dramatically from seventeenth century Mohawk communities to eighteenth century European American rural hamlets and defensive forts to nineteenth century canal and industrial villages.



Edward Gay, "Mohawk Valley at Canajoharie," 1876
Arkell Museum, www.arkellmuseum.org/coll_am06_gay_canajoharie.html.



Mohawk Valley, looking north from Route 5S, Town of Minden
May 2011



**Mohawk Valley, looking south, Town of Palatine
October 2010**

Third, people are fascinated by the complex layering of the area's ethnic, military, and economic history. Some people consider New England, with its heritage of Congregational churches and town meetings, to be the prototype of American religious and political traditions. In terms of its ethnic diversity and its importance to the country's wars and economic development, however, the Mohawk Valley was more typical of what became the new United States. In very real ways, local history in the Mohawk Valley is national history for all of us. The French and Indian Wars, in the 1740's and 1750's, led to widespread chaos in this valley. In the Revolutionary War the campaign by the British in 1777 to split the New York Colony with British attacks down Lake Champlain, and west along the Mohawk ended at the Battles of Saratoga and Oriskany, the latter just west of Montgomery County. Patriot Revolutionary War expeditions led from Montgomery County into Iroquois territory in 1779. Loyalists attacks led by Sir John Johnson and Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, destroyed dozens of settlements in Montgomery County from 1778 through 1781. The American Colonel Marinus Willett led many expeditions in the Revolutionary War, made up of both European Americans and African Americans from the Mohawk Valley.

The whole county once was at the cutting edge of America's agricultural expansion, its transportation revolution, and its industrial growth. Today's New York State Thruway parallels the old Mohawk Turnpike, Erie Canal, and New York Central Railroad. The sound of construction, factory bells, and train whistles pervaded each village. Generations of European American settlers found prosperity on farms, mills, and then factories. And the whole country knew about (and bought) paper bags from the Arkell factory in Canajoharie, carpets from the Bigelow-Sanford and Mohawk factories in Amsterdam, and Beech-Nut gum, Beech-Nut baby food, and Lifesavers from factories in Canajoharie.

Such rich land and productive factories brought labor, life, and wealth to this region, attracting people from all over the eastern U.S. and western Europe to create one of this country's most ethnically diverse populations. Mohawk Indians remained a powerful presence, and immigrants arrived from Holland, Germany, and the British Isles. Any American whose name is Beekman, Diefendorf, Dillenbeck, Dunckle, Ehle, Failing, Garlock, Miller, Moyer, Nellis, Saltzman, Sammons, Schenck, Spraker, Wagner, Walrath, Wormuth, Zimmerman, quite likely has roots in Montgomery County.

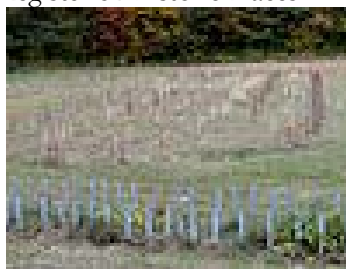
Among this conglomerate of Native Americans and European settlers lived hundreds of African Americans. Some were free but many, until New York State officially outlawed slavery in 1827, were enslaved. They worked in homes, farms, factories, canals, railroads, hotels, and barbershops. They made places for themselves on farms and villages in every township, but especially in Amsterdam, Fonda, and Palatine on the north side of the river and Canajoharie and Minden on the south side. The beginning of European settlement was also the beginning of African settlement. All, including Mohawks, formed a defining part of the fabric of this county.

Montgomery County's built environment reflects this complex history. As of June 2011, the National Register of Historic Places listed fifty-two historic sites (including five historic districts) in Montgomery County. In addition, Fort Johnson, Fort Klock, and the Erie Canal aqueduct over Schoharie Creek were listed as National Historic Landmarks. Montgomery County is also part of the eight-county Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, recognized by the State of New York as an official heritage area.¹

SETTLEMENT

All settlers to Montgomery County were drawn by relatively easy water access along the Mohawk River that led to productive land and waterpower for mills. From Mohawk Indians to successive invasions of Dutch, German, Scots, English from eastern New York, Yankees from New England, and African immigrants, this land has attracted a diverse group of people from different cultures on three continents: North America, Europe, and Africa. John Taylor, who visited Montgomery County in 1802, noted that it "appears to be a perfect Babel, as to language The articulation even of New-England people, is injured by their being intermingled with the Dutch, Irish, and Scotch." ²

First migratory aboriginals and later the six Indian tribes of the Iroquois Confederation settled at several major villages. Remains of a 350-year-old Mohawk village stand at Caughnawaga, just west of Fonda, on the north side of the Mohawk River. With foundations of twelve longhouses surrounded by a stockade, it is now the only fully excavated Haudenosaunee village in the country. In 1973, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Site of Caughnawaga Village
en.wikipedia.org

Dutch traders visited Mohawk villages as early as the 1620s, followed by French missionaries to the Mohawks, including Isaac Jogues, who was killed in 1646. Kateri Tekakwitha was one of the most prominent Mohawk converts to Catholicism, beatified by the Catholic Church in 1980. In 1711, construction of Fort Hunter, a stockaded fort surrounding Queen Anne's Chapel near the main Mohawk village of I-can-de-ro-ga, opened Mohawk land to further European trade and settlement.³

By the late eighteenth century, settlers began to migrate to Montgomery County in large numbers. Hendrick Frey settled here from Switzerland at what became Fort Frey in Palatine (1689). Dutch settlers formed the dominant culture of townships east of Town of Palatine.

¹ National Register of Historic Places, www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/ny/Montgomery/state.html; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Montgomery_County,_New_York.

² John Taylor, "Journal of the Rev. John Taylor," *Documentary History of the State of New-York*, E. B. O'Callaghan (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1850), III: 1129.

³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Montgomery_County,_New_York.

In 1710, Palatine Germans, severely dislocated from their homeland by the Thirty Years' War, arrived to settle first in the Hudson Valley and then moved north settling the Schoharie Valley and finally being granted a large tract of land in 1722 established Stone Arabia in Palatine. South of the river, Palatines also settled Canajoharie, beginning about 1730.

Early on, England recognized the value of this land. In 1738, Sir William Johnson arrived from Ireland to administer his uncle's lands on the south side of the Mohawk River. In 1742, Johnson purchased land at the junction of the Mohawk River and Kayaderosseras Creek where he built a mill in 1746 and a new stone house in 1749 first called Mount Johnson and later fortified as Fort Johnson. In 1763, Johnson moved to Johnson Hall at Johnstown, seven miles north of the Mohawk River. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974.⁴

Sir William Johnson created a second family with Mohawk clan mother Molly Brant, whose brother Joseph Brant became a major British ally. Appointed as British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department, Johnson was influential in defending British and Iroquois interests against the French during the French and Indian Wars. Johnson died in 1774, but his strong network of British and Mohawk allies helped create strong Loyalist opposition to American independence.



en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Fort_Johnson

Since the easiest route from the eastern seaboard west was through Montgomery County, the county's geography dictated that it would be not only a place of extensive settlement but also a battleground. The French invaded what is now Montgomery County repeatedly, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, as part of a worldwide struggle for empire which ended with the French and Indian War in the 1750's. Settlers eventually built thirteen forts along the Mohawk River as a haven for families threatened with loss of their property and lives. Place names such as Fort Hunter, Fort Klock, Fort Frey, and Fort Plain remain a testament to the need for protection in this embattled land. Fort Klock, built by Johannes Klock in 1750, just east of what is now the village of St. Johnsville, remains the best preserved of these. Listed on the National Register in 1972, it is now open to the public through Fort Klock Historic Restoration.

⁴ "Fort Johnson" by Timothy J. Shannon in Peter Eisenstadt (editor) *The Encyclopedia of New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 589.



Fort Klock, Route 5

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Klock

The Revolutionary War literally tore this rich country apart, destroying farms and families alike. The lingering influence of the Johnson family and their Indian allies ensured that much of the population would fight for the British. Many German and Dutch settlers, however, became Patriots.

Mohawk Valley patriots were instrumental in pushing a reluctant New York into the Revolution. In 1775, about 300 Patriots erected a liberty pole at Fonda. An active American Committee of Safety brought many prominent Loyalists to trial. Patriots hung two Loyalist spies on what is now Academy Hill in Canajoharie.

Sir John Johnson, Sir William's son, with the help of Walter Butler, led Loyalist and Mohawk forces on attacks against Patriot neighbors on the north side of the river in 1780. South of the river, Mohawk leader Joseph Brant led attacks in the territory that included his own home village near Canajoharie. The largest battle of the war in Montgomery County occurred on October 19, 1780, when Johnson's Loyalist, Mohawk, and British soldiers defeated an outnumbered force of militia at the Battle of Stone Arabia, in the hills northeast of Palatine Bridge.

The home of John Butler, one of the most notorious Loyalist raiders, still stands on the north side of the river, near the village of Fonda. Built by his father, Lt. Colonel Walter Butler (1670-1762), it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

The war left the Mohawk Valley in ruins. More than 1200 buildings were destroyed and it left about 800 widows and 2000 orphans. Mohawks and many British sympathizers left their lands behind and fled to Canada. Joseph Brant led most of the remaining Mohawks to the Grand River reservation in Ontario, Canada, set aside for them by the British. European American Loyalists became some of the earliest settlers in the rest of Upper Canada, now the province of Ontario. Lawyers such as Daniel Cady, father of women's rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, made their careers sorting out former Loyalist land titles.

After the Revolution, Yankees from New England and eastern New York poured into the Mohawk Valley, creating small villages on former Mohawk lands. Amsterdam, in the eastern hills north of the present city, was a pocket of New England settlement. So were Ames and Canajoharie in the Town of Canajoharie, one a rural hilltop town and the other a port city on the Mohawk River and Erie Canal. Ames, Canajoharie, and Fort Plain all constructed academies.



Raymond W. Smith (September 2001). "National Register of Historic Places Registration: Ames Academy Building". New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

These settlers brought with them their own religious traditions. Dutch people set up Reformed churches. Lutheran churches anchored German communities. Yankees set up Congregational services. Scots established Presbyterian congregations. English settlers created Episcopal churches. African Americans set up African Methodist Episcopal Zion bodies. The continued presence of many of these churches throughout Montgomery County is a living reminder of the county's original ethnic diversity. The Palatine Evangelical Lutheran Church, built in the Town of Palatine in 1770, exemplifies German cultural traditions. It was added to the National Register in 1973.



Palatine Evangelical Lutheran Church, built 1770

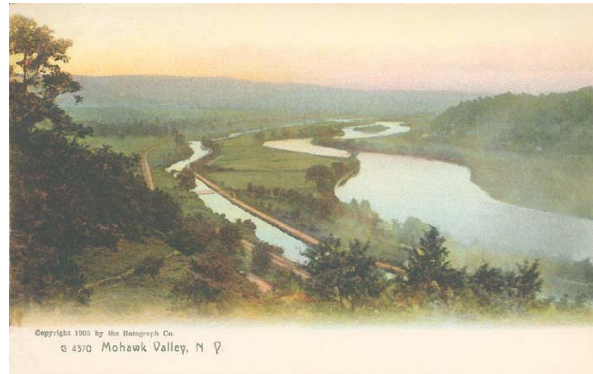
TRANSPORTATION

After the Revolution, Montgomery County remained at the cutting edge of economic development in the new nation. The transportation revolution focused intensely on the Mohawk Valley corridor running through Montgomery County. River transportation was based on Indian canoes and European American Durham boats.



Canoe and Durham Boat on the Mohawk⁵

In the colonial period, turnpikes augmented water transport, beginning with the King's Highway in 1739 and the Mohawk Turnpike in 1800, both built along the north bank of the river. The Erie Canal was completed along the south bank of the river in 1825. The Utica and Schenectady Railroad was built along the north bank of the river in 1836. It became part of the New York Central in 1853.



www.eriecanal.org/images/east-1/MohawkValley-1905c.jpg



www.eriecanal.org/images/east-1/FortHunter-1916.jpg

In 1853, the New York Central Railroad consolidated several different smaller railroad companies to create one continuous rail line across central New York State. In the mid-1850s, they

⁵ *The Archaeology of the Mohawk River Trade and Transport in the 1790s*. Compiled and edited by Philip Lord, Jr.

Albany: New York State Museum, 1992.

www.nysm.nysed.gov/research_collections/research/history/canajohary/index.html#home.

built the Palatine Bridge Freight house at Palatine Bridge. Still standing, it is a 300-foot long limestone building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

INDUSTRY

Fast-running streams on both sides of the Mohawk River ensured that its villages would also become leaders in the emerging industrial revolution. Some of these creeks ran south from the Adirondacks (such as the Chuctanunda, coming through Hagaman's Mills, Rock City, and Amsterdam; the Cayadutta, flowing through Johnstown south to Fonda; the Kayaderosseras, flowing into the Mohawk River at Fort Johnson; and Zimmerman Creek, joining the Mohawk River at St. Johnsville). Others flowed north out of the Appalachian Mountains. Of these, the most important for early industrial development were the Canajoharie, which met the Mohawk River at Canajoharie, and the Otsquago Creek, which flowed into the river at Fort Plain.



**Cayadutta Creek at Sammonsville, Town of Mohawk
May 2011**

This water power, combined with easy access to transportation through the Erie Canal and the railroad, transformed Montgomery County industries from local to national importance. Smaller flour mills and saw mills, such as the Beekman Mill (also owned by Leonard and Curran) in St. Johnsville, continued to operate throughout the county. But nationally significant mills also developed in the county. Beginning in 1842, two carpet mills in Amsterdam became the county's largest employers, with 9300 workers by 1920. The Imperial Packing Company (1891) became the Beech-Nut factory in Canajoharie, producing baby food, gum, candy, and other foods. Fort Plain, St. Johnsville, Rock City, and Hagaman's Mills also grew up around mill complexes.



Leonard and Curran's Flour Mill, St. Johnsville, constructed about 1835.

www.innbythemill.com/millhistory.htm



Amsterdam

Bigelow-Sanford Carpet Mill Complex, looking north, June 2011.
The stone building at left is the earliest extant structure in this mill complex.



Beech-Nut Factory left Canajoharie in 2009, after 118 years.
Syracuse Post-Standard, April 11, 2009

SLAVERY

As part of New York colony and New York State, Montgomery's County's development incorporated African Americans, both enslaved and free. Before 1827, New York State sustained slavery. Dutch settlers arrived in New Netherland in 1609 and set up two anchors, one in New Amsterdam, at the mouth of the Hudson River, and one at Ft. Orange (now Albany) at the junction of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. In 1626, they imported the first enslaved Africans, who worked both for the Dutch West India Company and for individual settlers.

When the English took over New Netherland in 1664, they changed its name to New York, and English settlers began to infuse the population. In 1678, French Huguenots settled upriver in New Paltz. Dutch language and Dutch culture continued to dominant many areas of settlement, however. The English enhanced two Dutch traditions: 1) the New York-Albany anchors of trade and urban life and 2) the institution of slavery that sustained prosperity in cities, farms, and mills. As

European Americans—Dutch, English, Germans, and Scots--moved west along the Mohawk Valley, they brought enslaved African Americans with them. When French and Indians attacked the stockade at Schenectady in 1690, twelve percent of the casualties were African American.⁶

Enslaved people in colonial New York worked on farms, mills, and households. Most lived in or near white households with only one or two African Americans. In a few places, however, they worked in groups of twenty or more people. At Philipsburg Manor on the Hudson River, between twenty-three and fifty people labored in slavery at the farm and mill. In 1755, Lewis Morris employed twenty-one enslaved people at his farm in Morrisania in Westchester County. Robert Livingston used a large number of enslaved people in his iron foundry at Ancram, New York.⁷

In the Mohawk Valley, the Johnson family carried on this practice of employing large numbers of enslaved people. Between Sir William Johnson's arrival as land agent in 1738 and his death in 1774, he listed in his writings at least forty enslaved people. In the earliest years, however, he had fewer enslaved people. When he left his uncle's lands at Warrensbush in 1742, only four "negroes" were listed among the tenants, laborers, and servants. As Johnson's own estate increased, so did his African American labor force. Once, he took twenty-four enslaved people to be baptized at St. George's Church in Schenectady. In 1757, when the French attacked Johnson's home at Fort Johnson, they left immediately, learning that smallpox had broken out within its walls. Several people died in that epidemic, including seven or eight people in slavery. By the 1770s, Johnson listed names of enslaved people as Adam, Christian, Dick, Abraham, Cork, Cato, Jacob, Charley, Sam, Sambo, Peter, Pontiach, Nicholas, Caseider, Quashy, Juba, Diana, Hester, Jemmy, Betty, and Peggy. Notably, only six of these twenty-one were female.⁸

The Revolution offered an opportunity for freedom for many enslaved African American men. African Americans on the Patriot side (and their owners) could take advantage of a law passed by the New York State legislature on March 20, 1781, which provided that if an enslaved person served in the war for three years, he would receive his freedom and his former owner would receive 500 acres of land. A young Henry Bakeman, once enslaved in Stone Arabia, took advantage of this, serving with Marius Willett's unsuccessful attack on Fort Ontario and then moving after the war to what later became Fulton, New York, where he operated a cooper shop and ferry and purchased a large farm.⁹

African Americans on the Loyalist side fought with John Johnson and Walter Butler and often moved to freedom in Ontario, Canada, after the War. Richard Pierpont, also known as Black Dick or Captain Dick, was the most famous of these. He had been born in Senegal about 1744, captured, and brought to New York about 1760. When the Revolution began, he was one of about a dozen African Americans who fought with Butler's Rangers. After the War, Pierpont settled in Upper Canada on 200 acres of land near St. Catherine's, with other United Empire Loyalists (about ten percent of whom were African American). He fought again on the British side in the War of 1812 and later helped create a black community called Garafaxa, near Fergus, Ontario.¹⁰

⁶ Audrey Laird and Audrey Bowman, "Black Heritage in Fulton County," www.fulton.nygenweb.net/.

⁷ Philipsburg Manor. "A Note on Large Slaveholdings in the North."
www.hudsonvalley.org/content/view/73/138/;

⁸ Philipsburg Manor. "A Note on Large Slaveholdings in the North."
www.hudsonvalley.org/content/view/73/138/; Conversation with Scott Haefner, Site Manager, April 13, 2011; Wanda Burch, "He Was Bought at Public Sale": Slavery at Johnson Hall," *Sunday Leader-Herald*, February 27, 2000.

⁹ Peter Betz, "Slavery in New York State"; "Henry and Jane Bakeman," Oswego County Underground Railroad, www.oswego.edu/ugrr/bakeman.html.

¹⁰ Peter Meyler and David Meyler, *A Stolen Life: Searching for Richard Pierpont* (Midpoint Trade Books, 1999). Thanks to Karolyn Smardz Frost and Wilma Morrison for sharing their information about Pierpont.



Plaque at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, commemorating John Butler's resettlement there from Montgomery County.

After the American Revolution, many New Yorkers worked to abolish slavery. The best legislation they managed to get through the New York State legislature, however, was a 1799 law that freed all people born in slavery after that date when they reached the age of twenty-five years for women or twenty-eight years for men. A subsequent law in 1818 freed all enslaved people in New York State, no matter what their date of birth, on July 4, 1827.

Between the Revolution and 1827, people continued to buy and sell others in slavery. In the Town of Charleston, for example, Victor Putman bought and sold people at least three times between 1799 and 1806. In Palatine, the Gramps/Kremps family were actively buying and selling people in the 18-teens.¹¹

By the time that Thomas James was born in Montgomery County in 1804, slavery in this period was in a state of flux. He and his family were part of a population of between four and five hundred African Americans who lived in slavery in Montgomery County. Many churches in Montgomery County counted African Americans as members or served African Americans, even while in slavery, with weddings, baptisms, and funerals. Records from the Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia, for example, mention several African Americans. On October 18, 1811, a baby named Augustus, son of Augustus and Diann (owned by two different families, Kilts and Eisenloard), was baptized in the church, sponsored by Dick (owned by G. Loucks, and Betsey, owned by Casper Cook).¹²

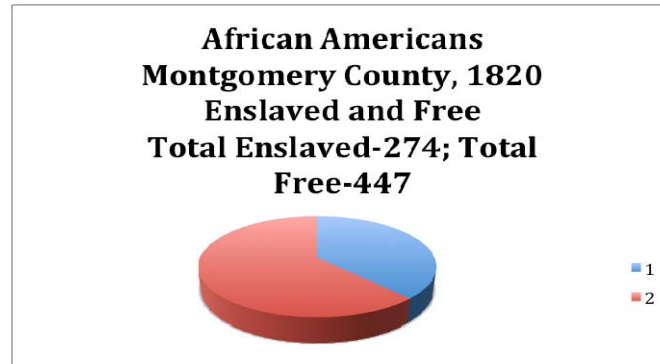
As freedom for everyone came closer, many people were manumitted (legally freed), but their daily lives and relationships to European Americans often remained virtually the same. Montgomery County census records listed 75 people in slavery in 1830, even after slavery had officially disappeared. As late as 1835, Dericke Yates, widow of Robert Yates, officially manumitted a man named George, age about thirty-five. "I hereby confess and acknowledge," she agreed, "and in conformity to the act entitled 'An Act relating to slaves and servants,' passed March 31st, 1817, I have manumitted and set free the said George, and freely exonerate him from all claims I have or

¹¹ Manuscript invoices, Victor C. Putman, 1799, 1801, 1806, courtesy of Missy Zaleski, Putman descendent.

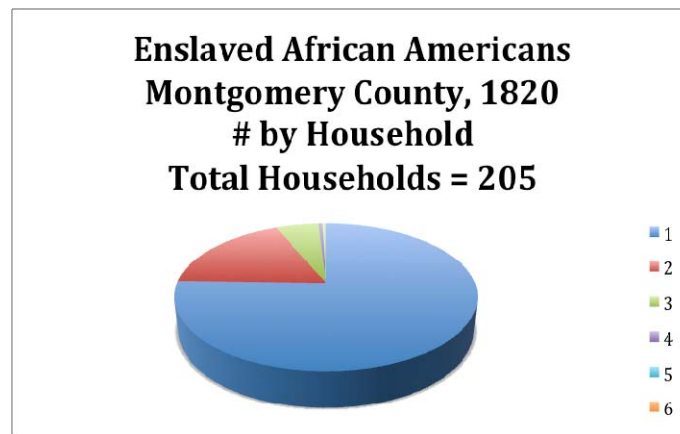
¹² Kelly Farquhar, "African American Life: The Montgomery County Experience."

may have to his services hereafter.” Legally, she had no claims to his services, in any case.¹³

Census records, although most likely inaccurate, are the best count we have of the enslaved population in this period. They listed 712 people in slavery and 365 free people of color in Montgomery County (which also included what is now Fulton County) in 1810. By 1814, the number of enslaved people had decreased to 519. In 1820, 349 enslaved people lived in the county, along with 571 free people of color. Some of these lived in the northern part of the county, which in 1837 became Fulton County. The part that is now Montgomery County included a total of 721 African Americans in 1820, of whom 274 (38 percent), including Thomas James, were enslaved and 447 were free.¹⁴



In 1820, 205 Montgomery County households incorporated enslaved people. By far the largest number of households (154 or 56 percent) included one enslaved African American in a European American-headed household. Eighteen households included two African Americans. Only two households included four or more African Americans.

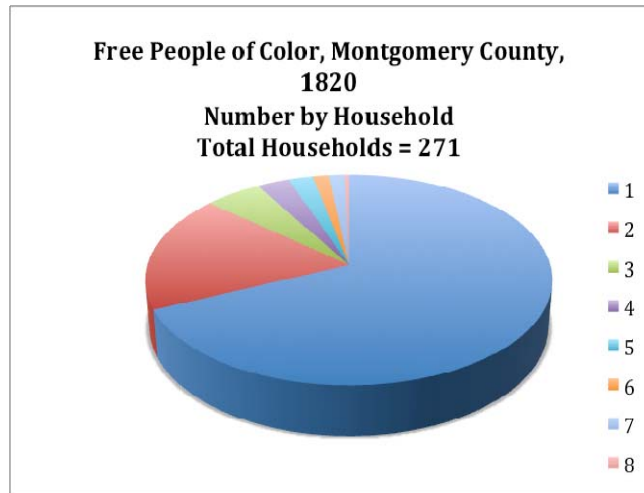


Free people of color lived in 271 households. Of these, an estimated twelve families (with a total of 84 people) were headed by African Americans. The rest of the free black population lived in households headed by European Americans. Some of these also included people in slavery. Similar to the enslaved population, however, most free African Americans were the only black person in their household. Of the 271 total households, 185 of them (68 percent) included only one free person of

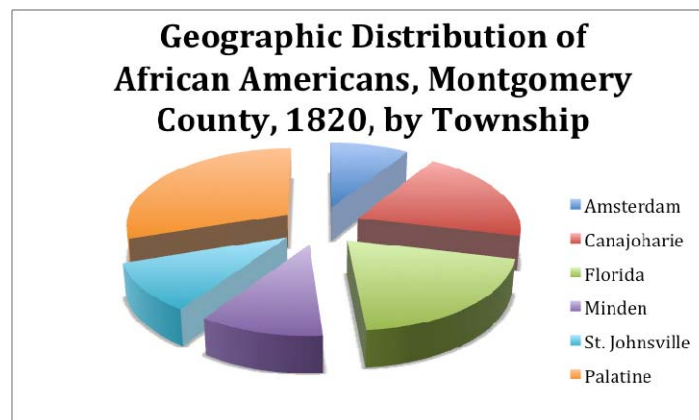
¹³ Kelly Farquhar, “African American Life: The Montgomery County Experience”; Dericke Yates (her mark), April 5, 1835, noted in *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties* (1878), 165.

¹⁴ *Census of the State of New York, 1855* (Albany, 1857), xiv.

color. Forty-nine households (18 percent) included two free people of color. Only 37 households (13.6 percent) included three or more free African Americans.



In 1820, the African American population was distributed relatively evenly through six of the county's ten townships. The central townships of Glen, Charleston, and Root (on the south side of the river) and Mohawk (on the north side of the river) listed no African Americans. Of the rest, Palatine had the largest number of households with African Americans, 84. Florida had 56, Canajoharie 55, Minden 30, St. Johnsville 29, and Amsterdam 25. (Mohawk is not listed here because it was still part of the Town of Johnstown.)



Our survey includes six sites specifically related to people who lived in slavery in the early nineteenth century—the Garlock homes in the Town of Canajoharie; the Gramps (often spelled Gremps or Kremps) homes in Palatine; the site of Joshua and Mary Read's house in the village of Palatine Bridge; the Putman home in the Town of Amsterdam; the area around Hessville, Town of Minden; and the old Montgomery County Courthouse (now the Fulton County Courthouse) in Johnstown. Many more homes certainly exist that were related to people in slavery, including colonial buildings such as Fort Johnson in the Town of Mohawk, Johnson Hall in Johnstown, the Van Alstine House in Canajoharie, and other early nineteenth century houses that we have not yet been able to label with certainty as homes associated with enslaved people.

FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR

As early as 1738, there are references to free people of color in Montgomery County. When William Johnson first arrived in the area to administer the estate of his uncle Peter Warren at Warrensbush on the Mohawk River, Warren wrote to him with concern about the “free Negroes” who owned land in the area. We have no further information about this settlement.

Slavery officially ended in Montgomery County, as it did throughout New York State, on July 4, 1827. We began work on free people of color in Montgomery County with the 1850 census, since this was the first to list names and information about individuals. Kelly Farquhar, Montgomery County Historian, created an Excel database listing all names of African Americans in both federal and state census records from 1850 to 1880. While the census most likely undercounted people of color, this source remains the best we have for a systematic effort to count the total population.

a. Numbers

According to census records, African Americans in Montgomery County generally declined in number from the 1850s to 1880. They numbered slightly over four hundred people in both 1850 and 1855 and between three hundred and four hundred from 1860 to 1875, dropping to 245 in 1880. Assuming about five people per family, we have calculated the number of families, also:

Total Population African American	Approximate Number of African American Families (rounded to nearest whole number)
1850—406	81
1855—419	84
1860—356	71
1865—331	66
1870—322	64
1875—326	65
1880—245	49

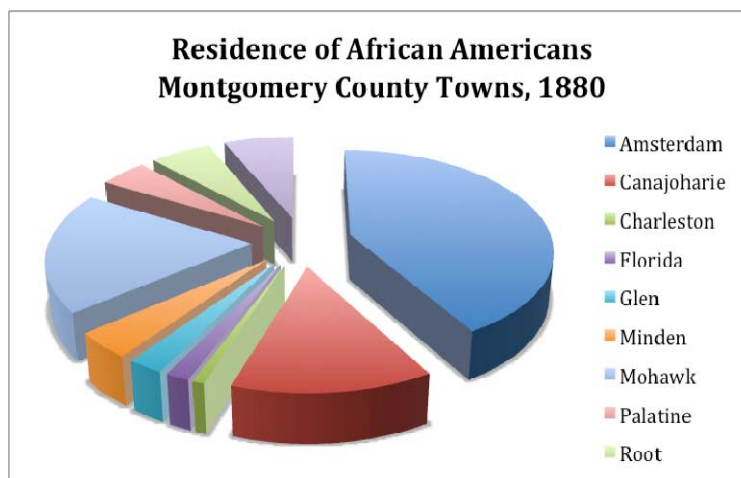
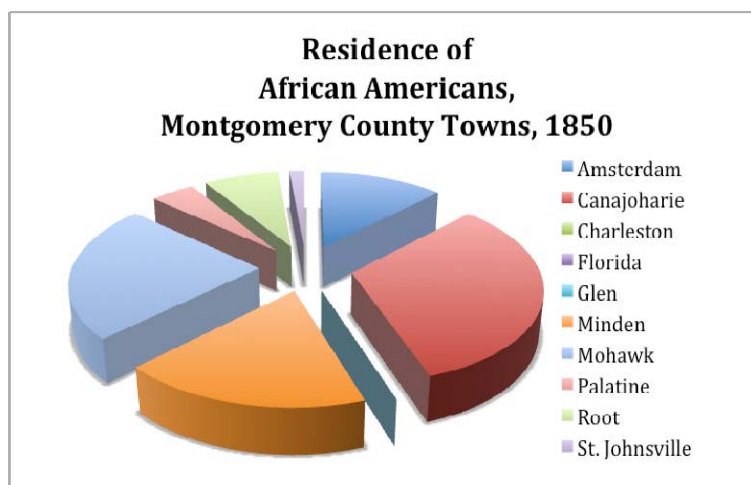
b. Residence Patterns

As the nineteenth century progressed, African Americans moved from rural farms into canal and industrial villages along the Mohawk River. By 1850, most African Americans lived in one of our canal/railroad villages: Amsterdam, Canajoharie, Minden (Fort Plain), and Mohawk (Fonda).

	Amsterdam	Canajoharie	Charleston	Florida	Glen	Minden	Mohawk	Palatine	Root	St. Johnsville	Total
1850	51	131	0	0	0	73	96	18	31	6	406
1855	37	117	1	35	29	57	109	11	14	9	419
1860	40	75	0	24	38	44	106	12	5	12	356
1880	102	33	2	4	6	10	47	11	14	16	245

The pattern of consolidation was even more pronounced by 1880, when Amsterdam’s population expanded dramatically, as it became the primary industrial center of Montgomery County.

The African American population in Canajoharie and Mohawk (Fonda) remained substantial, but that in the canal town of Minden (Fort Plain) shrank, as canal traffic gave way to the dominant railroad.



c. Work

Census records provide the only systematic listing of work for residents of Montgomery County. They are inaccurate in many ways, failing to list the work of women in 1850, changing categories of work from one census to another, and most likely missing (or mislabeling) many people in the workforce. Nevertheless, they are the best source we have for understanding how people made their living. The general pattern for African Americans in Montgomery County from 1850 to 1880 seems to be an increasing diversity of occupations over time, as workers shifted from rural farms to service and industrial occupations in villages and cities.

After a drop from 1850 to 1860, the total number of African Americans who listed occupations increased over time. These figures do not seem accurate, particularly for 1870 and 1880.

Year	No. Jobs	Approx. No. Families	No. Jobs/Family
1850	103	81	1.3
1855	84	84	1
1860	94	71	1.3
1865	94	66	1.4
1870	154 plus 69 housekeepers	64	2.4
1880	117 plus 54 housekeeping	49	2.4

Throughout this period, barbers remained a consistent and important anchor for communities all along the Mohawk River Valley. Except for 1800, they generally increased in number throughout this period. In 1850, for example, there were two African American barbers in Mohawk and three in Canajoharie. By 1855, seven African Americans in Montgomery County listed their occupation as barber; in 1860, there were six; in 1865, there were ten; in 1870, there were twelve; and in 1880, seven. Elisha Bovier worked as a barber in various towns from 1850-1880. Philip Skinner and James Teabout were barbers in Canajoharie for many years.

By far the largest number of African Americans in all these census years listed their occupations as laborers. We do not know from this label, however, whether they worked on farms, in service occupations, or in mills and factories. Number of people who listed their occupations as laborers included:

1850—86
1855—50
1860—33
1865—55
1870—76 (including common laborer-17; day laborer--4; farm laborer--20, and domestic laborer-1; laborer--34)
1880—55 (including farm laborer, laborer, retired laborer)

Other occupations included bakers, blacksmiths, boatmen, brick makers, broom makers, brush makers, butcher, cabinet makers, carpenters, clothes cleaner, coach man, cooks, coopers, domestics, dress makers, expressmen, farmers, grocers, hackmen, hostlers, hotel keepers, house keeping, huckster, laundress, linseed oil mill worker, locomotive engineer, musicians, music teacher, o [oil?] painter, omnibus driver, sawyers, servants, soldiers, teamsters, waiters, white washer, worker in cotton mill, worker in shoddy mill, worker in stone quarry. In general, the census listed more diverse occupations in the 1870s and 1880s than they did in earlier years, reflecting the increasing urbanization both of the African American population and the population of the Mohawk Valley in general.

Property Ownership

Numbers of property owners from 1850-75 are as follows:

Year	No. Prop. Owners	Approx. No. Families	% Families Who Owned Prop
1850	14	81	17.3
1855	49	84	58.3
1860	15	71	21.1
1865	48	66	72.8
1870	27	64	42.1
1875	54	65	83

(In the 1880 census, property data are corrupted. Some households were listed several times.)

The fact that federal census records (1850, 1860, 1870) consistently report many fewer property owners than do state census records (1855, 1865, 1875) suggests that this data may be skewed. Are property owners consistently underreported in federal census records? Or are they consistently over reported in state census records? And what accounts for these inconsistencies? ¹⁵ If, in fact, 83 percent of African American families owned property in 1875, that is a major triumph for a population that had emerged from slavery only fifty years earlier.

Evidence of an organized African American community emerged in Canajoharie in 1857, with the incorporation of an African American Episcopal Zion Church. Trustees were Andrew Dunckle, George Gilbert, Francis Jackson, Jack Yates, and Thomas Lansing. They purchased land on Cliff Street, just east of the home of Peter and Eliza Skinner, “to erect and build . . . a house or place of worship for the use of the members.” Although the church was not apparently built, the congregation supported at least two pastors. Rev. James J. Scott served in the early 1860s, until he was dropped by the Genesee Annual Conference in 1862 for failure to perform his duties. Rev. Richard Eastup, who had escaped from slavery himself, then served this church. ¹⁶

ABOLITIONISM

From the beginnings of the institution of slavery in this country, African Americans had resisted it. By the late eighteenth century, European Americans also organized against slavery. They strongly influenced by the ideals of the American Declaration of Independence, which asserted that “all men are created equal,” and by biblical injunctions to “love thy neighbor as thyself” and “remember those in bonds as bound with them.” Quakers were among the earliest groups to oppose slavery. After the Revolution, New Yorkers organized the New York Manumission Society. Some also supported the American Colonization Society, organized in 1816 to promote the migration of free people of color to the colony of Liberia, established on the west coast of Africa.

Beginning in the 1830s, however, a new brand of abolitionism swept the northeastern U.S. Labeled “immediatism” because it advocated the immediate rather than the gradual abolition of slavery, abolitionists of this persuasion organized nationally in Philadelphia in 1831 as the American Anti-Slavery Society. In October 1835, New York State abolitionists organized the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. None from Montgomery County signed the call to the convention, published in the *Liberator* on October 3, 1835, but many may have been among the hundreds who attended the first meeting, held in Utica and then, when they were mobbed out of the Bleecker Street Church, in Peterboro, New York. At the first annual meeting, more than four hundred delegates returned to the Bleecker Street Church in Utica. Among them were six men from Montgomery County: A. S. Seaton, Robert Brown, Thomas C. Geer, E. Tucker, James Carnduff, and Dr. Chalmers. These men do not appear in later documents relating to abolitionism in Montgomery County, but others took their places.¹⁷

In the fall of the next year, Montgomery County abolitionists in the Town of Amsterdam followed up by organizing their own local society. On November 9, 1836, they met in the Presbyterian Church in Hagaman’s Mills (still standing).

¹⁵ It is possible that some families were purchasing property on a land contract, by which they made regular payments, including taxes, but did not receive a deed until the entire property was paid off.

¹⁶ Kelly Farquhar, “African American Life: The Montgomery County Experience.”

¹⁷ *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, convened at Utica, October 19, 1836.*
http://www.archive.org/stream/proceedingsoffir00newy/proceedingsoffir00newy_djvu.txt.

On July 11, 1837, “a convention of the friends of human rights” met at the old county Courthouse in Johnstown, New York, to form the first Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society. David Candee, a storekeeper and postmaster in Hagaman’s Mills, Town of Amsterdam, presided. William Kennedy of Johnstown was secretary. Rev. Absalom Earle of Auriesville opened the meeting with prayer. They adopted a constitution and elected Ellis Clizbe of the Town of Amsterdam as President, and Rev. G. Smart of Johnstown, Sylvanus Judson of Mayfield, and T.B. Johnson of Amsterdam as vice-presidents. Although the subject of abolitionism “has but recently been introduced into the greater part of the county,” “the meeting was a highly respectable one,” noted the report in the *Friend of Man*, and the audience included “a fair proportion of ladies.”¹⁸

The New York State Anti-Slavery Society appointed Rev. J.N.T. Tucker as an agent for Montgomery County, and he traversed the area, giving lectures and organizing local anti-slavery societies. On January 13, 1838, the *Friend of Man* carried a story about his work in East Galway, typical of his efforts elsewhere. Tucker gave a lecture on January 12 and passed around the Constitution for a new society. “A goodly number” joined, including the pastor of the Scotch Presbyterian Church. “A new impulse, and new interest seems to be effected in the cause,” noted Andrew Carnduff, Secretary.¹⁹

The following month, a mob disrupted an antislavery meeting in the Presbyterian Church in Johnstown. Although the day was stormy, the meeting began in good order, with a “respectable audience.” They considered resolutions such as “That slavery is a great moral and political evil,” and “that the people of the United States are bound to contribute to the termination of American slavery by political and legal action, as far as they can do so consistently with the Federal Constitution.” President Ellis Clizbe urged the audience to remember “their dependence upon God, and rely on him.” “Remember,” he said, “it is prayer that moves the arm of God, and the arm of God moves the world.” No sooner had the second morning’s meeting begun when it was interrupted by the “boisterous ravings” of a man named Munroe, who feared that abolitionists were desecrating the church by espousing the cause of the slave. Asserting the “abolitionists are men of peace,” the meeting adjourned to the “Seceder House,” where “the assembly was larger than ever held in Johnstown on similar occasions,” crowding the church to hear a personal and passionate speech from Gerrit Smith.²⁰

Regular antislavery society meetings continued, many organized by Ellis Clizbe of Amsterdam. On February 19, 1840, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society held a meeting in Amsterdam (perhaps at the First Presbyterian Church in Hagaman). In July 1840, the Montgomery and Fulton County Anti-Slavery Society met in the Baptist Church at Fonda’s Bush (near what is now Broadalbin), electing E.M.K. Glen, of Florida, as president. Chandler Bartlett of Amsterdam was one vice-president, Ellis Clizbe from Amsterdam and Absalom [sic] Mereness from Ames were among the directors.²¹

Organized by the American Anti-Slavery Society and promoted by the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, one of the major abolitionist goals in the late 1830s was to send petitions to Congress. They asked only for what they believed Congress could deliver under the U.S. Constitution, including not admitting any new slave states, keeping slavery out of the territories, and abolishing the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Only three petitions have been found in the National Archives for Montgomery County. They are one from St. Johnsville in December 1841, signed by Morris Klock, Elias Saltzman, Nelson Perkins, William Toombs [?], Noah Yale, Isaac

¹⁸ *Friend of Man*, July 19, 1837.

¹⁹ *Friend of Man*, January 19, 1838.

²⁰ J.N.T.T. [ucker], “Scenes in Johnstown, A.D. 1838,” *Friend of Man*, March 7, 1838.

²¹ *Friend of Man*, February 5, 1840; July 29, 1840.

Fulmer, Peter B. Burlingame, Daniel Leonard, and Jacob P. Sitts. They believed that "slavery is a sin against God and a crime against man and should immediately cease," and they addressed a petition to John Q. Adams asking Congress to "abolish slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and also abolish the internal slave trade between the States, prevent the admission of Florida or Texas except as free states into the Union, and abolish the Act by which the Southern slaveholder attempts to recapture his fugitive slave in the Free States." In January 1845, local citizens sent another petition, also addressed to John Q. Adams. Basing their argument on the Declaration of Independence, they avowed that slavery in the District of Columbia was unconstitutional. (For transcripts of these petitions, see discussion of Leonard and Curran Mill.) Finally, petitioners in Canajoharie sent a petition in 1850, asking that no new slave states be admitted to the Union.²²

To the Congress of the United States —

We the undersigned, inhabitants of
Montgomery County — New York —
Respectfully represent, — that, "We hold
these truths to be self evident — that all
men are created equal; — that they are
endowed by their Creator with certain
unalienable rights that among these are
life Liberty and the pursuit of happiness;"
— We furthermore represent that
in our opinion all laws and usages
which now exist in relation to the
inhabitants of the District of Columbia
inconsistent with the above declaration,
are unconstitutional and ought to be
immediately abolished —

We therefore ask your Hon body
to repeal and annul all such laws and
usages, which may exist in the said
District as an understood, and interpreted
to confer privileges and immunities
on one class of inhabitants to the
exclusion of others —

At Johnsville, Montgomery Co New York
January — 1845
Noah Vale
Morris Klock

Calvin Hillman	Henry Stiles
Cotin W Vale	John Williams
Abt Montgomery	Philip Flanders
Cornelius Klock	Jacob C Helligers
Jacob P Sitts	Mrs H Skill
Edwin Saltzman	De Wit Klock —

I believe it to be the undivided sentiment of
the inhabitants of this place that Slavery is
unconstitutional in the D.C. N.Y.

²² National Archives and Records Administration, HR27A-H1.7 (1941); admitted February 18, 1845; 31A-J7 (1850).

In 1840, the American Anti-Slavery Society split apart over the issue of politics. Should abolitionists participate in the political system at all? Or should they continue to pursue “moral suasion”? The new American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society advocated political action, and the abolitionist Liberty Party organized to carry that plan into action. Leaders in Montgomery County, including Elijah M.K. Glen and Ellis Clizbe, supported the new Liberty Party. In the fall of 1840, Glen ran on the “Freeman’s Ticket” for Senator of New York, while Ellis Clizbee ran for Congress.²³

Sources are slim for the progress of abolitionism in Montgomery County in the early 1840s, but by 1845 the *Albany Patriot* was reporting extensively on this area. E.M.K. Glen lectured widely in Montgomery and Fulton counties, including Johnstown, Gloversville, Kingsboro, Pleasant Valley, Lassellsville, Oppenheim, St. Johnsville, and Ames. In May, another lecturer (perhaps William Chaplin, editor of the *Albany Patriot*) toured the whole northern Catskill region on behalf of the Liberty Party, speaking at Ames on May 13, 1845. Ellis Clizbe publicized a meeting of the Montgomery and Fulton Counties Anti-Slavery Society at Fonda’s Bush on the Fourth of July to promote the Liberty Party. Secretary E. Marsh (perhaps Edmund Marsh, from Amsterdam) reported that the convention unanimously agreed, “the Liberty Party is based upon those great principles which recognize and define the inalienable rights of man,” and that it is “as lasting as the conflict between freedom and oppression.” After the election, Abraham (or Absalom) Mereness exulted that “in 1840 there were but 2 Liberty votes given in this town. This fall there were 35 given in the Ames district and 10 in the two other districts.”²⁴

In January 1846, abolitionists held a mass meeting in the Town of Winfield, Herkimer County. It included many from Montgomery County as well, including Ellis Clizbe, who was elected chair. Gerrit Smith gave one of his “most splendid efforts,” and local luminaries Beriah Green, J.C. Jackson, and Dr. Wesley Bailey also spoke. In March, they held another large meeting in Fonda’s Bush and Pleasant Valley, in which Ellis Clizbe, H.E. Smith, and others took a part. Scattered issues of later newspapers suggest that abolitionist lectures and meetings continued through the decade. In 1848, for example, E.D. Hudson traveled through the area with someone (unnamed) who had escaped from slavery, speaking Fort Plain and west.²⁵

In 1846, the New York State Constitutional Convention failed to approve equal suffrage for African Americans. Instead, they kept a \$250 property qualification for African Americans. To ensure widespread voting, Gerrit Smith, wealthy philanthropist from Peterboro, New York, gave away tracts of land (most of them in the central Adirondacks) to African Americans in every county in New York State. In Montgomery County, thirty-four African American men received land, including Philip Phillips, John Cromwell, and George Gilbert in Canajoharie; Richard Parker, Henry Woodbeck, and Thomas Woodbeck, in the Town of Amsterdam; and Thomas Adams in Root.²⁶

In 1849, John S. Jacobs, son of noted freedom seeker Harriet Jacobs (who later wrote *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*), traveled through the Mohawk Valley, giving antislavery lectures. On September 6, 1849, he wrote from Fonda, New York, to abolitionist and Underground Railroad supporter Zenas Brockett, who lived in the Town of Manheim in Herkimer County. He described his experience as an African American at a hotel (so far unidentified) in Fort Plain:

²³ *Friend of Man*, September 2, 1840.

²⁴ *Albany Patriot*, January 29, 1845; May 7, 1845; June 25, 1845; Abm. J. Mereness, December 18, 1845, published in the *Albany Patriot*, December 24, 1845.

²⁵ *Albany Patriot*, February 4, 1846; April 8, 1846; *North Star*, February 25, 1848.

²⁶ Gerrit Smith, “Account of my distribution of land among colored men,” August 1, 1846, Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

Friend Zenas:

I promised to give you a sketch of my tour. my first stop was at Fort Plain. I could get no place to speak in there. The Minister of the Presbyterian Church said that he had put his foot upon all such subjects—here I stoped at a rum Hotel. when the bell rang for breakfast I went in with the rest of the boarders. at dinner I done the same but the boarders rose from the table and left the room. I told them that if I was the cause of their leaving, they could return. by this time a female rum seller, the Land Lord's wife I suppose, came in the bar room and with a look full of meaning she asked me if I eat with white folkes. I told her I did. Well said she we are not Abolitionist here. I said mam that has nothing to do with the case in hand. I am a boarder, was not that bell for them to go in to their dinner; yes said the Landlord but you should have known your place. I told him that the table was my place at dinner. but your place as a colored man is to wait until the other boarders are don. Sir I will not conform to the acts of colored. nor white men. unless they are just and equal but I will drop this story. . . . I am to lecture here [Fonda] to night in the Methodist church and tomorrow night at Ames. ²⁷

Abolitionists also used the First of August to celebrate “the release of 800,000 men and women from abject bondage” by the British in the West Indies. In Johnstown in 1845, they met in “a most beautiful grove” to hear speeches and share “an abundant and neat pic-nic,” prepared by “the good and true-hearted women.” Few people came from Johnstown itself, noted the reporter, “since Johnstown is one of the numerous castles of the demagogues—political and ecclesiastical—a set of men as deaf to the cries of suffering and outraged human nature, as they are blind to the beauties and excellence of freedom, and indifferent to the honor of God and the prosperity of their country.”²⁸

Montgomery County abolitionists also debated the role of religion in sustaining slavery. By the 1830s, a few churches began to debate abolitionism, with key members coming out in support of abolishing slavery. Both the First and Second Presbyterian Churches in the Town of Amsterdam (one in Hagaman and one in Amsterdam Village) lost abolitionist members who disagreed with the national assembly's position on admitting slave owners to membership. In 1843, the First Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam (Hagaman and Manny's Corners) passed an antislavery resolution. In 1846, Universalists in Montgomery County took an overtly abolitionist stance at their national convention, when J.D. Hicks from St. Johnsville and Nelson Snell of Minden signed a resolution protesting slavery. ²⁹ In Ford's Bush, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, led by abolitionist pastors J.D. Lawyer and Nicholas Van Alstine, created a new abolitionist Lutheran Synod, called the Franckean Synod. (See discussions of First and Second Presbyterian Churches, Amsterdam, and Ford's Bush Evangelical Lutheran Church for details.)

On December 10-11, 1845, Christian abolitionists from different Protestant denominations held a regional Christian Anti-Slavery Convention in the hamlet of Ames, Town of Canajoharie. James and Abraham [Absalom?] Mereness from Ames signed the call, as did J.D. Lawyer from Ford's Bush, who chaired the meeting. Resolved, they voted, “That as the system of slavery has been justly denominated “the sum of all villainies,” we cannot join in Christian fellowship with slaveholders, or those who sanction their practices, without being participators in their guilt.” Rev N. Van Alstine (most likely Nicholas Van Alstine from Fordsbush) served on the business committee, as did Dr. J. Mereness. The convention called a second meeting at Amsterdam, January 14-15, 1846. ³⁰

²⁷ Jean Fagan Yellin, ed., *Harriet Jacobs family Papers* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 167-69, published in the *Little Falls Evening Times*, May 29, 1953. There was no Presbyterian Church in Fort Plain.

²⁸ *Albany Patriot*, July 30, 1845; August 6, 1845.

²⁹ *Liberator*, April 24, 1846.

³⁰ *Albany Patriot*, December 24, 1845; December 31, 1845.

CHRISTIAN ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION.

A Christian Anti-Slavery Convention will be held at the village of *Ames*, Montgomery county, on Wednesday and Thursday, the 10th and 11th days of December next, commencing at 10 o'clock, A. M., of the first mentioned day.

The object of this Convention is to discuss the subject of the duties and relations of the Ministry and Churches of this country in regard to the sin of slavery, slaveholding, and the *fellowship* of those who are in any way connected with the abominable system.

The Ministers and members of the Christian churches of all denominations residing in Otsego, Herkimer, Schoharie, Fulton and Montgomery counties, are particularly invited to attend and participate in the deliberations.

Oct. 16, 1845.

S. OTTMAN,	HIRAM HUTCHINS,
J. D. LAWYER,	JAMES MERENESS,
JOHN RUNYON,	J. S. LUDINGTON,
J. R. STARK,	ABM. L. MERENESS,
J. S. ROBINSON,	BERIAH GREEN,
GEO. F. POST,	ISAAC S. FORD.

Albany Patriot, November 26, 1845.

When the Civil War began in 1861, large numbers of local men, both African Americans and European Americans, volunteered to fight. Among them were Bromley Hoke and his cousin Theodore Miller, both from Canajoharie, who joined the famous Massachusetts 54th Regiment (focus of the movie *Glory*) in April 1863. John H. Dennis volunteered from Amsterdam. Thirteen African Americans signed up from Fort Plain, including Bromley Hoke's cousin Joshua Hoke, as well as Charles Irving Lansing, William, Lansing, and Levi Lansing, three sons of Thomas Lansing and Harriet House Lansing, along with their cousin Charles Wilson. Levi died of consumption, and his body lies buried in Millikens Bend, Louisiana. (List from Minden.) Jeremiah Nutt, born either in Virginia or South Carolina, also joined the army. His gravestone notes that he was a member of the 20th U.S. Infantry Colored Troops. After the Civil War, however, he joined the Grand Army of the Republic unit of the 115th New York Regiment, which mustered in a Fonda under Col. Simeon Sammons. Nutt moved to Montgomery County after the Civil War, where he raised his family and worked for many years. Bruce Anderson, African American, won the Congressional Medal of Honor for his work at Fort Fisher, North Carolina. Anderson is buried in Greenhill Cemetery in Amsterdam.³¹

³¹ Military and Naval Records, Town of Minden, Montgomery County, New York, 1861-65, Montgomery County Department of History and Archives; Kelly Farquhar, "African American Life: The Montgomery County Experience."



Jeremiah Nutt
Photo of GAR unit in Fonda.
Courtesy of Montgomery County Department of History and Archives



Jeremiah Nutt's grave in Evergreen Cemetery, Fonda
Photo by Ryan Weitz



Veterans of the 115th New York State Regiment, including two African Americans. Jeremiah Nutt stands in rear, left of center; Elisha Bovier stands in rear, right of center.
Courtesy Montgomery County Department of History and Archives

After the war, several African American veterans joined local Grand Army of the Republic posts, including Elisha Bovier and John H. Dennis in Amsterdam and Walter C. Denning in Canajoharie.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

People escaped from slavery in Montgomery County from the time that slavery existed there. As Wanda Burch, Site Manager and Johnson Hall, has documented, Sir William Johnson owned many people in slavery in the mid-eighteenth century, and several of them ran away. Thomas James is another example, running away in 1821.

By the late 1820s, and especially after 1830, an organized system of helping people escape from slavery began to emerge. In New York State, one of its main routes ran directly west from Albany, first on roads and the Erie Canal and then on the railroad. By 1853, the New York Central Railroad had consolidated seven shorter lines to make a direct track from Albany to the Suspension Bridge at Niagara Falls. Supporters of the Underground Railroad in Albany most likely sent many people west on this railroad, going through Montgomery County but not stopping in it.

Some people, however, took different routes. A few went from Albany west to Amsterdam, where Chandler Bartlett (a local shoemaker) or another Underground Railroad worker might have met them at the station and took them to the home of Ellis and Ruth Clizbe in Rock City. From there, they might be passed north to Fonda's Bush and from there to Canada. From the Clizbe homestead, reported a writer, people were often sent by rail directly to Canada. One young woman, "nearly white, crossed the suspension bridge at Niagara one train ahead of her owner, who followed, swearing vengeance upon all who had aided her." Others might have stayed with the Clizbe family for several days before going west on the hillside road to "Fonda's Bush" and then "by regular stations across the country into Canada." Another writer noted fugitives were often sent from

Albany to the home or shoe store of Chandler Bartlett in the village of Amsterdam. Bartlett sent them to Clizbe, who in turn forwarded them to Mrs Brockway (later of Cleveland, Ohio), who sent them from her home to Canada. So active were Amsterdam abolitionists in the Underground Railroad that one traveler identified it as “an abolition hole.”³²

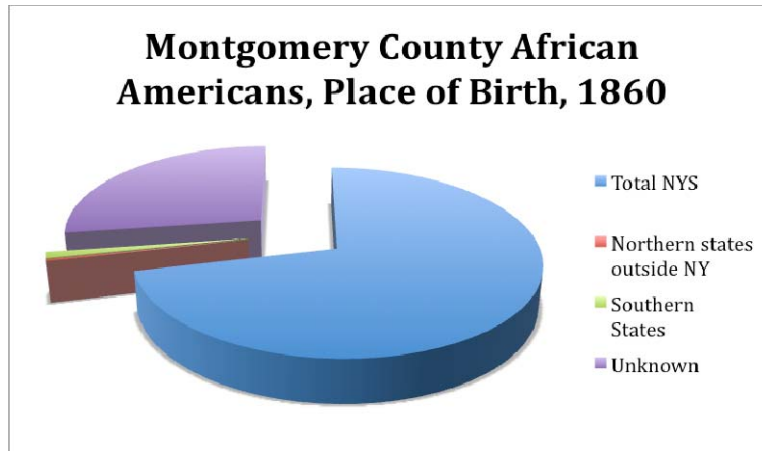
Still another route seems to have come from Sharon Springs in Schoharie County and then west through the southern hills of Montgomery County to Ames, in the Town of Canajoharie. In 1937, Elizabeth Jones McFee suggested that her father sent people to Dr. James Mereness in Ames. We have not yet found contemporary records to substantiate this, but we do know that Ames was a hotbed of abolitionist sentiment and that James and Abraham Mereness were consistently active in organizing abolitionist meetings. We do not know where people went from Ames, but it is possible that they traveled north to find help from the organized African American community in Canajoharie. They may also have continued west through Frey’s Bush and Ford’s Bush, which were pockets of abolitionist sympathies.

Overwhelming, African Americans who lived in Montgomery County in the nineteenth century had been born in slavery (or descended from enslaved people) and remained to live in freedom. Very few people who may have escaped from southern slavery, as measured by birthplaces in southern states, stayed in Montgomery County. Of the 406 African Americans recorded in the census for 1850, for example, only five listed their birthplaces in a southern state, all from Maryland (three members of the Herod family in Amsterdam and two barbers—William Medley in Canajoharie and Denzell Gibson in Mohawk). Three hundred and sixty-six (90.1 percent of the total) listed their birthplaces as New York State. The rest had been born in free states outside New York (eleven) or did not list a birthplace (twenty-four).

In 1855, only three people out of the 419 African Americans in Montgomery County listed their birthplaces as a southern state. Jane Walker, born in Tennessee, lived in Rock City in the Town of Amsterdam, right next to Ellis and Ruth Clizbe, who kept a major Underground Railroad station. Susan Allen, born in New Orleans, was listed as a servant in Amsterdam. And Anamariah Bovier, wife of barber Elisha Bovier, living in Glen, listed her birthplace as Delaware (which may have been the county in New York State rather than the state). Three hundred and fifteen African Americans were born in Montgomery County, and another 72 listed birthplaces as New York State outside Montgomery County. Thirteen had been born elsewhere in the free states, and eight were foreign-born or unknown or did not list any birthplace.

By 1860, the census listed 365 African Americans living in Montgomery County. Two hundred sixty-three (72.1 percent) of them had been born in New York State. (Only 43 were listed as born in Montgomery County. This is most likely due to the census taker, who did not distinguish between born inside and outside of Montgomery County.) One was born in a free state outside New York, but only four were born in a southern state (all in Maryland, two members of the Herod family, including a woman aged 22 and a girl aged 2; James Madison, aged 44, and two-year-old Sarah C. Young). All lived in the Town of Amsterdam and all except Madison most likely lived in Rock City, near the Clizbe family. A total of 97 (26.6 percent) people listed no birthplace. Perhaps the census taker simply neglected to record this information. Perhaps it was a deliberate attempt on the part of either individual residents or the census taker himself to obscure places of origin for people who had escaped from slavery.

³² E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900; “From My Note Book—No. 23, Amsterdam and the Abolition of Slavery,” *The Democrat*, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson.



By 1865, at the end of the Civil War, ten (three percent) of the 331 African Americans living in Montgomery County listed their birthplaces as a southern state (three from Virginia, two from South Carolina, one from North Carolina, and four—all in the Town of Amsterdam—simply listed as “South”), and two listed Canada.

In 1870, ten of 322 African Americans in Montgomery County listed their birthplaces as a southern state. In 1875, a similar figure was six out of 325. In 1880, it was eight out of 245.

These census figures may not be at all accurate. Census takers may have omitted many African Americans, either by mistake or deliberately (perhaps to protect people who were escaping from slavery). They may also have recorded birthplaces inaccurately, for the same reasons. These are, however, the only accounting that exists.

Census records, combined with anecdotal evidence suggest that African American communities in Montgomery County were dominated by people born locally, either in slavery or descended from enslaved people. Most of them probably had roots in this county for generations, reaching into the eighteenth century and even earlier. While hundreds—and most likely thousands—of people fled from slavery through Montgomery County (either on the turnpike, canal, or railroad), few stayed to live and work. The most important Underground Railroad area in the county correlated with the earliest and one of the most active abolitionist areas, the hamlets of Hagaman and Rock City in the Town of Amsterdam.

The chronological boundaries of this study ranged from 1820-1880. But the story overlaps at both the beginning and end of this period. Further work would be fruitful in several areas. The period between the Revolution and the end of slavery in 1827 remains a period of flux between slavery and freedom. There are more ephemeral records, including lists of baptisms, weddings, and burials; lists of the births and sales of enslaved people; and census records that give clues about both free people of color and enslavers that would help tell us more about slavery and freedom in this period. In mid-century, canal villages such as Canajoharie and Fort Plain became major centers of African American life. While the outlines of this story have been well documented here, more information based on church records and further research in property records would be useful. Certainly, further research in Rock City property records and maps might identify standing homes used by African Americans, as well as the site of Ellis and Ruth Clizbe’s pre-Civil War farmhouse (which later burned). At the end of the nineteenth century, large numbers of African Americans had moved to industrial villages. Learning more about their work in factories, especially in Amsterdam and St. Johnsville, might be possible, if account books and employment records surface.

The lives of African Americans and European Americans in this county have been intertwined for centuries, an essential part of creating the farms and factories that brought prosperity

to generations of people. In effect, the story of African Americans in Montgomery County turns into the story of Montgomery County itself. This study has built upon the good research of many people, and we anticipate that it will lead to much more interest and work, in terms of research, public awareness, and preservation of historic buildings.

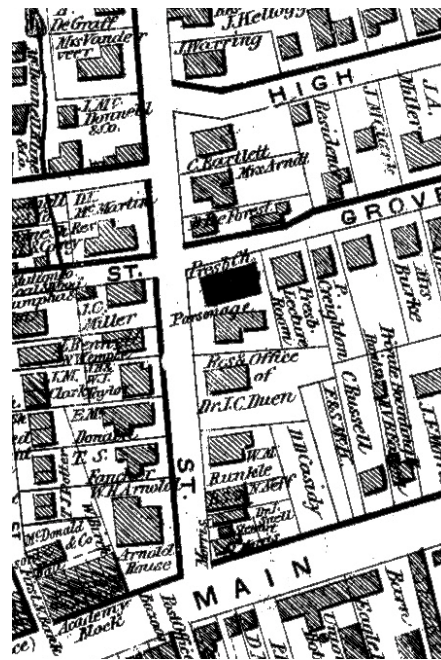
Site Descriptions

Amsterdam

- 1. Chandler Bartlett**
- 2. Ellis and Ruth Clizbe**
- 3. First Presbyterian Church**
- 4. Green Hill Cemetery**
- 5. Lyceum Hall**
- 6. Second Presbyterian Church**

Site of Chandler Bartlett's Shoe Store
163 Main Street
Amsterdam

Significance: Chandler Bartlett was one of a well-known group of abolitionists in the Town of Amsterdam who worked on the Underground Railroad and helped make the town and village known as an “abolition hole.”



Amsterdam, 1868

Description: Bartlett's shoe store was located at 163 Main Street, and he was one of the best known merchants in the city. His house stood one block north of the Presbyterian Church, on the northeast corner of Church and High Streets, now the site of the Sanford Apartments. ¹

Discussion: In 1820, Chandler Bartlett began his boot and shoe store in Amsterdam, and in 1822, he moved to his store at 163 Main Street, where he remained in business at least as late as 1878. Bartlett was one of the core group of abolitionists associated with the Second Presbyterian Church and the Amsterdam debating society. He was also a key part of the Underground Railroad. One observer remembered that fugitives were often sent from Albany to the home or shoe store of Chandler Bartlett in the village of Amsterdam. Bartlett sent them to Clizbe, who in turn forwarded them to Mrs Brockway (later of Cleveland, Ohio), who sent them from her home to Canada. ²

When Bartlett's daughter Fanny died in 1935, her own obituary emphasized the abolitionist and Underground Railroad work of her father. He was “an enthusiastic Abolitionist and greatly interested in the underground railway for escaping slaves at the time of the Civil War,” it read, “and took an active part in helping at least one slave who reached Amsterdam on his flight to the North.”³

¹ *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, April 20, 1937.

² *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties* (New York: J.W. Beers, 1878), 92; “From My Note Book—No. 23, Amsterdam and the Abolition of Slavery,” *The Democrat*, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson.

³ *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, April 15, 1935, fultonhistory.com.

One of the clerk's in Bartlett's shoe store was Elijah Glen, most likely the E.M.K. Glen who became a dedicated antislavery lecturer in the 1840s.⁴

Bartlett was also a key member of the Amsterdam lyceum. Miranda Marsh Hughes, who regularly attended these debates, remembered that the leaders of this society were "Dominie Goodale, Chandler Bartlett and John Hanson," who "did more than any others to prolong the existence of that useful society of free thinkers and free talkers." "While Domine Goodale, with his tenacity of creed and convictions (he never would give up) and unswerving purpose, did more than any other individual to arouse enthusiasm and stimulate real genuine controversy, Chandler Bartlett and John Hanson served as moderators and peacemakers when any, in their ardor, became too excited to observe courtesy and propriety. They would calm the troubled seas, as if with a magic wand."⁵

After Bartlett's death in 1884, W. Loring Clark of Boston painted Bartlett's portrait and displayed it in downtown Amsterdam. A newspaper reporter commented: "The same old familiar face; the same honest eyes, the same old kind expression looks at the passers-by from Becker's picture window on Market street. Who in Amsterdam does not remember Chandler Bartlett?"

Stephen Sanford purchased the Bartlett home at the corner of Church and High streets, tore it down, and built a new apartment building, which still stood in 2011.⁶

⁴ *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, May 5, 1945.

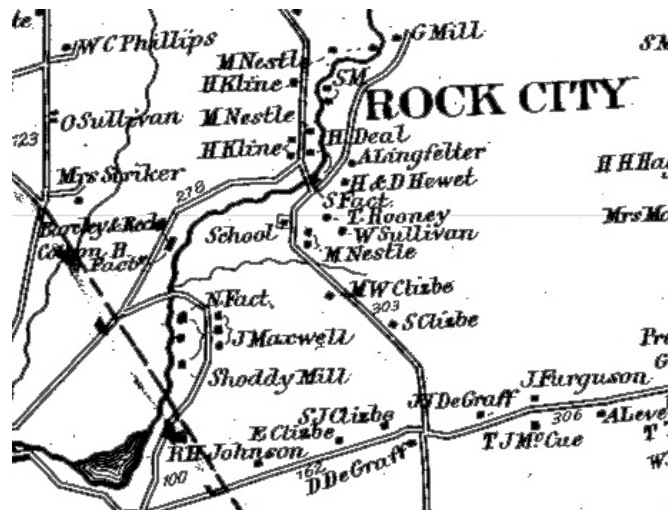
⁵ "Old Time Debaters," From Mrs. Miranda Marsh Hughes, Verona, Ill., May 30, 1896. Newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson.

⁶ *Amsterdam Daily Democrat*, April 14, 1886.

Amsterdam

Ellis and Ruth/Eliza Clizbe

Significance: Ellis Clizbe was an active abolitionist lecturer, author, and organizer, member of the Presbyterian Church, and founding member of the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society. Basing his opposition to slavery on Christian principles, he lived among a small group of African Americans (including the Dennis and Parker families) and worked tirelessly against slavery through writing, lecturing, and organizing. The Clizbes also kept the best-documented Underground Railroad station in Montgomery County.



1868 Map of Montgomery County, Town of Amsterdam
After the Civil War, the Clizbes most likely lived in the house marked "E. Clizbe," north of road that angles east out of Amsterdam Village, bottom of map

Description: Ellis Clizbe (April 2, 1797-December 13, 1878), the youngest of seven children, arrived in the Town of Amsterdam from Newark, New Jersey, in 1799, with his parents Joseph and Hannah Roberts Clizbe. The family settled on the banks of the Chuctanunda Creek in what became known as the hamlet of Rock City (later Rockton), or simply as "up to Ellis Clizbe's." Ellis Clizbe's father

Joseph purchased his original farm (known as the “Kennedy farm”) in 1807, when it was a major nursery, with many varieties of fruit. Ellis Clizbe took over his parents’ homestead, which included most of the hamlet of Rockton, which later became the Eighth Ward of the City of Amsterdam. He and Ruth Gillette Clizbe raised their five children there. In 1850, he owned a farm of 200 acres (150 of them improved) worth \$6000.⁷

That early house burned at some point, but we have a few clues about it from Miranda Marsh Hughes, who grew up in Rock City and later moved to Verona, Illinois. She published a poem about this homestead, most likely in the *Amsterdam Democrat* in the 1890s, in which she described the outside with a lawn, garden walls, trees, walk, spring, woodshed, mill, “a boat upon the pond,” “the schoolhouse near,” a running stream, and “old Rove” the dog. Inside, she recalled a porch, hall, stair kitchen, parlor, east room, fireplace and hearth.⁸

In 1900, a writer to the Springfield (Massachusetts) *Republican* described the estate in detail, likening it to “a southern plantation”:

Mr. Clizbe's home was at Amsterdam, N.Y., where he still retained a large farm, a part of the original tract of a mile square settled by his ancestors. Through this farm ran a brook or creek, as it was called, on one side of which were the farm house and farm buildings, a sawmill, a grist-mill, and the houses for the workmen, or “neighbors,” as they were always called; and on the other side was the residence of the family, always spoken of as “the house”—the whole making a settlement somewhat resembling in some ways a southern plantation.⁹

Another author, name unknown, described the Clizbe homestead in 1909 as “large white farm house, shaded with great oak, maple and willow trees,” standing “at the top of the sloping bank of a picturesque pond.”¹⁰

A 1902 article in the *Amsterdam Evening Recorder* described the property as the home of “one of the oldest and most respected families in the Valley, the Clizbe’s—Ellis Clizbe,” standing “on the right bank of the creek, above the bridge, where the stream bends sharply to the east.”¹¹

After his first wife Ruth died in the 1850s, Ellis Clizbe moved briefly to Springfield, Massachusetts. In the 1860s, he most likely moved his family, including his new wife Eunice, to the house pictured here. It is a classic gable-and-wing Greek Revival farmhouse reflecting Clizbe’s prosperity as a farmer and mill owner. Although it has been remodeled with new windows and porch on its wing, it retains Greek Revival features (including recessed doorway and returns on the gable) on its main block, as well as its original location, basic design, setting, and feeling.¹²

⁷ Special thanks to Alessa Wylie for finding so much of this material on Ellis Clizbe. “Reminiscences of Famous Debaters in Amsterdam,” newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson; U.S. Agricultural Census, 1850, Ancestry.com; *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties, New York*. F.W. Beers, 1878.

⁸ “Home and Homestead, A Few Thoughts on the Subject, With a Poetical Reference to the Clizbe Homestead.” Miranda Marsh Hughes, n.p., n.d., Files of Johnson Hall.

⁹ E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900. Thanks to Don Papson for sharing this research.

¹⁰ “A Retrospective Glance, Memories Revived by Death of Mrs. Ellis Clizbe.” N.p., n.d., Johnson Hall. [Mrs. Clizbe died 1908] Written January 13, 1909.

¹¹ “Hollander Letter,” *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, Sept. 12, 1902.

¹² “A Retrospective Glance, Memories Revived by Death of Mrs. Ellis Clizbe.” N.p., n.d., Johnson Hall. [Mrs. Clizbe died 1908] Written January 13, 1909.

Discussion: Ellis Clizbe was born in New Jersey (c. 1797-1877). He came to Rock City, Amsterdam, when he was two years old and remained in the area, with the exception of a year or two, for the rest of his life.

In 1850, he lived on his parents' homestead with his wife Ruth Gillette Clizbe, 52 years old and also born in New Jersey. A friend remembered Ruth Clizbe as "a tall, stately woman, filling her responsibilities as wife and mother . . . with gentle dignity and power." The Clizbes had five children, all born in New York State. In 1850, they were Cecilia, 24; Ellen, 22; Robert, 17; Jay, 14; and Eliza, 14. The last two were twins. An Irish servant, Honora Sullivan, age 23, also lived with them. Ellis was listed as a farmer with property worth \$6000.

Sometime in the late 1850s, Ruth Clizbe died. This coincided with one of Clizbe's attacks on the Presbyterian Church for its stance on slavery. Although he advised people to join Congregational churches or to form their own Independent Presbyterian Church, one commentator noted that he briefly joined the Episcopal Church. Another suggested that he went to a Presbyterian Church in Albany. It may also be the time that he rented his farm and left Amsterdam for Springfield, Massachusetts, in part to promote his children's education.¹³

Most likely while in Springfield, he met a young schoolteacher named Eunice Hayward. In 1860, he married her. Although she was barely older than Ellis's two youngest children, she proved a loving companion. She bore him at least three more children, Charles Sumner, Ellis Hayward, and Avery K. (and perhaps also Tunis, two months old in 1870).

By 1870, the Clizbes had most likely moved to the house pictured above, since the 1868 map located E. Clizbe there. In 1870, the census listed Ellis Clizbe as age 73, a farmer, living with 37-year-old Eunice, who was keeping house; Eliza M., 34 (his youngest daughter from his first wife); and Charles G., 7; Ellis H., 2; and Tunis (?), two months old, his three children with Eunice. Ellis Clizbe had real property worth \$3000 and personal property worth \$13,000.¹⁴

Many sources note Ellis Clizbe's work on the Underground Railroad. One author who as a teenager had known Clizbe well, noted, "'Ellis Clizbe was an abolitionist when that meant loss of all possible chance for promotion in church and state, and often personal abuse and even mob violence. I am glad to say that Amsterdam was never disgraced in the latter way. But social and church ostracism was felt. Mr. Clizbe gave time and money to help many a fugitive to Canada.'" Another recalled, "His home in Rock City (now Rockton) was one of the important stations for the underground railroading of slaves on through to Canada." In 1909, yet another remembered, "In his earlier vigorous manhood he took a solid stand against slavery and fought the system without fear, publicly and privately. . . . Never did he fail to most earnestly at the Thursday evening prayer meetings which I often attended as a young girl, that God would break the shackles of the slave and make a free man of him."¹⁵

As Tom Calaraco and Don Papson documented, Ellis Clizbe's involvement in the Underground Railroad was part of the network of the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society, of which Clizbe was a founder and vice-president. Founded in Albany on April 26, 1842, the Eastern New York Anti-slavery Society included abolitionists from twelve counties in central and eastern

¹³ "From My Note Book—No. 23, Amsterdam and the Abolition of Slavery," *The Democrat*, n.p., n.d. Files of Fort Johnson.

¹⁴ 1850 and 1870 U.S. census records; family trees as noted in Ancestry.com.

¹⁵ "Reminiscences of Famous Debaters in Amsterdam in Years Agone," newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d.; "From My Note Book—No. 23, Amsterdam and the Abolition of Slavery," *The Democrat*, n.p., n.d. ; "A Retrospective Glance, Memories Revived by Death of Mrs. Ellis Clizbe." N.p., n.d., Written January 13, 1909. All from files at Fort Johnson.

New York. Under corresponding secretary Abel Brown, this group actively promoted Underground Railroad escapes from the upper South into New York State and Canada. People who escaped from slavery and came through New York City to Albany were sent either north along the Champlain Valley to Canada or west along the Mohawk Valley. If they took the latter route, they were likely to receive aid from Ellis Clizbe and his family.¹⁶

In its annual report for 1843, the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society mentioned Clizbe as an Underground Railroad agent. Three freedom seekers—John Spencer, his wife Jane, and his five-year-old son Charles—had escaped from slavery in Maryland. The Albany committee reported that “They [ran] away because they were going to sell them. Heard of the abolitionists, but did not know whether they were his friends or not. Johnston [William Johnston of the New York Vigilance Committee in New York City] gave him \$3, paid their passage – sent on the same day. Gave him \$2, and gave letter to Emp. Wright and Ellis Clizbe.”¹⁷

In 1900, E.B.M. (perhaps former neighbor Edmund Marsh), who apparently knew Clizbe well, remembered:

before the excitement over slavery had reached its climax in the Dred Scott decision, his house had been a shelter for the runaway slave, and early became a station on the Underground railroad. Those coming by this route came by boat to New York, where by signal from the boat to some one on the dock the runaways were safely landed and taken care of for the night, going the next day by boat to Albany, thence to Amsterdam, and then to the Clizbe homestead, a mile and a half from the village.”¹⁸

From the Clizbe homestead, reported this writer, people were often sent by rail directly to Canada. One young woman, “nearly white, crossed the suspension bridge at Niagara one train ahead of her owner, who followed, swearing vengeance upon all who had aided her.” Others might stay with the Clizbe family for several days before going west on the hillside road to “Fonda’s Bush” and then “by regular stations across the country into Canada.” Another writer noted fugitives were often sent from Albany to the home or shoe store of Chandler Bartlett in the village of Amsterdam. Bartlett sent them to Clizbe, who in turn forwarded them to Mrs Brockway (later of Cleveland, Ohio), who sent them from her home to Canada.¹⁹

Sometimes, slave catchers traced people to the Amsterdam area. “Twice,” reported an observer, “the neighbors’ were armed, and watched all night for an attack, which did not come.” Another author corroborated this. “With his young wife and her infant son safely secure in the house, he [Clizbe] prepared for the battle, assisted by other zealous anti-slavery men, such as James Griswold, his neighbor, and armed themselves for the defense of the house, his family, and his secreted slaves. But after a watchful, anxious night to them all, the morning dawned upon a peaceful

¹⁶ “Anti-slavery Society of Eastern New York,” republished from the *Tocsin of Liberty* in the *Emancipator*, April 12, 1842. Thanks to Don Papson for this research.

¹⁷ Tom Calaraco, *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), footnote 71 and page 92; *Annual Report of the Committee*. Albany: Eastern NY A.S. Society & Fugitive Slaves, 1843; Don Papson, “Abel Brown,” northcountryundergroundrailroad.com/lake-champlain.php?page=5. Thanks to Don Papson for a copy of this annual report.

¹⁸ E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900. Thanks to Don Papson for sharing this research.

¹⁹ E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900; “From My Note Book—No. 23, Amsterdam and the Abolition of Slavery,” *The Democrat*, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson.

scene instead of riot and bloodshed, as was feared, and the blacks were gotten away in safety to their freedom in Canada.”²⁰

Clizbe (and many of his neighbors, some of whom were African Americans themselves) were so successful at aiding people escaping from slavery that Amsterdam gained a widespread reputation for its abolitionist sentiments. “After the war was over,” noted E.B.M., “as the train stopped at the Amsterdam station one day, and the name of the place was called, a man said to his seat-mate: ‘What place is this?’ ‘Amsterdam, N.Y.’ was the reply. ‘Oh, yes,” said the man, ‘I’ve heard of it down South,’ adding, with an oath, ‘It’s an abolition hole.’”²¹

E.B.M.’s recollections also gave a rare glimpse into the lives of people who stayed at the Clizbe home. “As the war drew near,” he remembered, “these runaways grew more confident, and a few remained permanently. It was very interesting to watch them. They were perfectly happy in being free, and utterly without anxiety or responsibility for themselves, although the family were quite often anxious for their safety.” One man and woman, in particular, stayed with the Clizbe’s at “the house.” E.B.M. related two stories about them, to show their sense of safety and comfort in the Clizbe home. The first suggests the man’s transition from flight to freedom:

Hearing a particularly merry time in the kitchen one evening, it was found that the man, who had been away the night before, was narrating his experience in eating with the white folks, telling how frightened he was at first, but soon got over it and “tipped back his chair and laughed as the rest did.”

The second emphasizes that habits useful under slavery challenged ideas of gender roles in this small northern hamlet:

Finding one morning that an old ulcer on the man’s heel was troubling him, Mrs. Clizbe prepared wormwood and vinegar, the old remedy for it, and was somewhat startled when the man put his foot into her lap to be treated, as he had been accustomed to do with his mistress. It did not occur to the man, or to his wife, who stood by, that the wife had the least-responsibility for her husband; they had lived on separate plantations, and only seen each other occasionally. Mrs. Clizbe saw at once that any evidence of surprise on her part would mean loss of confidence in her. She carefully bound up the foot, and waited for other opportunities of teaching them to care for each other.²²

Several African American families lived near Clizbe. In 1855, the census taker listed Charlotte Dennis on one side of the Clizbe family. Charlotte Dennis was a thirty-year-old widow, born in Columbia County, with property worth \$200 and four children, ages three to eleven—James (11), Benjamin (9), Alonzo J. (6), and Sarah (3). With them lived twenty-year-old Jane Walker, born in Tennessee, who had lived in Amsterdam for two years. This Dennis family intermarried with the Woodbeck and James families and remained in Amsterdam for many years.

Listed on the other side of the Clizbe family in 1855 were Richard and Wealthy Parker, who lived in this area at least through 1880. Richard was consistently listed in the census as a broom maker, brush maker, or laborer, while Wealthy was a housekeeper or laundress.

²⁰ E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900; “From My Note Book—No. 23, Amsterdam and the Abolition of Slavery,” *The Democrat*, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson.

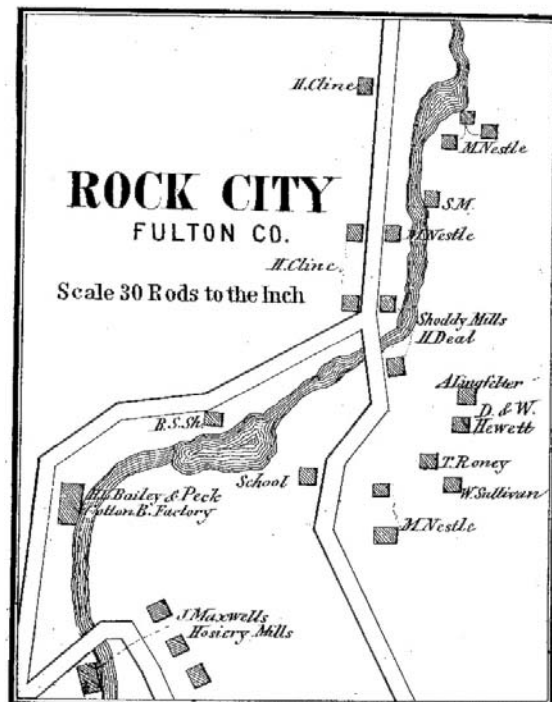
²¹ E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900. Courtesy of Don Papson.

²² E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900. Courtesy of Don Papson.

Alida (also called Lida or Leyda) Dennis appeared in Amsterdam in 1865, living with Mary C. Dennis and an eight-year-old boy, John. By 1870, Alida and John were living with Benjamin (age 24, with \$1500 worth of property), James (age 25 worth of \$400 property), and Sarah Dennis. Alida was listed as fifty years old, working in cotton mill. So was their boarder, Carrie Jacobs, age 28. By 1880, Leyda, listed as age 43, still worked in the cotton mill. She was living as an aunt with John C., age 23, who worked in the shoddy mill (in which cloth was recycled); his wife Mary E., age 22, and the one-year-old son, John C. The 1868 Montgomery County map shows both a shoddy mill and a cotton mill in Rock City.



The stone building on the right may be the southernmost of the “Shoddy Mills, H. Deal” listed on the 1868 Montgomery County map (below), perhaps where John C. Dennis worked in 1870.



Shoddy Mills, H. Deal, and Bailey & Peck Cotton B. Factory (perhaps cotton batting) are noted on the 1868 Montgomery County map.

John H. Dennis, perhaps a relative of Charlotte and Alida's families, served in the Civil War in a private in Company J, 131st Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry. After the war, he joined the Amsterdam Post No. 33 of the Grand Army of the Republic.



G.A.R. Records for John H. Dennis
Located in Montgomery County Department of History and Archives

Other African American families, including the Jacksons, Riggs, Morgans, Morrisons, Parkers, and Stanburghs (Steenburgs) also lived in the Rock City area, as noted in various census records.

Clizbe's abolitionism included regular organizing, writing, and lecturing over a period of many years. As one friend recalled, Clizbe "early espoused the anti-slavery cause, and in him it found no mean champion. With natural gifts of oratory, quick sympathy and ready wit, he lost no time in winning an audience; and after a day of active work would go to some hall or school-house in his own or a neighboring town, stirring the people to sympathy with the slave." The organizing convention of the Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society at the old county courthouse in Johnstown in July 1837. Clizbe presided over a meeting of the same group in the Presbyterian Church in Johnstown in March 1838, when a mob forced them to move to another church. Clizbe served as a director of the Montgomery and Fulton County Anti-Slavery Society when it met at Fonda's Bush in 1840, and he ran for Congress on the Freeman's Ticket in 1840. In 1846, he presided over a mass abolitionist meeting held in West Winfield, New York. Participants included Gerrit Smith, James C. Jackson, and local abolitionist editor O.A. Bowe. (For more on Clizbe's oratory and organizational role, see Amsterdam Lyceum and Ellis and Ruth Clizbe.)²³

Clizbe's opposition to slavery and his work for the rights of free people of color were firmly rooted in his Christian beliefs. In March 1849, Clizbe and five other men (Alexander Fulton, Enos French, Henry Neff, James Brown, and Nathaniel French), all members of the Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam Village, signed an "Action on Slavery," addressed to the Session of that church. In 1818, they noted, the Presbyterian Church had excluded from membership all those who voluntarily held others in slavery. In 1837, Presbyterians split into Old School and New School groups, partly over the issue of slavery. Old School Presbyterians in 1845 decided that slave-holding was "no bar to Christian Communion, as it is found in the Southern portion of our Country." Under this provision,

²³ *Friend of Man*, July 19, 1837; J.N.T.T. [ucker], "Scenes in Johnstown, A.D. 1838," *Friend of Man*, March 7, 1838; *Friend of Man*, February 5, 1840; July 29, 1840; *Friend of Man*, September 2, 1840; E.B.M., "Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York," *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900. Courtesy of Don Papson. *New York Daily Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1846.

they argued, someone from South Carolina could “claim a seat at our communion table, although he held at the same time our children in bondage, and the fruits of their unpaid labor filled his pockets or their blood stained his hands.” Having worked for three years to reverse this ruling, Clizbe and his fellow signers, “with grief of mind, and . . . without any bitterness or personal ill-will toward the Christians in this place,” felt compelled “to come out from among them and be separate, until they can find in their hearts to treat the sin of slavery as they would the sin of theft or duelling.” They retained all their rights as Presbyterians, they asserted, but they refused to acknowledge any ecclesiastical authority that allowed slave holders as members. To prove their point, as one friend remembered, Clizbe for many years attended a Congregational Church in Albany rather than their own Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam.²⁴

When the American Anti-Slavery Society split in 1840, Ellis Clizbe joined the political abolitionist wing. As a founding member of the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery, Clizbe endorsed Article 3 of its Constitution, asserting that “no member of this society shall vote for any candidate . . . who is reasonably suspected of being opposed to the immediate repeal of any law which sanctions slavery, or which, in any wise, stigmatizes the people of color.”²⁵

In 1852, he signed (with forty other abolitionist leaders from across the north and west) “An Address to the Anti-Slavery Christians of the United States” on behalf of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. It was published in the *National Era*, a national abolitionist newspaper in Washington, D.C. “Convinced that slavery is a sin,” they argued, “we not only have the right, but are bound by the obligations of Christianity, to oppose it.” Drawing on moral, political, and constitutional arguments against slavery, they addressed a wide range of issues (extension of slavery into the territories, the Fugitive Slave Act, opposition to sending freed people of color to Africa, and more). They went further, advocating the “abolition of CASTE as well as slavery.” “While protesting against the injustice and oppression practiced by our Southern brethren,” they reminded their readers, “let us not forget the deep guilt of our Northern community in their treatment of the free people of color.” They reserved his deepest scorn for the “atrociousness of the Fugitive Slave Act.” “Under no circumstances,” they argued, “can we aid in catching or securing fugitive slaves, whatever may be the penalties of our disobedience to a sinful act of Congress.”²⁶

To accomplish the most good, the Address urged its readers to join the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. “For the sake of the slave, for the prosperity of the country, for the good of the Church herself, we earnestly desire the union of all abolitionists, and their harmonious action in behalf of their colored brethren. We ask all who approve the opinions we have expressed, to give vitality and energy to those opinions, by aiding the A. and F.A.S. Society in disseminating and enforcing them.”

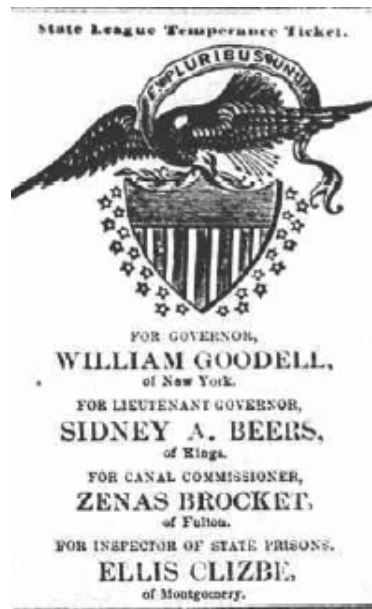
Clizbe’s reform work extended also to temperance. In 1854, he was a delegate from Montgomery County to the state temperance convention, along with abolitionists John Frey and Professor B.D. Ames. In 1860, Clizbe ran on the New York State Temperance League ticket for state prison inspector.²⁷

²⁴ “Action on Slavery,” reprinted from the *New York Evangelist* in *The North Star*, April 20, 1849; E.B.M., “Underground Railroad Again: Its Operations as Seen at Amsterdam, New York,” *Springfield Republican*, April 9, 1900. Thanks to Don Papson for sharing this research.

²⁵ “Anti-slavery Society of Eastern New York,” republished from the *Tocsin of Liberty* in the *Emancipator*, April 12, 1842. Thanks to Don Papson for this research.

²⁶ *National Era*, June 24, 1852.

²⁷ *New York Daily Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1854; *The State League* (Syracuse, New York), October 6, 1860.



The State League (Syracuse, NY), Oct. 6, 1860

In 1859, Clizbe left the Presbyterian Church for its policy of allowing slaveholders to be members. He published a lengthy statement of his reasons:

Now I have dissolved my connection with this body, but whether I have separated from the Presbyterian Church, or whether you, who maintain your connection with it, are the schismatics and apostates, let the public judge. . . . Let me say to you in kindness as well as faithfulness, that you are in fellowship with sin and the power that shakes its rod over you and holds you there, you dare not defy.

You are in Christian fellowship with the men that give their endorsement to the Fugitive Slave Law—the violation of the Missouri Compromise—the robberies in Kansas—the Dred Scott decision, and the murder of John Brown. Not one of the 70,000 slaveholding members of your Church has ever, so far as I know, raised his voice against any of these abominations. You belong to the same Church with them.

Clizbe explicitly attacked the minister of the local Second Presbyterian Church, Rev. Goodale. “I know that some of you, at least your Minister, professes to maintain his connection with your General Assembly, under protest. And that by protesting against the sin of the body, to which you belong, you escape personal responsibility. . . . Your pulpit is silent, and whatever you may do in secret, the great sin and curse of our country is wholly ignored in your *public ministrations*.”

Clizbe recommended joining either a Congregational Church or forming a separate Independent Presbyterian Church. He signed his name in capital letters and dated his letter December 20, 1859.

Although many of his fellow abolitionists left the church and in fact left Amsterdam, Clizbe was eventually reconciled with Rev. Goodale, and served faithfully as a teacher of its Sunday School for many years. One neighbor remembered, “He was a student of the Bible and a very active worker in the church of his adoption, the Second Presbyterian church, and all through Dr. Goodale’s pastorship was in close sympathy with him and his work.”

Another remembered , “He lived to see his prayers [for the abolition of slavery] answered, and as he lay in his coffin, his strong, rugged features were softened as if by the knowledge that he had ‘fought a good fight’ and had obtained his reward.”²⁸

²⁸ “A Retrospective Glance, Memories Revived by Death of Mrs. Ellis Clizbe.” N.p., n.d., Johnson Hall. Written January 13, 1909. From files of Fort Johnson.

**Town of Amsterdam
First Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam
Hagaman**

Significance: In 1836, Montgomery County's first antislavery society was organized in this church. Inspired by the antislavery energies of such people as Ellis Clizbe, Joseph Hagaman, and David Candee, this church passed an antislavery resolution in 1843.



Looking northwest, July 2011



Description: Built in 1835 by members of the First Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam, located about two miles south at Manny's Corners, this new church was a simple frame building with three bays across the front, six bays deep. A narrow broken pediment on the gable reflected a simple Federal building tradition. Gothic windows on the front of the building were most likely part of later remodeling, along with a bell tower. Details such as decorative strips of wood and steep arch over the doorway that suggest the bell tower was added in the 1870s.

Discussion: Organized in 1799, the Presbyterian Church at Manny's Corners was the First Presbyterian Church in [the Town of] Amsterdam. In 1803, it took over the building erected in 1800 at Manny's Corners by the Dutch Reformed congregation, which moved to Amsterdam Village.²⁹

By the 1830s, the congregation had grown so large that it split into three groups. On March 3, 1832, more than one hundred members of this church (including Ellis and Ruth Clizbe and Ellis's father Joseph Clizbe) were dismissed to form a second Presbyterian Church in the Village of Amsterdam. Three years later, on November 21, 1835, D.W. Candee, Levi Pawling, and John Allen reported to the Session that "a Church had been built in the North part of the Society," i.e. at Hagaman's Mills. They asked for help in dedicating the new building. They also suggested that services be alternated between the two churches. At their next meeting, on November 28, 1835, elders voted to ask the pastor to hold a dedication service for the new church "on or near the 1st day of January 1836." If those members living in the "North part of the Society" could raise enough subscriptions, i.e. money, they would recommend that Sabbath services be alternated between the two buildings. On January 18, 1836, "after some discussion it was unanimously resolved, that in accordance with the recommendation of Session the Services on the Sabbath shall be attended alternately in the Church at Manny's Corners & the Church at Hagamans Mills." The result of these splits was the establishment in Amsterdam village of the Second Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam. For fourteen years, the First Presbyterian Church remained intact as a corporate body, but it divided its Sunday meetings between the original building at Manny's Corners (the South church) and the new church at Hagaman's Mills (the North church). In 1855, this church became a Reformed Dutch Church, later known simply as the Reformed Church.³⁰

On November 9, 1836, this new church at Hagaman's Mills hosted the organizational meeting of the Amsterdam Anti-Slavery Society. Local people such as Joseph Hagaman, mill owner; Joseph Clizbe, farmer; and David W. Candee, storekeeper and postmaster, created the very first anti-slavery society in Montgomery County, an auxiliary to the American Anti-Slavery Society. On July 11, 1837, key members of the Amsterdam Anti-Slavery Society helped organize the first Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society. They met at the old Johnstown Courthouse. David Candee chaired the meeting, which elected Ellis Clizbe as president.³¹

On December 14, 1843, the First Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam met in the session room of the North Church. They took up unfinished business from the last meeting, resolutions on slavery. "After a full discussion," the following were unanimously approved as "the opinion of this Session." They suggested sensitivity to a broad spectrum of opinions, but they came down clearly for the abolition of slavery:

Whereas the discussion of the subject of American Slavery has given rise to a diversity of views & feelings; & whereas, the impression has gone abroad at the South that the Churches of the North are generally "Pro-slavery" & whereas we regard it as our solemn duty, as far as ourselves are concerned, to disabuse their minds on this subject, as well as to bear our decided testimony against what we are compelled to regard as a great moral evil,

²⁹ *History of Fulton and Montgomery Counties* (New York: J.W. Beers, 1878), 92.

³⁰ First Reformed [First Presbyterian] Church at Amsterdam, 1799-1828, Index to records in Montgomery County Department of History and Archives; First Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam, Session Minutes, typescript, Montgomery County Department of History and Archives; *History of Fulton and Montgomery Counties* (New York: J.W. Beers, 1878), 93.

³¹ Douglas J. Kaufman, "Montgomery County, New York's Abolitionist Movement" (2003) is an excellent curriculum unit developed around Montgomery County's early abolitionism; *Friend of Man*, July 19, 1837.

Therefore Resolved 1. That mutual forbearance among ourselves, & request for each others freedom of opinion on this delicate & deeply important subject is peculiarly encumbent [sic] upon us, & that without any concession of principle, we cordially unite in the expression of our views on the general subject.

Resolved 2. That slavery as it exists in this country is a moral, social & political evil; an evil that results in oppression, ignorance, licentiousness & heathenism & hence is the ruin of immortal souls & therefore ought to be abolished immediately.

Resolved 3. That in our opinion the time has come when every Christian Church should feel under solemn obligation earnestly to supplicate the Great Head of the Church for wisdom to discern & Grace to pursue that course in respect to this great & alarming evil that will result in the best good of our beloved Nation & especially of our American Zion.

By 1868, this church had become a Dutch Reformed Church.

**Green Hill Cemetery
Church St.
Amsterdam**

Significance: Burial place of many African Americans (including Bruce Anderson, winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, and John H. Dennis), Civil War soldiers, and European American abolitionists.



Clizbe Family Plot (taken by Alessa Wylie)



Bruce & Julia Anderson graves. From photo collection of Montgomery County Department of History & Archives



Grave of John H. Dennis. Photo taken by Alessa Wylie.



1868 Stranahan & Nichols Atlas map of Amsterdam

Description: Green Hill Cemetery sits atop a hill located near the center of and overlooking the City of Amsterdam. Consisting of approximately 41 acres, the cemetery is bounded on the north and west by Church Street, on the east by Cornell Street and on the south by the former Sanford estate. A stone and wrought iron gate adorns the original entrance to the cemetery on Church Street. Visitors currently access cemetery grounds through the entrance on Cornell Street.

Designer Burton A. Thomas utilized Amsterdam's natural topography by creating winding drives and footpaths over knolls and rolling hills. The native shade trees provide a picturesque and peaceful setting.

The west end of the cemetery consists of the original 15 acres purchased by the Green Hill Cemetery Association upon its organization in 1857. Twenty-six adjacent acres were purchased in 1865 and added to the cemetery grounds. Surveyor/engineer Burton A. Thomas designed the layout of the cemetery based upon the philosophy of the rural cemetery movement, which utilized the natural landscape contours and vegetation to create a park-like atmosphere separated from the surrounding urban hub of Amsterdam's developing city.

Discussion: On November 2, 1857, a group of Amsterdam's business leaders met and organized the Green Hill Cemetery Association for the purpose of creating a non-denominational cemetery dedicated to the continued burying of Amsterdam's deceased residents. Previous burial grounds near the Mohawk River and then on Market Street had been abandoned as the developing center of transportation and industry in Amsterdam encroached upon their confines. The cemetery association purchased, initially 15 acres and another 26 in 1865 to prevent urban growth from overtaking burial grounds for a third time.

Burton A. Thomas, a surveyor and engineer from West Sand Lake in Rensselaer County, designed the layout for Green Hill Cemetery. He is credited with plans for landscaping Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands and Vale Cemetery in Schenectady³². Thomas utilized the principal characteristics of the rural cemetery movement such as using nature to create a place, not only for interring remains of loved ones, but also "to experience the peacefulness and serenity of a beautiful park"³³ closed off from the hustle and bustle of the growing city outside of the cemetery gates. In addition to nature's beauty, visitors were allowed the opportunity to peruse the artistic features of the various tombstones and ornate mausoleums.

³² Grant Peckenschneider. "History and Development of Greenwood Cemetery," <http://www.uni.edu/connors/history.html>.

³³ Grant Peckenschneider. "History and Development of Greenwood Cemetery," <http://www.uni.edu/connors/history.html>.

Since its inception, Green Hill Cemetery has become the final resting place for almost 16,000 people. The burials range from mill workers, domestic servants, and paupers to prominent businessmen, industrialists and politicians. Outspoken abolitionists including Ellis Clizbe and Chandler Bartlett are interred in Green Hill Cemetery. A plot of Civil War soldiers and veterans, also characteristic of the rural cemetery, is among the features that contributed to the nomination and listing of Green Hill Cemetery on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Bruce Anderson, one of the many Civil War veterans buried in Green Hill Cemetery, received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valiant action in the January 15, 1865 attack on Fort Fisher in North Carolina. Anderson was a member of Company K, 142nd New York Infantry and was among several soldiers who “voluntarily advanced with the head of the column and cut down the palisading so that the advancing columns could enter the fort unhindered.”³⁴ Pension documents and census records identify Anderson as “black” or “negro” and the same documents list his birthplace as Mexico.

Anderson returned home from the war to marry twice. His first wife, Delia Smith, with whom he had a child, he divorced only to marry Julia James on the same day. His union with Julia, a Montgomery County native, produced four children. They settled in Amsterdam where he became a member of the E.S. Young Post, G.A.R. and served as color bearer in local parades.³⁵

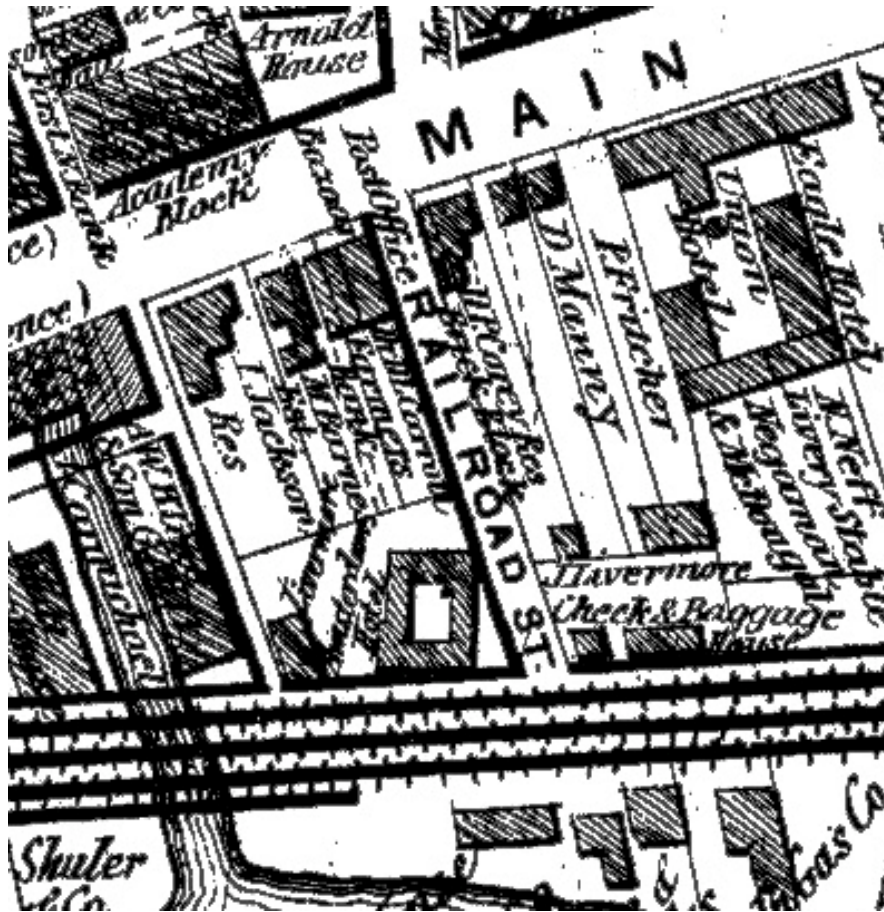
Nearly fifty years after his “distinguished gallantry in action” Anderson applied for and received the Congressional Medal of Honor on November 18, 1914. A little more than a month later, Julia Anderson passed away and was buried in Green Hill Cemetery. Eight years later, at the age of 77, Bruce Anderson followed and was also laid to rest in Green Hill.

³⁴ Historical Files at Montgomery County Department of History & Archives. Ray L. Collins. “The Forgotten or Lost Black Medal of Honor Recipient,” July 10, 1987, Medal of Honor Historical Society, Alexandria, Virginia.

³⁵ *Schenectady Gazette*, Aug. 24, 1922, www.fultonhistory.com.

Lyceum Hall
Southwest Corner of Main and Railroad Streets
Amsterdam, New York

Significance: The Amsterdam Debating Society lasted for many years as a major source of community debate and entertainment, where issues of slavery and freedom were frequently on the agenda. Ellis Clizbe, Rev. M.S. Goodale, Chandler Bartlett, Edmund Marsh, and others were star debaters. Debates were also held somewhere in Rock City.



Farmers Bank, second building west of Railroad Street on Main Street, 1868

Description: The Amsterdam Debating Society held its meetings, noted one observer, “in Harmony Hall, the upper story of the old Farmers’ bank building, which stood where now is the American Express company’s office.” The 1868 map of Montgomery County shows the Farmers’ Bank as the second building from the corner on Main Street, just west of Railroad Street. Another observer who often, as a college student of eighteen, attended, noted that debates were held “on the third floor over, I think, Harvey Bell’s store, a little east of Charles E. Bell’s present hardware store. The block was long since burned down and rebuilt.”³⁶

³⁶ “Reminiscences of Famous Debaters in Amsterdam in Years Agone,” newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d.; “A Retrospective Glance, Memories Revived by Death of Mrs. Ellis Clizbe,” n.p., n.d., Written January 13, 1909. From files at Fort Johnson.

Discussion: The Amsterdam debating society left a lasting imprint on the citizens of Amsterdam. Miranda Marsh Hughes regularly attended these debates as a girl and recalled in 1896, ““It was my good fortune to attend the debates at both places [Rock City and Amsterdam] for a number of years and I can truly say, thus I learned the best part of my education, viz., how to think. . . I do not believed there ever drifted, together in high tribunals, house of lords or other legislative halls, so much intellectual talent and worth as found way to old Amsterdam and Rock City”³⁷

Miranda Marsh Hughes listed the names of the first generation of debaters, as she remembered them. From Rock city, she noted Enos French, Darius Clizbe, Ellis Clizbe, Peter Deal, Henry Deal, and Edmund Marsh. From Amsterdam came Mr. Arnold, John Sanford, Rev. M.S. Goodale, Deodatus Wright, George Bronson, Clakr B. Cochrane, Samuel Belding, D.P. Corey, Dr. Sterling.

Another regular attender remembered that Ellis Clizbe and “a Mr. Marsh, a mason,” perhaps Edmund Marsh, “who lived a little beyond Tunis Van Derveer’s, in a small grove on the west side of the road, were regular attendants. When it was known that they were to take part, the room was crowded with the intellectually elite of Amsterdam. It would be difficult to say which was the better speaker. Generally they were on opposite sides, and it was a treat to see such athletes meet.”

Mrs. Hughes remembered that the leaders of this society were “Dominie Goodale, Chandler Bartlett and John Hanson,” who “did more than any others to prolong the existence of that useful society of free thinkers and free talkers.” “While Domine Goodale, with his tenacity of creed and convictions (he never would give up) and unswerving purpose, did more than any other individual to arouse enthusiasm and stimulate real genuine controversy, Chandler Bartlett and John Hanson served as moderators and peacemakers when any, in their ardor, became too excited to observe courtesy and propriety. They would calm the troubled seas, as if with a magic wand.”³⁸

Another remembered that Ellis Clizbe was the acknowledged leader and champion debater. “We young girls and boys were allowed to go with our parents and older members of our families, and listen to the warm and heated debates on popular subjects,” remembered this author. Ellis Clizbe was “a man of power and influence,” and “there were no stronger, more powerful minds, more convincing in their ideas, more influencing in their effect, than was Ellis Clizbe’s.”³⁹

Rev. Goodale himself eulogized Ellis Clizbe, crediting him with being a major force in creating and sustaining the literary and debating societies. Goodale highlighted Clizbe’s intellectual vigor:

He was endowed by his Creator with a mind and body of uncommon vigor and power. In his intellectual capacity, we think it will be conceded that he had few equals, and probably no superiors in this community; his mind was remarkable for its scope and grasp—working most vigorously when most taxed. . . he rather courted than avoided contact with the strongest minds which he could find, whether in the written page or on forums.⁴⁰

Although the tradition of public debates now survives primarily as a venue for presidential candidates, it provided a source of education and community for generations of people in Amsterdam.

³⁷ “Old Time Debaters,” From Mrs. Miranda Marsh Hughes, Verona, Ill., May 30, 1896. Newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson.

³⁸ “Old Time Debaters,” From Mrs. Miranda Marsh Hughes, Verona, Ill., May 30, 1896. Newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d., Fort Johnson.

³⁹ “A Retrospective Glance, Memories Revived by Death of Mrs. Ellis Clizbe.” N.p., n.d., Johnson Hall. [Mrs. Clizbe died 1908?] Written January 13, 1909.

⁴⁰ “The Late Ellis Clizbe.” Newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d. Johnson Hall. Reference to Quotes in “Reminiscences” suggest that this obit was written by Rev. Goodale

**Second Presbyterian Church
Amsterdam Village
Church Street**

Significance: The Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam Village, like its predecessor the First Presbyterian Church in the Town of Amsterdam, was a center of debate about abolitionism, led by a core of abolitionist members.



**Amsterdam, Second Presbyterian Church, 1832
Courtesy of Old Fort Johnson**



**Rev. Goodale, Interior of Second Presbyterian Church
Courtesy of Old Fort Johnson**

Site Descriptions

Canajoharie

1. Academy
2. African Methodist Episcopal Church, proposed site of
3. Arkell House
4. Denning House
5. Dunckle House, site of
6. Dutch Reformed Church
7. Ehle Block
8. Garlock Miller Houses
9. Hoke House
10. Thomas James, area of
11. Marshville Evangelical Church
12. Mereness House
13. Phillips House
14. Skinner House
15. Tebeot-Cromwell House

Canajoharie
Canajoharie Academy
Cliff and Otsego Streets
National Register listing, 2002

Significance: As headmistress of the female department, Susan B. Anthony taught from 1846-1849 in the building that stood on this spot. One cousin called her “the smartest woman in Canajoharie.” Here she began her public career as a reformer, when she gave her first lecture for temperance on March 2, 1849. She resigned in 1849 to move to Rochester, where she lived with her parents and began her career in abolitionism and women’s rights. The current structure was designed by Archimedes Russell and built in 1892.



Canajoharie Academy, looking east
May 2011

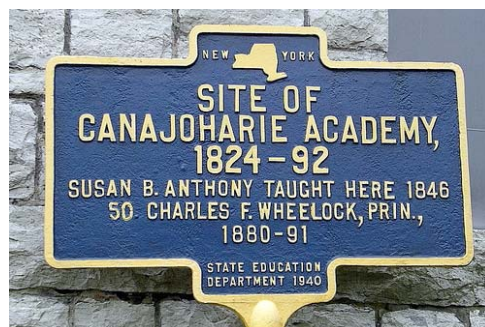


Photo: www.flickr.com/photos/aimlessbird/4012749487/. September 7, 2009

Description: Canajoharie Academy stood on the highest point in the village, overlooking the downtown, river, canal, turnpike, and railroad. The current building, designed by Archimedes Russell in a modified Romanesque Revival style, was constructed in 1892 of local limestone, perhaps taken from the quarry just west on Cliff Street. Walter Denning, a prominent local mason (and an African American) may have helped to build it. It replaced an earlier frame structure, built in 1824, that housed the Canajoharie Academy when Susan B. Anthony taught here, 1846-49. A belfry on the current building contains the original school bell. ¹

Significance: Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), temperance lecturer, abolitionist and women's rights activist, would become one of the best known women in U.S. history. Her years in Canajoharie represent a period of consolidation and growth just before she became active in public life. In Canajoharie, she developed a sense of herself as an independent person and a budding reformer, in the context of a loving extended family. Working successfully as a teacher (a job she did not like), she became an anchor for the families of her aunt and uncle Joshua and Mary Read in Palatine and her cousins (with whom she boarded) George and Eleanor Read Caldwell in Canajoharie and Joseph and Margaret Read Caldwell in Palatine. She also began her career as a reformer when she gave her first lecture to the Daughters of Temperance in Canajoharie. She solidified her antislavery position, both through lived experience in a community that included many African Americans and through intellectual discussions with her father—an ardent abolitionist—and her anti-abolitionist uncle and cousins. Every letter (and there were dozens) that she wrote home from Canajoharie reflected the love she felt for her parents. Ultimately, her homesickness and general dislike of teaching led her to resign from the Canajoharie Academy to return to her parents' farm near Rochester, where she began her public life, a career that would help transform America. (For further information, see discussions of Joshua Read, Joseph and Margaret Caldwell, and George and Eleanor Caldwell.)

Anthony's career as a teacher informed much of the rest of her life. In 1853, she gave a speech at the New York State Teachers' Association, promoting equal pay and professional equality for men and women. In 1859, she spoke at teachers' conventions in Troy, New York, and Massachusetts, arguing for co-education and equality between boys and girls. In the 1890s, she raised \$50,000 to ensure that the University of Rochester would admit women on an equal basis with men.

Anthony's years in Canajoharie also formed a solid basis for her life's work as a reformer. When Anthony began her public lecturing career in earnest in the 1850s, temperance was her first cause. And in Canajoharie, exposed for the first time to traditional electoral politics, she solidified her commitment to the radical abolitionism espoused by her father, who never wavered in his opposition to the "inhuman traffick" in human beings.

Discussion: Anthony began work at the Canajoharie Academy on May 11, 1846, and her teaching career proved pivotal to her emerging sense of self. Three months later, she survived the first public examination of her pupils before the principal, Daniel Hagar, principal, and the trustees. It was an "awful day, that day of days," she reported to her parents, but it "succeeded far better than I had even hoped." Wearing a new dress and new shoes, with an old-fashioned hairdo, she heard comments that "the School marm looks beautiful." Some of her students worried "lest some one might be smitten & they thus be deprived of their teacher." Actually, one of the trustees, Rev. Mr. Sholl, pastor of the St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church (which Anthony sometimes attended) courted Anthony for a time, much to her "considerable amusement and confusion," noted Ann Gordon, editor of the *Selected Letters of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*. ²

¹ Raymond W. Smith (December 2001). "National Register of Historic Places Registration: West Hill School". New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

² Ann Gordon, *Selected Letters of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Vol. IV, note page 55; SBA to Anthony Family, Canajoharie Nov 6, 1846, noted "Margaret little Mary & myself went to Lutheran Church



Susan B. Anthony, c. 1848, in dress she wore for the first examination of her students, August 1846.
 Susan B. Anthony to Lucy Read Anthony, August 12, 1846. Photo from
 Ann Gordon, ed., *Selected Letters of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Vol. I, and
<http://coffeewithken.blogspot.com/2011/03/susan-b-anthony-casting-her-first-vote.html>.

While she was in Canajoharie, Anthony gave her first public speech. On March 2, 1849, she spoke to the Montgomery Union No. 29 of the Daughters of Temperance. Anthony reported to her mother, "One week ago this P.M. the Daughters of T. invited the ladies of the Village to meet with them at their room & listen an address from their P.S. [Presiding Sister] S. B. Anthony. The story was written on about 8 sheets, the import was the necessity for all to help, & do something more than merely say your cause is good we wish you well." A complete copy of this speech survives. It is a stirring call to action, although written in the florid style that supposedly appealed to genteel ladies in the nineteenth century. "We do not presume that females possess unbounded power, in abolishing the evil customs of the day," Anthony acknowledged, "but we do believe that were they en masse to discountenance the use of wine and brandy as a beverage at both their public and private parties, not one of the opposite sex, who has any claim to the title of Gentleman, would so insult them as to come into their presence having quaffed of that foul destroyer of all true delicacy and refinement."³

Temperance alone was not the issue, she argued. Anthony could not think of any "inebriate females among us," but she could think of some who had lost their virtue, meaning sexual virtue. "Ladies! There is no neutral position for us to assume," Anthony argued. "If we who are now organized, few in number and possessed of comparatively little individual influence, may dare to hope that by our united efforts, some *small* good has been done, what vast results might we not anticipate, could we secure the active cooperation of all our more influential Ladies. For most

this morning, heard Mr. Sholl preach, did very well." I put on my new gound [sic] which is plaid, white, blue, purple & brown, has two puffs around the skirt, cups to the sleeves, with puffs and buttons where they end & puff at the rist sleeves cupy up like M[ary]s Cashimere, & undersleeves I have made out of my linen wristlets & some linen off Mr. C's ruffled shirts & a new colaret about my neck, Mags Gold pencil with a pen [in] it, & Susan watch & black chain That makes up the costme & in fine all say the School marm looks beautiful & I heard some of the Scholars expressing fears lest some one might be smitten & they thus be deprived of their teacher."

³ SBA to Lucy Anthony, March 7, 1849; "Speech by SBA to the Daughters of Temperance," *Selected Letters*, I, 135-42.

assuredly, when all our mothers become zealous and active in our noble cause, then will they no longer have to mourn over their children's departure from the path of Temperance and Virtue." ⁴

Anthony noted with pleasure that "Dan S. [Daniel Stafford Read, son of Joshua Read] came here the next day said that he had that day heard it remarked that Miss Anthony was the Smartest woman that is now or ever was in Canajoharie." Anthony continued her commitment to temperance by attending lectures that others gave, also. "The celebrated Mr. Gough lectured here last evening," she noted on March 7. "I did steal away & go. O what a lecture, what arguments, how can a man or woman remain neutral or be a moderate drinker?" ⁵

Temperance reform often involved issues of class as well as culture, but, in contrast to her later sensitivity to the concerns of working women, Anthony was not sympathetic to many of the domestics she knew. In the households of Joseph and Margaret Caldwell and George and Eleanor Caldwell, she encountered Dutch servant women, who did not meet her standards of cleanliness and order. On July 19, 1846, for example, while she was living with Eleanor and George Caldwell, she noted that "Dutch Kate short & dirty is here." On August 9, 1846, she scornfully mentioned "Cattle they call girls here." When she lived in the household of Margaret and Joseph Caldwell in 1849, she complained that the "Irish Wine" was "here 6 weeks, could not cook at all. . . . I would get up, dress part of the children & sometimes the whole & then go down and superintend the breakfast, then & noon run home and broil the Steak or fix the dinner, at night work &c." Anthony was more impressed with the new black cook, "a colored woman named Dina that has always lived at Blind Mr. Van Alstines. She can get up the dinners now I tell you." ⁶

In Canajoharie, Anthony also showed renewed appreciation and respect for her father's radical abolitionism, and she solidified her own commitment to antislavery. Unlike her parents, who were staunchly and outspokenly committed to the abolition of slavery, her Canajoharie relatives, Joshua Read and his sons-in-law, were conservative Democrats. Like most landowners of his generation, Joshua Read—before the abolition of slavery in 1827—had owned people in slavery. Although his name was not listed as a householder with people of color in either the 1810 or 1820 census records, a bill of sale now in the Montgomery County Archives recorded Read's sale of Jack, "an 18 year old negro boy," to Philip Knapp for \$75 in 1822. Joshua Read kept his proslavery views. "Uncle is Old Hunker to the back bone," reported Anthony in 1848, "and would not allow that the North had any more right to interfere with Southern Slavery, than the South had with the Northern system of manufacturing." Anthony's father, Daniel, quietly but clearly expressed his own abolition views, Anthony proudly wrote to her mother. "Father kept very cool, never talked once on his accustomed key. I was glad to have Father express his mind. Many people are so afraid of disturbing the repose of those engaged in inhuman traffick." ⁷

Joshua Read's sons-in-law espoused Read's conservative Democratic views. For the first time in their households, Anthony was exposed to electoral politics. On November 6, 1846, she wrote to her mother that her cousin George Caldwell had just returned from Albany, rejoicing in the defeat of moderate Democrat Silas Wright. "I have heard Father talk politicks," reported Anthony, "but never seen folks electionier before now." Two years later, George Caldwell went for Democrat Lewis Cass for President, in contrast to Anthony's father, who advocated the views of Frederick Douglass. "I took supper at Georges," Anthony wrote. "He thinks Cass is O.K. I asked him if there

⁴ "Speech by SBA to the Daughters of Temperance," *Selected Letters*, I, 135-42.

⁵ SBA to Lucy Read Anthony, March 7, 1849.

⁶ *Selected Letters*, I, note page 55; SBA to Lucy Read Anthony, March 7, 1849.

⁷ Montgomery County Archives [HF18-C-28]; SBA to Lucy Read Anthony, October 10, 1848, noted in *Selected Papers*, 132-33.

was no other smart man in the country, Oh yes Fred Douglas. Said I you do think my father a little crazy on the subject of slavery, no said he not a little, but a good deal, he never saw a man so wrapped up in a nigger as Father is in Douglas.”⁸

By all accounts, Anthony was a very successful teacher. “I have every reason to be encouraged in my school business,” she wrote her parents in 1846. “The prospect is thought very flattering, they say Miss Anthony’s classes acquitted themselves nobly, that ought to make you & Father feel happy & it makes me happy that I am able to do my parents thus such honor.” A few months later, she wrote, “I have never heard of the least fault-finding either with scholar or Parent, but not a few remarks of commendation.”⁹

Her salary was always a concern, and she regularly counted her earnings. She earned whatever her students paid in tuition, less 12.5 percent. In November 1846, she wrote, “Eight weeks of this Term are now gone. 4 Pupils entered the school during the last week, which makes the number 25. 11 of the \$5 & 14 of the \$3. My Tuition money will be nearly the same as last Term. That Salary business runs in my head I can tell you, & I am striving diligently, hoping my pupils may make such advancement as to induce others to come in. In 1848, she wrote her mother that “Father will tell you about my Financial matters, for two years board up to end of this Term have stipulated to pay \$96.000 & have paid \$45.00 leaving \$51. yet due & I have between \$80. & \$90 to collect.”¹⁰

Although she received accolades, teaching was not her true calling. Her parents left the decision up to her, but they made it clear that she would be welcome if she decided to return home. “As respects your continuing in Canie longer than the present term,” her father wrote in July, “we think we must leave mostly to yourself—We are to some extent aware of the labour & faitigue of mind you have to undergo in order to do justice to your patrons—pupils & yourself--You are or must be also aware that we are abundantly able as well as willing to bear the tremendous [sic] “Burden” that all our old maids & young maids will be able to throw upon us.” By 1849, Anthony had made up her mind. She wrote to her mother on March 7, 1849, “This Term closes 4 weeks from next Wednesday. I am decided that I shall not teach another term.”¹¹

Anthony never again took a formal job as teacher, but she spent the rest of her life lecturing, organizing, and educating the American people about equality for all—including African Americans and women of all races.

⁸ SBA to Lucy Read Anthony, Canajoharie November 6, 1846; Oct. [29]1848.

⁹ SBA to Anthony Family, Canajoharie Aug. 12, 1846, *Selected Letters*, 52-57; November 6, 1846.

¹⁰ *Selected Letters*, note, page 54; SBA to Anthony Family, Canajoharie Nov 6, 1846; SBA to Lucy Read Anthoy, October [29], 1848.

¹¹ SBA to Lucy Read Anthony, March 7, 1849; Daniel Anthony to SBA, July 16, 1848, *Selected Letters*, 70-73.

Canajoharie**African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion)****Cliff Street, just east of 34 Cliff Street (Skinner House)**

Significance: Five African American men, representing African Americans who had been meeting for some time in a local church to incorporate the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church at Canajoharie. They purchased a plot of land on Cliff Street, just east of the home of Peter and Eliza Skinner. Whether or not they actually built a church there is not known.



Site of AME Zion Church lot was just east of the Skinner house at 34 Cliff Street.

Description: No pictures of this church exist, and it may never have been built.

Discussion: “We the undersigned two of the members of the Church & Congregation hereafter mentioned do certify that on the 12th day of January A.D. 1857 the male members & persons of full age, belonging to a church or congregation in which divine worship is celebrated according to the rites of the Methodist Episcopal Church & not already incorporated, met at the place of public worship heretofore occupied by the said congregation in the village of Canajoharie in said county, for the purpose of incorporating themselves, and did then & there elect by plurality of voices, Jack Yates, Andrew Dunkle, George Gilbert, Francis Jackson and Thomas Lansing as Trustees of the said church and congregation & the said persons did then and there also determine by the like plurality of voices that the said Trustees & their successors should forever hereafter be called and known by the name & title of ‘The Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church at Canajoharie.’ Witness our hands & seals this 12th day of January A.D. 1857, signed & sealed in the presence of P. Wetmore — John H. Jackson (L.S.), George Gilbert (L.S.)”

The above information, stumbled upon in the *Record of Church Incorporations, Montgomery County*, was all that had been found to reference the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. There was a significant number of Blacks living in Canajoharie at the time that the 1855 New York State Census was enumerated. Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of information to be gleaned regarding the A.M.E. Zion Church in Canajoharie. We do know that representatives of the church purchased a lot of land from Pythagoras and Nancy Wetmore in the amount of \$50.00. The exact location of this lot is not yet determined, however, the deed indicates that it was situated upon the

north side of Cliff Street to “erect and build or cause to be erected and built thereon a house or place of worship.”¹²

Looking at a map of the Village of Canajoharie from 1857, there are darkened blocks representing the churches within the village limits. Moreover, a block located on property owned by P. Wetmore is darkened, leading us to surmise that a church was, indeed, at that location. The question remains whether or not the trustees ever saw to the erection of a structure for their congregation.

Furthermore, Peter Skinner, a Black barber residing in Canajoharie purchased a lot from Pythagoras Wetmore in 1864. From the deed, Skinner’s lot is described to be bounded “south by Cliff Street, west by a stone wall now standing on the line between the lot hereby conveyed & land now owned by Lorenzo B. Clark, north by a terrace [sp] wall running along the rear of the lot conveyed to the African M.E. Zion Church being the south line of a lot heretofore sold to Mrs. Elizabeth Collins & east by said African M.E. Zion Church lot being about 53 feet wide along Cliff Street and about 45 ¼ feet surface measure from said Cliff Street to said terrace wall in the rear.” This description indicates that Skinner’s lot that he purchased from Pythagoras Wetmore was located to the west of the lot owned by the A.M.E. Zion Church. As one can see from the 1857 Slaton map on the next page, “P. Wetmore” owns the lot located west of the darkened block believed to be the site of the A.M.E. Zion Church.

The A.M.E. Zion denomination organized from the Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City in 1796 by those black members wishing to worship with no distinction to race or color. The Genesee Conference, now known as the Western New York Conference, organized in 1849 and all A.M.E. Zion congregations west of Albany belonged to this conference. A number of key individuals synonymous with the anti-slavery movement were members of the A.M.E. Zion Church in their respective communities, namely Frederick Douglass, Rev. Jermaine Loguen, and Harriet Tubman.

An article appeared in the *Canajoharie Radii* newspaper in 1860 advertising a donation visit “given to the Rev. James J. Scott, Pastor of the Colored Church, at the Kirby House.”¹³ This singular newspaper reference to a congregation indicates that, like other community churches, the ministers’ salary was supplemented through donations. Although we do not have names of many other ministers serving this congregation, we do know that Rev. James J. Scott was excommunicated from the A.M.E. Zion’s Genesee Conference at its 1862 annual meeting for neglecting his duties¹⁴.

Reverend Richard Eastup was given charge of the Canajoharie mission in 1862 at the annual meeting of the A.M.E. Zion’s Genesee Conference. Prior to this charge, Eastup ministered to the A.M.E. Zion congregation in Auburn. While in Auburn, Rev. Eastup, along with his wife, reportedly aided in providing clothing and temporary shelter for slaves running away from their lives of bondage seeking lives in freedom. Eastup was himself a freedom seeker having been born into slavery in Virginia.

In 1857, in a letter to her daughter, Ellen, Martha described another instance of aid to freedom seekers. Rev. Mr. Eastup was minister to the AME Zion Church in Auburn and a freedom seeker himself.

¹² Deed granted 2nd October 1857 from Pythagoras and Nancy Wetmore to members of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Canajoharie. Recorded in Montgomery County Clerk’s Office, Book 70, pg. 292-3.

¹³ “Donation Visit,” *Canajoharie Radii*, January 26, 1860.

¹⁴ See “The Genesee Annual Conference” article, *The Christian Recorder*, Sept. 27, 1862 in the African American newspapers collection at <http://www.accessible.com/accessible/>

“Rev. Mr. Eastup called here a few weeks ago, to say that there were six fugitives at his house. Pa gave him what money he cd. Spare, and yesterday I sent to see whether they had got to Canada yet. Had quite a pleasant call. Mrs. E. was anxious to form a sort of fugitive aid or Anti-Slavery society among the colored people, to make up & repair garments for those that they have to clothe. I contributed *a mite* and she hopes to accomplish something this wk. I had quite a pile of coats & things that had been waiting to be judiciously disposed of, so I got Mr. E. to come for them, & while he was here got him to give me a history of his own escape, wh. was very interesting—his wife is a genuine Native American, being of Indian extraction—was never in the South. He left a wife & 10 children there—his wife died three years after he left, & two of his children were sold to go to Georgia. He is quite a good looking man.”¹⁵



T. & J. Sator's 1857 map of Canajoharie. It is believed that the darkened block in the upper right-hand corner of the picture is the A.M.E. Zion Church, almost directly across from the Roman Catholic Church lot.

When the A.M.E. Zion congregation at Canajoharie dissolved is not known. On March 2, 1874, Peter Skinner, one of the trustees of the A.M.E. Zion Church purchased from the church property for a sum of sixty dollars. Other trustees named in the transaction were George Gilbert, Charles J. Sherman and Noah B. Gibbs.¹⁶

¹⁵ Martha Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, Nov. 28, 1857, quoted in Sherry H. Penney and James D. Livingston, *A Very Dangerous Woman: Martha Wright and Women's Rights*, 58.

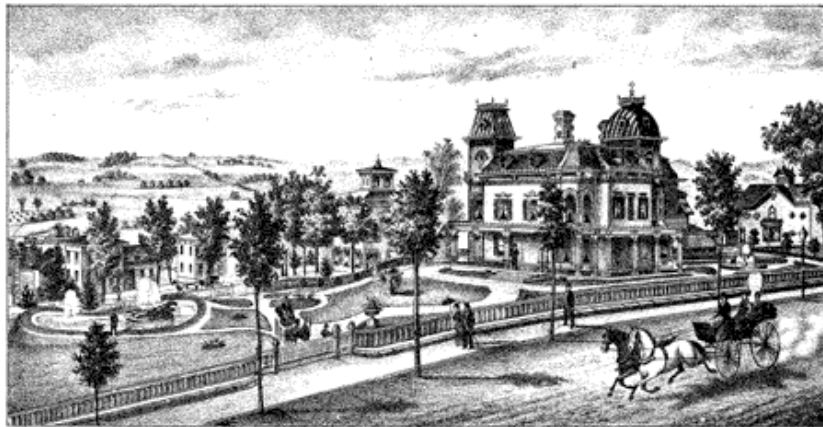
¹⁶ Montgomery County Deeds Book 93, 138-139. Recorded in Montgomery County Clerk's Office.

Canajoharie
Arkell House
55 Montgomery Street

Significance: This house represents the kind of employment that many African Americans found in the nineteenth century Mohawk Valley, as service workers for wealthy families. With money from their industries (they produced the first paper bags in the world), James and Sarah Hall Arkell built this home and garden in 1888. To help care for this house, they hired African American Elizabeth Phillips Hoke, who lived with her husband Bromley Hoke and their three children in a house on Mohawk Street.



Arkell House, looking east
May 2011



View of JAMES ARKELL, MONTGOMERY ST., CANAJOHARIE, N. Y.

<http://www.grimshaworigin.org/images/NorthAmerica/CanajoharieArkell.gif>

Description: James Arkell and Sarah Hall Arkell built this Richardsonian Romanesque home, with its polychromed stone exterior, in 1888. Sarah Hall Arkell collected many of the stones herself from fields around the village. It replaced an earlier Second Empire house on the same site.¹⁷

Discussion The Arkell family owned the largest paper and sack factor in the U.S., started in 1859. James Arkell also published the *Canajoharie Radii*, beginning in 1866. In 1883, James Arkell was elected Senator. In 1891, his son Bartlett (and members of the Lipe and Zielley families) founded the Imperial Packing Company, producing Beech-Nut ham. In 1899, they formed the Beech-Nut Packing Company, which produced the first vacuum-sealed containers and later became famous for baby food, gum, and life savers.

As they continued their economic success, they hired local people to help maintain their buildings. One of those was Elizabeth Phillips Hoke, daughter of Phillip and Eunice Phillips. Before their marriage, Chester Bromley Hoke wrote to his future bride Lizzie Phillips, who was with Mrs. Arkell in Saratoga Springs, that he had walked past the Arkell home in Canajoharie and wished that Lizzie were there so that he could visit her. Elizabeth was born in Canajoharie in 1860. She married Bromley Hoke, a Civil War veteran, in 1892, and they raised their three children on Mohawk Street. Elizabeth Hoke died in 1944.¹⁸

The Arkell family had a powerful sense of place, and they maintained a strong commitment to the Village of Canajoharie. A fire in 1873 made James Arkell consider moving the whole business to Niagara Falls, but Sarah Arkell would not agree, and so they stayed. Bartlett Arkell established the Canajoharie Library in 1925 and the Arkell Art Museum a year later. The family's home, once called East Hill and now called Arkell Hall, is now an assisted living center, with gardens open to all.¹⁹



Nelson Greene, ed., *History of the Mohawk Valley: Gateway to the West* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1925), III:22-26.

¹⁷ Vol. III, pp. 22-26 of *History of the Mohawk Valley: Gateway to the West 1614-1925*, edited by Nelson Greene (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1925).
http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/mvgw/bios/arkell_james.html.

¹⁸ Chester Bromley Hoke to Lizzie Phillips, August 1892, addressed "c/or Mrs. W.J. Arkell, Mount McGregor, Saratoga Springs, New York." Hoke Collection 1879-1956, New York State Library.

¹⁹ www.beechnut.com/About%20Us/itn_pr2.asp

Canajoharie
Walter and Frances Denning House
141 Cliff Street

Significance: Built sometime after 1868, this house was the home of Walter and Frances Denning, African Americans, by 1905. Walter Denning was a Civil War veteran who became a prominent mason and brick worker in Canajoharie, who most likely used limestone quarried near this house. Frances Skinner Denning grew up with her parents in a house just east on Cliff Street.



141 Cliff Street
September 2011

Description: The Denning house is a red brick three-bay Italianate house with a small side extension at the west end of Cliff Street.

Discussion: Walter C. Denning (sometimes called Charles W. Denning), born in Smithville, New York, October 8, 1843. Denning spent his early years in Corning, and after serving in the Civil War in the 26th U.S. Infantry, he came to Canajoharie in 1878 as a brick and stone mason. His first project was the Wagner Hotel, and he may have built many other stone and brick buildings in the village after the Civil War. On November 26, 1879, he married Frances Skinner, born about 1853 to Peter and Eliza Skinner, at her parents' home on Cliff Street.

Frances was living in her parents' home on the census from 1855 through 1875. Walter Denning did not appear in the census in Montgomery County through 1880, but by 1905, both he and Frances were living in this house. The Dennings had three daughters, Clara, Angeline, and Mary Elizabeth (July 7, 1882-August 1953). Clara trained as a nurse at a Freedman's hospital in Washington, D.C., after the Civil War and later married twice, first to John C. Robinson and then to Clarence Overton in 1936. She lived in Baltimore, Maryland, where she taught and did physical therapy in a school for disabled children. Angeline was a "well known and popular young woman," a graduate of Canajoharie High School, Albany Normal School, and the Cheney Institute in

Pennsylvania. She worked as a teacher of domestic science and art in Springfield, Missouri, in 1913, and also in a college in Normal, Alabama, before she married Isaac Smith in 1916. She moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and later Baltimore, Maryland. Mary Elizabeth married first Russell Frank in 1904 and then James Marshall. She lived for a time in New York City before returning to live in Canajoharie. She inherited the family home here on Cliff Street.

Walter Denning's father Daniel R. Denning lived in Corning and later in Big Flats (near Elmira). His obituary in 1903 noted that "in the time of the slave excitement preceding the Civil War," he moved to Canada, "to pilot to freedom fugitive slaves who came here on the 'Underground Railroad,'" as it was called."²⁰

Walter Denning was a veteran of the Civil War (serving in Company K of the 26th U.S. Infantry), and both Walter and Frances Denning became very active in the Farrell Post No. 51 of the GAR in Canajoharie. Walter Denning served as quartermaster of the Post for more than thirty years. Frances took a major part in the Women's Auxiliary.

Frances Denning was a long-time member of the Episcopal Church, but she later joined St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Canajoharie. Her husband joined St. Mark's in 1924.

When Walter and Frances Denning celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1929, they were touted as "esteemed and well known residents of Canajoharie." Walter Denning died on June 13, 1930. When he died, his obituary noted that he was "one of the well known and highly respected citizens of Canajoharie for over half a century." Frances Skinner Denning died in 1937, age 84, and her obituary noted that she lived at 141 Cliff Street. Their daughter Mary Elizabeth Marshall died in 1953, and her address was also at 141 Cliff Street.²¹

²⁰ *Corning Journal*, July 29, 1903, fultonhistory.com.

²¹ This biographical sketch is a composite of information from several newspaper articles, all found by Kelly Farquhar: *Christian Recorder*, August 9, 1900; *Corning Journal*, July 29, 1903; *Canajoharie Evening Recorder*, March 21, 1904; *Utica Observer Dispatch*, August 7, 1909; *Otsego Farmer*, August 19, 1909; *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, October 1913; *Utica Herald Dispatch*, September 15, 1915; *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, December 21, 1915; *Utica Herald Dispatch*, July 1, 1916; *Utica Daily Press*, October 11 and October 13, 1916; *Utica Herald Dispatch*, August 21, 1919; *Utica Observer Dispatch*, August 25, 1927; *Gloversville Morning Herald*, November 27, 1929; *Gloversville Morning Herald*, June 14, 1930; *Gloversville Morning Herald*, June 17, 1930; *Gloversville Morning Herald*, September 4, 1936; *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, May 28, 1935; *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, September 9, 1936; *Gloversville Morning Herald*, October 2, 1936; *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, August 2, 1937; *Utica Daily Express*, 1937; *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, August 3, 1953.

Town of Canajoharie
Home of Andrew and Clarissa Dunckle
Route 10, near Marshville

Significance: Andrew Dunckle and his blind sister Judey were born in slavery in Montgomery County in the 1780s. At least by the 1830s, Andrew married Clarissa, who may have escaped from slavery somewhere in the South. They settled here at this bend in the creek, where they had eleven children, took care of Andrew's blind sister Judey, and helped establish both the Marshville Evangelical Lutheran Church and the A.M.E. Zion Church in Canajoharie. Although never wealthy, they became leaders of the local community.



Dunckle Homesite, looking west
May 2011

Description: This small frame building, with a gable roof and two front doors, is all that remains of the homesite and small farm of Andrew and Clarissa Dunckle and their family. This site is listed on both the 1853 and 1868 Montgomery County maps as belonging to "A. Dunckle." Deeds suggest that Andrew and Clarissa Dunckle leased this land from James McEwen of Canajoharie (who owned the large farm that surrounded this small plot) rather than owning it outright. The agreement was described in 1852 as

said McEwen lets & hires unto said Andrew a certain triangular piece of ground situated on Canajoharie & Cherry Plank road opposite the wood land of Abraham Seeber where an Irish shanty formerly stood said piece being a point on the east end bounded s. by Plank road & n.e. by creek running far enough west to make about 3/4 of an acre for the term of the natural life of said Andrew & Clarisa his wife & said Andrew agrees in consideration of said letting to pay said McEwen his heirs & assigns yearly one days work & to build good & sufficient fences around same & keep same up in good order so that cattle & animals of said Andrew shall never go over upon lands adjoining of said McEwen no any other animals shall be permitted to go over the same, the said Andrew is also to pay all taxes & assessments made on said lot so leased.²²

Discussion: Andrew and Clarissa Dunckle and Andrew's blind sister Judey (Judah, Julia) were born in slavery. Andrew and Judey were most likely born in Montgomery County in the 1780s, but Clarissa

²² Deeds, Montgomery County Clerk's Office, Liber 62, p. 371, July 1, 1852.

(born about 1806) listed her birthplace as “unknown” in the 1850 census, along with that of her twelve-year-old daughter Susan. It is possible that Clarissa and Susan had escaped from slavery somewhere in the South.

The household in 1830 consisted of one free male under the age of ten, one free male age 10-24, one free female under the age of ten, and two free females age 10-24.

In 1850, Andrew Dunckle listed himself in the census as 53 years old, a laborer, and illiterate. His wife Clarissa was 44. They had only two children at home. Susan, age 12, attended school, probably at the schoolhouse down the road from their home. The baby Jeremiah was only fifteen months old. Andrew’s sister Judah, age 55, also lived with them.

By 1855, the family’s status was much the same, except that daughter Sarah, age 26, now lived with them, and Judah was listed as blind. “Clarecy” listed herself as illiterate, along with her husband and sister-in-law. “Suzen” was also listed as living in the household of Richard D. Bullock, farmer.

In 1860, Andrew now listed himself as owning real estate worth \$200, with a personal estate of \$250. Daughter Sarah had moved out of the house, but Jeremiah, age 11, and Susannah, age 22, still lived at home, along with Judey, blind and illiterate.

In 1865, Andrew, Clarissa, Judey (now called Julia), Jeremiah, and Susan still lived together, and a new child, nine-year-old Launie, had joined them. This census noted that Andrew and Clarissa were the parents of eleven children, and that Andrew was the owner of land.

Andrew and Clarissa disappear from the census records after 1865, but their son Jeremiah reappears in 1880 as “Jerry,” a 26-year-old laborer, married to Ellen, also 26, living with their four children, ages one to seven.

Andrew and Clarissa Dunckle took an active role in community life. A small church congregation, loosely affiliated with Methodists, early emerged in Marshville. In July 1841, Rev. William Southworth conducted a large revival in the area. The resulting converts formed a church in 1843. Founding members included Andrew and Clarissa Dunckle, George and Margaret Selleck, and Godfrey and Margaret Hesler.²³

When the A.M.E. Zion Church in Canajoharie organized in 1857, Andrew Dunckle was a trustee.²⁴ Dunckle also received land from Gerrit Smith, in 1847, when Smith distributed plots to worthy African Americans, to enable them to pay taxes and vote.²⁵

Andrew died on February 24, 1872, when he was 75 years old. Clarissa (“Clarry”) died April 5, 1880, 76 years and six months old at the home of her son-in-law Spencer Mungo in Ames. They are buried in Ames Cemetery.

²³ Montgomery County Department of History & Archives, *Steeple Chase: A History of the Churches in the Town of Canajoharie, Montgomery County, N.Y.* ([Fonda], 2010), 34.

²⁴ Montgomery County Clerk’s Office, Book of Deeds, Liber 70, p. 292.

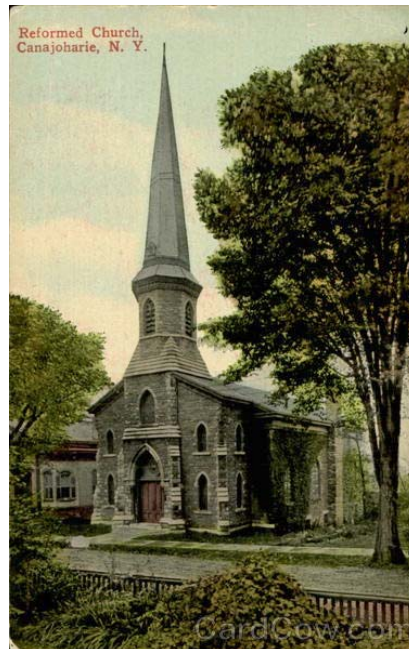
²⁵ Gerrit Smith Papers, [Syracuse University Library Department of Special Collections](https://www.library.syr.edu/specialcollections/)

**Dutch Reformed Church
19 Front Street
Canajoharie, New York**

Significance: Like many churches in Montgomery County, European Americans dominated this congregation, but many African Americans were also members. Philip Phillips and his wife Eunice Van Horn Phillips were both members of this church; Philip Phillips was also sexton.



Looking northeast, May 2011



1917

www.cardcow.com/68823/reformed-church-canajoharie-new-york/

Description: This elegant stone church, with buttresses, Gothic arches over windows and doorways, and a hexagonal bell tower, was constructed in 1841. It remains in virtually original condition.²⁶

Discussion: Like many Montgomery County churches, this one incorporated African American as well as European American members. Records of the Canajoharie Reformed Church show that Philip Phillips and Eunice Van Horn (who would later marry each other) joined this church upon “profession of their faith.” (p. 34). Amy Wilson, also identified as “colored”, was among a group of individuals who were received into church membership “upon examination” in May 1843 (p. 33). Both were noted as “colored.” In April 1842, the Rev. E.O. Dunning officiated at the wedding of Prince Freeman and Mary Ann Thompson, both “colored,” with Philip Phillips and Diana Titus as witnesses. (p. 103) On September 26, 1848, the consistory meeting of the church, with H.D. Dievendorf as Clerk “Resolved that Philip Phillips be our sexton for one year and that his compensation for his services and the duties required of him be as the late sextons.”

²⁶ *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties* (New York: J.W. Beers, 1878), 99.

Canajoharie**Ehle House****Corner of Church Street and Canajoharie-Cherry Valley Turnpike (NYS Route 10)**

Significance: Philip Skinner kept a barbershop here, and Eliza Skinner kept a well known ice cream parlor. Eliza Skinner's parents had been born in slavery in Montgomery County. The Skinner family owned a house nearby on Cliff Street and became well known business people in Canajoharie.



Ehle House, looking northeast
May 2011

Description: The Ehle House stood in downtown Canajoharie at the juncture of Church Street and the Cherry Valley Turnpike, just across the street from the Canajoharie Academy. A building stood on this site on the 1868 map of Canajoharie. This Italianate building may date to the 1850s. Segmental arches over the windows, with a partial curve, suggest the possibility of remodeling at a later date.

Discussion: Owned by a woman, Mrs. Ehle, this block became a small commercial center, hosting the business of two African Americans, Peter Skinner, who kept a barbershop, and Eliza Skinner, who kept an ice cream parlor and catering service. The Skinners married in the early 1850s and lived at 34 Cliff Street, just west of the Ehle Block. For more details about their lives and their business, see discussion under Skinner House.

Canajoharie

**Home of Adam Garlock and enslaved African American Mary Garlock Miller
Clinton Road, third and fourth houses on west, south of Marshville Road**

Significance: The Garlock family represents those European American families in Montgomery County who owned people in slavery. Maria Garlock Miller (c. 1793-July 16, 1891) was one of those enslaved people. She most likely lived on this farm before she created her own household with her husband Henry Miller. She and Henry became pillars of the African American community in the village of Canajoharie.



Garlock House, Clinton Road, looking northwest, June 2011

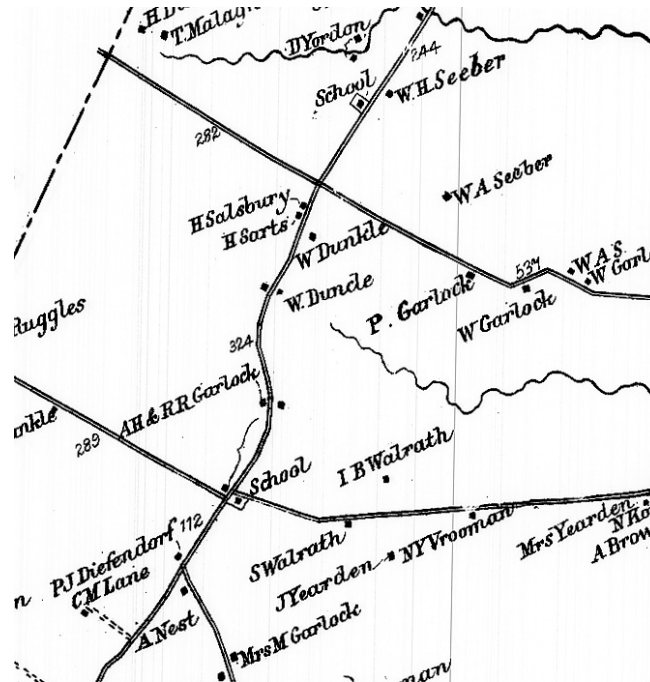
Description: Two Garlock houses stand along Clinton Road, just north of Marshville Road, in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, between Canajoharie on the north, Sprout Brook and Buel to the south, and Marshville to the east. The small house on the northwest corner is the oldest. It is a one-and-a-half story three-bay frame house, with a wing on the rear.



The large house north of the corner is a five-bay brick building, with Greek Revival details, including stone window caps and six-over-six window sashes. The doorway, with Italianate arched windows on the door itself, a segmented stone arch over the doorway, and an unusual cap (with a curved top and flat finials on each side) suggest that it was built in its current form between 1845 and

1860. Flemish bond—with stretchers alternating with headers in each row—adds another touch of elegance to this house.

Adam Garlock bought this farm when it was “in its wild condition,” noted one local history. Deeds in the Montgomery County Clerk’s Office detail several purchases of land, from 1796-1801.²⁷



Garlock houses in 1868, then owned by Adam H. Garlock and Reuben Garlock, grandsons of Adam Garlock

Discussion: Born in slavery about 1793, Mary (also known as Maria, Mariah, or Marian) Garlock Miller lived to become a free woman, landowner, and anchor of her family. When she died in 1891, her obituary in the *Canajoharie Radii* on July 23 noted that she “was formerly a slave, the property of Adam Garlock, grandfather of the present Adam Garlock, of this town.” Adam Garlock was not listed as the owner of people in slavery in either the 1810 or the 1820 census. Instead, the 1820 U.S. listed ten free white persons living in Adam Garlock’s household. We assume from this description of Maria Garlock Miller either that the census taker failed to count her as part of the Garlock household or she was living in a separate residence.²⁸

Adam Garlock, the man who held Maria Garlock in slavery, had been born in Canajoharie in 1754, son of a German immigrant who settled in Fort Plain. Adam Garlock married Hannah Grey of Palatine, and together they made this farm a family homestead, clearing and cultivating the land and raising seven children. The American Revolution brought chaos to the whole Mohawk Valley, with attacks by Loyalists and Indians under Sir John Johnson and Joseph Brant, and the Garlock family—like all their neighbors—chose sides. Adam Garlock and his brother George picked the Patriot side,

²⁷ From John Delancy & wife, 5/325, 10 Nov 1796; from William Garlock 7/421, 15 Jan 1801; from Matthias Lane 7/422, 15 Jan 1801; from Marg. Lane, 7/424, 15 Jan 1801; from Hendrick Frey & wife 7/425 and 427, 15 Jan 1801; from Henry Kesler & wife, 8/494, 27 September 1803. Thanks to Skip Barsheid for helping to locate these houses.

²⁸ *Canajoharie Radii*, July 23, 1891.

and Adam served as a soldier, drawing a pension in his later years from his war service.²⁹

Mary Garlock Miller's story illustrates the difficulty of uncovering evidence about people in slavery. It also illustrates, however, many clues that outline her remarkable life as a pillar of her family and her community. Mary Garlock was most likely born about 1793. Whether she was born while her mother, whose name we do not know, lived with the Garlock family or whether Adam Garlock purchased Mary later, we do not know. Her father, John Malone, was born just west of this farm in Freysbush. We do not know whether he was African American or European American. On October 4, 1818, when she was about twenty-five years old, Mary Garlock ("prop of Adam Gerlach") married Henry Miller ("prop of Jno. Miller) in the Reformed Church of Fort Plain.³⁰

If Mary Garlock grew up with the seven Garlock children, she most likely helped care for them, including the youngest son Henry, who would inherit this farm at his father's death in 1840. Henry became a soldier in the War of 1812. When he returned, he married Laney Bort of Mapletown on April 25, 1822. They had two sons, Adam H. and Reuben. As the youngest son, Henry most likely continued to live on his father's farm, caring for his aging parents.

Henry apparently continued to hold people in slavery. In 1828, he sued his neighbor Henry J. Failing for \$350, the value, as listed in a legal document, of an African American man named Jack. Garlock alleged that Failing had "wrongfully and maliciously killed" Jack, and Garlock wanted recompense. As related in Hamilton Child's *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Montgomery County*, published in 1869, Failing admitted that he had killed Jack, but by accident not intent. Court records established that

on the night of the homicide the negroes had a gathering near the river below Dutchtown, became intoxicated and broke up at a late hour. Jack and one of his companions started for home, on the road passing defendant's house. During the night a black man called at Failing's house saying that he had seen a bear a short distance from the house. Failing took his rifle and, accompanied by his dog, started in search of the bear, which he soon discovered sitting upon his haunches about ten rods distant. The dog refused to advance, and Failing could see by the dim starlight the eyes of the bear. Taking good aim between the eyes he fired. A terrible groan, a struggle and all was still. A light was procured, and on proceeding to the spot there lay Jack, stone dead. It appeared that the negro had taken a keg from a trough where it had been placed to soak, and seated himself upon it in the middle of the road, with his back towards Failing, who mistook the bright buttons upon his coat for the eyes of a bear. Eminent counsel were employed on both sides, and the result was a verdict for the plaintiff for \$250.³¹

If this event actually occurred in 1828, then Henry received reimbursement for the loss of an enslaved person whom he no longer legally owned. This story suggests that, even after the legal end of slavery in 1827, the status of formerly enslaved people often remained ambiguous, tied to their former owners.

Adam Garlock wrote his will on January 21, 1828. He gave all three hundred acres of his home farm ("on which I now reside") along with all the farming equipment, personal property,

²⁹*History of Montgomery County, Family Sketches* (1878), 298 ff.

³⁰ Mary Miller, death record, Town of Middlefield, Otsego County. Thanks to the Middlefield Town Clerk for this information. Records of the Reformed Church of Fort Plain, Vol. I, 75, in Montgomery County Department of History and Archives.

³¹ Hamilton Child, ed., *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Montgomery County* (1869), montgomery.nygenweb.net/canajoharie.html

money and accounts, to his youngest son Henry. Adam Garlock signed his will with his mark, not a signature, suggesting that he could neither read nor write. Adam Garlock died in 1840. Henry died only four years later, in 1844, leaving the home farm to his two sons Adam H. and Reuben.³²

We do not know where Maria Garlock Miller and Henry Miller lived immediately after their marriage. Henry Miller's name does not appear as head of household in the 1820 census, so it is likely that both remained with families headed by European Americans. By 1825, however, Henry purchased the first of three pieces of land (with two more purchases in 1827), so the family most likely lived independently by that time. (It is also possible that the Henry Millers listed as purchasing land in this period were an entirely different person altogether.) In 1847, Henry Miller received a grant of land in the Adirondacks from Gerrit Smith.³³

About 1830, Mary and Henry Miller moved to Canajoharie. In 1850, their household consisted of eight people, all African American, all born in New York State. Henry, a laborer, was fifty-nine years old. Maria was fifty-four. Daughter Mary Ann Miller and son-in-law Moses Hoke lived with them, together with grandchildren Sarah J. (age 11), Theodore (age 6), and Bromley (age 3). Another child, Helen A. Van Vrankin (age 6), also lived with them.³⁴

The Millers eventually had nine children, including Nancy (who married Moses Hoke, moved to the village of Canajoharie, and became the mother of Bromley Hoke and who died before 1850); Eliza (who married Peter Skinner and operated a well-known ice cream shop in the village of Canajoharie); William (who likely died after 1870) and Mrs. Timothy (Mary Ann) Dodge (who moved to Phoenix Mills, Town of Middlefield, Otsego County).

Both Mary and Henry Miller bought several pieces of land. They lived at least for a time at 35 Cliff Street, in a neighborhood that included their daughter and son-in-law, Eliza and Peter Skinner (who lived across the street), George Gilbert and his family (who lived down the hill on Mohawk Street), and John and Sarah Teabout and John and Martha Cromwell (who lived near the Gilberts on Mohawk Street). After their daughter Nancy died before 1850, they raised their grandson Bromley in their Cliff Street home.

In 1855, they lived in a two-family household, with two Hoke (Hoak) children, Bromley and Mary, Mary and Henry Miller's daughter Eliza Skinner, Eliza's husband Peter, and their two-year-old daughter Frances. Hellen A. Miller, Theodore Miller, Mary Ann Miller, and Sarah Jane Miller—children and grandchildren—also lived with them, plus two boarders.

In 1860, they had nine people in their household, including a new child, Reid Freeman, age 2, and E.A. VanVranken, age 16, listed as a servant (most likely Helen A. Van Vranken, age 6 in the 1850 census).

When Bromley returned from the Civil War, he likely returned to his grandparents' household. Years later, after his marriage to Elizabeth Phillips, Bromley rented the house next door to George Gilbert, just down the hill from his childhood home with the Millers.³⁵

In 1865, grandson Reed Williams (probably listed earlier as Reid Freeman) was now listed as age 6. Both Bromley Hoke and Theodore Miller had joined the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, where they had been serving since April 1863. Listed next to them (most likely in the house across the

³² Adam Garlock's will, written January 21, 1828, recorded September 22, 1845, Montgomery County Surrogate's Office, Will Book vol. 7, 299, www.usgwarchives.org/ny/nyfiles.htm.

³³ Henry Miller, deeds, 10 September 1824 (Charleston, so this may ; 20/382, 12 August 1825; 23/263, 12 June 1827; 23/265, 12 June 1827; 25/235; Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

³⁴ The 1855 census noted that Henry Miller had lived in this town for 25 years, while Mariah Miller had lived there her whole life, 54 years. Household information from 1850 census.

³⁵ Mary Garlock Miller, deeds, 68/24, 30 September 1856; 76/74, 1 August 1868; 103/128, 8 September 1883.

street) lived daughter Eliza Skinner and her family. Henry Miller was listed as owning land worth \$350.

By 1870, Henry Miller had died, but Maria Miller, age 73, still kept house for six people, including her grandsons Bromley Hoke and Theodore, John, and Reed Miller, along with John's wife June. Grandchildren Theodore (now married to Martha), Reed, and Anna Miller also lived here.

By 1875, Maria, age 76, may have married a man named John Miller, age 69, who is listed as head of the household.

By 1880, another Mary Miller, age 26, perhaps a grandchild, lived as a servant in the home of Philip Phillips, a local African American, age 67, along with Philip's daughter Elizabeth, who would soon marry Mary Miller's grandchild Bromley Hoke. Grandson Read Miller was now working in a local hotel, operated by Charles Lovett.

In 1880, Mary Miller had left Canajoharie, perhaps to move to Phoenix Mills to live with daughter Mary Ann VanVranken Dodge. She died on July 16, 1891. The *Canajoharie Radii* summed of the life of this remarkable woman, born in slavery who lived in freedom as a pillar of her community:

Mrs. Marian Miller died last Thursday in the 96th year of her age, at Phoenix Mills. Deceased, who had resided many years in this village, was formerly a slave, the property of Adam Garlock, grandfather of the present Adam Garlock, of this town. She was the mother of nine children, two of whom survive her, Mrs. Peter Skinner of this village and Mrs. Timothy Hodge, of Phoenix Mills.³⁶



Mary Ann Miller Van Vranken Dodge, Timothy Dodge (in his Civil War uniform) and possibly son Clement Dodge, born about 1860.

These photos belong to Evelina Lincoln Fuller and her mother Amelia Fuller,

[http://www.dodgefamily.org/Photographs/Timothy Pickering Dodge/EvelinaLincolnFuller.shtml](http://www.dodgefamily.org/Photographs/Timothy%20Pickering%20Dodge/EvelinaLincolnFuller.shtml)
Ancestry.com

Mary Miller was buried in Fort Plain Cemetery, along with her husband Henry, daughter Eliza Skinner, son-in-law Peter Skinner, daughter Mary Ann VanVranken Dodge, and son-in-law Timothy Dodge.³⁷

³⁶ *Canajoharie Radii*, July 23, 1891.

³⁷ Caretaker's records note Mary Miller's burial, but her gravestone has not been located. Most likely it is near the fence, along with many other African American graves. Henry Miller's gravestone is unreadable.

Canajoharie**Bromley and Elizabeth Phillips Hoke****45 / 131 Mohawk Street**

Significance: Bromley Hoke and Elizabeth Phillips Hoke represent the integral part that African Americans, descendants of grandparents who had been locally enslaved, played in the economic and social development of the Mohawk Valley, as well as the close ties of family and neighborhood that sustained African American families as they moved from slavery into freedom.



June 2011



August 2011

Description: This house was built directly on the banks of the Erie Canal sometime before 1831, when it appeared on a map of Canajoharie. Three bays wide, with a porch added sometime in the mid-nineteenth century, it is unusual for this area because it is only one room deep. A small ell at the rear may or may not be original. After the canal was moved north of Mohawk Street, this house became part of a small African American neighborhood.

Discussion: Born about 1847 of parents who had once been enslaved, Bromley (also spelled Brumley) Hoke (also spelled Hoak) lived with his grandparents Henry Miller and Mary Garlock Miller (born in slavery), his father Moses Hoke, and other members of the Miller family at 35 Cliff Street after the death of his mother when he was three years old. In April 1863, he enlisted in the

Massachusetts 54th with Theodore Miller, who may have been his cousin. His older brother Joshua Hoke also enlisted from Fort Plain. Bromley Hoke was wounded in the war and mustered out on June 16, 1865, when he was only seventeen years old.³⁸

When he returned from the war, Bromley Hoke worked as a laborer and married (at his grandmother's home) Elizabeth Phillips, born December 29, 1860, thirteen years younger than her husband. She was the daughter of Philip Phillips and Eunice Van Horne Phillips, and she grew up in a neighborhood just south of the Hoke house. She worked most of her life for the Arkell family. She and her husband raised three children in this house, Philip, Chester Jr., and Robert.

The Hokes were part of an African American neighborhood in Canajoharie. George Gilbert, one of the trustees of the A.M.E. Zion Church, lived in a house no longer standing just west of the Hoke house. The proposed site of the church was directly behind the Hoke house, on Cliff Street, next door to the home of Peter and Eliza Skinner. Three houses to the east of the Hoke house, James and Sarah Teabout lived with their family, along with John and Martha Cromwell and their children.

The New York State Library holds papers relating to this family, researched by Montgomery County Historian Kelly Farquhar. The Heritage & Genealogical Society, a "friends group of Montgomery County Office of History and Archives, erected a marker in front of the Hoke house, commemorating Bromley Hoke's service in the Civil War. (See descriptions for Arkell House, Peter and Eliza Skinner house, Phillips house, and Adam Garlock/Mary Garlock Miller house for related details about this family.)



Bromley Hoke
Courtesy New York State Museum

³⁸ Kelly Farquhar has done most of the huge amount of research on the Hoke family, as well as on the Phillips, Skinner, and Miller families. See, e.g., her PowerPoint presentation, "African American Life, the Montgomery County Experience in the 19th Century." Many thanks to Ty Yacobucci, owner of the Hoke property, for his cooperation and preservation efforts.



Daguerreotype, most likely of Elizabeth Phillips Hoke as a young girl
Courtesy New York State Museum

**Approximate location of home of Thomas James and Asa Kimball
Near the Hamlet of Buel
Town of Canajoharie**

Significance: Thomas James was born in slavery on the farm of Asa Kimball near the hamlet of Buel in the Town of Canajoharie in 1804. He escaped about 1821 to become one of the best-known ministers in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, founder of many churches in the northeastern U.S., and author of an autobiography in 1886.

Description: No specific site has been identified for Thomas James or his enslavers. James noted, however, that he had been born in the Town of Canajoharie, enslaved by Asa Kimball and Cromwell Bartlett and then by George H. Hess, who lived near Fort Plain, Town of Minden. Asa Kimball lived in the vicinity of Buel, on what later became known as the Milligan Farm. David Burr's map of Montgomery County, published in 1829, lists locations of original land grants mentioned in deeds for Cromwell Bartlett, his second owner. (For a discussion of James' life with George H. Hess, see section for Hessville, Town of Minden.).³⁹

Discussion: When Thomas James wrote his autobiography, *Life of Rev. Thomas James, by Himself*, in 1886, he was a well-known and well-respected minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. An early anchor for the African American community in Rochester, New York, he had been a founder of the A.M.E. Zion Church there, as well as of churches in Syracuse and Ithaca. When he served as pastor of the A.M.E. Zion Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts, he welcomed a young Frederick Douglass, just escaped from slavery in Maryland, and gave Douglass some of his earliest experience in public speaking.

James' early life gave no hint of his eventual contributions to the world. He began his life story by writing, "The story of my life is a simple one, perhaps hardly worth the telling." But the experience of this remarkable man belies his modesty. His own words, eloquent in their simplicity, tell the story of the most important incident etched into his memory, the sale of his mother and siblings when he was eight years old:

I was born a slave at Canajoharie, this state, in the year 1804. I was the third of four children, and we were all the property of Asa Kimball, who, when I was in the eighth year of my age, sold my mother, brother and elder sister to purchasers from Smitttown, a village not far distant from Amsterdam in the same part of the state. My mother refused to go and ran

³⁹ Beers, *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties* (1878), 97. Cromwell K. Bartlett and his wife Catherine Hess Bartlett had many deeds listed in the Montgomery County Clerk's Office. In 1825, Cromwell and Catherine Bartlett sold land in Canajoharie to Ira Todd, of Canajoharie & Connecticut, Liber 20, p. 142, 2 April 1825, "being a part of a tract of land granted to John Lynd by letters patent under seal of then Province of New York bearing date of 5 August 1736 being known & distinguished by Lot No. 4 in 1st allotment of said patent bounded as follows: on n. by lands formerly owned by Elizabeth Colden, e. by Lot No. 5 in said allotment, s. by Lot No. 3 of 2nd allotment & w. by Lot No. 3 of 1st allotment & containing 120 acres of land excepting & reserving therout one fourth part of above described premises in form of a parallelogram off of the n.w. corner of said lot the same having been previously conveyed & also all that certain other lot or parcel situated in Canajoharie & granted by letters patent aforesaid to John Lynds." In 1835, many deeds record Bartlett's purchase of land possibly from siblings. He bought, with quit claim, all land belonging to late William Bartlett of Canajoharie [described as "land in Canajoharie known as Lot No. 4 in 1st allotment bounded: n. by lands formerly owned by Elizabeth Colden, e. by Lot No. 5, s. by Lot No. 3 of 1st allotment, w. by Lot No. 3 of 1st allotment containing 112 acres likewise other lot of land containing 17 acres bounded n. by Lot No. 4 above described which said lots comprehend all real estate of William Bartlett, late of Canajohary." Cromwell was a resident of Bergen, Genesee Co., NY on these land transactions.

into the garret to seek a hiding place. She was pursued, caught, tied hand and foot and delivered to her new owner. I caught my last sight of my mother as they rode off with her. My elder brother and sister were taken away at the same time. I never saw either my mother or sister again. Long years afterwards my brother and I were reunited, and he died in this city a little over a year ago. From him I learned that my mother died about the year 1846 in the place to which she had been taken. My brother also informed me that he and his sister were separated soon after their transfer to a Smithport master, and that he never heard of her subsequent fate. Of my father I never had any personal knowledge, and, indeed, never heard anything. My other sister, the youngest member of the family, died when I was yet a youth.⁴⁰

Asa Kimball, James' first master, came to Canajoharie about 1800 as one of the earliest post-Mohawk settlers in the area. James, whose slave name was Tom, worked as a farmhand on the several farms that Kimball owned. James remembered Kimball as "a well-to-do but rough farmer, a skeptic in religious matters, but of better heart than address; for he treated me well."⁴¹

When James was seventeen years old, Kimball was killed in a "runaway accident." With the rest of Kimball's property, James was sold at Kimball's estate sale. Kimball's farm later became known as the Milligan farm. Cromwell Bartlett, another local farmer, purchased Tom but kept him only "a few months" until he traded him to his father-in-law George H. Hess, who lived just east of the Bartlett farms near Hessville, in the Town of Minden. (See description of Hessville for more information about James.)

Several families near Buel owned people in slavery. Faith M. Smith, author of a 1934 history of Buel, noted that Cornelius Sammons (living on what became known as the Porter place), bought a woman named Jim, aged nineteen, for \$200 from Jacob Gardinier's estate. In 1934, a descendant still owned the bill of sale. Enslaved people, noted Smith, were buried in the Buel cemetery.⁴²

⁴⁰ Thomas James, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas James, by Himself* (Rochester: Post-Express Printing Company, 1886), 5.

⁴¹ Thomas James, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas James, by Himself* (Rochester: Post-Express Printing Company, 1886), 5; Beers, *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties* (1878), 97.

⁴² Faith M. Smith, *History of Buel* (1934).

Canajoharie
Marshville Evangelical Lutheran Church

Significance: Biracial church established about 1843 by Andrew and Clarissa Dunckle (African Americans) and others. Church building constructed in 1892.



Marshville Evangelical Lutheran Church, looking northeast
May 2011

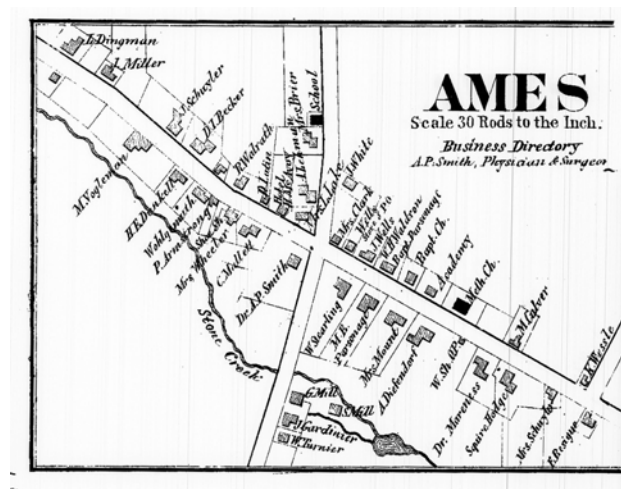
Description: This small frame church, with its gable end to the street and small roof over the front entrance, contains modified Italianate features (modest brackets under the eaves and round-topped central window in the gable), with steep roof and drip moldings over the windows that reflect a Gothic Revival tradition. A small bell tower caps the building.

Discussion: Regular church meetings in Marshville may have begun about 1827, when Mrs. Srah Thomson moved to the area with her husband, a disabled glass blower. After a major religious revival in Marshville in 1843, converts formed a new church, first affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Among its founding members were African Americans Clarissa and Andrew Dunckle. For many years, they met in the local schoolhouse at the corner of Route 10 and McEwan Road, built on land provided by Seymour Marsh. The community was so grateful that they changed the name of their hamlet from Muttonville (so-called because of widespread sheep farming) to Marshville. Although the church almost died out during the Civil War, a revival in 1876 led to renewed interest in constructing a church building. In 1892, church members officially formed the Marshville Evangelical Church and dedicated their new building, the same one that still stands.⁴³

⁴³ Montgomery County Department of History & Archives, *Steeple Chase: A History of the Churches in the Town of Canajoharie, Montgomery County, N.Y.* ([Fonda], 2010), 33-36.

Canajoharie
Village of Ames
Dr. James Mereness and Elizabeth Jones McFee

Significance: An oral history given by Elizabeth Jones McFee suggests that the home of Dr. James Mereness in Ames was used as a stop on the Underground Railroad.



1868 Map



Ames Academy, looking west, May 2011

Description: The Mereness house is one of those pictured here. Further research in deeds and assessments will identify the specific one.⁴⁴

Discussion: Oral tradition reported by Elizabeth Jones, who would have been ten years old in 1852, suggests that Dr. James Mereness was involved in Underground Railroad work with Elizabeth's father Joseph Jones. James Mereness was born in Sharon, Schoharie County, on February 26, 1802, of parents John Mereness (1762-1851) and Margaret Laurence (1763-1842). He attended Fairfield Medical School and then began his practice in the hamlet of Ames, Town of Canajoharie. The 1850 census listed him as a physician, 48 years old, living with his wife Rebecca, age 46, and his daughter Louisa, age 17, with property worth \$500. James Mereness died in December 1872. His obituary noted that he had been "a life long abolitionist, and advocate of total abstinence from intoxicating liquors. He was a man of strong convictions, tenacious of his opinions, and yet of a most kindly disposition." In his will, he left money for the education of "free colored persons." He was buried in the People's Cemetery in Sharon, New York.⁴⁵

John M. Mereness, born about 1806 and perhaps a younger brother, lived near Dr. James Mereness in 1850. He was a farmer with property worth \$3000. He and his wife Catharine had nine children, ages five to twenty.⁴⁶

Elizabeth Jones McFee Kinney (April 9, 1842-October 24, 1929) lived nearby, perhaps in Ames or Sharon Springs, a few miles east of Ames, where her parents Joseph Jones 1807-December 9, 1891) and Ann Alger (D, 1893) lived in 1855. They are all buried in the Ames Cemetery.

In 1880, Elizabeth McFee was 35 years old, widowed, living in Canajoharie and boarding at the hotel of Aaron Nellis. In 1900, she was listed as living with husband William Kinney, 54 years old, in the Town of Canajoharie. William died in 1909. By 1920, Elizabeth was listed in the U.S. census as 75 years old, living with George W. (perhaps William/Washington), also 75, in the Town of Canajoharie.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Thanks to Ames historian Maud Van Arsdale for help in identifying this house.

⁴⁵ *Canajoharie Radii*, December 5, 1872.

⁴⁶ [www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:James_Mereness_\(2\)](http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:James_Mereness_(2)); 1850 U.S. census.

⁴⁷ Ames Cemetery records, U.S. census; "Deaths for Town of Canajoharie, 1884-1908."

In July 1929, shortly before her death, a newspaper reporter asked her, “How good is your memory?” She responded with several details about life on a subsistence farm, with candle dipping, fireplace cooking, flax weaving, and foot warmers. She also remembered a story about the Underground Railroad, “when slaves were carried from station to station to get to Canada, by abolitionists. All this I remember, and father had a stove [presumably a person escaping from slavery] to carry to the next station, which was at old Dr. Mereness’, at Ames, and I, a kid, scared to death.” Dr. James Mereness was a noted abolitionist, and the story has a ring of truth. It is worth further investigation.⁴⁸



Joseph and Ann Jones Grave, Ames Cemetery



Elizabeth Jones McFee Kinney Grave, Ames Cemetery

⁴⁸ *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, July 15, 1929.

Canajoharie**Home of Philip and Eunice Van Horne Phillips****Corner Otsego Street and Canajoharie-Cherry Valley Turnpike (NYS Route 10)**

Significance: As the generation of African Americans who were once enslaved, Philip and Eunice Phillips represent the modest success that steady work and home ownership provided to people who spanned the experience of both slavery and freedom in the Mohawk Valley in the mid-nineteenth century.



Description: This five-bay story-and-a-half house, with its broad side to the street, represents a modified vernacular saltbox style. Its windows have six-over-six panes, with upper half windows (perhaps once part of a frieze, now covered up?) of six panes each. The central doorway has sidelights, a suggestion of high style buildings. Its location at the corner of Otsego Street and the Canajoharie-Cherry Valley Turnpike gave this small house a prominent location. As stage and wagon travelers arrived in Canajoharie from the east, they would all pass this house.

Discussion: Philip Philips (born about 1812) and Eunice Philips (born about 1825) were living in Canajoharie by the 1850s. A Montgomery map showed them living in a house in this location in 1857. They may have moved by 1868, however, when C.W. Wheeler was listed at this location. In 1872, Mrs. Jane Voorhees and Mrs. Leslie Voorhees stated that "they would help Eunice Phillips if she could get clear title to the land."

The census for 1865 showed Philip Philips (also spelled Phillips), age 53, living with his wife Eunice, age 40, daughter Elizabeth, age 4, and two other children, one 12-year-old child named Caroline L. Otto, and another seven-year-old girl named Mary Miller. Although Philip Philips was listed as a laborer, he had regular work as the caretaker for the Dutch Reformed Church in

Canajoharie, for which he received as wages the collections from evening meetings. He also worked for sixty-five years for the Van Alstine family.⁴⁹

By 1870, the Phillips family counted two children—Elizabeth, age 9, and Mary, age 13 (perhaps the Mary Miller listed five years earlier). Philip Phillips was listed as a farm laborer, but Eunice may have been keeping at least one boarder, since Mary A. Ostrander, age 85, “retired,” also lived with the family.

Eunice Phillips died on July 31, 1874, when she was only about 49 years old. In the 1875 census, her husband Philip, age 62, was listed as a farm laborer owning \$300 worth of real estate. His daughters Mary and Elizabeth (ages 19 and 14) still lived with him.⁵⁰

Philip Phillips died in Canajoharie February 14, 1881⁵¹, aged seventy, leaving two daughters, one of them adopted. His funeral was held in the Dutch Reformed Church of Canajoharie where he had worked for so many years.

Philip and Eunice Phillips are buried in Greenridge Cemetery in the City of Saratoga, Saratoga County, NY, along with the above Mary A. Ostrander.

Elizabeth Phillips, December 29, 1860, later married Bromley Hoke. She lived in Canajoharie until her death on January 23, 1944.



Philip Phillips
Courtesy New York State Museum

⁴⁹ *Steeple Chase*, 7; Obituary, *Canajoharie Radii*, Feb. 17, 1881.

⁵⁰ *The Radii*, Aug 6, 1874.

⁵¹ *The Radii*, Feb. 17, 1881.



Unidentified woman in Hoke Family Papers. May be Eunice Van Horne Phillips.
Courtesy New York State Museum



Elizabeth Phillips Hoke, as a very young girl
Courtesy New York State Museum

Canajoharie
Home of Peter and Eliza Skinner
34 Cliff Street

Significance: Peter and Eliza Skinner represent the successful integration of many African Americans, born of enslaved parents, into the community life of these Mohawk Valley villages. Both Peter and Eliza became property owners and successful business people in Canajoharie. Their daughter Frances married African American Walter Denning, a prominent mason, and lived west of the Skinners on Cliff Street in the early twentieth century.



Skinner House, looking east
May 2011

Description: Located at 34 Cliff Street, within a block of Canajoharie Academy and the barbershop and ice cream store kept by Peter and Eliza Skinner, this small three-bay, post-and-beam house, with its broad side to the street, may have been built any time before the mid-1850s. Returns on the gable ends show Greek Revival features. Vertical board walls underneath twentieth century asphalt shingles with shadows of battens suggest Gothic Revival board-and-batten trim.

Discussion: Eliza and Peter Skinner were both born in Montgomery County to parents who had been enslaved. Eliza's parents were Henry Miller and Maria (Marion) Garlock, both born in slavery before 1800. Henry Miller had been enslaved by John Miller. Mary Garlock lived in slavery with Adam Garlock. They married in the Reformed Church in Fort Plain and purchased land as early as 1825. In 1847, Henry Miller received land in the Adirondacks from Gerrit Smith. They are both listed in the census, beginning in 1850, as living in Canajoharie. Their children included Eliza Miller Skinner, Nancy Miller Hoke, and Mrs. Timothy Hodge. The 1887-88 city directory for Canajoharie listed a Mary Miller as a laundress, living at 11 E. Main Street. It is possible that this is Eliza Skinner's mother, since Mary Garlock Miller did not die until July 1891, when she was ninety-six years old.⁵²

In 1855, Eliza and Peter Skinner lived in Canajoharie. Eliza listed her age as 29 years old, and she noted that she had lived in Canajoharie since her birth. Peter Skinner, barber, listed his age as 30,

⁵² Census records, 1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, 1870, 1880; Gerrit Smith list, Smith Papers, Syracuse University; Obituary for Marion Garlock Miller, *The Radii*, July 23, 1891; various deeds in deed index, Montgomery County Clerk's office.

and reported that he had come to Canajoharie only three years before, probably at the time of their marriage. They had a two-year-old daughter named Frances.

By 1865, Peter and Eliza were both 39 years old. They now had several children: Frances, age 12; Georget, age 8; Catharine, age 7; and Clara, age 1. Peter still worked as a barber, and Eliza continued to list her status as "wife." They shared their home with Charles E. Lansing, age 25, also a barber born in Montgomery County.

In 1870, they had a new child, Frederick, only four months old. Frances and Katy remained in the household, ages 14 and 12, but the other children were no longer living with their parents. Eliza still "kept house." Peter was still a barber, with real estate worth \$1500 and personal property worth \$150.

In 1875, Eliza and Peter still lived with Frances and Kate. Peter was still a barber, listed as an owner of land. Eliza was listed as "keeping house." By 1880, Eliza and Peter were both 54, living with no children at home.

Peter Skinner had a business card in the *Canajoharie Radii*, May 11, 1865, noting that he operated from the old Failing's Dry Goods store, a brick building at the corner of Mohawk. The city directory of 1887-88 listed the Skinner house at 34 Cliff Street. It also listed their business--"ice cream parlors and barbershop"—in the Ehle Block, located on Church Street, downtown just east of their home. Peter was the barber, while Eliza kept the ice cream parlor (although the census always listed Eliza as keeping house). In 1879, the *Amsterdam Daily Democrat* reported that Eliza Skinner furnished quality ice cream and could "serve parties in good style." Doubtless their location right across the street from the Canajoharie Academy brought them considerable business from students and teachers alike.⁵³

Peter Skinner was a prominent resident of Canajoharie. Not only was he well known as a businessman. He also helped organize for African American rights. In September 1879, he was elected to the Executive committee of the colored county convention.⁵⁴ In 1857, trustees of the A.M.E. Zion Church in Canajoharie purchased the vacant lot just east of the Skinner house, planning to build a church. This church was almost certainly never built. Most probably it dissolved by the mid-1860s, since the last documented reference to it appeared in minutes of the Genesee Conference in 1862. In 1867, Peter Skinner purchased the property.⁵⁵

Successful with both their family and their business, Peter and Eliza Skinner played important roles in their local community. They represented both the opportunities and the limitations that African Americans in the central Mohawk Valley faced after the Civil War.

⁵³ *Radii*, May 11, 1865; *Amsterdam Daily Democrat*, Sept. 24, 1879; *Canajoharie Radii*, September 3, 1908--"Skinner house on Cliff Street has been repainted."

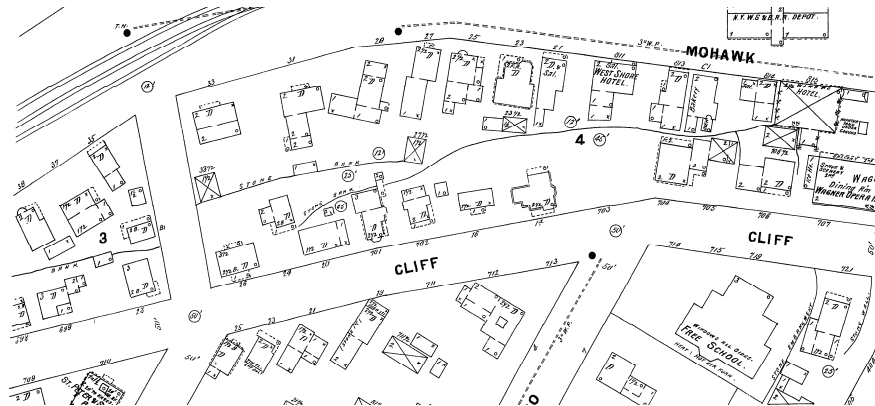
⁵⁴ *Amsterdam Daily Democrat*, Sept. 24, 1879.

⁵⁵ *Christian Recorder*, October 11, 1862. Deeds, Montgomery County Clerk's Office, Liber 93, page 138, July 30, 1874.

Canajoharie

Home of James and Sarah Tebeot and John and Martha Cromwell
119 Mohawk Street (historically 39 Mohawk)

Significance: James and Sarah Tebeot and John and Martha Cromwell, African Americans, lived with their families in the brown Italianate house in the center of this photo. James Tebeot was a barber who worked in the Shaper Block, just east of his home, while John Cromwell was a musician.



Canajoharie, Sanborn Map, 1897

Tebout House, 39 Mohawk Street, at extreme left, with bay window

Description: This two-story Italianate house with brackets and double-story bay window represents this biracial middle-class neighborhood, where many African Americans lived in Canajoharie. While the house shows evidence of change in its porch supports and two-over-two window panes, it retains its original site, surrounded by many of the neighborhood's original buildings.

Discussion: James and Sarah Teboet (also spelled Teabout, Tebought) were one of a large number of Teabout families, both black and white, in the central Mohawk Valley. Although both James Teboet and his sister Susan Teboet listed their birthplaces as New Jersey, the name may have been derived from the French "Thibault," perhaps a suggestion of an earlier family migration from Montreal. The possibility of a French connection is strengthened by the presence of Edwin Larue,

born in France, and his family in this household in 1880. The Larue family consisted of Edwin (42), wife Linder (29), and son Lewis (1).⁵⁶

The Teboet family came to Canajoharie sometime in the 1870s. James Teabout was listed in the 1880 census as a barber, age 30, born in New Jersey. His wife Sarah was 23 years old, and they had a son, John, only one year old. James' sister, age 25 (also listed as a servant), lived with them. The 1887-88 city directory for Canajoharie listed J.A. Teabout, as a barber in the Shaper Block, at the corner of Church and Mohawk Streets, with a house at 39 Mohawk Street.

John Cromwell had been born in Cobleskill, Schoharie County, about 1820. When he was very young, he had been adopted and raised by a man named George H. Mann. He showed early musical talent. When he was ten years old, he purchased a violin for six shillings. Mann—a devout churchgoer—refused to let such an instrument in his house, so he broke it in splinters. But, not to be deterred, Cromwell raised money to buy another, with which he entertained his friends when Mann went to church.⁵⁷

John Cromwell, popularly known as “Bay John,” became a well-known figure in the Mohawk Valley. In 1889, a newspaper article described him as “a veteran colored musician, director, and caller.” Cromwell had come to Montgomery County by the 1840s, since he received land in the Adirondacks from Gerrit Smith in 1847. He established dancing schools, and his orchestra was in demand all over the Mohawk Valley. The 1860 census listed John, aged 35, as a musician, living in Canajoharie with his wife Martha, aged 29, and their two children, ages three and one. At some point, the Cromwells leased land in Fonda, but they were in Canajoharie in 1875, living in the multi-family house of George Minch. John's two sons, Addison and Oscar, ages eighteen and fifteen, had joined him as musicians. All four family members were listed as being born in Montgomery County. By 1887-88, the city directory listed the Cromwell family as boarders at 39 Mohawk Street, the same house in which the Teboet family lived. Martha later acquired land in Amsterdam (probably at Rock City, near the Clizbe family), the same land once owned by Wealthy Parker, Martha's sister.⁵⁸

In 1889, the *Utica Daily Observer* described him as “owning a comfortable home at Canajoharie, and it is the universal wish that “he may shuffle around those streets, ‘allemande left,’ and continue to resin the bow for my years to come.” John Cromwell died in 1895. His wife Martha moved first to Colorado and then to Chicago, to be with her son, where she died in 1911.⁵⁹

The Teboet family remained in Canajoharie at least as late as 1889 (and most likely longer). The *Utica Observer* noted that both James Tebought and John Cromwell were pallbearers at Charles Franklin's funeral in 1889.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Thanks to Earl Hinkle for suggesting the possible derivation of “Teabout” from the French “Thibault.”

⁵⁷ *Utica Daily Observer*, August 24, 1889; *Little Falls Evening Times*, August 2, 1895.

⁵⁸ Lease from Catherine Cromwell and Angeline Cromwell 73/108; 2 Jun 1861: For sum of \$1.00 from the first day of April next for and during the term of his natural life all those lots in Fonda and distinguished as lots 145 & 146 as laid down on map of Fonda made by O.H. Lee, Esq. on file in Clerks office being 68' wide in front and rear and 109' deep. Martha Cromwell from Philinda Gale & Eliz. Trouble 115/239, 18 Oct 1886; Land in Amsterdam bounded and described as follows: Southerly by Dove St., 100'; Westerly by Elk St., 50'; Northerly and Easterly by lands now or formerly owned of David Matthias being lot 50' wide fronting on Elk St. and 50' wide in the rear and 100' deep. Being the same lands of which Wealthy Parker died seized. Same Amsterdam lot sold to Wealthy Parker 115/256, 30 Nov 1872. *Utica Observer*, Sept. 30, 1889.

⁵⁹ *Utica Daily Observer*, August 24, 1889; *Little Falls Evening Times*, August 2, 1895; *Johnstown Daily Republican*, August 1, 1895; *Utica Herald Despatch*, May 23, 1911.

⁶⁰ The *Utica Observer*, September 30, 1889.

Site Descriptions

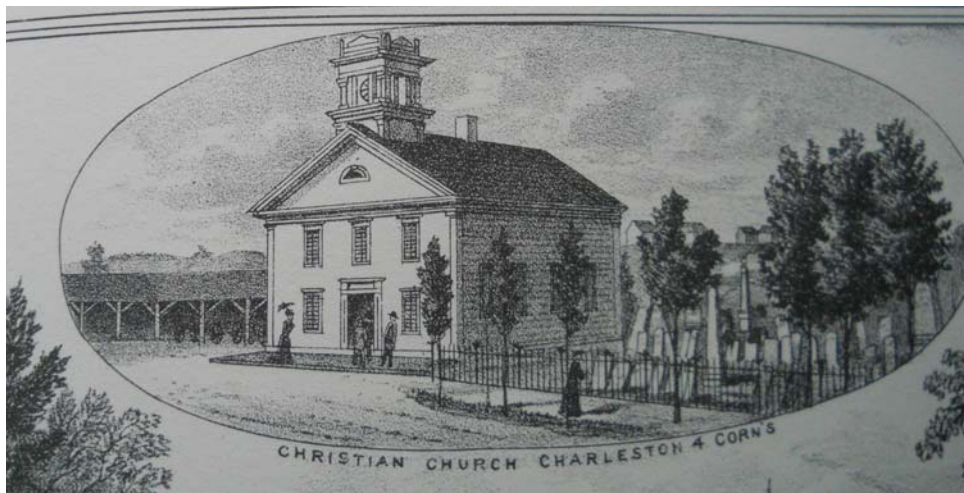
- 1. Charleston, Christian Church Cemetery, Margaret Houck Grave**
- 2. Glen, Site of Victor C. Putman Home**
- 3. Johnstown, Johnstown Courthouse**

Charleston
Grave of Margaret Houck
Christian Church Cemetery
Charleston Four Corners
1380 East Lykers Road
Sprakers, New York

Significance: Margaret Houck was an enslaved African American, born in 1766, who served as a nurse during the American Revolution at the Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey, in 1778. She later moved to Charleston, Montgomery County, with the family who held her in slavery. She became affiliated with this Christian Church when it formed in 1813 and remained a resident of this neighborhood until her death as a free woman in 1872.



Christian Church, Charleston Four Corners
 Photo from christianchurchcharlestonfourcorners.org/



Christian Church, Charleston Four Corners
History of Fulton and Montgomery Counties (1878)



Photo by Lorraine Whiting, Town of Charleston Historian, November 2011

Discussion: Margaret Houck (c. 1766-September 20, 1872) lies buried in the Christian Church Cemetery at Charleston Four Corners. Her gravestone notes that she was about 106 years old, and her epitaph reads: “She was a slave at the Battle of Monmouth, N.J., June 28, 1778. Made free in Christ in 1813. Now free indeed.”¹

A New York State historical marker gives further details:

Margaret Houck

While a slave she nursed wounded at Battle of Monmouth June 28, 1778,
moved to the area with her owner, became a beloved caregiver.

Apparently, the Battle of Monmouth was fought partly on a farm owned by the family who had enslaved Margaret. At twelve years old, she helped take care of wounded American soldiers. When her owners came to the Town of Charleston after the American Revolution, she came with them. She became a Christian in 1813, when the Christian Church of Charleston Four Corners was formed with twelve members. She remained affiliated with this church throughout her long life.

Margaret Houck apparently married a man named Joseph. Whether Houck was her married name, her maiden name, or the name of her original owners is not known.

By the end of Margaret Houck’s life in 1872, she had seen Charleston grow from a wilderness to a small hamlet. Her church, which had started with twelve people, had over two hundred members. It was surrounded by a hamlet that contained “a hotel, a store, a cabinet shop, a blacksmith shop, a carriage shop, a cooper shop, two hay hoop manufactories and twenty-nine dwellings.”²

¹ From cemetery transcription done by Melvin Lethbridge, 1920s.
montgomery.nygenweb.net/cemeteries/char4cornerscem.html; *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, n.d.), 88.

² *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Montgomery County, N. Y.* (Syracuse: Hamilton Child, 1869).

Town of Glen

Site of Home of Victor C. Putman and Margaret Visscher Ten Eyck Putman, with enslaved African Americans Tom, Feby, and Nan

Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs (Birthplace of Kateri Tekakwitha)

Corner Route 5S and Noeltner Road

Auriesville, New York

Significance: Site of eighteenth century farmstead where people lived in slavery with the Putman family, as documented by extant bills of sale. House demolished after 1916.

Description: As an adult, Victor C. Putman lived on the current site of the Auriesville Shrine, according to Melissa Zaleski, a descendent, who provided this photo. This house was a gable-and-wing house, with two bays on the gable section and three bays on the wing, with a small enclosure off the porch. Two-over-two window sashes and gingerbread on the porch supports suggest that this house was constructed after 1850, although parts of it may be earlier. The house was passed down to Victor C. Putman's great-grandson and was torn down after 1916.

The second Putman house shown here appeared as a drawing in the 1878 *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties*. It is a different house than the one in the family photo, and we do not know the relationship between the two. Clearly Greek Revival in style, it most likely was built to take advantage of its canalside site and became the anchor for a store and warehouse.

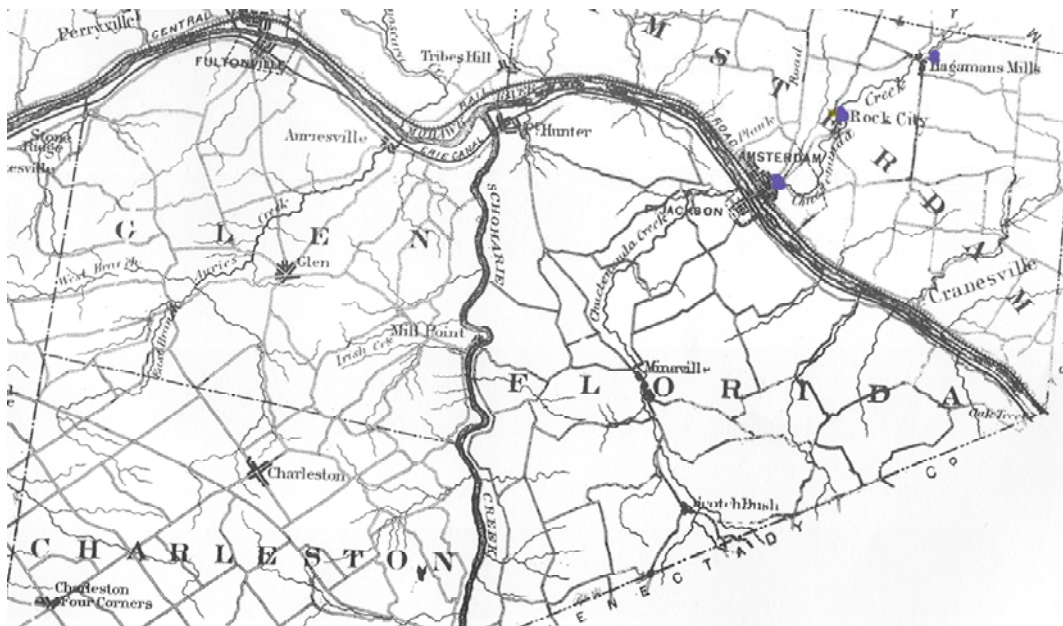
The third Putman house shown here, a modest story-and-a-half structure on Fort Hunter Road in the Town of Florida, is actually the earliest, most likely rebuilt on an earlier site after the first house was burned in 1780. It was not Victor C. Putman's house when he was an adult, however, and he may or may not have lived or visited here. It is included here as an example of a late eighteenth century Putman house.



Victor C. Putman House near Auriesville Shrine
Courtesy Melissa Zaleski



Putman House, Store, and Warehouse along Erie Canal, Glen
History of Montgomery County (1878)



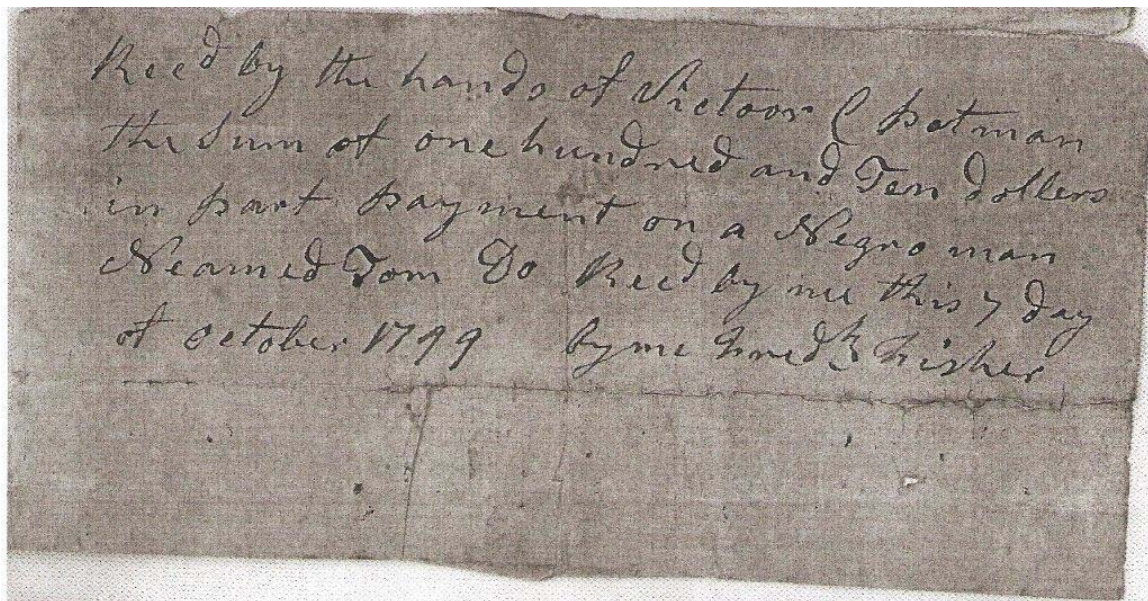
This area shows the eastern part of Montgomery County. Putman family properties were located in Tribe's Hill, in the Town of Amsterdam, located just north of the Mohawk River; in Fort Hunter, in the Town of Florida, and in Towns of Glen and Charleston, which were all part of the Town of Charleston, south of the Mohawk River.
 1868 Montgomery County map



Putman House, Fort Hunter Road, Town of Florida
mohawkvalley.blogspot.com/2006/10/clarissa-putmans-house-part-1.html

Discussion: When this survey of sites relating to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in Montgomery County first began, Melissa Zaleski came to a History Day sponsored by Kelly Farquhar at the Montgomery County Department of History and Archives. She brought with her three small pieces of paper, all of them documenting the sale of people in slavery to Victor C. Putman, once of her ancestors.

According to the first note, Victor C. Putman purchased a “Negro man Neamed Tom” from Jared B. Fisher on October 7, 1799, with partial payment of \$110. The second note recorded a sale on July 14, 1801, when Putman paid Christopher Peck \$162.50 for a young woman named Feby [Phebe?], about thirty-two years old. And, finally, on June 19, 1806, Putman paid \$115 to Aaron Brown for a young woman named Nan.



Recd by the hands of Victor C. Putman the sum of one hundred and ten dollars in part payment on a Negro man Named Tom Do. Recd by me this 7 day of October 1799 by me Jared [?] B. Fisher

Know all men by these Presents that I Christopher
 Peck of the third Ward of the city of Schenectady in the
 County of Albany and State of New York have receid of Victor
 C. Putman of Charlestown of the County of Montgomery
 and State aforesaid the just and full sum
 of one hundred and sixty two and a half Dollars
 Current money of New York it being for my
 Negro Wench of about thirty two years of age
 named Feby and I Christopher Peck do by these
 Presents bind and Oblige myself My heirs
 and every of them jointly by these Presents to
 Warrant and for ever hereafter Defend the above
 Bargained Premises against any just and Lawful
 Claim of any Person or Persons In Witness whereof
 I have hereunto set my hand and Seal In
 Charlestown this fourteenth Day of July one
 thousand eight hundred and one.

Sealed and Delivered } Chris. Peck.

In the Presence of
 At the request of the said Christopher Peck
 between the said Chris. Peck and
 also the said Ward C in the
 Marion

Know all men by these Presents [?] that I Christopher Peck of the third Ward of the city of Schenectady in the County of Albany and State of New York have receid of Victor C. Putman of Charlestown of the County of Montgomery and State aforesaid the just and full sum of one hundred and sixty two and a half Dollars Current money of New York it being for my negro Wench of about thirty-two years of age named Feby and I Christopher Peck do by these present and obliges my [?] my heirs and every [?] of their family by these Presents to Warrant and forever hereafter Defend the above ? and Premises against any just and Lawful Claim of any Person or Persons In Witness whereof I have proven[?] to set my hand and Seal In Charlestown this fourteenth Day of July one thousand Eight hundred and one.

Chris. Peck

Sealed and Delivered In the Presence

???

This may testify that I have
 Reciev'd from Victor C. putman one hund
 and fifteen Dollars in full for an negro winch
 named. nan. wich negro winch is my own
 property: and will wornt and Defend the
 putman ~~and putman~~ against all perfon
 or persons for Ever: giving under my hand
 this 19 Day of June 1806 Aaron ^{his} Brown
 mark
 Cornelius V. Putman

"This may testify that I have rec[i]eved from Victor C. putman one hundred and fifteen Dollars in full for a negro winch named nan wich negro winch is my own property and will wornt [?]and Defend the same [?] putman against all people or persons for Ever giving under my hand this 19 Day of June 1806 Aaron Brown (his mark)
 Cornelius V. Putman

These documents are definitive evidence that the Putman family, like most families of their economic background, was involved in buying people in slavery. There were, however, many branches of the Putman family. Of Dutch ancestry, the Putmans had settled in Montgomery County in the late seventeenth century, on both sides of the Mohawk River in the Towns of Amsterdam, Glen, and Charleston. In addition, for many generations, Putman men bore the first name of Victor.

One Victor Putman seems to have lived in the Putman home at Tribe's Hill, in the Town of Amsterdam. The 1878 *History of Montgomery County* noted that Wilson Putman lived at that house in the 1870s and that it had originally been settled by Victor Putman. From this house, Victor Putman "often took his family across the river to Fort Hunter, for safety" and was once stationed at the fort as sentry, to alert the neighborhood of potential Loyalist attack.³

The Putman home south of the river in Florida is associated most closely with Clarissa Putman, mistress of Sir John Johnson and mother of Johnson's first two children, William and Margaret. While Clarissa may have lived at Fort Johnson before Sir John's marriage to his legal wife, Polly Watts, in 1773, she may also have lived at both these houses. Archeological evidence from the country home in Florida suggests that this replaced the original house, which burned, perhaps in Loyalist attacks by Sir John Johnson's men in 1780. As Peter Betz, Fulton County historian, suggests

³ *History of Montgomery County and Fulton Counties, N.Y.* (F.W. Beers & Co., 1878).

in his “Clarissa Putman, Life Versus Legend,” Clarissa may have lived in the country house in the Town of Florida from 1771 until 1780, when the first house was most likely burned, and then in the rebuilt house until 1785, when she moved to Schenectady.⁴

This Victor C. Putman may well be the Revolutionary War soldier, Victor C. Putman (b. May 31, 1756 and d. November 9, 1816). Born in the Town of Glen, his parents were Cornelius and Elizabeth Pruyn Patman (Putman). His grandfather was Victore Putman, whose parents had been massacred in 1690. Victor C. Putman served as a lieutenant under Colonel Marius Willett and Colonel Harper, fighting at battles in both Oriskany and Johnstown.⁵

Quite possibly also, this Victor C. Putman may have lived in Charleston (as the 1801 note suggests), and the two Putman houses noted here belonged to some other branch of the family.

Whether or not Tom, Feby, and Nan lived in either of these houses, these remarkable documents suggest the extent to which Revolutionary War families of Dutch heritage continued to be involved in buying people in slavery into the early nineteenth century. Whether Victor C. Putman bought these individuals to retain as enslaved people, or whether he bought them to ensure their freedom, we do not know.

The Putman family, in all its branches, epitomizes the importance of Dutch settlers in the Mohawk Valley over a period of centuries. As Peter Betz suggested in his essay on Clarissa Putman, “Dutch families predated the English takeover of New Netherlands. They adapted to life under English colonial government, paid it lip service, and when the American Revolution began, almost all of them took up the American cause. English rule came and was thrown off again. The Dutch remained.” As these documents suggest, so did African Americans remain. They were among the earliest settlers of the Mohawk Valley, and they remained a presence always.

⁴ Peter Betz, “Clarissa Putman, Life versus Legend,” unpublished paper; Dan Weaver, “Clarissa Putman’s House: Part I,” *Upstream: The Mohawk Valley Blogstream*, mohawkvalley.blogspot.com/2006/10/clarissa-putmans-house-part-1.html; “Update on Clarissa Putman’s House,” *Live Journal*, mohawkvalley.livejournal.com/1925.html.

⁵ *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties, Family Sketches*, vol. III (1878).

Montgomery County (now Fulton County) Courthouse, 1772
223 West Main Street, corner North Williams Street
Johnstown, New York
National Register, 1972

Significance: Site of sales of enslaved people before 1827, organizational meeting of Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society, July 11, 1837, and of later antislavery meetings. Oldest courthouse still in use in New York State.



www.revolutionaryday.com/nyroute5/johnstown/default.htm

Description: The Colony of New York built this courthouse between 1772-75 for the new Tryon County, which covered all British-controlled territory in New York State west of Albany. On May 21, 1772, Sir William Johnson, British agent to the Haudenosaunee, wrote: "I am now carrying on a handsome building for a Court House, toward which I shall contribute 500 pounds." To keep workers happy during the long summer, he also donated twenty-five gallons of rum. In 1773, Tryon County residents paid another 1600 pounds for courthouse construction, and in 1775, they collected another 900 pounds. At the same time, the county constructed a stone jail (still standing).⁶

⁶ Sir William Johnson to Hugh Wallace, May 21, 1772, Sir William Johnson, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, The Division of Archives and History, (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1933), 369, letter from Philip Schuyler to William Johnson, January 18, 1772.

The brick courthouse, with Flemish bond, is five bays wide on the front but only three bays deep on the sides. A semi-circular window fills the large gable. A boxed pediment ends in bell cast eaves, trimmed with modillions, adding liveliness to an otherwise stolid structure. A large octagonal bell tower with a rectangular base and a copper dome sits astride the roof. Inside, the original iron triangle (reputedly used to announce the very first session of court in 1772) still hangs. A weathervane caps the copper dome. Windows capped with jack arches have sixteen-over-sixteen sashes. According to the National Register nomination (1972), both cupola and modillions may have been added after construction of the original building. A small porch over the front door was added after 1872.⁷

At the end of the Revolutionary War, Tryon County became Montgomery County, named after General Richard Montgomery, killed in 1775 in the battle for Quebec. The old Tryon County Courthouse became the Montgomery County Courthouse. In 1792, the County Board of Supervisors ordered two large and two small stoves to be installed inside and a row of willows or elms to be planted outside. Inside, judge's bench and railing most likely date from 1867, when extensive remodeling destroyed most of the original woodwork. Seats were installed in the 1950s.⁸

In 1932, the New York State Education Department erected a marker in front of the building: "Erected 1772. Only colonial Court House in State of New York. First Court General Sessions, Tryon County, September 8, 1772."

Discussion: As the oldest courthouse still standing in New York State (and one of the oldest in the nation), this building has been associated since its construction with major people and events in New York State history, including Sir William Johnson, British agent to the Iroquois; Walter Butler, lawyer and Loyalist leader; Aaron Burr, most famous as the duelist who killed Alexander Hamilton; and Daniel Cady, father of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the country's major women's rights activists. Stanton remembered that her father had "but two places in which he felt at ease—in the courthouse and at his own fireside."⁹

The courthouse was also a community gathering place. Johnstown citizens used it in the early days as both a town hall and a school, and it continued to be the site of community celebrations. Johnstown residents celebrated the Fourth of July, for example, with "a great dinner given in the open air under the trees in the grounds of the old courthouse."¹⁰

2. Letter from Hugh Wallace to Sir William Johnson, May 10, 1772, Sir William Johnson, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, The Division of Archives and History, (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1933), VIII, 477.

3. Sir William Johnson, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, The Division of Archives and History, (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1933), VIII, 492. The Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York, *Fulton County Courthouse*, online.

⁷ Gombach Group, adaptation of National Register nomination (1972, 2009) notes that twelve-over-one sashes replaced the original windows in the later 19th century, www.livingplaces.com/NY/Fulton_County/Johnstown_City/Fulton_County_Courthouse.html

⁸ The Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York, *Fulton County Courthouse*, online, [3]; Gombach Group, adaptation of National Register nomination (1972, 2009).

⁹ The Board of Supervisors abolished use of the building for town meetings 1807 and school meetings in 1810. The Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York, *Fulton County Courthouse*, online, [3-4]; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More* (Boston, 1898), 12.

¹⁰ The Board of Supervisors abolished use of the building for town meetings 1807 and school meetings in 1810. The Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York, *Fulton County Courthouse*, online, [3-4]; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More* (Boston, 1898), 24.

In May 1836, the county seat moved to Fonda, New York, a growing village on the Erie Canal. On March 14, 1837, private individuals purchased the Johnstown courthouse, jail, and clerk's office at auction for \$2040. Many county residents protested the move, however, and thirteen months later, on April 18, 1838, the New York State legislature divided county was divided into two—Montgomery County on the south, with Fonda as the county seat, and Fulton County (named after Robert Fulton, inventor of the steamboat) on the north. The new County of Fulton purchased the old Montgomery County courthouse for its county seat.¹¹

As the site of legal proceedings, community gatherings, and sales of enslaved people (and perhaps of manumissions), this courthouse is significant for its association with African Americans. When Aaron Burr came to Johnstown in 1812, for example, he entered the courthouse followed by his black servant (probably enslaved), carrying his books. Other lawyers most likely used similar help. We know that Peter Teabout, enslaved by Daniel and Margaret Cady, often visited the courthouse, accompanied by the young Elizabeth Cady and her sisters. "Peter was very fond of attending court," remembered Elizabeth Cady Stanton. "All the lawyers knew him, and wherever Peter went, the three little girls in his charge went, too." Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter Margaret recorded more details. Peter would carefully explain "the merits and demerits of the suits to his young charges before entering [the courthouse], then with one on each knee and the third standing beside him they would sit contentedly and listen," she noted. Peter was also an active participant in the Episcopal Church, although he was forced to sit in the "negro pew" and to take communion alone. When the Cady children attended, however, they all sat with Peter.¹²

Not all African Americans had a positive association with the courthouse. In 1813, four enslaved people were sold in front of the courthouse for \$450.00. Others may also have been sold here. Manumission papers for still others may have been signed in the courthouse.¹³

As the site of the organizing convention for the Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society, the courthouse is also significant for abolitionism. In 1836-37, debates over slavery also revolved around the courthouse. In November 1836, the Sheriff refused to allow further meetings in the courthouse that dealt with slavery, "believing that such discussions are calculated to disturb the public peace." On July 11, 1837, however, after the county seat had moved to Fonda, "friends of human rights" organized the Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society in the old courthouse. David Candee of Amsterdam chaired the meeting, and William Kennedy of Johnstown was Secretary. The convention adopted a constitution and elected officers for the coming year, including Ellis Clisbee of Amsterdam, President; Rev. G. Smart of Johnstown, Sylvanus Judson of Mayfield, and T. B. Johnson of Amsterdam as Vice-Presidents; William Kennedy of Johnstown as Secretary; and Samuel S. Wells of Kingboro as Treasurer.¹⁴

The convention adopted resolutions against slavery, for free discussion, against the admission of Texas into the Union, for sending petitions both to the federal and state governments, and asserting "that Montgomery county, from its location, antiquity, history, and present moral influence, is preeminently called on, at a crisis like the present, to take a high and determined stand in

¹¹ Gombach Group, adaptation of National Register nomination (1972, 2009); The Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York, *Fulton County Courthouse*, online.

¹² The Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York, *Fulton County Courthouse*, online; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More* (Boston, 1898), 21; Margaret Stanton Lawrence, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton," typescript, 5, Stanton Papers, Vassar College.

¹³ The Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York, *Fulton County Courthouse*, online, [4].

¹⁴ *Friend of Man*, July 19, 1837.

vindication of republican liberty and human rights.” After taking up donations for the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and subscriptions for the *Emancipator* and the *Friend of Man*, the convention adjourned to hear a speech by noted abolitionist William Goodell.¹⁵

Although only brief anti-slavery lectures had been given earlier by Mr. Neely and Rev. A.I. Crandall, “the meeting was a highly respectable one, and exhibited a growing interest in the good cause,” noted the reporter, and the audience included “a fair number of ladies.”¹⁶

The following January, Rev. J.N.T. Tucker, agent from the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, gave a lecture in Montgomery County (place not identified) and recruited “a goodly number” of new members, including Rev. Donald of the Scotch Presbyterian Church.

In February 1839, Alvan Stewart (an abolitionist lecturer from Utica) held both abolitionist and temperance meetings in the Courthouse. “The leading ladies and gentlemen of Johnstown were present,” he reported. “Everything was conducted with the most marked propriety, and a number joined the society.”¹⁷

¹⁵ *Friend of Man*, July 19, 1837.

¹⁶ *Friend of Man*, July 19, 1837.

¹⁷ Alvan Stewart, Utica, February 27, 1839, printed as “Temperance and Abolition,” in *Friend of Man*, March 6, 1839.

Site Descriptions

Minden / Fort Plain

- 1. Diefendorf Hall**
- 2. Fort Plain Cemetery**
- 3. Lipe House**
- 4. Wagner House**
- 5. Wilson House**
- 6. Jackson House**
- 7. Nicholas Van Alstine House and site of Franckean Lutheran Church, Fords Bush**
- 8. Frey's Bush**

Diefendorf Hall
47 Main Street
Fort Plain, New York

Significance: Site of talks in 1867 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who toured central New York arguing that equal political rights for men and women, blacks and whites should be incorporated into proposed changes in the New York State constitution.



**Diefendorf Hall at right, looking southeast
May 2011**

Description: A typical Main Street three-story brick Italianate commercial building, Diefendorf Hall was built in 1861 to replace part of the frame business block that burned on the south side of Main Street in Fort Plain in 1855. Shops occupied the first floor, while the second floor was used s storage for goods awaiting shipment on the Erie Canal. Part of the second floor (or perhaps the third floor) was used as an auditorium for community meetings. Owner John I. Diefendorf lived next door at 51 Main Street. The second floor was used as a hall in the later 19th century. About 1918, the Rialto Theater used this space. From 1923 to 1933, the area was vacant. In 1933, the American Legion renovated the buildings for community use. In the early twentieth century, Friends of Fort Plain acquired the building for restoration as a community center. ¹

Discussion: In June 1867, New York State held a Constitutional Convention. In late 1866 and the spring of 1867, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony organized lecture tours across New

¹ Robert E. Smith, "47 Main: A Milestone in Fort Plain," April 14, 2011.

York State, promoting universal voting rights in the new Constitution, including suffrage for African American men and women of all ethnic backgrounds. Lucy Stone, another European American woman, also helped, as did Charles Lenox Remond and Frederick Douglass, African American abolitionists and women's rights advocates.

On March 14, 1867, Stanton and Anthony were both scheduled to speak in Diefendorf Hall in Fort Plain. The *Canajoharie Rader* printed a notice:

Elizabeth Cady Stanton will address the citizens of Canajoharie at Sayles' Hall [no longer standing] on Friday, March 22nd on the subject of "universal suffrage". 25 cents admission. She and Susan B. Anthony to address a meeting at Diefendorf Hall in Fort Plain on Monday, March 25th, on the same subject.

On March 24, 1867, Susan B. Anthony wrote from Palatine Bridge to Anna E. Dickinson, a charismatic young lecturer. Anthony was evidently staying with either with her uncle Joshua Read or her cousins, the Caldwells. Dickinson had been scheduled to speak in Fort Plain and had not kept her engagement:

I was at Fort Plain Saturday, and the good people there told me how they came to grief last Monday night—all assembled in Hall & waiting first for the 7.40 train—and then for the 8.40—and no Anna Dickinson came—and this, though she had telegraphed the Saturday previous she would surely be there—and that no tidings had yet come from her—as to reasons why she failed them—I tried to modify their wrath—by reference to her ill healthy, the severe snow storm of Sunday &c &c—but they would answer, she might have telegraphed them—

Anthony went on to report that "Mrs. Stanton & self are to have meeting there tomorrow—Monday evening—hope we may get the ear of many—I wish you could hear Mrs. Stanton—She really is doing wonderfully well—when you remember how very little practice she has had--."2

Most likely, Anthony gave a speech in Fort Plain similar to the one she had given at Troy a month earlier. "At the close of a second revolution [the Civil War]," she argued,

it will be wise for us not to perpetrate the same blunder into which our fathers fell at the close of the old Revolution. They fought for the principle that all mankind are entitled to equal rights, and that just governments derive their power from the consent of the governed, and yet they founded a government denying to certain subjects their rights, and fixing laws for their control to which they had not consented.³

Stanton, too, most likely echoed themes she echoed on similar occasions. "The essential element of government is equality; an idea that came not to bring peace on earth but a sword; an idea at war with its antagonist, caste or class; from the beginning, one ceaseless protest of the human soul against all authority and oppression, against all inequalities of rank, against despotisms, and monarchies and slaveholding Republics."⁴

² Susan B. Anthony to Anna Dickinson, March 24, 1867, in *Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, edited by Ann D. Gordon, Vol. II (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 45-47.

³ Anthony speech to Equal Rights Convention in Troy, New York, February 18, 1867, in *Selected Papers*, 23-25.

⁴ Stanton, "Reconstruction," lecture given in Brooklyn, New York, February 19, 1867, *Selected Papers*, 25-41.

Louisa Jacobs was scheduled to speak with this tour for several lectures in the Mohawk Valley, including Amsterdam. Louisa was the daughter of Harriet Jacobs, who told the story of her dramatic escape from slavery in Edenton, North Carolina, in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin.⁵

Rev. Olympia Brown, Universalist minister; Charles Lenox Remond, African American abolitionist lecturer, as well as Bessie Bisbee and Parker Pillsbury also spoke on this tour.

SHALL WOMAN BE DENIED THE BALLOT?—Miss SUSAN B. ANTHONY requests us to announce that conventions will be held in Rome and Herkimer on the 11th and 12th of February, and in Amsterdam and Schenectady on Thursday and Friday, the 14th and 15th. The sessions will be held at 2 and 7 p. m. of each day. The speakers will be Rev. OLYMPIA BROWN, pastor of the Universalist Church at Weymouth, Mass., CHAS. LENOX REMOND, Miss BESSIE BISBEE, Miss LOUISA JACOBS, PARKER PILLSBURY, and Miss SUSAN B. ANTHONY, all of whom will appear in each of the villages mentioned above.

Utica Daily Observer, Wednesday, Feb. 6, 1866

⁵ Jean Fagan Yellin, ed., *Harriet Jacobs Family Papers* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 682.

Fort Plain Cemetery
29 Clyde Street
Fort Plain

Significance: Like many cemeteries in Montgomery County, Fort Plain Cemetery, organized in 1864 as part of the rural cemetery movement, contains the graves of many African Americans as well as European Americans.



Nellis Chapel, Fort Plain Cemetery, June 2011

Discussion: The Fort Plain Cemetery Association was formed on March 4 1864, part of the wave of rural cemeteries that were organized in many cities and villages in the mid-nineteenth century. The cemetery occupies a park-like setting on high ground near the school, overlooking the village. The Catherine Nellis Memorial Chapel, a centerpiece of the cemetery, was donated by Mrs. H.H. Benedict in 1907, in honor of her mother. Just west of it lie the graves of many African Americans, including soldiers who served in the Civil War. ⁶



Graves of Alfred Hamilton, Civil War Veteran (left) and Henry Miller (right). Taken May 2010.

⁶ *History of the Mohawk Valley*, Vol. II, edited by Nelson Greene (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1925), 1700-1740.



Graves of Joshua Hoke, Civil War veteran (left) and Peter Skinner (right). Taken May 2010.



Graves of Eliza (Miller) Skinner (left) and two of her children, Kellen on left and Ida M. on right. Taken May 2010.



Grave of William Lansing, Civil War veteran.

www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/mvgw/history/122.html

Lipe House Fort Plain

Significance: Lorenzo Lansing represented the many African Americans, intermarried with other local families, who formed part of the essential social infrastructure of many Mohawk Valley communities. For many years after the Civil War, Lansing was a long-standing presence in the village of Fort Plain, working as a teamster and hostler in the Lipe House (often called the Clock Building, for its dominant corner clock).



Lipe House, looking northwest, May 2011

Description: Once known as the Montgomery House, the Lipe House was purchased in 1875 by Adam Lipe, once a farmer, came to Fort Plain in 1875 and purchased what was then known as the Montgomery House, a five-bay brick building on the Main Street. He changed its name to the Lipe House and most likely he added the corner tower and clock, a feature found in many Queen Anne buildings of the 1880s.⁷

Discussion: Adam Lipe hired Lorenzo Lansing, a local African American, as a teamster and hostler to help care for horses associated with his tavern and hotel. Lorenzo had been in Fort Plain at least since 1865, when the census listed him as a twenty-two-year-old laborer, living in the home of Cauncey Getman, a European American with no occupation listed.

Levi Lansing, perhaps Lorenzo's brother, was also listed here. In October 1864, he had enlisted in New York City for one year as a private with the 20th New York Infantry, Company A. He died of consumption on September 5, 1865, in Millikens Bend, Louisiana, where he was buried. His brothers William Lansing (who joined the 14th Rhode Island Colored Artillery in October 1863 and mustered out in October 1865) and Charles Irving Lansing (who enlisted in the 20th New York in April 1865 but served only a month before his discharge) also served in the Civil War. All three—and perhaps also Lorenzo Lansing—were sons of Thomas Lansing and Harriet House. Most likely Susan House Wilson was their aunt. (For more details, see the description of the Susan Wilson house.)⁸

⁷ *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties*, "Family Sketches," Vol. II, 231-32.

⁸ *Military & Naval Records, Town of Minden, Montgomery County, New York, 1861-65*, Montgomery County Office of History and Archives.

By 1875, Lorenzo Lansing had acquired both a wife (Melissa, age 25) and property worth \$500. Deeds suggest that Lansing purchased property on May 28, 1878. Perhaps this was the house at 34 Reed Street, noted in the 1887-88 village directory as Lansing's home. The 1905 Sanborn map showed this location along the Erie Canal towpath near the bridge.⁹ It is now the site of an Italianate building and, behind it, a print shop.



**32 Reed Street at left, once located along the bank of the Erie Canal.
Bridge over Otsquago Creek at right.
Looking southwest, May 2011**

⁹ Deeds, Montgomery County Clerk's Office, May 28, 1878, Liber 98, page 55.

**Fort Plain
Wagner Tavern
5 Main Street
Fort Plain**

Significance: As a community gathering place, the Wagner tavern was part of Fort Plain's pre-canal history, when it was called "Totoville," a reference to African American dances held here at the Wagner tavern.



Description: Now an apartment house, the Wagner tavern stands at a key intersection in the village of Fort Plain, at the end of Main Street, beside the remains of the aqueduct that once carried the Erie Canal across the Otsquago Creek. The building is a five-bay structure, most likely built in the late eighteenth century. Today, however, it reflects both Greek Revival details (especially pilasters at each

corner) and Italianate and Gothic features (in the gable windows, which feature both Roman arches and steep window caps, as well as in the gingerbread trim in the gables). Windows were replaced, most likely in the late nineteenth century. This site was identified from a 1932 description, which noted that “this old tavern, at the foot of Main Street, Fort Plain, is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Nation W. Gros and Miss Blanche L. Yerdon.” The 1930 Mohawk Valley Directory noted that Nathan W. Gros, hay dealer, and his wife Isabel R. Gros lived in this location at 5 Main Street and that Blanche L. Yerdon, proprietor of Yerdon’s Millinery Shop, lived at 3 Main Street.¹⁰

Discussion: According to Nelson Greene, who published a four-volume *History of the Mohawk Valley* in 1925, the center of town for Fort Plain before the Erie Canal was finished in 1825 was a section called Sand Hill. Only a tavern, store, and a few houses stood on the site of the current village center. “The neighborhood negro slaves used to gather at the tavern here,” Greene noted, “where they performed a peculiar dance called the ‘Toto dance,’ and hence the locality was called ‘Totoville.’” Local tradition, recorded in 1932, suggests that this building was that early tavern, probably built by 1790. One free man of color lived with Jacob P. Waggoner, perhaps associated with this tavern, in the Town of Minden in 1820.¹¹

¹⁰ *Souvenir Program -- Mohawk Valley Washington Bicentennial Celebration*, July 20, 1932.

¹¹ Nelson Greene, ed., *History of the Mohawk Valley: Gateway to the West 1614-1925*, Vol. II (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1925), 1700-1740.
www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/mvgw/history/122.html; *Souvenir Program -- Mohawk Valley Washington Bicentennial Celebration*, July 20, 1932; 1820 U.S. Census.

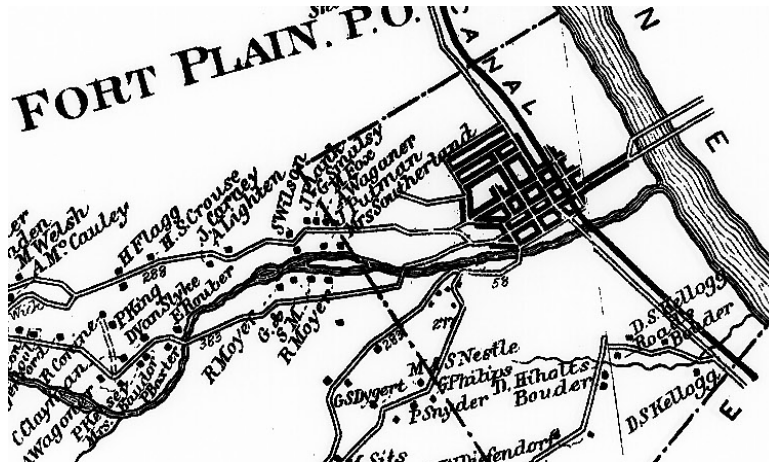
Fort Plain**Susan Wilson Home**

Main Street (Pickle Hill Road) just north of village boundary, on west side of street

Significance: Susan House Wilson was associated as a person in slavery with the Lipe family of Fort Plain. She lived in Fort Plain most of her life, married Thomas Wilson, and raised her family there until her death in 1898.



Susan Wilson Home
Main Street-Fort Plain/Minden, looking northwest
May 2011



Note "S. Wilson," fifth house north west of village, 1868 Map

Description: This small three-bay saltbox house stands high on a hill at a sharp curve in the road, just north of the Fort Plain village line, with a spectacular view into the Mohawk Valley. A modest three-bay Federal house stands directly across the road.



Discussion: Susan Wilson’s small house belies the importance of her story. Born in slavery (either in Virginia or New York State), she spent the rest of her long life in Fort Plain, raising her family. By the time she died in April 1898, she had become a local institution.

At least three different newspapers published four brief obituaries for Susan Wilson. They all noted that she died in Fort Plain (and three of them said that she did “at her own home”) on April 18, 1898. Had she lived two more months, she would have been 100 years old. Two of the four obituaries mentioned that she had been born in Virginia, that she had been a “servant” in the home of James Monroe during his second term as President (1820-24), and that one son survived her.

Drawing on a composite from all four obituaries, plus information from census records in 1850 through 1880, we find other details. Not all of them are consistent with her asserted birthplace in Virginia and her work in President Monroe’s household.

The Gloversville *Daily Leader* gave the most detailed information. Susan Wilson had been enslaved for many years by the Lipe family, noted the *Daily Leader*, and their son Seeber Lipe still lived on Upper Canal Street in Fort Plain. Called “Aunt Susan,” Wilson had spent most of her life in the Mohawk Valley, especially in Fort Plain, where she was well known. She had a good memory, was “an intelligent conversationalist,” and was not “feeble.”

Census records between 1850 and 1880 contradict her place of birth as Virginia. In every census, however, Susan Wilson listed her place of birth as either New York or Montgomery County.

Census records also challenge the assertion that Susan Wilson was almost 100 years old when she died. In 1850, Susan Wilson listed her age as thirty, making her date of birth about 1820. In 1855, she listed her age as forty-four, giving her a birth date of about 1811. Her age is inconsistent in subsequent census records, also. In 1860, she listed her age as 44, in 1865 as 48, 1870 as 55, 1875 as 62, and 1880 as 63, suggesting a birth date between 1813 and 1817. Most likely, she was born sometime in the mid-18 teens, so that when she died, she would have been closer to 80 than 100 years old.

What about the story that she had served in President Monroe’s household during his second term? Most likely this came from Susan herself, as she retained both her memory and her abilities as an “intelligent conversationalist” to the end of her life. On its surface, the story is so unlikely that its widespread acceptance during Susan’s lifetime gives it the ring of truth. If Susan Wilson did serve with President Monroe from 1820-24, and if her age at death was closer to eighty than one hundred, she would have been from six to ten years old (rather than in her early twenties)

when she served in President Monroe's household. If she indeed also lived in slavery with the Lipe family, she would have had to come to the Mohawk Valley before 1827, when she was still a very young girl. How this may have happened, and what connections the Lipes had to James Monroe is unknown.

Whatever the circumstances of her early life, she married Thomas Wilson and had several children. By 1850, she was living as head of an independent household with Elizabeth Corburn (or Coxburn/Cockburn, most likely her mother) and five children, Norman (age 12), Nancy M. (age 9), Menzo (age 6), Henry (age 4), and Charley (age 18 months). Most likely, Thomas died shortly before 1850, because daughter Margaret was born that year. The census listed all members of the family as black.¹²

By 1855, Susan Wilson, now 44, lived in a house with her mother Elizabeth Coxburn, age 60, and four children, Nancy M., age 14; Amenzo, 12; Henry, 10; and Charles, 7. Her oldest son Norman was nineteen years old, living as a servant in the household of John I. Lipe, farmer, with James Cleveland, age twenty-four, also African American.

The 1860 census listed Elizabeth Cockstern, age 40, as head of the family, with Susan, age 44, as her sister. All the children were listed as Elizabeth's nieces and nephews. Norman's sister Margaret (who had not appeared in previous listings) was 19, Menzo (16), Henry (15), and Charles (12) all lived at home. Next door lived the family of Nancy Freeman, age 60, listed as a barber, and her two sons Abram and Hiram, ages 24 and 22. Susan's oldest son Norman, age 21, was listed as living at home. He was also listed, however, as working with Lorenzo Jackson (black, age 18) in the household of Jacob Abeel, a white farmer.

By 1865, Susan Wilson's mother had died. Susan, age 48, was listed as widowed and a mother of five children with \$600 worth of real estate. Charley, age 16, was a discharged soldier. Henry, 20; Nancy M., 21; and Norman, 26, listed as married, also lived at home. Nine houses away on one side lived the family of Abram Freeman, barber, his wife Catherine, and his mother Nancy. Twelve houses on the other side lived Diana Ann Kelley, age 69, a domestic living in the household of Curtis Hawes, stage proprietor.

By 1870, Susan was surrounded by her grown children. Susan, listed as age 55, kept house for her son, Charly, age 30, a "common laborer"; her daughter Margaret Hoke, age 28, a domestic laborer, and her son-in-law Joshua Hoke, age 30, a common laborer. Both males were eligible to vote. Norman, age 30, a teamster, had established his own household, living with Augusta Wilson, age 23, "keeping house," and Charley, age 21, a canal boatman. This family was also listed as living near Norman's mother, Susan Wilson, with Gusta Willson, age 28, keeping house, and Norman, age 30, as a canal boatman. Henry, age 25, a "common laborer," was now married to Martha, age 26, keeping house, and they lived nearby.

In 1875, Susan Wilson, age 62, was head of a household that included her daughter, Nancy M. Hoke, age 34; her son Norman, age 36, a boatman; and her grandson Charles, age 5, in a house worth \$200.

In 1880, Susan was listed as age 63, keeping house for her daughter Margaret, age 30, and her grandson Charley age 9. The other children had all moved away or died.

Notably, Susan was always listed in these census records as head of her own independent household, never as a domestic. It seems reasonable to assume that she had once worked for the Lipe family and then married, had five children, and was widowed before 1850. When she moved to

¹² Death record for Margaret Wilson Hoke, d. April 2, 1894, aged 44 years, colored, cook. Father Thomas Wilson, Mother Susan Wilson. Cause heart disease. Medical attendant John C. Jackson. Buried Fort Plain. Montgomery County Department of History and Archives.

the little house on the hill and how she acquired it, we do not know. No deeds were recorded in the county clerk's office in her name. Was she buying this house on a land contract? Did one of her children own it? Did members of the Lipe family rent it to her?

"Susan Wilson, colored, died at her home in Fort Plain last Tuesday. The deceased would have been 100 years old next June. She was born a slave in Virginia and was a servant in President Monroe's household during his second term." *The Otsego Farmer*, Fri., April 29, 1898 [www.fultonhistory.com]

A Servant of President Monroe Dead

Fort Plain, N.Y., April 19—Susan Wilson, colored, died at her home in this village yesterday. The deceased would have been 100 years old next June. "Aunt Susan," as she was called, was well known throughout this entire section. Her memory was good. She was an intelligent conversationalist and was not feeble. She was born a slave in Virginia and was a servant in President James Monroe's household during his second term."

Gloversville NY *Daily Leader* 1898

One Hundred Years Old

Mrs. Susan Wilson, colored, died at her home in Fort Plain Sunday afternoon, age 100 years. Nearly all her life had been spent in the Mohawk valley and more particularly in Fort Plain. She was for a number of years a slave for the Lipes, one of the oldest families to settle in that vicinity and who were the parents of Seeber Lipe, now residing on Upper Canal street. One son survives. The funeral was held this afternoon.

Gloversville NY *Daily Leader*, April 19, 1898.

--Mrs. Susan Wilson, colored, 100 years old, died at Fort Plain yesterday. She was the oldest person in the Mohawk valley and had lived in Fort Plain 60 years. One son survives.

Johnstown *Daily Republican*, April 19, 1898

**Site of home of Phebe Lansing Jackson and son Charles H. Brown
Center Street
Fort Plain, New York**

Significance: Phebe Lansing Jackson represented the many solid black working class families of Fort Plain. Phebe Jackson owned her own home on this site. Her husband Francis worked as a canal boatman. Her son Wilbur Jackson joined the Army during the Civil War and served in the siege of Petersburg. Her son Charles Brown became a barber and bought this property from his mother.



Site of Phoebe Lansing Jackson Home next to Methodist Church, looking west
November 2011



Phoebe Jackson home at 41 Center Street (white house with porch). Date of photo circa 1960s. Courtesy of Eileen Chambers, Village of Fort Plain Historian.

Description: The Jackson family owned a small two-story frame house on this site, just north of the church. With its gable end facing the street, it reflected the influence of Greek Revival forms, much

like many other pre-Civil War working class houses throughout upstate New York. This house was demolished in the mid-twentieth century.

Discussion: Phoebe Lansing Jackson, born about 1827, lived somewhere in the Town of Minden, beginning about 1840, where her son Wilbur Jackson was born on August 1, 1845. She first appeared in the census in 1850, when she was thirty-three years old. She lived with her husband Francis Jackson, aged 48, born about 1802 in Montgomery County, most likely in slavery. Francis and Phoebe had two children, son Wilbur aged five, and daughter Mary, aged 1. By 1855, the family had added another daughter, Alice, born about 1851. Francis was listed as a laborer and owner of \$250 worth of property. All five family members had been born in Montgomery County. By 1860, the family Julia Jackson lived with this family aged 90. She may have been Francis Jackson's mother, or she may have been Phoebe's mother, since a Julia Lansing was recorded in Minden in both 1850 and 1855.

The early 1860s brought many changes to this family. Julia Jackson died before 1865. So did Francis, Phoebe's husband, who at age 59 fell from the stern of the canal boat *Warsaw* while it was travelling through Newark in Wayne County, New York. He broke his neck on the rudder and died instantly. His body was returned to his home in Fort Plain for burial.¹³

By 1870, all three children continued to live at home with Phoebe Jackson, who was listed as owning \$1000 worth of real property and \$200 worth of personal property. Wilbur Jackson worked as a teamster. By 1875, only daughter Alice, then 22 years old, lived at home with her mother, whose property was by then worth \$1400. In 1876, Phoebe sold the property to her son Charles H. Brown. At that time the property was described as follows:

"northerly by a lot formerly owned by Mrs. J.B. Johnson and now occupied by J.R. Simms, easterly by Center street, southerly by the Methodist Church lot, westerly by a lot owned by Walter Keller excepting and reserving that part of said lot sold and conveyed by said Phoebe Jackson to the Methodist Episcopal Church of Fort Plain said lot hereby conveyed is thirty-four feet more or less on Center Street."¹⁴

Phoebe D. Jackson died December 13, 1893 at the age of 72 years, 10 months, and 8 days.

¹³ *Wayne County Sentinel*, November 1861. Another notice read, "On Sunday evening of last week, at Newark, a negro named Francis Jackson was killed by falling from the stern of a canal boat; his neck being broken by striking upon the rudder-blade of the boat. An inquest was held, and a verdict in accordance with the above statement. The body of the deceased was taken to Fort Plain, where his family reside, for interment."

¹⁴ Deeds, Montgomery County Clerk's Office, 1876, Liber 96, page 14.

BOATMAN KILLED.—The Newark Courier says a colored man named Francis Jackson was killed at that village by falling from the boat Warsaw, Sunday evening, 10th inst. He was taken from the water in three minutes, but it was found that his neck was broken—probably by striking on the rudder blade as he fell. He lived in Fort Plain.

Wayne County Sentinel, November 1861

On September 15, 1864, son Wilbur Jackson enlisted at Schenectady for a one-year tour of duty in the U.S. Army. On September 20, he was mustered in as a Private in the 26th U.S. Colored Infantry, Company D. By joining, he earned a \$400 bounty paid by the town, serving as a substitute for Daniel C. van Camp of Fort Plain. Wilbur Jackson served during the siege of Petersburg, where he broke his right arm. He was discharged on August 20, 1865.¹⁵

¹⁵ Military & Naval Records, Town of Minden, Montgomery County, New York, 1861-72.

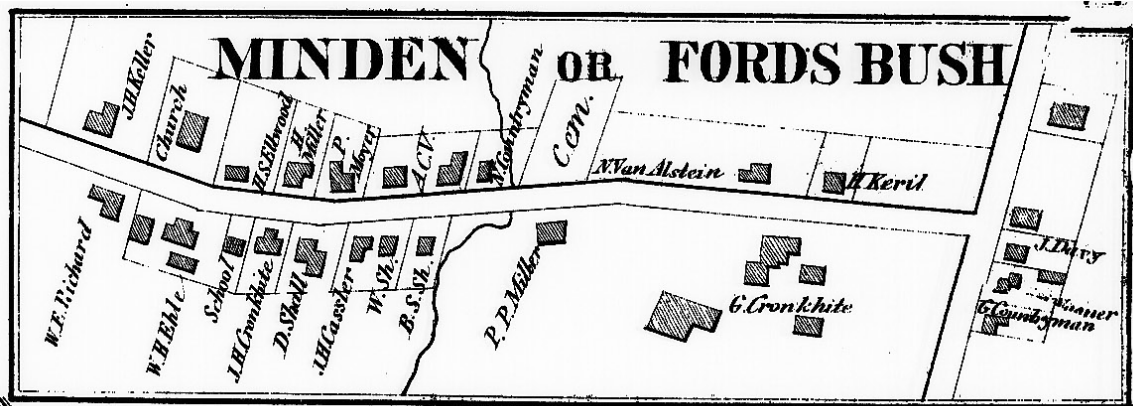
Nicholas VanAlstine Home and Site of Fordsbush Evangelical Lutheran Church
Ford's Bush
Town of Minden

Significance: Under pastors J.W. Lawyer and Nicholas Van Alstine, this church helped organize the antislavery Franckean Synod, the only Lutheran Synod in the U.S. that espoused abolitionism. In 1839, they ordained African American Daniel Payne, who later became a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.



Franckean Lutheran Church, Fordsbush

Photo from "Steeple Chase," *A History of Churches in the Town of Minden, Montgomery County* (Fonda: Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, 2000)



Lutheran Church second from left, north side of street. Nicholas Van Alstine's house second from right (just east of the cemetery).

Atlas of Montgomery County (1868)



Site of Lutheran Church among trees, looking east
August 2011



Home of Nicholas Van Alstine, Fordsbush
Looking northeast, August 2011

Description: Although the church as pictured was constructed in 1867, it was chartered on April 30, 1836. On September 19, 1836, the church decided to build a new building in 1837, “for the worship of Almighty God and our Heavenly Father.” They rebuilt an old schoolhouse to create the church, dedicated February 1, 1838. In 1867, this church was torn down and replaced with the building shown above.

Van Alstine’s home is a typical gable-and-wing with Greek Revival trim around the doors and broken pediment. Changes in fenestration and siding do not obscure the integrity of its location, design, setting, feeling, and association.

Discussion: On May 5, 1837, Rev. Lambert Swackhammer, a graduate of Hartwick Seminary, met with four other ministers and representatives from twelve area churches in the schoolhouse chapel in Fordsbush to form the antislavery Franckean Synod, which broke away from the Hartwick Synod because its members believed that slavery was “a sin in the sight of God.” For several years, they published a newspaper dedicated to abolishing slavery, *The Lutheran Herald*. Historian Paul P. Kuennig has asserted that the Francken Synod, named after German Lutheran pietist August Hermann Francke, was “the only corporate body [among Lutherans] to take an early, serious, and vigorous stand on behalf of the abolition of human slavery.” As such, it was “without precedent in the history of the Lutheran church.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Guide to Swackhammer Family Papers, New Jersey Historical Society, www.jerseyhistory.org/findingaid.php?aid=1048; Paul P. Kuennig, “New York Lutheran Abolitionists: A Solution to a Historical Enigma,” *Church History* 58:1 (March 1989).

The Franckean Synod promoted its antislavery stance in both its constitution and in a pamphlet called “The Fraternal Appeal” (published in 1842), which Douglas Stange called “the most explosive anti-slavery document ever to come forth from a Lutheran body.” Basing their arguments both on the Bible and the U.S. Constitution, they argued, “all humanity constitutes one human brotherhood, rich or poor, high or low, honored or dishonored.” They sent this Appeal to all Lutheran synods throughout the U.S.¹⁷

Rev. John D. Lawyer was the second pastor of the Fordsbush Evangelical Lutheran Church, serving from 1838-39. He also became the first president of the Franckean Synod. In both of these positions, he took a strong antislavery stand. On October 18, 1838, a correspondent with the pen name of “Origen,” apparently a member of the Franckean Synod, wrote a letter published in the *Colored American*, an African American newspaper in New York City. Traveling on the canal across New York State, he arrived in Fort Plain at 3:00 a.m. After spending the night in a local tavern, he took another boat nine miles to Crouses Lock, where he hired a carriage to take him to Fordsbush. He arrived about 1:00 p.m. “and was heartily welcomed by our pious President,” Rev. J.D. Lawyer. He described his visit as a “delightful season, conversing about general topics and the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom.” There he also met Mr. Ladvux, who was going to Canada as a missionary. “Mr. Lawyer and Mr. Ladvux,” noted Origen, “are red-hot abolitionists.”¹⁸

Rev. Nicholas Van Alstine succeeded Rev. Lawyer as pastor of this church. He served from 1839-50 and again from 1860-79. Born in 1814 in Schoharie County, Van Alstine entered Hartwick Seminary in Oneonta in October 1835, with a \$75.00 loan from the Hartwick Synod. At the seminary, Van Alstine met Dr. George B. Miller, who argued that slavery must end because it was not part of a natural state of life. Perhaps through Miller’s influence, Van Alstine gave his first public antislavery talk in 1838, at his ordination to the Franckean Synod. He argued that slavery “deprives him [man] of liberty, equality in rank, and the opportunities of elevating character and cultivating the noble powers of mind.” Instead, slavery “degrades” mind, “and reduces it to brutal inferiority.” Van Alstine continued to speak and write prolifically against slavery until its abolition. He served often on the Franckean Synod’s Select Committee on American Slavery, and in 1861 gave an antislavery sermon on Thanksgiving Day, published as “A Specific Remedy for National Calamities.”¹⁹

When Van Alstine arrived in Fordsbush, he made good use of emotional religious revivals to arouse people’s commitment to abolitionism. He did the same when he organized the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Fort Plain in 1840.

¹⁷ Karen Blumquist and John R. Stumme, *The Promise of Lutheran Ethics* (Fortress Press, 1998), 89-92; Douglas Stange, “The 125th Anniversary of the Fraternal Appeal,” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 40: 43 (1967), quoted in Paul P. Kuennig, “New York Lutheran Abolitionists.”

¹⁸ *Colored American*, November 3, 1838.

¹⁹ “Steeple Chase,” *A History of Churches in the Town of Minden, Montgomery County* (Fonda: Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, 2000), 26, based on Robert Van Alstine, *Steadfast: A Biography of Rev. Nicholas Van Alstine* (1814-1900).



Nicholas Van Alstine
"Steeple Chase," 26.

In 1839, while under the leadership either of John D. Lawyer or Nicholas Van Alstine, the Fordsbush Evangelical Lutheran Church was the site of the ordination of African American Daniel A. Payne. Born in South Carolina, Payne was a free person of color, driven out of the south by South Carolina's laws against teaching African Americans. He studied at a Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and in 1839 gave the keynote address at the Francken Synod in Fordsbush, where he was formally ordained. His speech, "Slavery Brutalizes Man," was a ringing endorsement of the Franckean Synod's antislavery stand. It is now available online. In 1841, Payne joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church, where he became a nationally known bishop. In 1863, he became the first black college president when he served as president of Wilberforce University in Ohio.²⁰

In 1861, Van Alstine, with others members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, helped establish Mount Hope Cemetery next to his home.

In 1908, the Franckean Synod combined with the Hartwick Synod and the New York and New Jersey Synods to created the Synod of New York.

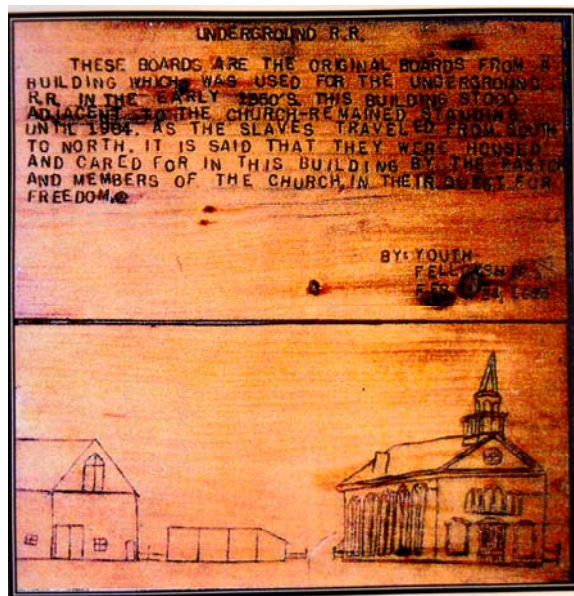
²⁰ Daniel A. Payne, "Slavery Brutalizes Man," *Lutheran Herald and Journal of the Fort Plain, N.Y., Franckean Synod* 1:15 (August 1, 1839), 113-14, www.blackpast.org/?q=1839-daniel-payne-slavery-brutalizes-man.

United Methodist Church and Cemetery
620 Freysbush Road
Fort Plain, Town of Minden 13339-3944

Significance: Strong oral tradition suggests that the barn (now demolished) behind this church was used as a safe house on the Underground Railroad. This survey was not able to confirm this, but the site is worth further research. The cemetery includes several African American graves.



Looking south, May 2011



Sign in United Methodist Church of Frey's Bush,
Created by Youth Fellowship, February 24, 1985



Barn to the left may have been the barn used to shelter freedom seekers. Thanks to Eileen Chambers for finding this photograph.

Description: As early as 1812, Methodists held services at Freys Busch Station, part of a circuit that included several small villages in southern Montgomery County. In 1864, preaching was discontinued at one church in the circuit, Willsey Hill, over issues relating to slavery and the Civil War.

In 1828, parishioners at Freysbush built their first church, complete with bell, stove, and pulpit with steps that led up on either side, on land donated by John Diefendorf. In 1840, the church divided its cemetery into lots, with a special section for African Americans. In 1870, the church was renovated, with a new foundation, a twelve-foot addition in the rear, and a raised roof, with new lamps, carpet, pulpit, cushions, bell, and two furnaces.²¹

Discussion: In 1985, young people associated with the Youth Fellowship of the United Methodist Church at Freysbush created an engraved wooden plaque, commemorating the oral tradition that people affiliated with the church (and the barn, now demolished, behind it) were involved with the Underground Railroad. This survey found no evidence to support this tradition, but further research in records located at the church (which include a membership list from 1837-46, part of the Canajoharie Circuit of the Oneida Conference) may help locate names of abolitionists (both white and black) and African Americans who may have affiliated with this church.

At least one African American was a member of this church and lies buried in the cemetery. Records of the Freysbush Church from 1887 note that “Amy Lando, s. [single?], colored” was a member. A revised membership list from 1904 indicates that Amy Lando “died Sept. 23, 1904.” Cemetery records note her dates of birth, May 19, 1814, and death, September 23, 1904.²²

²¹ *Steeple Chase: A History of the Churches in the Town of Minden* (Fonda, New York: Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, 2000), 39, 12-16.

²² Freysbush Church records in Montgomery County Department of History and Archives.

Town of Minden**Hessville homes and cemetery, Route 163**

Significance: Thomas James escaped from the farm of George Hess, somewhere in this area, in 1821, as documented by James' autobiography.



Greek Revival, Hessville, south end of town



Greek Revival, Hessville, south end of town



Looking south from Hessville, toward Appalachians



Pasture, Looking east, south of Hessville

Description: About 1821, Thomas James, enslaved in Canajoharie, was purchased by George H. Hess. James moved to Hessville for three months until he escaped in June 1821. We do not know where he actually lived in this hamlet. Today, Hessville is a loose collection of houses that extends for a mile or more along Route 163 (an old turnpike road), surrounded by farmland and hills in the southern part of the Town of Minden. The surrounding landscape, while most likely more open than it was when James lived there, remains rural and wooded, dotted with open fields and pastures. Thomas James most likely saw the same Appalachian foothills rising south of the hamlet that visitors can view today.

George H. Hess lies buried on what is locally known as the Aaron's Farm cemetery, four hundred feet west of Route 163, about 250 north of the intersection with Indian Trails Road.²³

²³ Find A Grave Memorial #63528946, created by Charlott Hess on December 31, 2010, www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=63528946. Thanks to Skip Barsheid for helping us to locate this cemetery.

These two Greek Revival houses are the most high style buildings in Hessville. Although they post-date Hess's death, parts of them may be earlier. It is not known whether or not they were associated with the Hess family.

Discussion: Thomas James, born in 1804, grew up as "Tom," enslaved in the southern hills of the Town of Canajoharie, near Buel, owned first by Asa Kimball. (See description for Thomas James/Asa Kimball in the Town of Canajoharie.) When Kimball died, his estate sold seventeen-year-old Tom to Cromwell Bartlett, who traded him to Bartlett's father-in-law George H. Hess for a yoke of steers, a colt, and some additional property.²⁴

Hess had been born nearby on March 17, 1773, of John Hendrick and Maria Elizabeth Gerlach Hess. Hess married Maria Elizabeth Yordan on March 19, 1793. They had eight children, of whom Catherine, second oldest, married Cromwell K. Bartlett, second owner of Tom.

Through his mother, Hess was related to the Gerlack/Garlock family who later held Mary Garlock Miller in slavery. When Adam Garlock made his will in 1828, George H. Hess was one of his executors.

James lived with Hess only three months, from March to June 1821. When Hess threatened to whip him, James ran away. He described his experience in his autobiography, published in 1886:

My master had worked me hard, and at last undertook to whip me. This led me to seek escape from slavery. I arose in the night, and taking the then newly staked line of the Erie canal for my route, traveled along it westward until, about a week later, I reached the village of Lockport. No one had stopped me in my flight. Men were at work digging the new canal at many points, but they never troubled themselves even to question me. I slept in barns at night and begged food at farmers' houses along my route. At Lockport a colored man showed me the way to the Canadian border. I crossed the Niagara at Youngstown on the ferryboat, and was free!²⁵

George H. Hess died on September 27, 1840, aged 67 years, six months, and 10 days. He was buried near his home on a small cemetery on Aaron's Farm, near his wife Mary E., who died on May 30, 1838, aged 66 years.²⁶

²⁴ Thomas James, *Rev. Thomas James, by Himself* (Rochester, N.Y: Post Express Printing Company, 1886), docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jamesth/jamesth.html.

²⁵ Thomas James, *Rev. Thomas James, by Himself* (Rochester, N.Y: Post Express Printing Company, 1886), docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jamesth/jamesth.html.

²⁶ "Small Cemeteries in the Town of Minden," unnamed cemetery on the Aarons Farm, montgomery.nygenweb.net/cemeteries/mindcems.html.

Site Descriptions

Mohawk

- 1. Larkin Mead House**
- 2. Sammons-Derry House**
- 3. Wendell House**

Larkin Mead House
83 East Main Street
Fonda, New York

Significance: Larkin (Larcom) Mead represents a man born in slavery in Montgomery County in the early nineteenth century who achieved relative stability and independence in freedom. He married Margaret (who may have been born enslaved in Virginia) and bought this house in 1851, where he and Margaret raised their children and lived for almost twenty years.



Description: This frame gable-and-wing house may have been built in two sections. The wing may have been constructed first as a small three-bay house, with broad side facing the road and center doorway. The height of the main gable, facing the street, as well as its steep angle suggest that this may have been added after the Civil War. In 1849, the site included a wagon and blacksmith shop, as well as a dwelling. Lark Mead purchased this house on December 10, 1851, from Michael Dorn and sold it to Frederick and Winfield Sanderson on October 18, 1873. He and Margaret lived here until the early 1870s, when at least Lark moved to Amsterdam.¹

Discussion: Census records in 1855 suggest that both Lark Mead and Margaret Mead had lived in Montgomery County all their lives, Lark for 54 years and Margaret for 42 (since her birth on May 15, 1811). In 1875, however, their son Martin told the census taker that his mother had been born in Virginia. Had Margaret escaped from slavery to live in freedom with Lark, deciding not to reveal her birthplace to census takers?

Lark Mead appeared in the 1850 census as a forty-five-year-old laborer, born in New York State, living in the Town of Mohawk, married to forty-year-old Margaret, also born in New York.

¹ Deeds in Liber 63, 43 and Liber 93, 10. Thanks to Ryan Weitz, Historian, Village of Fultonville, for deed research and locating this house.

They had five children, Jane (age 13), Charles (age 15), Elizabeth (11), Mary (8), and Martin (3) Lark was listed as illiterate; the three older children were in school.

In 1855, Lark was a farmer, 54 years old, with \$200 worth of property. According to this census, both he and Margaret, age 42, had lived in Montgomery County all of their lives. Elizabeth, Mary, and Martin still lived at home.

In 1860, Lark was listed as a laborer, age 52, with property worth \$500. Margaret was forty. Elizabeth, Mary, and Martin still lived at home. In 1865, Lark was age 57, laborer, owning \$900 worth of property. Margaret was 55, the mother of seven children. Children "G." (probably Elizabeth, age 23) and Martin (18) still lived at home.

In 1870, Larcome Meed (now age 62) still lived with Margaret (51) in the Town of Mohawk. Still a common laborer, he owned real property worth \$900 and personal property worth \$100. Martin, age 27, had moved to Amsterdam. He was working as a broom maker and had married a woman named Harriet, age 20. The difference in ages between the census records reflect that information provided to the census enumerator was not always accurate.

Larkum Mead appeared in the Amsterdam city directory for 1873, living at 17 Main Street. Lark Mead died on July 11, 1874. Margaret Mead died on October 24, 1875, and she was buried in Green Hill Cemetery (birthdate listed as May 15, 1811). ²

Their son Martin Mead (age 30) was now a teamster, living with Harriet (27), born in Monroe County, New York. They had a son Edward (3). Significantly, Martin's mother was listed as born in Virginia.

² Green Hill Cemetery list of burials; "Letter of Administration," Book 7, 14, file #417, Index to Wills and Administration, 1787-1904, Montgomery County History and Archives.

Mohawk**Home of Colonel Simeon Sammons Family, Julia and Landon Derrey, and Eliza Derrey Ray
Route 30A North**

Significance: The Sammons family was famous for their resistance to the British during the Revolutionary war. They also held people in slavery, including Julia Derrey, who married a Mohawk man named Landon Derrey and lived here with Colonel Simeon Sammons, a Civil War officer, and his family until her death at age 108. Their daughter Eliza Derrey Ray became a traveling lecturer for African American rights.



History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties (1878)



Sammons Family Home, looking north
May 2011



Sammons Family Cemetery

Description: The Sammons house as it currently stands is a double-wing Greek Revival building. Parts of this building may date to the late eighteenth century, but the main block of the house most likely dates to the 1840s. Its wings have been much changed from its original construction.

Discussion: The Sammons family is best known in the Mohawk Valley as “staunch and intrepid supporters of the American cause” during the American Revolution. In 1780, Sampson Sammons and his three sons (Thomas, Jacob, and Frederick) were captured by troops led by Loyalist Sir John Johnson. They were forced to march as, noted Oliver Bell Bunce in 1853, Loyalists committed “one uninterrupted outrage” of murder and pillage on the north bank of the Mohawk River. The elder Sammons and his youngest son Thomas were quickly released, but Jacob and Frederick were imprisoned in St. John’s, New Brunswick. They both escaped in June 1780 and after considerable hardship returned home. Jacob died in 1810, while Thomas became a member of Congress and Frederick was elected a presidential elector in 1836.³

The Sammons family maintained their lifestyle with the help of African Americans. In 1810, Thomas Sammons owned two people in slavery, and in 1820, one free woman of color, aged 14-26, lived in this household. Perhaps this was Julia Derrey. She married a Mohawk man named London Derrey (or Darrow). They lived in a log cabin near the Sammons house, and on October 26, 1824, they had a daughter named Eliza. Julia Derrey would often tell the story of how she had once held a

³ Oliver Bell Bunce, *The Roman of the Revolution: Being a History of the Personal Adventures, Romantic Incidents, and Exploits Incidental to the War of Independence* (Bunce and Brother, 1856), 92-110, Google Books.

chair at a banquet for George Washington. London Darrow died on November 23, 1859, aged 84. Julia continued to live with the Sammons family until her death on March 15, 1887, at age 108.

When she was fifteen years old, Eliza Derrey married William Ray. They had five children and helped organize the first black church in Gloversville, probably the A.M.E. Zion Church that still exists there. Educated at Captain Knott's school in Schenectady, Eliza later lectured in western New York to help raise money for African Americans in the South. She died at the home of her daughter in Gloversville on January 3, 1932, when she was 107 years old. ⁴

London and Julia Derrey (Darrow) are buried in Lot 143 of Prospect Hill Cemetery in Gloversville. William Ray and Eliza Derrey Ray lie next to them, in lot 144. Next to the Rays lie the two wives of Jeremiah Nutt, who had escaped from slavery to live in Montgomery County and fight in the Civil War, along with Delia Smith, who married Lewis/Luther McKinney and then became the first wife of Bruce Anderson, who won a Congressional Medal of Honor for his service in the Civil War. ⁵

⁴ Newspaper clipping, n.d., n.p., Montgomery County Historian's Office.

⁵ Prospect Hill Cemetery Records, Office of Montgomery County Historian.

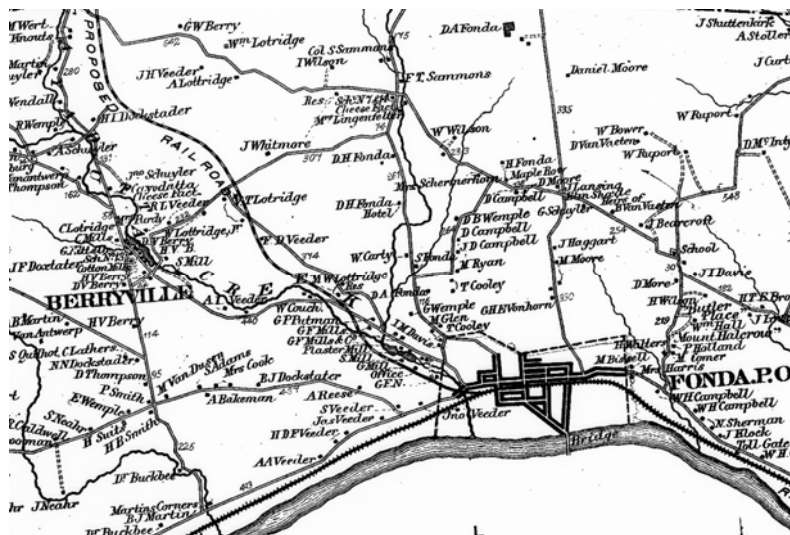
Mohawk**Home of Michael and Elizabeth Wendell**

West side of road from Fonda to Sammonsville

Significance: This house represents that generation of people moved from slavery into freedom. Michael and Elizabeth Wendell were both born in slavery in Montgomery County and survived to raise their family in this house. Son and daughter-in-law Oliver and Ruth Wendell took over this house and later owned a home in the Town of Root.



Wendell House, Looking north
May 2011



1868 Map – Wendell house is on road heading north out of Berryville,
4th from top on left corner of map

Description: This frame gable-and-wing house on the banks of the Cayudutta Creek, on the road to Johnstown just south of Sammonsville, was the home of Michael and Elizabeth Wendell and their family. Although no deeds were listed in their names, census records listed Michael Wendell as the owner of property, and the 1868 Montgomery County map listed the Wendell family as living here. A newspaper article reported that Harmon Wendell, son of Michael and Betsy, sold this land to James

Martin, whose name appeared here on the 1905 county map. The form of this house reflects a Greek Revival influence, with the main gable facing the street and a wing built on to the north. This house was most likely constructed after 1850.⁶

Discussion: Adults in the African American Wendell family were all born in slavery, and their children were the first post-slavery generation in Montgomery County. This house represents the lifestyle of that generation which moved from slavery into freedom. The family appeared in census records from 1850 to 1880. By the end of their lives, Michael (born about 1800) and Betsey (born about 1808) Wendell could count themselves as successful landowners and farmers. Although unable to read, they owned property and had raised their children in freedom and safety.⁷

In 1850, the family consisted of four adults, all illiterate, and three children, all born in New York State. Adults included Michael Wendell, laborer, age 50; his wife Elizabeth, age 48; a second Elizabeth, perhaps Michael's sister, age 41; and Diana Havens, age 58, perhaps a sister of wife Elizabeth. David Wendell, age 16, worked as a laborer, like his father. Lauria [sic], age 18, and Oliver, age 6 (who attended school) completed this family. Value of Michael's property was listed as \$300.

By 1855, Michael still worked as a laborer, with his age listed as 51, while his wife Betsey, perhaps a second wife, was listed as 42. Diana Havens no longer lived with the family. Nor did the second Elizabeth or daughter Lauria. Son David, laborer, and son Oliver, now 12, still lived with the family as did a three-year-old daughter, Marietta. Value of real estate was listed as \$300.

In 1860, Micle [sic] and Elizabeth lived at home with children Oliver, now 17, and Marietta, now 5, with property valued at \$300.

In 1870, Michael, now 74, still worked as a laborer while Elizabeth, age 65, kept house. Martha (probably Marietta) was now 17 and Oliver, age 27, still lived at home. A third child, Duane, most likely a grand child, since he was only one year old, had joined the family. Michael's real estate was listed as worth \$520, with personal property worth \$100, while Oliver had personal property worth \$125.

By 1875, Michael was listed as 75 years old, a farmer, and owner of property worth \$500. Betsey was now 67. By 1880, Michael had died, Elizabeth was listed as insane, living as a boarder in the County Alms House. Oliver and Ruth had most likely taken over the family homestead.

See also description for the home of Oliver Wendell and Ruth Adams Wendell in the Town of Root.

⁶ Many deeds exist for Benjamin Wendell. Was Benjamin Michael's father? See, e.g. Benjamin Wendell from Henry B. Jansen, 34/436, April 17, 1834; from Cannon Hibbard, 34/508, May 20, 1834; from Anthony Robbison, 41/71, May 22, 1837; from William Allen, 47/281, May 11, 1841; from Isaac Snyder, 47/282, May 11, 1841.

⁷ Michael Wendell was spelled in various ways: Micle Wendell in 1860, Michael Wendle in 1865 census, Mick Wendell in 1875.

Site Descriptions

Palatine

- 1. Frey House**
- 2. Gramps/Krempps Houses**
- 3. Kilts Farm**
- 4. Site of Joshua Read House**
- 5. Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia**

Frey House**Route 5, one mile west of Route 10****North bank of Mohawk River****Palatine Bridge, New York**

Significance: John Frey represents those Whig politicians from elite land-based families in New York State who supported political and legal rights, including the right to vote, for African Americans.



Raymond W. Smith, National Register Nomination
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frey_House



May 2011

Description: Built in 1808, the Frey House is a five-bay stone Federal house, with a one-and-a-half story kitchen wing added in 1882. Nearby stands the original Fort Frey, built originally by Hendrick Frey, a native of Zurich, Switzerland, in 1689, palisaded by the British in 1702, and replaced with the current stone building in 1739. ¹

¹ Raymond W. Smith, National Register Nomination, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frey_House; Fort Frey, New York State Military Museum, dmna.state.ny.us/forts/fortsE_L/freyFort.htm; *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties, N.Y.* (F.W. Beers & Co., 1878).

Discussion: The Frey family was part of a large migration from the Palatine area of what is now Germany to southeastern Pennsylvania and the upper Mohawk Valley of New York State. Frey family members were active in New York State politics from their earliest settlement. Major John Frey (c. 1740-1833) fought in the Revolutionary War and in 1788 served as delegate to the Poughkeepsie convention that ratified the new U.S. Constitution. His son, also named John Frey, became a prominent Whig abolitionist. He was vice-president of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1840 and a member of the constitutional convention for New York State in 1846, where he supported equal suffrage for black men. His daughter Carrie married the son of Joshua Giddings, who served as an abolitionist member of the House of Representatives from Ohio from 1833-59.²

² Kelly Farquhar, "African American Life - The Montgomery County Experience in the 19th Century," unpublished talk; *Friend of Man*, Sept. 23, 1840; "Joshua Reed Giddings," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joshua_Reed_Giddings.

**Palatine
Gramps Family Homes**

Significance: Henry Gramps, John Gramps, Peter Gramps (also spelled Grams or Kremps) and probably other members of the Gramps family owned people in slavery before 1827.



**Gramps Family Homes, Palatine.
Photos by Carrie Freese, 2011**

Description: The Gramps family owned several farms and homes in the town of Palatine. Most of those that still stood in 2011 dated from the 1840s or later, after the period of enslavement in New York State, but the back wing of the house, with twelve-over-eight window panes, may date to the period of slavery.

Discussion: The Gramps family were part of the migration from the Palatine area of what became Germany into the Stone Arabia area in the eighteenth century. Henry Gramps and Peter Gramps both appear in the 1820 census as owners of people in slavery. Henry Gramps was listed with one male, aged 26-45, living in slavery in his household. Peter Gramps was listed with one female, 14-26, living in slavery in the Gramps household and one free black man, aged 14-26, living with the family. Neither Gramps family was listed as owning others in slavery in the 1810 census.

A remarkable collection of Gramps family manuscripts (shared by Skip Barshied) suggests considerable family activity, from 1792 to 1817, in buying and selling people in slavery. In 1792, Henry Kremps, Jr., purchased an enslaved child named Harry, aged six, from Nicholas Van Alstine. In 1802, Henry Kremps bought a woman named Sarah, aged 34-35, from George Eigenbroat. In 1804, he bought another young woman named Nan, aged 27, from John Cook. In the mid-18-teens, Henry, whose last name was now spelled Gramps or Grams, continued to buy and sell other people. In 1814, he bought a young man named Jack, aged 20, from Severinus S. Dygert. In 1815, he purchased an enslaved woman named Mary, aged about 27, from Aaron V. Putnam. In 1817, John H. Grames (perhaps a brother or son of Henry) purchased Yat, aged about 40 years, from William H. Devoe, promising to manumit Yat at the end of eight years.

This collection suggests several hypotheses:

1. census records are wildly inaccurate, in terms of recording people of color in 1810 and 1820.
2. most enslavers held only a small number of people in slavery at any one time.
3. buying and selling people in slavery, in small numbers, was very common among land-holding farmers in Montgomery County before 1820.
4. neither age nor sex protected people from sale. Men, women, and children were all liable to be sold.

Further research may expand our knowledge of what these sales meant to the people—both African American and European American—involved. How common were these sales? Did African Americans share households in relatively comfortable living conditions with Dutch, German, or English enslavers? Did enslavers attempt to keep families together?

Know all Men by these Presents that I George
Eigenbroad of Palatine in the County of Montgome-
ry and State of N. York for and in Consideration of
the sum of Twenty pounds Lawful Money of the
State of N. York to me in hand paid by Henry Krump
of the same place County & State aforesaid at & before
the Enacting & Delivery of these Presents, the Receipt where-
of is hereby Acknowledged have bargained sold & confirm-
ed by these Presents do bargain sell & confirm unto the
said Henry Krump a certain Negro Wench named
Sarah Aged About Thirty four or 35 years herewith de-
livered with all her wearing Apparels, To have &
to hold all and Singular the said ^{Negro} Wench named Sa-
rah by these Presents Bargained sold & confirmed
unto the said Henry Krump to the sole and Only Use
Benefit & behoof of the said Henry Krump his Heirs, Ex-
ecutors Administrators & Assigns for ever of the said George
Eigenbroad for himself his Executors & Administrators
all and Singular the said Negro Wench Sarah unto the said
Henry Krump his Heirs Executors, Administrators and
Assigns against him the said George Eigenbroad his Heirs
Executors, Administrators & Assigns & Against all and
every other Person or Persons whatsoever shall & will
Warrant and for ever Defend by these Presents, In Witness
whereof I have hereunto set my hand & Seal this Twentieth
Third day of Oct^r. One Thousand Eight Hundred and two
N.B. The words Negro & Property being interlined before Execution
Signed sealed & Delivered
In the presence of the
Henry Krump

George Eigenbroad
Mark

Bill of sale between Henry Kramps (buyer) and George Eigenbroad (seller) for "a negro wench named Sarah aged about thirty four or 35 years" for the price of twenty pounds (1802).

Courtesy Willis "Skip" Barshied

Kilts Farm and Susan Livingston Grave Town of Palatine

Significance: Susan Livingston was born enslaved about 1809. When she died in 1853, she was buried on the Kilts Farm in the Town of Palatine.



Description: Peter Kilts bought this homestead from the heirs of Philip Livingston in 1750. The farm remained in the Kilts family until 1965. Its two main houses, Dutch barn, and outbuildings were listed on the National Register in 2009. Both houses are story-and-a-half frame buildings, with central doorways, two windows on each side, and their broad sides to the street, with Greek Revival details.

A detached outbuilding, perhaps once the main kitchen, contains a large fireplace and cooking oven.

Discussion: Behind the house, the family graveyard contains a stone for Susan Livingston. The writing is faded, but a new sign, erected by the current owner, reads:

IN MEMORY OF SUSAN LIVINGSTON
A WOMAN OF COLOR
WHOSE FINAL RESTING PLACE IS
NEAR THIS SPOT.
DIED APRIL 23, 1853, AGE 44 YEARS.
BORN IN AN AGE OF SLAVERY
DIED IN AN AGE OF FREEDOM.

Susan Livingston was most likely born in the Town of Palatine, perhaps in the village of Stone Arabia, since church records for the Dutch Reformed Church in Stone Arabia contain her death record. The 1850 census listed her as born in New York, age 40, living in the home of David Nellis, laborer. She did not appear in later census records.³

³ Records in Montgomery County Office of History and Archives

Palatine**Home of Joshua Read and Mary Stafford Read****North end of bridge, Route 5****Demolished. Now site of Rite-Aid Drugstore**

Significance: Joshua Read was Susan B. Anthony's uncle (oldest brother of her mother Lucy Read Anthony). When Anthony taught school in Canajoharie (1846-49), she frequently visited her Uncle Joshua and Aunt Mary, and she boarded with two of his children (Eleanor Read Caldwell and Mary Read Caldwell). Unlike Anthony's abolitionist parents, Joshua Read had once owned at least one person in slavery, and he remained a proslavery conservative Democrat, challenging Anthony to balance her obligations as a loving family member with her commitment to abolitionism.



Looking North, May 2011

Description: The home of Joshua Read and Mary Caldwell Read stood at the north end of the bridge that connected the Village of Palatine Bridge with Canajoharie. The house stood near the homes of their son Daniel and their daughter Mary Read Caldwell (where Anthony boarded for several months at a time). No known pictures exist of this house, which was demolished to make way for this Rite Aid drugstore.

Discussion: Joshua Read (1783-1865) was the oldest brother of Lucy Read Anthony, Susan B. Anthony's mother. With his wife Mary Stafford Read (1787-1866), he had three children, Eleanor Read Caldwell, Margaret Read Caldwell, and Daniel Stafford Read. He owned a substantial farm, and when Daniel Anthony, Susan's father, went bankrupt and lost his mill and home, it was Joshua who rescued the family financially, purchasing their household goods and leasing to them a farm near Rochester. As trustee of the Canajoharie Academy, he was most likely influential in getting Susan her job as head of the female department in 1846.⁴

⁴ Ann Gordon, editor, *Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Vol. I, note, 61.

Anthony often visited the home of Joshua and Mary Read. Typical of her relationship with this strong-minded man was one incident she recounted to her parents in the fall of 1846:

Sunday even. 15th [October 1846] I attended Church this A.M. then went over the River & staid until 4 P.M. Uncle had been very much perplexed and to finish off with, when he got home from Church & went into the barn he found his corn crib burst & some of his corn in the barn yard & some on the barn floor with hens & geese hard at work. The pigs also neighbors pigs had rooted up a large bed of parsnips. Well his feelings were very much tried; he seemed striving very hard to hush his passions, finally said he, It seems as though the Devil was trying to see if he could not tempt me to day. He walked to the barn & back again then took his concordance & from that, turned to some passage in luke where read for a long time. What a change there must be in that man, in olden times, he, instead of thus struggling with & quelling the storm of passion, would have burst forth in uncontrollable wrath and the most bitter oaths. O that we all might thus wrestle & conquer every unruly passion of the heart.”⁵

Joshua Read’s conservative proslavery attitudes were in direct contrast to the radical abolitionist sentiments that Anthony was used to in her own home. Before the end of slavery in New York State, Joshua Read (like most farmers of any means) owned at least one person in slavery. In 1822, he sold an eighteen-year-old “negro boy” named Jack to Philip Knapp for \$75. In 1848, Anthony recorded a conversation about slavery between her Uncle Joshua and her father Daniel Anthony:⁶

Uncle is Old Hunker [conservative Democrat] to the back bone, and would not allow that the North had any more right to interfere with Southern Slavery, than the South had with the Northern system of manufacturing. Father kept very cool, never talked once on his accustomed key. I was glad to have Father express his mind. Many people are so afraid of disturbing the repose of those engaged in inhuman traffick.”⁷

In spite of these arguments from proslavery family members, Anthony solidified her commitment to radical abolitionism.

⁵ Anthony to parents, November 6, 1846, Gordon, *Selected Letters*, Vol. I.

⁶ Gordon, ed., *Selected Letters*, Vol. I, footnote 2, 131; Bill of sale, Montgomery County Archives [HF18-C-28]

⁷ Susan. B. Anthony to Lucy Read Anthony, October 10, 1848, Gordon, ed., *Selected Letters*, Vol. I, 132-33.

Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia
Southwest Corner of State Route 10 and County Route 33
Town of Palatine
Listed on National Register, 1977

Significance: Like many Montgomery County churches, including those established by Palatine German settlers, the Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia included African American members, one of whom was Susan Livingston.



Description: Built between 1787-89, this simple rectangular cut limestone church was a sister church to the Reformed Dutch Church across the river in Canajoharie. With construction attributed to Philip Schuyler, it replaced an earlier church that burned in 1780. Entrance is at the south end, with the belfry, perhaps a later addition, at the north end. Georgian influences include a Palladian window and fanlight in the gable. Galleries line either side of the interior.⁸

Discussion: Church records show that several African Americans, were baptized here. In 1850, the census listed Susan Livingston as born in New York, age 40, living in the home of David Nellis, laborer. She did not appear in later census records. When she died in 1853 her death was recorded in the records of this church and she is buried on the Kilts Farm, north of this church. (See description of Kilts Farm.)⁹

⁸ Doris Vanderlip Manley, "National Register of Historic Places Registration, Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia," www.oprhp.state.ny.us/hpimaging/hp_view.asp?GroupView=4358.

⁹ Records in Montgomery County Office of History and Archives; 1850 U.S. Census.

Site Descriptions

- 1. Root, Oliver and Ruth Wendell**
- 2. St. Johnsville, Leonard and Curran Mill**

**Home of Oliver Wendell and Ruth Adams Wendell
Route 162, Currytown
Town of Root**

Significance: The Wendell family represents African American families who lived in slavery in Montgomery County and whose descendents remained in the county for several generations as free people of color.



**Wendell Home
June 2011**

Description: This small story-and-a-half three-bay frame house sits sedately along Route 162 in the Town of Root. It probably once had another window or door, now covered with clapboards, on its broad side. Site identified by Root Town Historian Bill Maring.

Discussion: Oliver Wendell was one of the children of Michael and Elizabeth Wendell, who lived in the Town of Mohawk. Ruth Adams Wendell was associated with the Diefendorf family, whose family cemetery is about fifty feet from this house.

Oliver Wendell first shows up in census records in 1850 as a boy of six, living in the home of his parents Michael and Elizabeth. In 1855, he was twelve years old, and in 1860, he was listed as age seventeen, still living at home with his parents. In 1865, he was a laborer, living with his parents and sister Mary Elly in Mohawk. In 1870, he was twenty-seven years old, a common laborer, with a personal estate worth \$125, still living with Michael and Betsy Wendell, who were then 74 and 65 years old. A sister Martha, age 17, is also in the household, with one-year-old Duane, perhaps Martha's son.

In 1875, Ruth Wendell, age 24, appeared in the Town of Root as a servant, living in the household of Cornelius Dievendorf. This may be the source of the story that Dievendorfs and hand enslave the Wendell family. The Dievendorfs seem to have been affiliated with Ruth, not with Oliver.

The 1855 census lists an African American girl, age 14, named Ruth, born in Root, whose surname is illegible. She is living as a servant in the home of John I. Yates, farmer. In 1865, Ruth Adams, age 23, is living as a servant in the home of Cornelius Dievendorf, farmer. On Dec. 31, 1874, Ruth Adams married Oliver Wendell at the Fonda Reformed Church parsonage with Oliver's

residence listed as “near Fonda” and Ruth’s as Currytown. By 1875, she is still in the Dievendorf home, but her last name is Wendell.

Oliver was not listed in 1875, but by 1880, he was counted in the Town of Mohawk as a head of household, age 47, a laborer, living with his wife Ruth, age 39, who was keeping house. No other people shared their household. Perhaps in 1880 Oliver and Ruth lived in Oliver’s parental home, since father Michael had apparently died, and mother Elizabeth, listed as age 72, was listed as insane and a boarder in the County Alms House in Glen.

It is not known when they moved to the Town of Root, but by 1884 Oliver and his brother David had transferred the family homestead in Mohawk to William James Martin. The 1905 county map lists the property as owned by James Martin. Perhaps Oliver and Ruth returned to Ruth’s family after the Wendell children sold their parental home.¹

Sometime before 1905, the Wendells were living in the home of John McNally. In 1905, they moved to “the tenant house of Yates Dievendorf,” which may be the house pictured here.²

In January 1911, friends and neighbors of the Wendells celebrated their thirty-eighth wedding anniversary with a surprise party in their home. “The little home was soon full to overflowing,” noted the *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, “so the whole company adjourned to the school house, where music, refreshment, and a general social time was enjoyed. Many useful and substantial gifts testified to the esteem in which Mr. and Mrs. Wendell are held.”³

Oliver Wendell died in 1919, age 85. He was buried in the Sand Flats cemetery.⁴ His wife, Ruth Adams Wendell, died in 1921 at the age of 81. She is also buried in the Sand Flats Cemetery. (For more on this family, see the site description for the Michael and Elizabeth Wendell home in Mohawk.)

¹ *Johnstown Daily Republican*, July 26, 1898.

² “Currytown,” *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, Jan. 5, 1905.

³ “Currytown,” *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, Jan. 5, 1911.

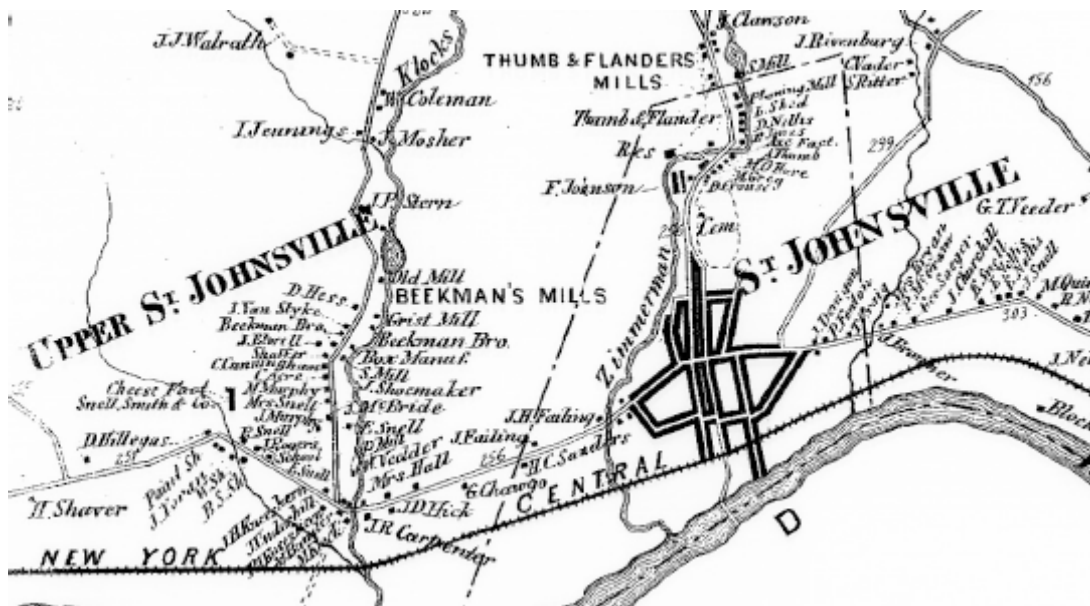
⁴ *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, Nov. 28, 1919; *Gloversville Morning Herald*, Mon., Nov. 28, 1919;

Leonard and Curran Mill
Timmerman Creek
St. Johnsville

Significance: In 1841, Daniel Leonard, owner of this mill, signed an antislavery petition sent to the House of Representatives. Leonard represents the many small manufacturers who supported abolitionism.



www.innbythemill.com/millhistory.htm



Beekman's Mills and Grist Mill are located just left of center of the map

Description: This stone two-and-a-half story stone gristmill was three bays wide and four bays deep, with a central front doorway and limestone lintels. It stands on the banks of Klock's Creek, which (along with Zimmerman's Creek, just east) provided waterpower for several area mills. Research by

A.E. Seaman, who acquired the mill in 1884, suggests that the building was completed in February 1835 by Daniel Leonard and a partner named Curran.⁵

Highway records record an application in the minutes of March 28, 1839, for “the alteration of the highway leading from Messrs. Leonard & Curran's grist mill to the Mohawk Turnpike, and thence to Sanders' Ferry, across the Mohawk River,” apparently the road which still leads from this gristmill to the river. As part of the surveyor's technical description of the road, he noted “a stake and a stone in the ground in the Mohawk Turnpike in front of Daniel Leonard's dwelling house,” suggesting that Leonard lived along the Mohawk Turnpike (now Route 5), running east and west just north of the Mohawk River. Curran (perhaps James Curran, who was listed in the 1850 census for St. Johnsville as a farmer) lived on a farm later owned by Stanley Shuster. Several Daniel Leonards appeared in the 1850 manuscript census. The Daniel Leonard from St. Johnsville may have been the one who moved to Johnstown to open a “mitt” factory.

From 1838-41, highway commissioners levied assessments against Leonard and Curran as individuals. In 1842 and 1843, they levied them against the two as a partnership. In 1843, Samuel Sadler, the first miller employed here, replaced Leonard in this list with Samuel Sadler. Sadler and Curran operated the business until 1845, when Anthony Beekman took it over. The 1850 census listed Anthony Beekman, age 50, as a “tanner and currier,” with property worth \$3000. He lived with his children Noah W. (age 23), Catharine (age 21), John G. (age 19, a mason), Reuben (age 17), Benjamin (age 13), and Laomi (age 10). Next, George Magadica (age 28, born in France), also a tanner and currier, lived with his wife Mary (age 30), and their son Henry H. (age 5). By 1868, the mill was listed on the Montgomery County map of that year as owned by the Beekman Brothers. The *Town of St. Johnsville Sesquicentennial History* suggested that Anthony Beekman's sons inherited the mill after their father's death. They hired their youngest brother Laomi, who was not one of the owners, as the miller. They also conducted a grocery store and feed store in St. Johnsville.

In 1884, A.E. Seaman purchased the property and ran the mill for thirty-seven years until October 1, 1921, when the McCrone Brothers took it over.

Town of St. Johnsville Sesquicentennial History noted that the original water wheel for the mill was thirty feet in diameter and eight feet wide on its face, connected with metal bearings to a shaft that was eighteen inches across. To prevent winter damage, a wheelhouse enclosed the whole apparatus. A.E. Seaman replaced the old wheel with a new more efficient turbine.

Discussion: A tunnel and three small rooms lie beneath this mill. Local tradition suggests they were used as part of the Underground Railroad, but no primary source evidence exists to support this view. It is clear, however, that owner Daniel Leonard supported the abolition of slavery, as indicated by his signature on an 1841 petition to Congress.

Very few African Americans lived in the Town of St. Johnsville before the Civil War. Only six African Americans were listed in the town in the 1850 census, nine (including the Clausen and Flint families) in 1855, and twelve in 1860. After the Civil War, St. Johnsville's African American population grew, albeit slowly. Eighteen people of color were listed in 1870 and seventeen in 1875, many of them members of the Clausen family. By 1875 and 1880, many African Americans began to list their workplaces as a factory or mill, a “circle factory,” “fifth wheel shop,” or sawmill, for example.

Although few of their neighbors were people of color, several European Americans in St. Johnsville were committed to ending slavery. Among the very few antislavery petitions sent to

⁵ This description is based on the 1850 census and on the *Town of Saint Johnsville Sesquicentennial History 1838 – 1988*, noted in “Leonard and Curran Mill,” www.innbythemill.com/millhistory.htm.

Congress from Montgomery County, two came from St. Johnsville. Whether inspired by a local church group or by another network, we do not know. St. Johnsville citizens sent their petitions in care of John Quincy Adams, former president and now congressman from Massachusetts, who had taken it as his personal responsibility to submit antislavery petitions to Congress. Dated December 1841, the first one was a litany of antislavery requests to the federal government, highlighted with a clear statement that "slavery should immediately cease." It read:

To the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States,
The petition of the undersigned inhabitants of the County of Montgomery in the State of New York most respectfully represents

That in their opinion slavery is a sin against God and a crime against man and should immediately cease—

Your petitioners therefore pray that your honorable body will as fast as in your power abolish slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia, also abolish the internal slave trade between the States, prevent the admission of Florida or Texas except as free states in the union and abolish the Act by which the Southern slaveholder attempts to recapture his fugitive slave in the Free States and your petitioners will ever pray—

December 1841

Morris Klock
Elias Saltzmann
Nelson Perkins
William Toomer

Noah Yale
Isaac Fulmer
Peter B. Burlingame
Daniel Leonard
Jacob P. Sitts

To the House of Representatives
of the Congress of the United States
The petition of the undersigned
inhabitants of the County of Montgomery
in the State of New York most respectfully
represents— That in their opinion
slavery is a sin against God and a crime
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cease— Your petitioners therefore pray
that your honorable body will as fast as
in your power abolish slavery and the
slave trade in the District of Columbia,
also abolish the ~~slave trade~~ internal
slave trade between the States— prevent
the admission of Florida or Texas except
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the Act by which the Southern slaveholder
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in the Free States and your petitioners
will ever pray—
December 1841
Morris Klock
Elias Saltzmann
Nelson Perkins
William Toomer
Noah Yale
Isaac Fulmer
Peter B. Burlingame
Daniel Leonard
Jacob P. Sitts

HR27-A.H1.7

In 1845, St. Johnsville residents, not including Daniel Leonard, who had most likely moved out of the village two years earlier, sent a second petition to Congress. John Quincy Adams submitted it to Congress on February 18, 1845.

To the Congress of the United States—

We the undersigned, inhabitants of Montgomery County—New York—Respectfully represent—that, “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal;--that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;

--We further more represent that in our opinion all laws and usages which now exist in relation to the inhabitants of the District of Columbia inconsistent with the above declaration, are unconstitutional and ought to be immediately abolished—

We therefore ask your Hon body to repeal and amend all such laws and usages, which may exist in the said District as are understood, and interpreted to confer privileges and immunities on one class of inhabitants to the exclusion of others—

St. Johnsville, Montgomery Co New York

January 1845

Noah Yale

Morris Klock

Calvin Hillman

Henry Stiles

Colin W. Yale

John Williams

Alex Montgomery

Philip Flander

Cornelius Klock

Jacob C. Hilligas

Jacob P. Sitts

Wm. H. Shill

Edwin Saltsman

DeWit Klock

Two notes were appended to the main petition. The first read: “I believe it to be the undivided sentiment of the inhabitants of this place that slavery is unconstitutional in D.C.” N. Yale. The second tried to separate its signers from the organized abolitionist movement, perhaps as a way to give legitimacy to their requests: “There is but one person whose name is attached to the within petition who is an abolitionist.”