

Village Views

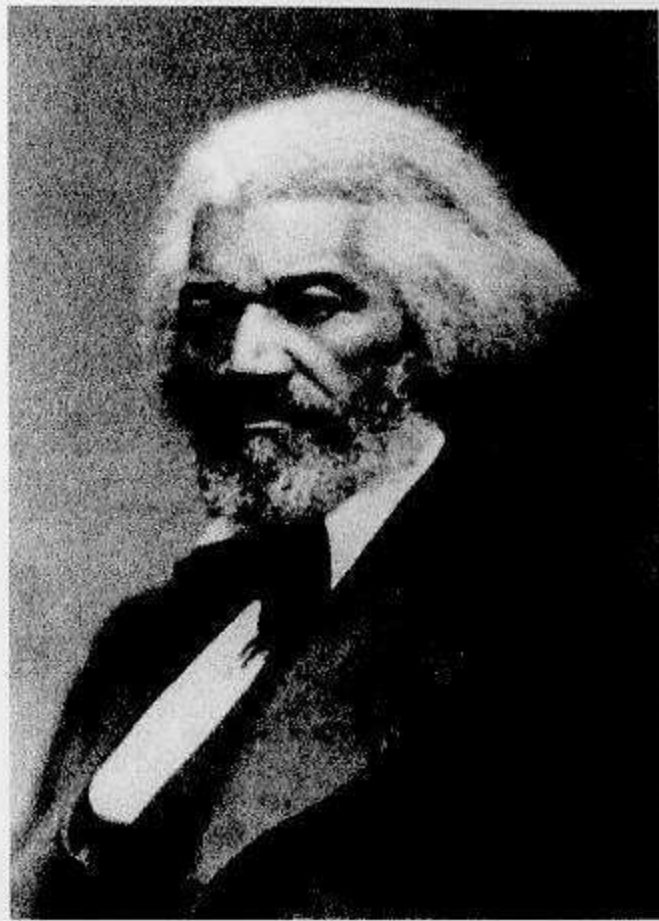
Volume X, Number 1

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On the cover: Liberty with the new nation. From the Independence Flagstaff in Union Square Park, designed by the New York sculptor Anthony de Francisci in 1926, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the signing. The text of the Declaration is reproduced in bronze, as seen on our back cover. De Francisci had designed the 1922 silver dollar, known as the Peace Dollar, which features a similar profile of Liberty; his wife, Teresa was the model.

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I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the *underground railroad*. I honor those good men and women for their noble daring, and applaud them for willingly subjecting themselves to bloody persecution, by openly avowing their participation in the escape of slaves. I, however, can see very little good resulting from such a course....I would keep the merciless slaveholder profoundly ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave....Let us render the tyrant no aid; let us not hold the light by which he can trace the footprints of our flying brother. —*Frederick Douglass*.

THREE SMALL HOUSES LINKED TO THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY: DESTROYED FOR THE DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN PLAN?

Destruction, and "A cry of 'Fire!'"

Three small historic houses stand in an urban renewal area rezoned for development and subject to eminent domain: 227, 231 and 233 Duffield Street. Owners protested that the houses were part of the Underground Railroad, but Deputy Mayor Doctoroff's Downtown Brooklyn Development Environmental Impact Statement found no "documentable association" with the Underground Railroad. The City Council thought otherwise.

The controversy over the forced demolition of the Duffield Street Houses raises two political issues:

- How do we remember the history of slavery and its abolition, the Underground Railroad in Brooklyn, the Civil War, and the 13th Amendment? Does that history still matter?

New research and new books about slavery—seventy-five in the last year, according to the *New York Times*—new exhibitions, new museums and historical societies, new web sites, and a booming new cultural tourism industry all point to one conclusion. The past history of slavery and its abolition is still present in our lives and in our minds. Destroying the sites where that history was made is contrary to Federal public policy as expressed in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998, which, however, finds that "many sites are in imminent danger of being lost."

- Should local government use eminent domain to obliterate the historic city and assemble sites for private economic development?

Many Americans were shocked by the Supreme Court's 5 to 4 decision, *Kelo vs. New London*, affirming a city's right to seize small homes to clear the land for private luxury development. The decision triggered a national second look at the role of eminent domain in economic development.

New York City government has an opportunity to respond to these concerns. It has an opportunity not to exercise eminent domain against Joy Chatel, a widow and a grandmother, whose home at 227 Duffield Street—as we will show—was part of an important Brooklyn abolitionist community in the years before the Civil War. Instead, government has an opportunity to create a freedom memorial to that Brooklyn community whose leaders—men and women, black and white—were brave fighters for the constitutional rights we now enjoy. Taking this opportunity would not jeopardize the Downtown Brooklyn Plan, which is an urban renewal project of vast scope. There is still time to refine existing schematic plans that call for open space and a parking garage on Duffield Street. Preserving a few small historic houses on one block would require modest design readjustments that are feasible.

Who Owns History? The question is the title of a recent book by Eric Foner of Columbia University. As an historian, Professor Foner cautions against the kind of "selective remembering" that also asks us to forget: forget the origins of the Civil War, forget the historic role of slavery, forget the abolitionist movement, forget the evolution of the Constitution. Similar cautions came from the New-York Historical Society in its recent exhibition, *Slavery*. Is government listening? For New York city to demolish the houses of Brooklyn abolitionists to make a parking garage and call it "urban renewal" would be a travesty. No city is renewed by the selective destruction of its history.

IN THE "SMALL UNIVERSE" OF ZONING: THE DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Given the immense changes proposed, it is a sad commentary on communications in New York that the Downtown Brooklyn Development Plan has received so little public attention. The *New York Times* thought that the Plan might be of interest to "the small universe of people who follow the intricacies of city zoning policies," since as much as 5.4 million square feet of new office and commercial space would be created.² But the *Times* saw no need to offer much information about how this would be achieved, or what it would replace. For most people, the whole question is still flying under the radar.

The Downtown Brooklyn Plan has three main components: zoning changes, urban renewal plans, and a whole new politicized wish list, including spacious development sites to be crowned with skyscrapers, and an agenda of fashionable new urban design requirements. Probably the clearest available project description is in the *Downtown Brooklyn Development Final Environmental Impact Statement*.³

Adopted in 2004, the Plan affects 59 blocks of downtown Brooklyn, with boundaries running along Tillary Street from Prince Street to Adams Street, south on Adams into Boerum Place, then east on Schermerhorn Street, on to the area around the Brooklyn Academy of Music, then north on Ashland Place to Myrtle Avenue, across Myrtle to Prince, and back to Tillary. The Atlantic Yards Arena and Redevelopment Project is just south of the Downtown Brooklyn Plan boundaries. A small area of overlap that was originally proposed was rescinded.

Within these boundaries, a number of re-zonings create potential for much larger new commercial buildings and community facilities with more "flexible" tower options, especially in the area just south of MetroTech, where the Duffield Street houses stand. The Plan incorporates previously adopted urban renewal plans (which provide the mechanism for eminent domain) enlarging them, and extending the duration of those that were about to sunset. It also revises the City Map, officially "de-mapping" Red Hook Lane—part of a road that had existed in Brooklyn since the 17th century—as well as parts of Fair Street, Pearl Street and Prince Street, "to create larger, more viable development sites." The pre-existing (2001) Special Downtown Brooklyn District is amended, with a view to promoting various forms of gentrification, like fancy new pavements on Flatbush Avenue. There is a list of projected sites for development that are to be cleared, and promises of "amenities" such as a new corporate plaza and a four-tiered underground parking garage on the edge of MetroTech.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW GONE WRONG

The Downtown Brooklyn Plan went into environmental review in April, 2003, and the consultant, AKRF (Allee, King, Rosen & Fleming) prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, Daniel Doctoroff, who acted as Lead Agency. Thanks to a somewhat obscure 1991 revision of the rules governing City Environmental Quality Review⁴ Mr. Doctoroff is an agency, according to current definitions. However, the public authority charged with executing the Plan, the Economic Development Corporation, has acted as spokesman in dealing with the media.

During public hearings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, concerns were raised about demolition of the 227 and 233 Duffield Street houses.⁵ Owners and residents maintained that the houses were historic because of their association with the Underground Railroad.⁶

The consultant, AKRF, stoutly denied that this was possible. In the Final EIS, AKRF wrote:

A thorough documentation study has not uncovered a documentable association of the 227 Duffield Street, 233 Duffield Street and 436 Gold Street buildings with the Underground Railroad, and there is no evidence to support a determination that these properties are eligible for either National Historic Landmark status or for listing on the National Register of Historic Places in relation to the Underground Railroad. The potential existence of tunnels under the street buildings [sic] and any corroborating artifacts cannot be ascertained without further testing. Therefore additional work, first in the form of a visual inspection of the interiors of the buildings after condemnation to ascertain the existence of other artifacts and, second, in the form of new continuous soil borings, would need to be undertaken at the sites.⁷

Further, AKRF asserted that

A link between the Truesdell family, which occupied 227 Duffield Street from ca. 1851 to 1863, and documented Underground Railroad events could not be established....

According to the Brooklyn Papers, at the City Council subcommittee hearing on the adoption of the Downtown Brooklyn Plan, June 14, 2004, an Economic Development Corporation executive claimed that "a dozen agencies" including the Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture of the New York Public Library had been consulted by AKRF when they made these determinations.

But Christopher Moore, exhibitions research coordinator for the Schomburg Center, testified that nobody from the city had ever contacted his organization regarding Duffield Street. "I have never spoken to any representative of your firm about the possibility or probability of Underground Railroad activity on or near Duffield Street," said Moore, who is also a city Landmarks Preservation commissioner. "Had any representative of your firm actually spoken to me, I would have informed them, without hesitation, that the entire length of Duffield Street is one of the city's most promising areas for the study of Underground Railroad activity."

In addition to Commissioner Moore, two other groups, the Weeksville Society and the Bridge Street Church, denied having been consulted. When this misrepresentation came to light, serious questions were raised about the impartiality and accuracy of the process by Councilmembers Barron, Avella and Gioia.⁸

The City Council, led by Zoning Subcommittee Chair Tony Avella and Councilmember Charles Barron, then asked for a supplemental study of the Duffield Street houses and their association with the Underground Railroad. In July, 2005, AKRF announced that further study showed "no evidence" of the Underground Railroad, and Councilmember Barron called for a public hearing on the issue. AKRF then employed a panel of specialists to conduct what the EDC grandly described as a "peer review." This term, however, is not normally applied to a situation where the author of the reviewed document chooses and pays the reviewers. It is also unclear whether Deputy Mayor Doctoroff's service providers really are "peers" of the scholars and authors serving on the panel since we do not know who these scholars are. The public was not allowed to know the names of all the experts, who were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Only a few names have become known. (A comment from the blogosphere: "Why in the world should historians sign gag orders? Is this a nuclear test site?")

FRAMING THE ISSUE BY ASKING THE WRONG QUESTION

Recently, political strategists and pollsters have emphasized the importance of "framing" an issue to win an argument. The question you select dictates the answer. In this case, the answer that the Duffield Street houses have no value can be elicited, but only through a biased analysis that ignores the larger patterns of history, trivializes the role of the abolitionists, and treats fugitive slaves with condescension, as if hiding in some basement defined their participation in the abolition movement, when we know that former fugitives became orators, ministers, authors, publishers and statesmen.

We believe that the Downtown Brooklyn Environmental Impact Statement framed the evaluation of the Duffield Street houses in a way that provides political cover for eminent domain and demolition. Focusing narrowly and ignoring historic context, the consultants ask, can you document beyond a shadow of a doubt that slaves were hidden in these cellars? Juggling the administrative and regulatory arcana of various historic preservation laws, they question whether the houses qualify for National Historic Landmark Status, the highest and rarest honor available at the federal level.

These are not the first or the only questions that applicable law prompts us to ask. Environmental review is advisory: it was intended to provide decision makers with the big picture and the possible alternatives and mitigation. It is there to ensure that the facts are on the table, in this case, the facts about buildings that are surviving monuments to an important moment in history—antebellum houses that were certainly owned and perhaps built by Brooklyn abolitionists who were actively involved in helping slaves achieve freedom.

In 1998, Congress authorized a new program, the Network to Freedom, to supplement the commemoration of Underground Railroad sites available through existing federal historic preservation programs. Although State and National Register (SNR) listing has been used to honor such sites, Congress acted to supplement these programs, in part because SNR restrictions on listing altered buildings, and requirements for owner consent, could sideline candidates that ought to be recognized by an informational program intended to foster a national awareness of the scope and nature of the Underground Railroad movement. Of course, SNR restrictions also apply to the National Historic Landmark program, the highest federal honor available, and the least likely to be bestowed. Most existing landmarks are not eligible for this program.

Although later alterations might indeed affect eligibility of some Duffield Street houses for National Register listing, the New York City Landmarks Law gives broader discretion to the commissioners who designate landmarks. Since it is City Environmental Quality Review that requires this EIS, eligibility for local landmark designation should be a primary consideration, and it is significant that AKRF does not try to argue that the houses could not be designated under city law, but rather focuses on SNR restrictions. In the final EIS, the Landmarks Preservation Commission changed its original assessment (which omitted Duffield Street from a list of potential landmark sites) and volunteered that one of the houses, 233 Duffield Street, was eligible for New York City landmark designation. This unexplained decision may have been made on architectural grounds, since 233 is a rare surviving example of a small 19th century wooden dwelling in the city. It is not known whether the LPC examined the history of the block independently, or relied on the AKRF materials. The New York City Landmarks Law states:

The Council finds that many improvements, as herein defined, and landscape features, as herein defined, having a special character or a special historical or aesthetic interest or value and many

improvements representing the finest architectural products of distinct periods in the history of the city have been uprooted, notwithstanding the feasibility of preserving and continuing the use of such improvements and landscape features, **and without adequate consideration of the irreplaceable loss to the people of the city of the aesthetic, cultural and historic values represented by such improvements and landscape features.** In addition, distinct areas may be similarly uprooted or may have their distinctiveness destroyed, although the preservation thereof may be both feasible and desirable. It is the sense of the Council that the standing of this city as a world wide tourist center and world capital of business, culture and government cannot be maintained or enhanced by disregarding the historic and architectural heritage of the city and by countenancing the destruction of such cultural assets. (Administrative Code, §25-301)

Contrary to impressions AKRF sometimes tries to generate, the City landmarks commissioners are not in any way bound by the standards of the State and National Register, the National Historic Landmark program, or any of the other federal or local commemorative programs specializing in Underground Railroad sites. Nor is there any kind of existing legal requirement to produce so-called "documentable" proof of the presence of concealed slaves for New York City landmark designation, or for City Environmental Quality Review. And, leaving aside issues of alteration and owner consent, National Register eligibility criteria include "association" [just "*association*"] "with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history."

Focusing narrowly on the concealment of slaves, without considering associations with the history of the abolition movement, distorts the larger picture in a way that is pleasing and convenient to enemies of civil rights. But the realities of the Underground Railroad cannot be understood in this way. No genuine historical evaluation is possible without knowledge and without understanding; without sensing the danger faced by fugitives who had "gone after the North Star" and by the abolitionists who tried to help them; without understanding why the fugitives could never be free, even once they reached the "free states"—and what that meant for the role of the Underground Railroad in the abolition movement.

HOW THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD WAS SEEN IN ITS OWN TIME

In its earliest beginnings the Underground Railroad was a movement of black people who—in the extraordinary formulation of the 19th century—"stole themselves." *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, James Pennington's autobiography, describes this experience; how he ran away; how he was sheltered by Quakers; how he came to live as free on Long Island, and how he felt about it.

Slavery had been my theme of thought day and night. In the spring of 1829, I found my mind unusually perplexed about the state of the slave. I was enjoying rare privileges in attending a Sabbath school...I began to contrast my condition with that of ten brothers and sisters I had left in slavery...The theme was more powerful than any my mind had ever encountered before. It entered into the deep chambers of my soul and stirred the most agitating emotions I had ever felt. The question was, what can I do for that vast body of suffering brotherhood I have left behind. To add to the weight and magnitude of the theme, **I learnt for the first time how many slaves there were. The question completely staggered my mind;** and finding myself more and more borne down with it...I was in agony...

In the first issue of the *North Star*, Frederick Douglass wrote

We solemnly dedicate the *North Star* to the cause of our long oppressed and plundered fellow countrymen. May God bless the offering to your good! It shall fearlessly assert your rights, faithfully proclaim your wrongs...**What you suffer, we suffer; what you endure, we endure.**

A similar account of a painful solidarity came from Henry Highland Garnet. Garnet was a slave who as a child escaped from Maryland with his parents and came to live in New York. A slave-catcher pursued and found them, and though the family escaped—his father by jumping out of a window twenty feet above ground—they were separated and lost everything. Garnet, having escaped twice, grew up among Quakers on Long Island to become an abolitionist orator. At the 1840 American Anti-Slavery Society convention he explained why it was that even if he escaped to total safety, for instance in the British Empire, he still could not be free:

I speak in behalf of my enslaved brothers and the nominally free. There is, Mr. President, a higher sort of freedom which no mortal can touch. That freedom, thanks be unto the Most High, is mine. Yet I am not, I cannot be entirely free. I feel for my brethren as a man—I am bound to them as a brother. **Nothing but emancipating my brethren can set me at liberty**....for though my habitation were fixed in the finest part of Victoria's dominions, yet it were vain, and worse than vain, for me to indulge the thought of being free, while three millions of my countrymen are wailing in the dark prison house of oppression.⁹

Henry Highland Garnet was chosen to deliver a sermon to Congress celebrating the adoption of the 13th Amendment in 1865; he was the first African American to speak there. Perhaps Republicans had recognized that Garnet embodied the paradox of the Underground Railroad: that escape was never enough. The issue was never just how to help individual slaves, or how to find hiding places for slaves pursued by their owners, though abolitionists did those things. The issue was how to make the whole United States a safe haven by eliminating slavery, as had been done earlier in Britain.

Harriet Beecher Stowe illustrated this for the nation, writing,

"And so thee still thinks of going to Canada, Eliza?" she said, as she was quietly looking over her peaches. "Yes, ma'am," said Eliza firmly. "I must go onward. I dare not stop...I can't sleep nights. I can't rest. Last night I dreamed I saw that man coming into the yard." (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Chapter XIII, "The Quaker Settlement".)

Focusing exclusively on the Underground Railroad and the help provided to fugitives, it is also easy to ignore the commercial ties to the South, the strong pro-slavery sentiment, and the harsh climate of prejudice that surrounded even free blacks in the north. Craig Steven Wilder (in a contribution to the *Columbia History of Urban Life* series, edited by Kenneth Jackson) writes of the 1850s in Brooklyn:

Free African Americans found themselves stripped of political rights and forced to the periphery of urban life. Most white Brooklynites—immigrant or native, Catholic or Protestant, wealthy or poor—were in conflict on all but a single local issue: the subjection of free black people, a cornerstone of pro-slavery politics.¹⁰

Recognizing the difficulties experienced by free black Brooklynites also illuminates the mob violence and corrupt policing that both black and white abolitionists faced. Abolitionists could be murdered, like Lovejoy, or have their homes sacked, like Tappan, or be assaulted and beaten in the street, like Weld or

Garrison. The vestrymen of Plymouth Church were sometimes advised to bring guns for the protection of themselves and others, when they attended services in that known abolitionist church.

WHAT IS "EVIDENCE" OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD?

Frederick Douglass wrote:

I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the *underground railroad*. I honor those good men and women for their noble daring, and applaud them for willingly subjecting themselves to bloody persecution, by openly avowing their participation in the escape of slaves. I, however, can see very little good resulting from such a course...I would keep the merciless slaveholder profoundly ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave....Let us render the tyrant no aid; let us not hold the light by which he can trace the footprints of our flying brother.¹¹

Thus in 1845 a man who was in many ways the conscience of the movement urged abolitionists to secrecy, fostering the very ambiguity that is now being exploited to deny the abolitionist role in the history of Brooklyn, because we cannot always "document," beyond the shadow of a doubt, the passage of slaves through houses that belonged to known abolitionists, houses with architectural features that could have been used for hiding and escape, houses close to churches and harbors and roads we know were used by fugitives.

Wilbur Siebert, the dean of Underground Railroad scholars, the 19th century historian who first set out to map the routes of the Underground Railroad, expounded the difficulties that beset him:

Written evidence of complicity was for the most part carefully avoided, and little information concerning any part of the work of the Underground Road was allowed to get into print. It is known that records and diaries were kept by certain helpers, and a few of the letters and messages that passed between station-keepers have been preserved. These sources are as valuable as they are rare: they would doubtless be more plentiful if the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 had not created such consternation as to lead to the destruction of most of the tell-tale documents.¹²

Under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the criminal penalty for aiding a fugitive was \$1000 or six months in jail, with additional civil penalties of \$1000 per fugitive available. There is no absolute measure for the value of \$1000 in 1850, but the figure of about \$25,000 in today's dollars has been suggested.¹³ More important, a slave captured under the Act would be returned to his or her owner for whatever cruel punishment the owner might choose. And even before 1850, under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, which required the return of fugitives to their state of origin (though without imposing severe penalties on those who helped them), written communications were evasive, to avoid furnishing evidence against fugitives in the courts. The few messages that belonged to the intrepid William Still of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee might say, the brethren will soon receive a few fine hams, or boxes, or bundles and little bundles. In his *Underground Railroad*, Still mentions that he cannot acknowledge or remember all of his contacts.

Similarly, the exact number of slaves who escaped bondage in the South can probably never be known, and has been variously estimated. Certainly there were tens of thousands, and perhaps hundreds of thousands, but as Siebert notes, documentation of their passage is rare. One must conclude, we do not know and cannot know exactly where the vast majority were sheltered on their terrible journey.

In the light of history, it is not possible to argue that absence of documentation proves lack of connection to the Underground Railroad. And even if one chooses to deny the fact that documentation is rare, or chooses to insist that an abolitionist's house was not used by fugitives unless their presence can be documented, still, that is no vindication for destroying the house. "Nothing but emancipating my brethren can set me at liberty," said Henry Highland Garnet. When Brooklyn abolitionists fought for their cause, they were not fighting for the Underground Railroad. Their cause was immediate emancipation for all slaves. Despite the romance of the Underground Railroad, it was not the pre-eminent civil rights issue, and for that reason, the house of an abolitionist is still historic without any "proof" that it was a safe-house: abolitionists were the freedom fighters who risked their property and their lives to shape our Constitution. Niggling attempts to discredit them in an Environmental Impact Statement are profoundly unpatriotic and a disgrace to city government.

It is interesting to note that none of those immediately responsible is an elected official. The head of the "Lead Agency," Deputy Mayor Doctoroff, is appointed by the Mayor, AKRF is a city contractor, and the Economic Development Corporation is a public benefit corporation.

We acknowledge that because of the hold the Underground Railroad has had on the American imagination, legitimate independent scholars have urged a skeptical examination of oral traditions alone, or individual hiding places alone, as evidence of Underground Railroad activity; for instance, claims have reportedly been made for buildings erected after the Civil War. But reasonable caution need not become more than that. AKRF claims that the Truesdells had no "documentable" connection with the Underground Railroad when they lived on Duffield Street. But was Duffield Street a place where no such connection could be expected?

"THE RUNAWAY SLAVE CAME TO MY HOUSE": BROOKLYN, 1850

Walt Whitman lived at 106 Myrtle Avenue, a block away from the Duffield Street houses, between 1849 and 1852,¹⁴ and was thus a neighbor of the Truesdells. These were the years when he was composing his first, 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*.¹⁵ Much has been written about the ambiguities of Whitman's position on slavery when writing as a journalist and Free Soil partisan, but Whitman himself noted, "The poet is a recruiter, he goes forth beating the drum—O who will not follow his troop?" As a poet, in the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman wrote:

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,
And brought water and filled a tub for his sweated body and bruised feet,
And gave him a room that entered from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;
He stayed with me a week before he was recuperated and passed north,
I had him sit next to me at table, my firelock leaned in the corner.¹⁶

Of course not everything in *Leaves of Grass* is autobiographical. But it was created to be a picture of its time. *The Brooklyn Eagle*, where Whitman worked, was a vehemently pro-slavery paper, reflecting

the views of the majority of white male voters who would later cast their ballots against Abraham Lincoln. Consequently, the *Eagle's* few news stories on the Underground Railroad are derogatory. However, one from 1857 does suggest something about the Duffield Street neighborhood. The *Eagle* reports that a black hackney driver who parked his cab at the hack stand at Bridge and Concord Streets (near the Bridge Street Church, and the Duffield Street houses) was approached by a man who said he was a fugitive and asked to be concealed. The driver took him into his own home for the night. Next day, he conducted him to a safe house in Farmingdale, using the Long Island Railroad. Subsequently, the driver learned that the man was not, as the *Eagle* put it, "a fugitive slave, but a fugitive from justice." He was a free man who had stolen a considerable sum of money on board a ship where he was working as a steward. The driver, outraged, went to the police, the steward was captured, and thus the story became known to the *Eagle*.¹⁷ It is suggestive that the steward chose the neighborhood of Duffield Street to ask for help, and the driver apparently offered it without hesitation or surprise.

References to safe houses naturally tended to surface after the danger had passed. The *Eagle* also reported on an 1889 lecture by the Reverend Dr. Richard Salter Storrs, of the Church of the Pilgrims, who was a founder of the Brooklyn Historical Society:¹⁸

Dr. Storrs had preached an earnest sermon denouncing the Fugitive Slave Law, and declaring that he would never be bound by it nor would he obey it. Dr. Dwight expostulated with him as a friend...but Dr. Storrs was flinty and did not repent. A week later, one stormy Saturday night, Dr. Dwight came to Dr. Storrs's door in the pouring rain, with a man as black as the night, and explained that the poor fellow was a runaway, and he wanted Dr. Storrs to tell him where he could take the man for safety. Dr. Storrs wanted to go himself and relieve Dr. Dwight, but the latter would not hear of it, nor would he permit Dr. Storrs to bear a part of the expense, but insisted on doing the whole work himself. So Dr. Storrs told Dr. Dwight where to take the man, over on Nassau Street, where there was a depot on the underground line.

Nassau Street is about five blocks from the Duffield Street houses. But in view of the record of participation of Dr. Storrs and Dr. Dwight, as well as the roles of Henry Ward Beecher, Reverend Ray, and others, it is certainly arguable that friendly Brooklyn churches were a known stopping place from which travelers were directed to other associated homes nearby for shelter.

ON THE WAY TO LONG ISLAND: PLYMOUTH CHURCH, BRIDGE STREET AWME CHURCH, CONCORD BAPTIST CHURCH

In the years before the Civil War, Brooklyn was a nexus of abolitionist activism, a home and a battleground to leaders in the struggle to rouse the national conscience and abolish the institution of slavery. Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Church in Brooklyn was a national leader of anti-slavery opinion. It is unclear whether he or his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, was the more influential. However, we know that Reverend Charles B. Ray, a founding member of the Committee of Vigilance in Manhattan, brought fugitives from Manhattan to Plymouth Church. The memorial biography of Ray published by his daughters in 1870 specifically notes that he conducted fugitives to the care of Henry Ward Beecher there. According to a Plymouth Church history published in 1873¹⁹

...the name of Plymouth Church of Brooklyn would become famous throughout the land, throughout the world, not only by the fearless denunciations of slavery as an institution

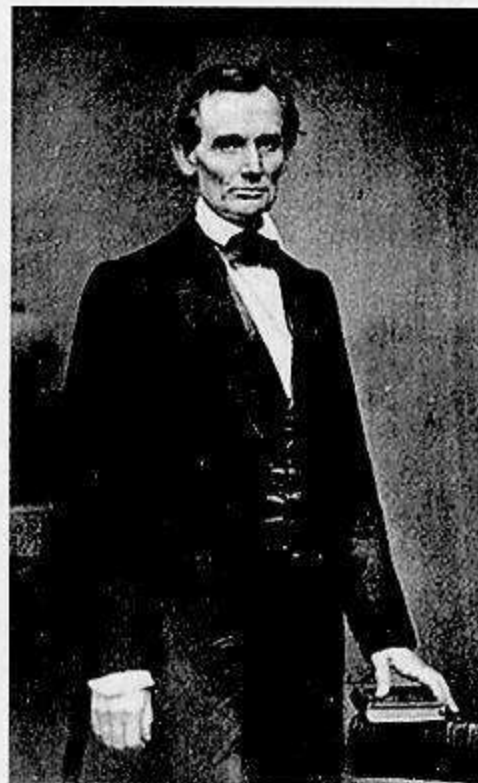
and the Fugitive Slave Law by its pastor, but also by the outspoken sympathy for, and the active and willing aid given to the fleeing and hunted bondmen. Its pastor was certainly one of the most prominent directors of the once noted Underground Railroad company, and its congregation were nearly all large stockholders in that Line—of which, by the way, the Church itself may be said to have been the Grand Central Depot....

Beecher preached that the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was contrary to the law of God and said of the fugitives:

I will both shelter and conceal them, or speed them in their flight; and while under my shelter, or under my convoy, they shall be to me as my own flesh and blood...For such service to those whose helplessness and poverty make them peculiarly God's children, I shall cheerfully take the pains and penalties of this Bill....The man who shall betray a fellow-creature to bondage, shall obey this law to the peril of his soul and the loss of his manhood...²⁰

The day before his famous Cooper Union address, Abraham Lincoln worshipped at Plymouth Church and listened to Henry Ward Beecher preach on the need for political action. Lincoln was there as a guest of Henry Chandler Bowen, a wealthy silk merchant, publisher of *The Independent*, and an early organizer of the Liberty Party, one of the forerunners of the Republican party in New York; Bowen had participated in arranging the speaking engagement. Lincoln sat in the Bowen pew, and was introduced to many members of the congregation afterwards; together with Arthur and Lewis Tappan, Bowen had been a founder of Plymouth, a more militant faction of Congregationalists who broke off from the original Church of the Pilgrims. Bowen was also a trustee of the First Congregational Church on Bridge Street in 1854, when that Greek Revival church building was sold to an African American congregation, becoming the Bridge Street African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church.²¹ The landmarked building still stands as the Polytechnic University Student Center in Metro Tech, a few blocks from the Duffield Street houses; the congregation, which has moved to Bedford Stuyvesant, affirms that the Bridge Street Church was an Underground Railroad station. Frederick Douglass spoke to the congregation at Bridge Street in 1863,²² as did Harriet Tubman in 1865.²³ Another acknowledged "sanctuary for runaway slaves" was the Concord Baptist Church (on Concord Street near Duffield Street; after the war, the Church moved and was located on Duffield Street itself.)²⁴

Peter and Mary Hawes (owners of 231 Duffield Street) appear on the Plymouth Church registers, and Thomas Edwards was also a parishioner. There was a Thomas Edwards who built and owned the house at 233 Duffield Street, but since the Plymouth registers for this period do not include street addresses, it is not "documented" that they are the same person. According to the *Daily News*,²⁵ the supplementary AKRF report is careful to note that the Hawes may not have registered as members while they were living on Duffield Street. But is it credible that Peter Hawes would ever have registered at Plymouth, where breaking a Federal law was deemed necessary to avoid "the peril of his soul and the loss of his manhood," where worshippers went to church carrying weapons to protect themselves from pro-slavery mobs that threw stones against the windows, where rifles were packed into boxes of Bibles and sent to anti-slavery insurrections in Kansas, where women threw their jewels into the collection plate to buy freedom for their enslaved "brethren"—unless he was a militant abolitionist?



Abraham Lincoln, photographed by Matthew Brady.

In the 1840s, many New York churches supported slavery with arguments derived from the scriptures. At first some abolitionists hoped that by remaining in their own congregations, they could effect changes of heart: the Tappan family were Presbyterians in 1838, when Juliana Tappan made that argument for remaining.²⁶ But by the 1840s, her family had abandoned the ideal of persuasion, founded the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and joined a group of twenty who were establishing the new Congregational church that brought Henry Ward Beecher to Brooklyn in 1847. Many people of faith who were abolitionists eventually gave up hope and gravitated to Plymouth, whose membership grew hugely in the years before the Civil War.

One who lost patience early was Theodore Weld, who wrote in 1837 in *The Bible Against Slavery*:

Some of the Bible defenses thrown around slavery by ministers of the Gospel, do so torture common sense, Scripture, and historical fact, that it were hard to tell whether absurdity, fatuity, ignorance or blasphemy predominates...

DESTINATIONS: JERICHO, WEEKSVILLE, THE LONG ISLAND SOUND

The antebellum role of Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island in abolition and the Underground Railroad has only recently been explored and published by historians who help us see the geography—the transportation and the destinations—that made downtown Brooklyn part of the road to freedom.²⁷

According to Dikeman's *Brooklyn Compendium*, Duffield Street was laid out in 1835 as a continuation of Stanton Street to Fulton Street. Stanton lay next to Bridge Street, which had been mapped in 1819.²⁸ Fulton Street, already an artery in the 18th century, was the main road inland from the Fulton Ferry, which in the 1830s and 40s was the ferry closest to the lower Manhattan offices of anti-slavery societies and their founders, to Manhattan's African American churches, and to the businesses of members of the Committee of Vigilance. On the 1775 Rattner map, we see Fulton Street running through farmland and forking into the road to Flatbush and the road to Jamaica, thus connecting onward to all of Kings County and Long Island. It is important to bear in mind that the barriers and divisions we now know, created by approaches to the Brooklyn Bridge, the Manhattan Bridge and the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, were not there before the Civil War. Brooklyn—the old Brooklyn that will be still further cut apart by the Downtown Plan—must be pictured as a far smaller place in rural surroundings, before the Civil War. The Perris map of 1855 shows an uninterrupted progression of blocks divided into small lots through what now are seen as the separate neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights, Downtown Brooklyn and Fort Greene, with factories, shipyards, docks and stores nearest the river. Ferries and other small craft plied the waterways, connecting lower Manhattan, Long Island and Connecticut, and overland, the road to Jamaica led to Long Island where horse-carts of fruits and vegetables moved from market gardens to town. From Brooklyn, the then Jamaica Turnpike was a good approach to Flushing and the North Shore, unless the travelers preferred to go by water. At a time when upper Manhattan and northern Queens were less developed, and the Flushing River and its wetlands were less passable, another possibility was to leave Brooklyn via Flushing Avenue (which crossed Stanton Street four blocks north of the houses) and proceed through Bushwick, Maspeth and Newtown to Flushing. Travel by rail was also already an option in the 1830s and 40s; the tracks of the L.I.R.R. Hempstead branch ran from the East River along Atlantic Avenue to Fulton Street and thence to Jamaica and various Long Island towns—Hicksville in 1837, Farmingdale in 1841. So Duffield Street was conveniently near both road and rail, with access to free black communities, Quaker settlements, and also from there, transportation across the sound to Westchester and Connecticut.

There was a solidarity among abolitionists that crossed boundaries. In August, 1849, under the sponsorship of the Massachusetts Anti Slavery Society, an observance of the anniversary of the West India Emancipation drew four or five thousand abolitionists to Worcester, Massachusetts to celebrate and hear Ralph Waldo Emerson denounce slavery, according to *The Liberator* (August 17, 1849):

They came from a distance of nearly a hundred miles in almost every direction—from Plymouth rock, from the outlet of the Merrimac river, from Concord, Lexington and Bunker Hill, from the regions of Mount Holyoke and along the meadows of Connecticut, from busy Springfield, from Rhode Island, the home and refuge of Roger Williams, a time-honored schismatic and disturber of the peace, and from Long Island Sound.

Because slavery was most widely accepted and prevalent the southern part of the state before 1827, and

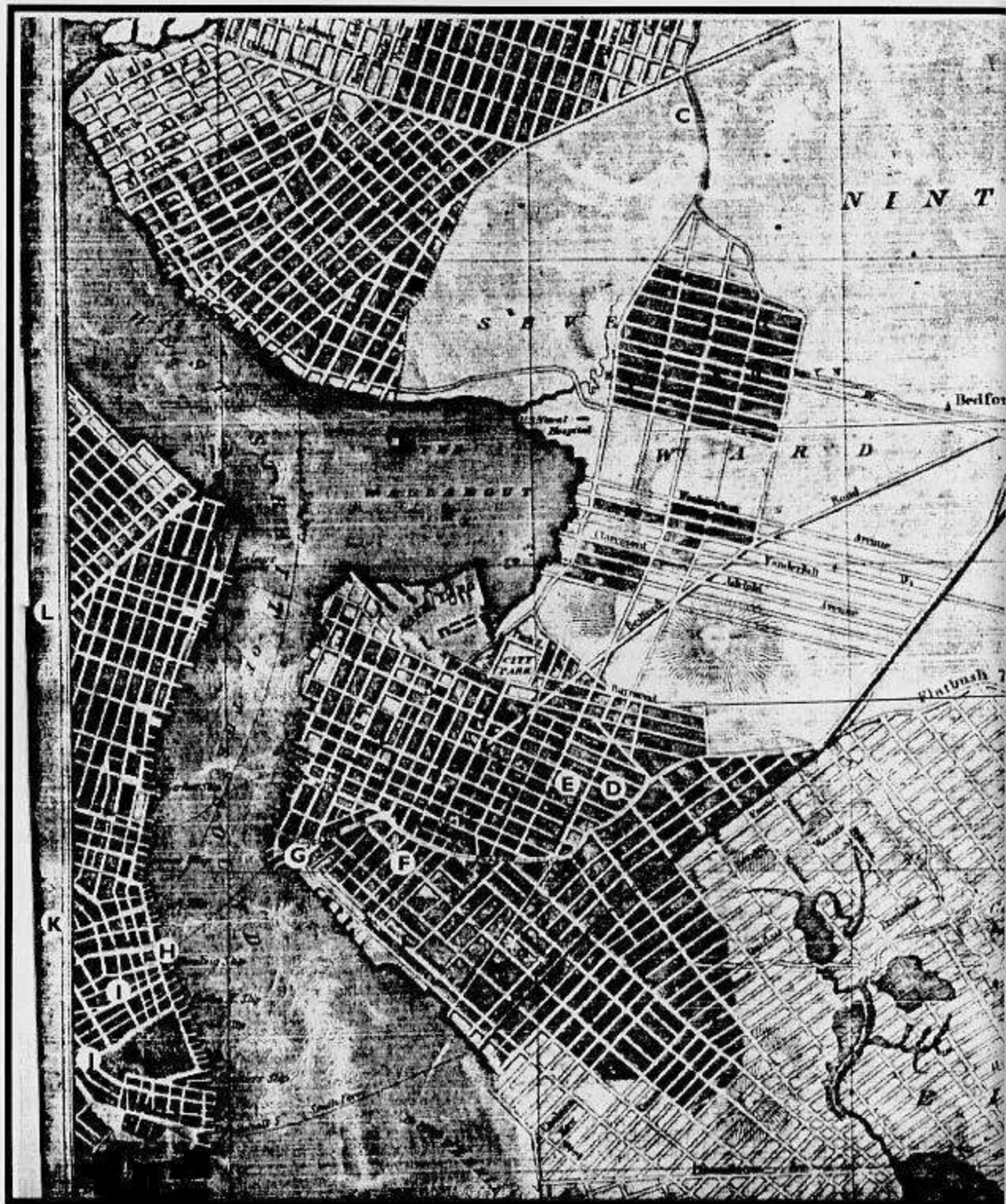
because conservative mercantile opinion in New York City never favored abolition—in 1861 Mayor Fernando Wood opined that New York should join the Confederacy—Underground Railroad activity has come to be associated more with the “North Star country,” Albany, Troy, the “Burned-Over District,” Peterboro, Oswego: places where more idealists lived. But fugitives arriving in New York State from the South often came through Manhattan. William Still of the Philadelphia Committee of Vigilance is known to have directed freedom seekers to Manhattan, and others arrived by sea from points further south.

The New York Committee of Vigilance was there to welcome them. Founded in 1835, it was the first group to offer practical assistance on the ground to fugitives. Members included prominent free black businessmen and clergy in lower Manhattan, such as David Ruggles, the publisher and bookseller, and Charles Ray, a preacher and editor of *The Colored American*. Thomas Downing, the owner of a well known oyster bar on Broad Street, and his son George were active in the cause. Another member was Isaac Hopper, the “venerable saint”, a Quaker who is remembered not only for his kindness, but for never changing his style of dress. He aided those in need throughout his life, and died at the age of 80, still wearing black knee britches in the manner of William Penn, “exactly like the late King Charles, but without the ornament.”²⁹ Hopper, having moved from Philadelphia to New York in 1829, was an important connection between the Philadelphia Committee of Vigilance, the New York Committee of Vigilance and the Quaker communities in Flushing, Westbury and Jericho that remained abolitionist (even after some meetings withdrew from active political participation in submission to what they interpreted as the will of God). Hopper's son married a daughter of the entrenched abolitionist, Lucretia Mott of Philadelphia, who in turn had relations in Long Island and Westchester. These ties seem to have occasioned Underground Railroad routes alternative to the more traveled Hudson Valley path to Canada—those Long Island routes that have only recently been made known.

We know that the New York Vigilance Committee used alternatives at various times that included travel by water from the port of New York to New Bedford—as David Ruggles had arranged for Frederick Douglass immediately after his escape—and crossing the East River to Long Island, with the assistance of Plymouth Church, its pastor, vestry, and congregation (conveniently near the Fulton Ferry). So while most arriving fugitives were directed north along the Hudson and the Erie Canal, through Troy and Albany to Canada, there were alternatives: outwitting the slave-catchers called for a continual shifting of routes to freedom. Although Long Island routes are not plotted on his master map, Siebert summarizes:

The Rev. Charles B. Ray, a member of the Vigilance Committee of New York City and editor of *The Colored American* has left some testimony which corroborates that just given. He knew of a regular route stretching from Washington, by way of Baltimore and Philadelphia to New York, thence following the Hudson to Albany and Troy, where a branch ran westward to Utica, Syracuse and Oswego, with an extension from Syracuse to Niagara Falls. New York was a kind of receiving point from which fugitives were assisted to Albany or Troy, or as sometimes happened, to Boston and New Bedford, or when considerations of safety warranted it, were permitted to pass to Long Island.

There were several destinations. Beyond what was then the town of Brooklyn, the free black community of Weeksville was established in 1838 on a portion of the Lefferts estate that was bought



Annotated to show underground railroad locations relating to the Truesdell House: a section of the *Map of Long Island with the Environs of New York*, by J. Calvin Smith, published by J.H. Colton & Co. New York, 1844.

A. Approximate location of the welcoming free black settlement of Weeksville.

B. The Jamaica and Long Island Railroad, running along Atlantic Avenue and following the Jamaica Turnpike, leading to Westbury and Jericho, additional places of refuge.

C. Skirting the Wallabout, leading from the Navy Yard in Brooklyn north to Newtown, Queens and onward to the Quaker community in Flushing (where the Parsons family helped fugitives): Flushing Avenue.

D. 227 Duffield Street, the Thomas and Harriet Truesdell House.

E. The celebrated Bridge Street AME Church, where Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass spoke to the congregation.

F. Plymouth Church, where Henry Ward Beecher preached abolition and welcomed fugitives.

G. Fulton Ferry, the Brooklyn terminal.

H. Fulton Ferry, Manhattan, where fugitives embarked.

I. Thomas Truesdell's 141 Pearl Street office.

J. Thomas Downing's Oyster House, an outpost of the Committee of Vigilance.

K. Just off this map, at 143 Nassau Street, the American Anti Slavery Society.

L. Also off the map by a few blocks, at 153 Baxter Street near Grand Street, the home of Charles B. Ray, who sheltered fugitives and conducted them to Plymouth Church. Six blocks west, on Lispenard Street, was the bookshop of Samuel Ruggles, Committee of Vigilance member who sheltered Frederick Douglass when he first escaped to New York.

by James Weeks. Dr. Judith Wellman, in research for a National Register nomination, found evidence for Weeksville as a destination for fugitives in the high proportion of residents the census shows were born in the South, and in the presence of Junius C. Morel, involved as a correspondent for the *North Star* and other abolitionist periodicals. In *Slavery in New York*, the New-York Historical Society publication that accompanied their recent exhibition, Wellman characterizes Weeksville as “a major station on the Underground Railroad.”³⁰ The Duffield Street houses are just off Fulton Street, which led to the road to Jamaica, a major road toward Weeksville before the Civil War.

Another alternative was “disappearing in plain sight” in other free black communities formed in Flushing and along the North Shore, where Quaker families had led the way by freeing their slaves as a matter of conscience even before the New York State Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, in 1799. The meetings in Flushing and Westbury and the followers of Elias Hicks were responsible for numerous 18th century manumissions. The 1844 Colton map of Long Island shows the Middle Post Road, leading, like the Long Island Railroad, from Brooklyn to the homesteads of the Parsons, Hicks and Kirby families, and the Motts. New research by James Driscoll, Derek Gray, Kathleen Velsor and Richard Hourahan of the Queens Historical Society into the genealogical records of these families has revealed a previously underestimated network of activism. Slave narratives—like *The Fugitive Blacksmith* by Pennington—also recount moves from Pennsylvania to Long Island, guided by free blacks and Friends.

The Duffield Street neighborhood was conveniently located on the way overland to these destinations. Also, in the 1850s, as part of the 11th Ward, the area itself had a considerable black population. Wilder notes that there were 786 black residents there in 1860, a significant fraction of the 4,999 black residents of Kings County.³¹ People who worked on the docks and in the local Morocco leather factory were often African American, as Lewis Greenstein has demonstrated in his Directory and Census research.³² These occupations could heighten opportunities for inconspicuous travel.

ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE

Architectural evidence, by its nature silent, can be ambiguous. We know that there were Underground Railroad stations without hiding places, and buildings with hiding places that were not stations. The modern example of the diary of Anne Frank shows how existing features of a house can be adapted for concealment. In the Western Reserve, some old homesteads were built with secret closets intended for protection from hostile native Americans: these closets may have found a new use in the Underground Railroad. In other parts of the country, such secret spaces were built for the protection of valuables. Architectural evidence alone can seldom be a determining factor, but it should be weighed.

Most of the original Duffield Street houses were built in the late 1840s and early 1850s, at the height of the fugitive slave controversy. One of the builders, Thomas Edwards, who built and briefly occupied 233, may have been a member of Plymouth Church; the Peter and Mary Hawes family, owners of 231, definitely were parishioners. As will be detailed below, the Truesdells, though not Congregationalists, were active founding members of several anti slavery societies, and also had various links to Plymouth Church, as did William Harned, in the next block; he worked for Lewis Tappan.

233 Duffield Street, the Thomas Edwards house, has an unexplained, fieldstone-lined shaft communicating between the sub-basement or cellar and the back garden. It was large enough for an

exit by ladder, and it is unlikely to have been a coal chute since an 1855 map shows that the back yard was not accessible from the street. This back yard adjoined the gardens of a house too old to be aligned with the new street grid. This layout had potential for escape by foot to nearby Fulton Street.

227 Duffield Street was part of a row of houses with interconnected underground vaults on the street side of the properties, which would have enabled passage from house to house as well as being potential hiding places in themselves. Joy Chatel has seen these vaults sealed up one by one, as related in her oral history submitted for the City Council mandated EIS review. Parts of one of them remain in her cellar, as well as marks of the previous interconnection. That this interconnection existed at the time of the Fugitive Slave Act is in fact “documented”: it is shown on the 1855 Perris, a “fire map” which was designed to illustrate the vulnerability of properties to fire in several ways, color coding the building materials, and also specifying any connections between structures, as indicated in the key by a long dash. These dashes appear between the front vaults of the original row of townhouses at the north end of the block, which in 1855 were numbered 127 to 143 Duffield. The present 227 Duffield was numbered 141 in 1855, when it belonged to the abolitionist Harriet Truesdell. (Images: page 36.)

THE ABOLITIONISTS AT 227 DUFFIELD STREET: THOMAS AND HARRIET TRUESDELL

The Truesdells came to Brooklyn from Providence, where they had been abolitionist leaders.

“Let Rhode Island have the palm—for, of all her competitors, she is now foremost in the race for freedom!”—William Lloyd Garrison, letter of January 30, 1836.³³

Thomas Truesdell and his wife worked under the aegis of William Lloyd Garrison, who was the principal leader of the American abolitionist movement from 1831 to 1865,³⁴ and mentions the Truesdells fondly in his letters. The surviving published records of their points of contact, in Rhode Island and in Brooklyn, suggest that “friend Truesdell” and his wife were part of the network that Garrison painstakingly built up and maintained in every possible state, as part of his extraordinary campaign to sway public opinion.

Harriet was born in 1786 in Providence, where her father, William Lee, was the proprietor of a successful grocery business on Westminster Street, not far from the harbor. Thomas moved from his nearby home town of Woodstock, Connecticut and married Harriet in a ceremony at the First Baptist Church in 1811. They lived in Providence, and Thomas carried on her family’s business after his father in law’s death. A very early opponent of slavery in Providence, he joined the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade, one of the oldest of its kind, founded in 1789 by a dissident member of that prominent mercantile family, the Browns, who founded Brown University. John S. Gilkeson, Jr. in his study *Middle Class Providence*,³⁵ notes:

Only two members of the original Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade, George Benson, former partner of Moses Brown and father-in-law of William Lloyd Garrison, and Thomas Truesdell, a grocer, appear to have been active in the later antislavery movement.

Truesdell is identified in directories as a grocer, and later in New York as a cotton broker. In fact, these descriptions give a somewhat incomplete picture of his business life. Truesdell, alone and through his several partnerships, was a prolific advertiser, leaving an extensive record of his activities in *The Providence Patriot*, *The Rhode Island Advertiser*, *The Rhode Island American*, and *The Providence*

Gazette until 1838, the date of his move to Brooklyn. It was his father-in-law, William Lee, who was more what we now think of as a grocer, as well as a manufacturer of vinegar. When Lee died, not long after his daughter's marriage, Truesdell, as executor, sold Lee's property, including "a good family horse," the family carriage, and various furniture, at auction, but carried on the business on Westminster Street, which was then one of the finest in downtown Providence, not far from the harbor. It was then that he entered into the first of several partnerships, becoming Truesdell & Wheaton, and subsequently Truesdell & Rhodes. His activities as a merchant included importing from abroad and selling at both wholesale and retail, as well as offering storage and sale on commission. While he always advertised and stocked exotic China teas and spices, he appears also to have supplied provisions for ships, such as barrels of preserved pork and beef, described as "mess" or "prime." He had a considerable business in wines and spirits, and tobacco, but also sold furs, china, panes of glass for the construction of windows, medicines, and from the first, cotton.

The earliest offerings are of cotton to be sold for weaving. Subsequently, he was one of several dozen cotton brokers in Providence, not one of the largest; but newspaper descriptions clearly show that the cotton was "upland" and "sea island," that is, from the South. Also, while much of the tobacco he sold was in the form of "Spanish Cigarrs," some was from Kentucky. He handled West Indian products, sugar and spice, before the emancipation of the British West Indian slaves, and his longstanding and very substantial business in rum raises questions of the "Triangular Trade."

This initial failure to fight slavery with boycotts and economic pressure was not unique to Truesdell. In the period from 1811 to 1838, when Truesdell was an active merchant in Rhode Island, many abolitionists were opposing slavery while still condoning the use of products of slave labor: Truesdell had been in business almost twenty years before cotton boycotts became an issue in the North, although, of course, the earlier temperance movement was linked to abolition, when West Indian rum was still a product of slavery. Free Produce Societies sprang up, promoted by Quakers in Philadelphia, Lucretia Mott and the Grimke sisters, but it was only in the 1830s that Lucretia's husband gave up cotton brokerage, at a considerable financial loss, and redirected his business to wool.³⁶ A tract in defense of colonization in 1856 was still attacking abolitionists for failing to understand their role in supporting slavery through their use of cotton, tobacco, and other compromised products. In *Cotton is King*, David Christie wrote:

Slave labor products have now become necessities of human life to the extent of more than half of the commercial articles supplied to the Christian world. Even free labor itself is made largely subservient to slavery, and vitally involved in its perpetuation and extension.

In the North, there seems to have been an evolution of conscience that moved from opposing the slave trade, to the call for universal emancipation and political pressure against the expansion of slavery in the territories, to assisting fugitives, to economic pressure renouncing the products of slave labor, and ultimately, when the abolitionists came to understand that none of this was enough, to the battlefields of the Civil War. Much of this evolution is visible in the career of Thomas Truesdell.

While the practicability of the Free Produce movement was increased indirectly by prophetic British fears that political instability could interrupt their supply of Southern cotton (Southern voices had predicted that abolitionists would destroy the Union as early as 1836),³⁷ British manufacturers looked to India and Egypt for supplies. Also, there were attempts to start plantations in British colonies, in

Africa, the West Indies, and Australia, avidly reported by Garrison in *The Liberator*. By 1850, there was a Free Produce Association in New York, which reported that "thousands of bales" of cotton were available from American plantations using free labor. However, it had proved impossible to fund a Free Produce mill locally.³⁸ We have not found surviving evidence that Truesdell as a merchant was involved in the Free Produce movement.

But Truesdell was not only a merchant. He and his partners advertised real estate transactions. Additionally, after the death of William Lee, through various partnerships, he became involved in coastal shipping. The picturesque small advertisements, illustrated with woodcuts of sailing vessels, first offer his premises near the harbor as a booking office, and then as more vessels become available (the *Liberty*, the *Enterprise*, the *General Hawes*), they advertise a "regular" run between Providence and Charleston, South Carolina.³⁹ The opportunities this could afford for aiding fugitives are obvious.

In 1829 and 1830, Truesdell is identified as the Rhode Island agent and distributor for *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, Garrison's first newspaper, published in Baltimore.⁴⁰ He was not just a subscriber; an early issue states: "AGENTS...are authorized to receive subscriptions and monies for the Editor."⁴¹ Some "agents" for anti-slavery publications had an involvement far beyond distribution of publications. For instance, on November 24, 1835, David Ruggles placed an advertisement in the *New York Emancipator*, saying, "The Friends of Human Rights are respectfully informed that in consequence of the destruction of my books, pamphlets and stationery by fire, I am compelled for the present to discontinue the sale of books and the circulating library, but will abide in the same place, and continue my agency for anti-slavery publications."⁴² David Ruggles was a member of the New York Committee of Vigilance; it was he who helped Frederick Douglass from New York to New Bedford in his initial escape from slavery.

In 1836, Thomas Truesdell became a founding member of the Rhode Island State Anti-Slavery Society, a more radical body than the earlier Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade: Garrison was active in founding this new Society, and it called for immediate emancipation.⁴³ It was while campaigning for this political advance that Garrison met his future wife, Helen Benson—her father was also a founder of the new Society—and it is reasonable to suppose that Truesdell, as an agent for Garrison's first periodical, and an associate of Helen's father at the old Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade, may have fraternized with Garrison then. Truesdell also stepped up to become a founding member of the New England Anti Slavery Society at their convention held in Boston in May of 1836, endorsing another Garrisonian position: "Slavery and Liberty can no longer dwell at peace within the same borders."⁴⁴ In 1837, the convention adopted other incendiary resolutions:

Little opposition was shown to resolutions demanding the purification of the churches, by denying membership to slaveholders, by abolition prayer and preaching, and by "coming out" from churches that were hopelessly given over to pro-slavery influences...⁴⁵

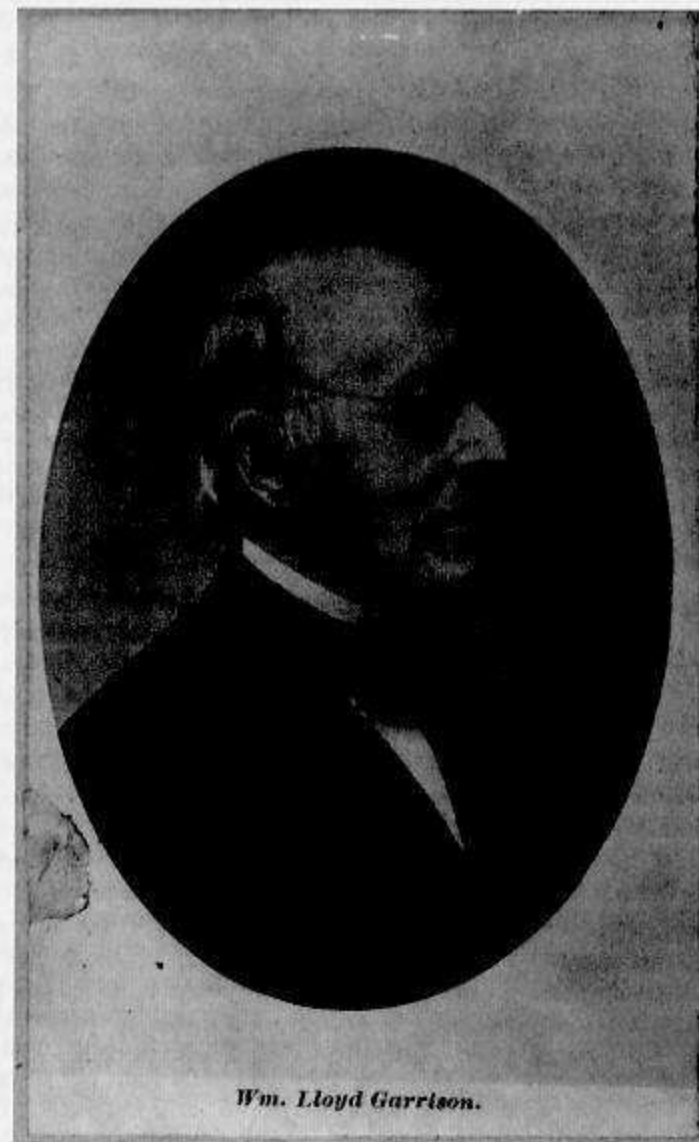
In a letter published in *The Liberator*, August 24, 1838, while Oliver Johnson was "editor *pro tem*," William Lloyd Garrison wrote, "In New York, I enjoyed the hospitality (not for the first or second time) of my esteemed friend Thomas Truesdell, formerly of Providence." Unfortunately, the digitized version of *The Liberator* appears not to be as fully indexed as might be hoped; this reference to Truesdell was not returned by a search on "Truesdell," but rather by a search on "Brooklyn" which returned hundreds of hits, not all of which we have reviewed. Clearly, additional research is needed.

The Truesdells were married in the First Baptist Church of Providence, but Thomas later became involved in the Society of Friends. In a private communication to Joy Chatel, Deborah Van Broekhoven, author of *The Devotion of these Women*, (quoting Stanley Lemons, historian of the First Baptist Church in America) confirmed that Thomas Truesdell was expelled from the First Baptist Church in Providence on July 3, 1823 because he had become a Quaker.

However, there was a potential link between Truesdell and the Congregational Plymouth Church of Brooklyn; though as a Quaker he could not become a member, he shared certain of their goals. As noted above, Plymouth was founded in 1847 by a group including Brooklyn's leading abolitionists, Arthur and Lewis Tappan and Henry Chandler Bowen, who showed their colors by engaging Henry Ward Beecher to preach abolition. Both Henry Chandler Bowen and Thomas Truesdell were born in the tiny town of Woodstock, Connecticut, and their families were in contact.

While the Bowens were among the "old thirteen," families that founded the village in 1686,⁴⁶ a Thomas Truesdell was there by 1711, and both families fought in the Revolutionary War. Darius Truesdell (1752-1808), who was at Valley Forge, was the father of Thomas Truesdell, and of his brother, John Truesdell, a builder—which at that time in America would generally mean that he also functioned as an architect. John Truesdell built the Bowen family homestead, Plaine Hill, in 1816.⁴⁷ The house is listed on the National Register.⁴⁸ As a partner in Truesdell & Underwood, John Truesdell went on to build the 1821 church on the Woodstock village green. Henry Chandler Bowen's nephew (who published the history and genealogy of Woodstock in 1878) documents this, and notes that the Thomas Truesdell who married Harriet Lee of Providence, Rhode Island was born in Woodstock in 1789, the son of Darius, and the younger brother of John, the builder.⁴⁹ Henry Chandler Bowen, although working in New York as a silk trader, living in Brooklyn Heights, and working for abolition in both places, continued to summer in Woodstock, and eventually built Roseland, a festive Gothic Revival "cottage" there, which he had painted pink. There his lavish Fourth of July fireworks parties were celebrated. By the time he was entertaining Ulysses Grant and Oliver Wendell Holmes, his first wife, Lucy Maria Tappan (of the New York abolitionist family) had died; however, she provided yet another link to the Truesdells; her sister Juliana had worked with Harriet Truesdell on anti-slavery issues in the 1830s, as is detailed below. In addition to his organizational and philanthropic support of the abolition movement, Lewis Tappan, father of Lucy and Juliana, is known to have aided fugitives on several occasions documented in unpublished letters and diaries referenced in Bertram Wyatt-Brown's biography,⁵⁰ as well as participating in the rescue of James Hamlet, and the defense of the Amistad prisoners.

The Truesdells' move to Brooklyn may have been driven both by their ties to abolitionists in the city and the exigencies of Truesdell's business. From the 1790s until the 1830s, Providence was a major seaport and a thriving center for the China trade. Rhode Island was also an early leader in the textile industry, importing raw cotton and exporting finished goods. With the opening of the Erie Canal and the expansion toward the West, New York became the "Empire City" and pre-eminent port, and Providence went into a decline. By 1840, no more vessels from Providence were trading with the Far East, and some had even made New York their new home port, according to *A History of Providence County*,⁵¹ which mentions Truesdell as a prominent wholesale grocer and cotton broker in the earlier part of the century. As a broker, Truesdell had reason to follow where his business led, to an office on the New York waterfront, at 141 Pearl Street in the 1840s. Whether by happenstance or association,



Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, patron and friend of Thomas and Harriet Truesdell.

his office was close to the business premises of Arthur Tappan & Co., at 122 Pearl Street.⁵² And parallel to the rise of the port was an increase in the influence of local abolitionists: the American Anti Slavery Society expanded, and enlisted the firebrand Theodore Weld, who in 1836 organized and taught "the seventy," the new convention of agents who were to spread the gospel of abolition across the East and westward.

We know Harriet Truesdell mainly through public records and the history of the abolition societies she belonged to. During the Providence years, she bore ten children: four died in infancy, three others died young. At that time, it was not conventional for men and women to belong to the same anti-slavery society; consequently, though Thomas was active in male-dominated groups, Harriet joined the Providence Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, of which she became secretary in 1835.⁵³ The role of these ladies' societies is discussed at length in *The Devotion of these Women: Rhode Island in the Anti-Slavery Network*, by Deborah Van Broekhoven,⁵⁴ who mentions Harriet Truesdell as a founding member of the Ladies' Society, along with Catherine Benson, Garrison's mother-in-law. In 1838, Harriet was a delegate from Rhode Island to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, in Philadelphia, and she served on the organizing committee together with the well-known abolitionists, Lucretia Mott, Angelina Grimke Weld and Juliana Tappan.⁵⁵

The convention was not welcome in Philadelphia, where much popular sentiment was pro-slavery. A delegate from Fall River wrote the following account, preserved in the May Collection at Cornell:⁵⁶

Dear Sisters:

Having endeavored to represent your body in the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, held in Philadelphia, I will now attempt to represent that Convention to you...and bring you to feel and act in full sympathy with those who were present.... *Wednesday evening.* On repairing to Pennsylvania Hall, found a noisy throng about the door, and a vast congregation gathering rapidly within...The platform was occupied by the most eminent abolitionists of both sexes. It was a heart-thrilling spectacle—such an assemblage!...Mr. Garrison occupied the first of the evening....Before he had done speaking, several stones were thrown through the glass, evidently aimed towards the speaker. However, he was not in the least moved, but concluded his speech with great coolness and deliberation. Just as he sat down, rose a deafening shout, accompanied by a fresh volley of stones against the windows, and heavy blows against the house, as if it were destined soon to be demolished...On returning to the Hall on Thursday, 4 o'clock, P. M., we found the number and noise of the mob much increased...Before the meeting adjourned, the gentlemen, fearing we should be molested as we left the house, sent their advice that the Convention should go out by the back door. I believe no member thought it expedient to follow this advice...Mrs. Weld proposed that we should, as far as possible, protect our colored sisters while going out, by taking each one of them by the arm. We passed out through a mob of two or three thousand, fierce, vile looking men, and large boys. They allowed us just room to walk, two abreast. We heard the worst language, and saw the most hideous countenances...It appeared very evident too from appearances, that the mob was now ripe for some violent outrage...I felt not a little relieved when a messenger came in, saying the Mayor had taken the keys of the Hall, and there would be no meeting this evening. The question under discussion was now settled, and all were seated to enjoy a social evening. You will not suppose we had any other topics than slavery,

abolition, speeches, and mobs...Our conversation was interrupted before 9 o'clock by the cry of 'Fire!' Pennsylvania Hall was in flames! The mob had accomplished the work by breaking in the doors, and deliberately kindled a fire in the house—in view of the city of Philadelphia! We walked out to witness the speedy destruction of that beautiful building which the diligent axe and hammer had been, for months, patiently rearing; that building, which the friends not only of abolition, but the friends of free discussion, the friends of civil and religious liberty, the true philanthropists and patriots of our land had reared—"As a fair Hall to Truth and Freedom given..."

This was the experience that Harriet Truesdell and Juliana Tappan shared, at the time the Truesdells moved from Providence to Brooklyn (they appear in the 1839 Brooklyn Directory and the 1840 Brooklyn census), becoming neighbors of the Tappan and Bowen families, on Hicks Street in Brooklyn Heights.

We know from his letters that William Lloyd Garrison stayed with the Truesdells in Brooklyn in 1838, and again when he attended the 1840 American Anti-Slavery Society convention. This was the convention at which the division between the American Anti Slavery Society and the new "Foreign and American Anti-Slavery Society" took place, due to a policy disagreement on how to move forward, disagreement between the Garrisonians and those who were looking for a more political solution, like the Tappans and the Bowens, in the nascent Republican party. That Garrison stayed with the Truesdells then, while the wealthier and more powerful anti slavery business leaders rejected his strategies, may reflect longstanding ties. Garrison described Mrs. Truesdell as "smiling, as always." So, to reiterate, we have no reason to think that she changed in her loyalty to Garrison and his doctrines.

African American oral traditions have a peculiar background and force, given that before the Civil War, it was illegal in many parts of America to teach a slave to read and write. David Brion Davis, in *Inhuman Bondage*, notes that despite such precautions, designed to enforce illiteracy and suppress rebellion, slaveholders were awed by the network of communication—entirely by word of mouth—that surrounded them. Oral tradition has played a role in the Duffield Street controversy: after the City Council asked for an investigation of the conclusions in the EIS, the consultant gathered oral history statements from some residents. The statement of Joy Chatel suggests that Thomas Truesdell was of African descent. This is unexpected, since the census counted the Truesdells as white, and a daguerreotype, said to be of Truesdell's brother, John, shows a typically pale and grim New England countenance. Apparently, there is some ambiguity about the Truesdell (or possibly the Lee) family identity, which may tell us something about the attitudes and passions of their time, how they saw and portrayed themselves—and their role in Brooklyn's anti slavery crusade.

However, Louis Ruchames (editor of *The Abolitionists, a Collection of their Writings* and co-editor of the complete *Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* published by Harvard University Press) identifies Thomas Truesdell as "a Negro abolitionist" in a footnote in the *Letters*.⁵⁷ He gives two sources: "Reference card, Rare Book Room, Boston Public Library" (which we have not seen) and *William Lloyd Garrison, the Story of his Life Told by his Children*. The footnote in the *Life* quotes an article by Garrison's traveling companion, N. P. Rogers (from the *Herald of Freedom*), which describes their visit to New York for the 1840 convention of the American Anti Slavery Society, and is sarcastic

about the welcome they received from "the place of the Tappans and the Jays, that it had not a place for William Lloyd Garrison to lay his head." The party was eventually housed by "our noble hearted colored friend" Thomas Van Rensalaer (a member of the Committee of Vigilance), who found them a place to sleep on the fourth floor of a "Wall Street cotton storehouse," and fed them in his restaurant: "his table, in his victualling cellar, was abundant and excellent—too good, if anything, for an abolitionist." After the meeting, Garrison and Rogers went over the river to Brooklyn to stay with the Truesdells before sailing to England for the World Anti Slavery Conference. While this passage could be read to suggest that in 1840 Garrison was welcomed by black, but not by white abolitionists in New York, it certainly does not state this unambiguously.

Scholarly reviews of Volume II of the *Letters* did not contest the factual accuracy of any of the footnotes. The *Journal of American History* called it "a model of editorial excellence," and added, "If these volumes of Garrison's papers had no other value, they would serve as an admirable biographical directory of the antislavery movement in both Great Britain and the United States."⁵⁸ The *New England Quarterly* wrote "Louis Ruchames is a careful and graceful editor. He has made heroic effects to identify many names, famous and obscure, mentioned in these letters. Accordingly the footnotes are an extremely valuable guide to the membership of the abolition movement."⁵⁹ Benjamin Quarles commented in a review in *The Journal of Negro History*:⁶⁰

Ruchames, the editor of this volume, calls Garrison the founding father of the Civil Rights Movement, and unquestionably the blacks of his day held him in an esteem that was unmatched by any other white until the John Brown flare-up at Harper's Ferry. Hence it follows that the 231 Garrison-written letters in this volume contain numerous references to blacks, some of them to meetings of blacks at which Garrison spoke. A few of the references are to anonymous blacks, such as the hackman who overcharged him (with Garrison typically refusing to pay the amount he considered an overcharge). More useful, perhaps, are Garrison's references to black co-workers in the cause, such as Charles Lenox Redmond, with whom he briefly traveled with while in the British Isles in 1840, and Thomas Van Rensalaer and Thomas Truesdell, at whose homes he sometimes stayed while on trips from Boston to New York.

Pursuing this line of thought, we looked at Quarles's 1961 study, *The Black Abolitionists*. Here Quarles argued convincingly that the role of African Americans in the movement had been significantly understated, and that people of color were predominant both in the Underground Railroad and in fundraising and lecturing for abolition causes. Noting the seminal role of the New York Committee of Vigilance (he observes that Still understates the number of organizers who were people of color) Quarles further describes extensive African American support for William Lloyd Garrison, and suggests that it was African American funding that made early issues of the *Liberator* and an early trip to England possible.

This is interesting in the context of biographical details about the Tappan brothers and another founding member of the American Anti Slavery Society, Judge William Jay.⁶¹ Although they were all committed abolitionists on philosophic and religious grounds, Jay objected to having African Americans participate in the new Society; the Tappans had reservations about employing blacks in their business; moreover, all of them, perhaps not without reason, feared that personal contact with

people of color could frighten away potential abolition supporters among the New York bourgeoisie. This is undoubtedly the subtext of Rogers's "no place to lay his head" comment. In the first issue of the *Liberator*, Garrison wrote, "TO OUR FREE COLORED BRETHREN":

Your moral and intellectual elevation, the advancement of your rights, and the defence of your character, will be a leading object of our paper. We know that you are now struggling against wind and tide, and that adversity has "marked you for his own;" yet among 300,000 of your number, some patronage may be given. We ask and expect but little: that little may save the life of "The Liberator." Our enemies are numerous, active, and inveterate; and a great effort will undoubtedly be made to put us down.

Unfortunately, Ruchames and his co-editor, Walter M. Merrill, as well as Benjamin Quarles, were part of an earlier generation of scholars who are no longer with us. We cannot ask them what they thought, but given Quarles' belief that most Underground Railroad operators were black, we might consider whether there was an assumption that Van Rensalaer and Truesdell shared the duty of sheltering Garrison because they had already worked together in the Underground Railroad through Van Rensalaer's Committee of Vigilance, which sometimes, as we have seen, directed fugitives to Brooklyn. We might also speculate that the Truesdells, like their leader Garrison, felt strong ties to those victims of prejudice many abolitionists called their brethren, and expressed that solidarity as Henry Ward Beecher did when he said of the fugitives, "they shall be to me as my own flesh and blood." Many understood, what W. E. B. Du Bois wrote:

From the very day that a Philadelphia colored man became the first subscriber to Garrison's "Liberator", to the day when Negro soldiers made the Emancipation Proclamation possible, black leaders worked shoulder to shoulder with white men in a movement, the success of which would have been impossible without them. There was Purvis, and Redmond, Pennington and Highland Garnett, Sojourner Truth and Alexander Crummell, and above all, Frederick Douglass—what would the abolition movement have been without them?⁶²

At the time of the "peer review" of the AKRF study, subsequent to the Final EIS, for the first time, AKRF made a systematic attempt to collect oral histories of the Duffield Street traditions. Some of those who participated were very dissatisfied with the interviews, which they found to be rushed and manipulative. We also have had opportunities to hear from some of the residents of Duffield Street, and what they had to say was of interest.

The oral traditions surrounding Duffield Street's role in the Underground Railroad involve several interesting chains of connection. Joy Chatel married Albert Chatel, owner of 227 Duffield Street, after the death of his first wife, née Vera Jacobs, and after his death in 1996, the house remained in the family. Albert came to Duffield Street through Vera, who was born in 1915 at 235 Duffield Street, on the same block as 227. Her extended family had invested in a number of properties there and elsewhere in the immediate neighborhood.

227 Duffield Street had remained a Truesdell family property until Matilda W. Truesdell sold it in 1921, according to Brooklyn deed conveyance records. Matilda was the daughter-in-law of Thomas Truesdell. After Harriet had died in 1862, Thomas remarried and fathered a son, Thomas, Jr., who married Matilda Walsh Truesdell, née Heller. Before his death in 1904, the younger Thomas gave

Matilda the Truesdell family bible, dating from 1779. Thus Thomas had finally achieved a surviving male heir, three other sons of Harriet's having died. Although the elder Thomas apparently lived in New Jersey with his new, younger wife, he continued to hold the property in his family and willed it to his son, thus retaining a connection to Brooklyn, where the family also retained a plot in Greenwood cemetery. In this way, family memories could remain fresh well into the 20th century and even today, persisting in time through the agency of two younger second wives, Janet, the second Mrs. Thomas Truesdell, and Joy, the second Mrs. Albert Chatel.

Joy Chatel tells of eliciting more information from her husband, when because of her interest in education and her position as an elder in the African drumming circle in Prospect Park, she met activists who were members of the Committee to Honor Black Heroes and Sheroes: among them, Fred Laverpool (the organizer of the "Braggin' About Brooklyn," a program of Underground Railroad tours offered to tourists and through the school system) and Abubadika Sonny Carson. They had a strong interest in the African American role in the Underground Railroad, and came to visit Duffield Street already believing that it was part of a neighborhood with Underground Railroad involvement through its militant churches, Bridge Street AWME and Concord Baptist—a neighborhood that they wanted to memorialize and make known to future generations. "Mama Joy," as she is called because of her work with children, introduced them to her husband, who showed them his Jacobs family documents, and the traces of the tunnel in the basement. Since Albert Chatel's death in 1996, Joy has welcomed numerous visitor and tourists by appointment and casually, and she was working with Fred Laverpool from 1991 until his death in September, 2005.

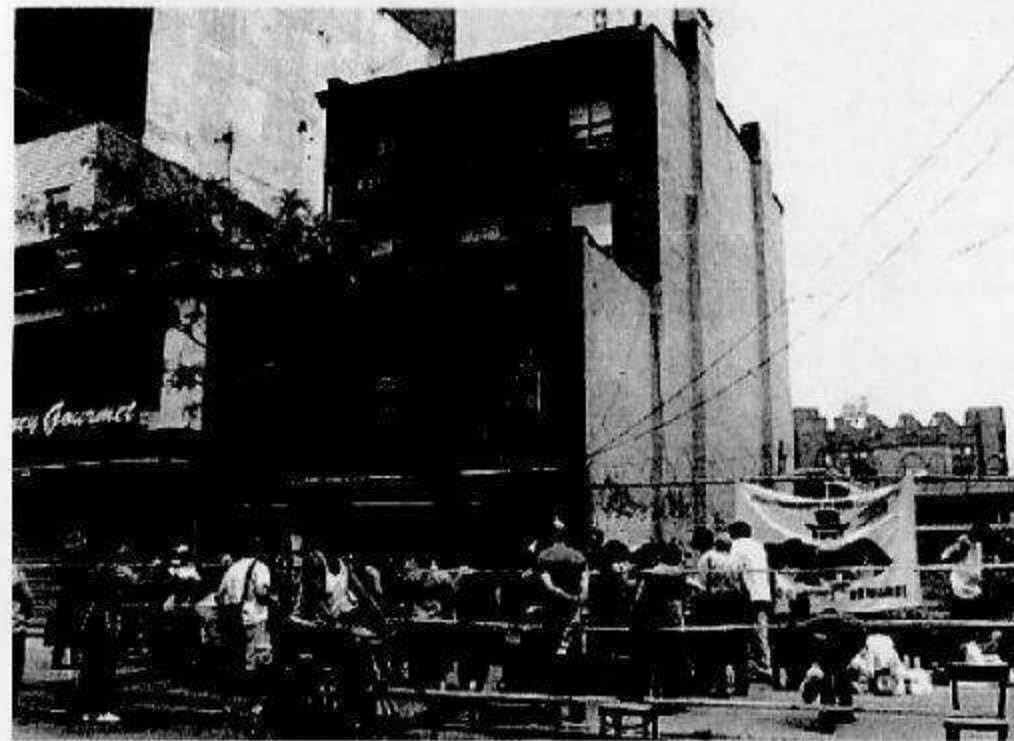
She also met Brother Hadari, as she recounts in her oral history:

In 1988, Brother Hadari, a high priest and close friend in the community found out I was on Duffield Street and came by. Brother Hadari said "Sister, do you know where you are?" I said "What do you mean do I know where I am?" He said "No disrespect intended sister, what I meant to say is, you are living on holy ground." I said "What?" Hadari said "Yes, sister. Our ancestors passed through here." He asked if he could bless the house.

Dr. Robert Swan, an independent scholar and community advocate, also became interested, and further investigated the Truesdell family, providing additional community support. We are indebted to Dr. Swan's extensive research for key references in the bibliography of his unpublished research notes to the 19th century local histories and modern works of scholarship that describe the interconnected role of Providence, Woodstock and Brooklyn in the larger struggle. Dr. Swan correctly observes that the history of the abolition movement in Brooklyn has yet to be written. He also notes that the Brooklyn Historical Society library has been closed for renovations and a revision of their catalogue since 1999, eliminating a resource for study throughout the period when the Downtown Brooklyn Plan was developed, announced and reviewed.

Lewis Greenstein, a Duffield Street homeowner, also undertook extensive research into the registers of Plymouth Church, which he is computerizing as a volunteer, and Brooklyn directory and census listings for the general Duffield Street area, which show a considerable African American population. Mr. Greenstein located William Harned, who worked for Lewis Tappan at the American and Foreign Anti Slavery Society and the American Missionary Association, at 123 Duffield Street, and it was Mr. Greenstein who first noted the relevance of the 1855 Perris map of Brooklyn.

We believe that the building owners and community leaders seeking to preserve Duffield Street and remember its history deserve support and gratitude for their Herculean efforts, as do the many individual Brooklynites, Underground Railroad enthusiasts, and elected officials who have rallied for the preservation of these historic houses.



A photo from the Web, which appeared at No Land Grab.com: the Truesdell House at 227 Duffield Street as it appears today. A community rally is in progress to stop government seizure of this historic private home through eminent domain, as proposed by the City of New York working with the Economic Development Corporation, a public authority. The plan, part of the redevelopment of Downtown Brooklyn, is to demolish the Truesdell House and build a parking garage.

In pursuance of the sixth section of the act of Congress entitled "An act to suppress insurrection and to punish rebels and rebellions, to seize and confiscate property of rebels, and for other purposes" Approved July 17, 1862, and which act, and the Joint Resolution explanatory thereof, are herewith published, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby proclaim to, and warn all persons within the contemplation of said sixth section to cease participating in, aiding, countenancing, or abetting the existing rebellion, or any rebellion against the government of the United States, and to return to their proper allegiance to the United States, on pain of the forfeiture and seizure, as within and by said sixth section provided.

And I hereby make known that it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress, to recommend the adoption of a practical measure for tending pecuniary aid to the free chases or rejection, of any and all States, which may then be recognizing and practically sustaining the authority of the United States, and which may then have voluntarily adopted, or hereafter may voluntarily adopt, gradual ~~abolition~~ ^{abolition} of slavery within such State or States—that the object is to peacefully restore, thereupon, to ^{the} maintain the constitutional relation between the general government, and each, and all the States, which that relation

17992

The first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation in Lincoln's own hand.

CONCLUSION

So in the case of 227 Duffield Street, the house belonged to known, active abolitionists; there is an oral tradition of Underground Railroad activity with links going back to the 19th century; the house stands in a larger area of known abolitionist activity; it is strategically placed on a route to several known destinations for fugitives; and the house has architectural features that could have been used to conceal fugitives. We believe that such an abolitionist's house has great historic value even without incontrovertible legal proof that it was a station in the Underground Railroad. Like other houses on the block, it is a candidate for recognition and preservation.

Preservation accomplishes many things; among them, it can offer what Eric Foner calls "the social context of ideologies," by letting us see the real physical setting of historic events. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has a mandate to recognize such historic sites. In the case of Duffield Street, while the houses are there, we can see how people lived who made the abolition of slavery possible. Seeing, being able to touch their houses—boards and bricks and mortar still in their original place—can galvanize the observer. W. E. B. Dubois wrote that his life was changed in 1906 when he made a barefoot pilgrimage at dawn to the actual scene of John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, along with other members of the Niagara Movement:

After that pilgrimage, the fat was in the fire and my career as a scientist was beginning to be swallowed up in my role as propagandist.⁶³

His "role as propagandist" meant bringing the NAACP to prominence. There is an unbroken chain of connection from the abolition movement to the modern civil rights movement. Martin Luther King had a fine old copy of *My Bondage and My Freedom* by Frederick Douglass⁶⁴ in his personal library. As he did, New York should cherish and preserve tangible reminders of the abolition movement, and not destroy them.

Describing the burning of Pennsylvania Hall, Laura Lovell of Fall River wrote:

Our conversation was interrupted before 9 o'clock by the cry of 'Fire!' Pennsylvania Hall was in flames! The mob had accomplished the work by breaking in the doors, and deliberately kindled a fire in the house—in view of the city of Philadelphia! We walked out to witness the speedy destruction of that beautiful building which the diligent axe and hammer had been, for months, patiently rearing; that building, which the friends not only of abolition, but the friends of free discussion, the friends of civil and religious liberty, the true philanthropists and patriots of our land had reared—"As a fair Hall to Truth and Freedom given..."

Must we, like the delegate from Fall River, witness the "speedy destruction" of buildings that should not be lost, as they recall the origins of important civil liberties? Those civil liberties cannot be taken for granted or relegated to the past. At Gettysburg Lincoln said, "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work..." "Justice for all" is not invariably available in New York. The civil rights movement has not achieved all of its goals. And New York has no dedicated memorial of the abolition crusade. One could be created on Duffield Street.

ENDNOTES

¹ NYT, May 14, 2006 book review by Ira Berlin of *Inhuman Bondage*, by Pulitzer Prize winner David Brion Davis.

² NYT, "Remaking, or Preserving the City's Face," January 18, 2004.

³ Available via the website of the City Planning Commission, Downtown Brooklyn Plan, Public Review.

⁴ (62 RCNY § 5-05(a)).

⁵ Four landmarked 19th century houses that were moved from Johnson Street to Duffield Street in 1990 to avoid demolition for Metro Tech, referred to in the EIS as the "Duffield Street Houses," are not the houses in question.

⁶ Downtown Brooklyn Development FEIS, Chapter 23, Response to Comments.

⁷ Downtown Brooklyn Development FEIS Chapter 7, page 3.

⁸ See "Charge city big lied about Downtown study," by Tom Callan, *The Brooklyn Papers*, June 19, 2004.

⁹ Our emphasis. Quoted in Schor, Joel. *Henry Highland Garnet: A Voice of Black Radicalism in the 19th Century*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977.

¹⁰ Wilder, Craig Steven. *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*. The Columbia History of Urban Life, Kenneth T. Jackson, General Editor. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. Page 67.

¹¹ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, Chapter XI.

¹² Siebert, Wilbur. *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*. Reprinted, New York: Russell & Russell, 1967. Page 7.

¹³ Robert C. Sahr, Political Science Department, Oregon State University. www.oregonstate.edu/Dept/pol_sci/fac/sahr/sahrhome.htm

¹⁴ Kaplan, Justin. *Walt Whitman, A Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980. Page 160.

¹⁵ Kaplan. Page 185.

¹⁶ We would like to thank Commissioner Christopher Moore for calling our attention to this passage from "Song of Myself" (*Complete Poetry*, Library of America edition, page 197) and its significance for Duffield Street.

¹⁷ *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 10, 1857, "Another Fugitive Slave Case."

¹⁸ *Eagle*, April 23, 1889.

¹⁹ Thompson, Noyes L. *The History of Plymouth Church*. New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1873.

²⁰ Thompson, quoted in Chapter IV.

²¹ Centennial anniversary celebration of the Bridge Street A. W. M. E. Church. Brooklyn, 1918. Page 27.

²² *Brooklyn Eagle*, Feb. 20, 1863.

²³ *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 23, 1865.

²⁴ Taylor, Clarence. *The Black Churches of Brooklyn*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Page 12.

²⁵ *Daily News*, "Slaves May Free Homes," July 31, 2005.

²⁶ See *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia, May, 1838; including an account of other meetings held in Pennsylvania Hall, and of the Riot. Addressed to the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, and published by its request*. Boston: I. Knapp, 1838. (Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.)

²⁷ Notably, in *Angels of Deliverance: the Underground Railroad in Queens, Long Island, and beyond*, by James Driscoll, Derek Gray, Richard Hourahan and Kathleen Velsor, a publication of the Queens Historical Society, and Judith Wellman's research for the Weeksville nomination to the National Register.

²⁸ Dikeman, Jr., John. *The Brooklyn Compendium*. Brooklyn: Published by the order of the Brooklyn Common Council, 1870.

²⁹ Child, Lydia Maria. *Isaac T. Hopper: a true life*. New York: Dodd, Mead, c. 1881.

³⁰ Berlin, Ira and Harris, Leslie M. ed. *Slavery in New York*. New York: New Press, 2005. Page 255.

³¹ Wilder, Craig. *A Covenant with Color*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. Page 61.

³² We would like to thank Lewis Greenstein for sharing his transcripts of directory entries for the Duffield Street neighborhood. Mr. Greenstein is the owner of 233 Duffield Street.

³³ Merrill, Walter M. and Ruchames, Louis, ed. *The letters of William Lloyd Garrison*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-. Volume II. Letter 7.

³⁴ In the opinion of David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*. Oxford University Press, 2006. Dr. Davis, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is the Director Emeritus of the Gilder Lehrman Center of the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale.

³⁵ Gilkeson, John S. *Middle Class Providence, 1820-1940*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

³⁶ Lutz, Alma. *Crusade for Freedom: Women in the Antislavery Movement*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.

³⁷ *Proceedings of the American Anti Slavery Society*

³⁸ *Report of the Board of Managers of the Free Produce Association of Friends*. New York: Egbert & King, 1850. (Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.)

³⁹ *The Providence Patriot*, March 7, 1821, page 3. "For Charleston, (S. C.)"

⁴⁰ *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. The EIS notes that Truesdell subscribed to an antislavery publication, which, for some reason, they do not identify. It is unclear whether the reference is to the *Genius*.

⁴¹ *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, II, 1: page 16 and passim.

⁴² Quoted in "Slavery and Resistance in the Empire State" by Derek Gray, in Driscoll, James, et al. *Angels of Deliverance: the Underground Railroad in Queens, Long Island and beyond*.

⁴³ *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Convention, held in Providence on the 2d, 3d and 4th of February, 1836*. Providence: H. H. Brown, Printer, 1836. (May Collection, Cornell.)

⁴⁴ *The Liberator*, Extra dated May 14, 1836.

⁴⁵ Garrison, Wendell Phillips. *William Lloyd Garrison: the Story of his Life, Told by his Children*. New York: Negro Universities Press (facsimile), 1969. Page 131.

⁴⁶ Bowen, Clarence Winthrop. *Woodstock, an historical sketch*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1886.

⁴⁷ Gilkeson, page 36.

⁴⁸ #87000859.

⁴⁹ Bowen, Clarence Winthrop. *The History of Woodstock, Connecticut*. Norwood, Mass.: Plimpton Press, 1926-1943. Vol. 8, Truesdell genealogy.

⁵⁰ Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery*. Louisiana State University Press, 1997. Page 330. (First published Case Western Reserve, 1967.)

⁵¹ Bayles, R. M. *History of Providence County*. New York: W. W. Preston, 1891.

⁵² Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery*. Page 31.

⁵³ *Fourth Annual Report of the American Anti Slavery Society*. (Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.)

⁵⁴ Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, c. 2005.

⁵⁵ *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia, May, 1838; including an account of other meetings held in Pennsylvania Hall, and of the Riot. Addressed to the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, and published by its request*. Boston: I. Knapp, 1838. (Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.)

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Merrill, Walter M. and Ruchames, Louis, ed. *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-. Volume II, Letter 114, Note 1: "Thomas Truesdell was a Negro abolitionist who had a large home in Brooklyn Heights in New York. Garrison stayed there at least one other time. See Life, II, 356 n.; reference card Rare Book Room, Boston Public Library."

⁵⁸ *Reviews in American History*, Vol. I, No. 4, December, 1973.

⁵⁹ *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4, July, 1972.

⁶⁰ *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 57, No. 3.

⁶¹ Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana

University Press, paperback edition 1997, first published 1969. See especially pages 104 and .

⁶² Du Bois, W. E. B. *Writings*. The Library of America, 1996. In "The Talented Tenth."

⁶³ W. E. B. Du Bois, *John Brown*. Modern Library: New York, 2001. P^{er} xi.

⁶⁴ The 1855 edition, at Sotheby's, New York, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection, Sale, June 30, 2006, *Catalogue*. Page 207. Sotheby's quotes King, "I catch up on my reading every time I go to jail."

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APPENDIX I:

A GENEALOGICAL NOTE ON THE LEE AND TRUESDELL FAMILIES AND THEIR 17TH CENTURY ANTECEDENTS

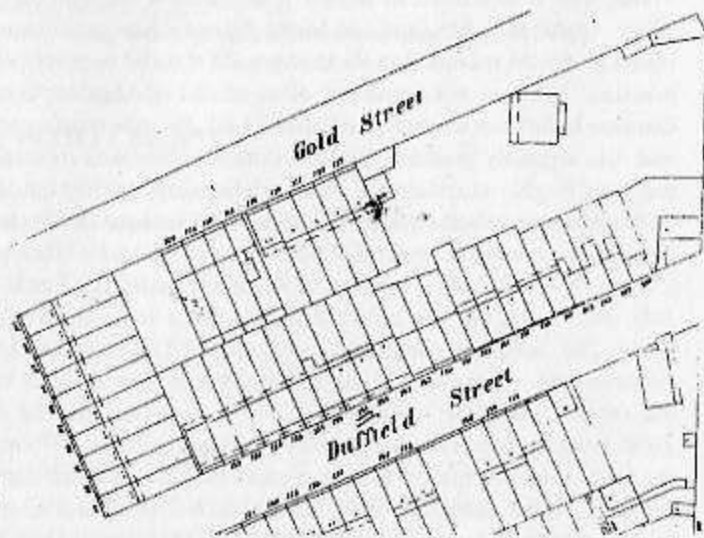
The 1779 Truesdell family bible contains entries, not in date order, made by various family members, and a transcription of these is available on line (petjr.net/BIBLE/index.html); this bible is apparently still in the hands of members of the Truesdell family, although not in the line of descendants from the Lee family. The bible was bequeathed by William Lee to his daughter, Harriet Lee Truesdell on his death in 1814. The notes identify William as the third generation of Lees in America. The first was Samuel Lee, who was born in Warwickshire in 1688, and emigrated to Massachusetts. There is an inscription, "Sarah Lee was born First Day of November in the year of Our Lord 1692 in Free Town the wife of the above Samuel Lee." And again, "1714 Swansey March 3 Samuel Lee and Sarah Gardner was married by Samuel Luther," which is confirmed in Ancestry.com transcriptions. Freetown, Sarah's birthplace, was an early settlement in the Plymouth Colony; incorporated in 1683; until 1805 it was included what is now the town of Fall River. Today, it is rich in historic districts and its history is detailed in a compilation of the National Register reports at the Freetown Historic Districts Database (www.assonetriver.com/preservation). Here it is noted that the township began with a grist mill on the river, and remained a tiny settlement until the mid-18th century, when the population grew to about 1,500. The Narragansett Bay basin, with Newport and Providence as its larger port centers, was a place where the slave trade flourished before 1770. Fall River was so close to Newport that in hard winters, people drove their horses across the ice from one town to the other (see Fowler, Orin. *Historic Sketch of Fall River, from 1620 to the present time; with notices of Freetown and Tiverton.*)

The vital records of Freetown have been published for genealogical reference (*Vital Records of the Town of Freetown, Massachusetts: 1686 through 1890. Compiled by Helen Gurney Thomas*. Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1988.) In the 17th and 18th centuries the records of births and deaths are sparse, but marriages and notices of intent to marry were plentiful, as they were required by law. There

is a record of a notice of intent to marry from Absalom Gardner, who is described as mulatto, and Malle, who is described as Indian. The notice is undated but is believed to be from May or June of 1732. Apparently, Absalom and Malle did not subsequently marry in Freetown. There are no Gardner births or deaths recorded in Freetown until the 19th century, when those recordings became common practice. We have not found any other record of Absalom Gardner, or Malle, or any record of Sarah Gardner before her marriage to Samuel Lee. Freetown was a very small place in the early 18th century, and it is arguably possible that Absalom Gardner was in some way related to Sarah Gardner. This might or might not indicate a blood relationship, as they could also have been cousins, or bearers of a shared name, whether or not the relevant Gardner family were slave owners. Clearly, the known facts are inconclusive; marriage between a white and a black was illegal in Massachusetts from 1705 ("Race, Marriage and Abolition in Massachusetts," by Louis Ruchames. *Journal of Negro History*, July, 1955), and so was unlikely to become a topic in family histories when it did occur. In his study, *The Negro in Colonial New England*, Lorenzo Greene shows from court records and other documentation that colonial legislative intervention was not very successful in its aim of separating the races. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*, by James Horton, makes the case that in the 18th century, social and economic standing (or the lack of it) determined alliances more than race did, so that free blacks, Indians, white indentured servants, slaves, the pious, and the poor tended to join forces against the ruling class, especially under "the egalitarian ideology of the Great Awakening in the hands of ministers like Samuel Hopkins of Newport.... colonial elites objected to the interracial character of the revivals." Later, the Revolution was another engine of change: the Boston Massacre began with Crispus Attucks, and most New England states enlisted black troops; Rhode Island had its First Rhode Island Regiment, which was largely black after 1778; there had been resistance to allowing people of color to bear arms, but when the shortages of troops became desperate, manumission was offered in exchange for military service. Harriet and Thomas were not yet born when the newly free black regiment marched into Providence with their new rifles on their shoulders to protect the city from the advancing British, but Harriet's father and mother may have viewed this dramatic moment of reversal. There were still slaves in Connecticut and Rhode Island in the towns where Thomas and Harriet Truesdell grew up, people they might have seen or known as children. Their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents will have been witnesses to slavery at the least: before independence, Newport and Bristol were major ports for the slave trade—as much as Boston, New York or Charleston. In weighing the assertion that Thomas Truesdell was black, one might consider the possibility that this represented not the immediate physical fact, but his own expression of solidarity with African Americans, and that through his marriage with his wife (which then was conceived as making them "one flesh") his family might have had an extremely fractional African or native American bloodline or other relationship, going back to antecedents of Harriet's great-grandmother in the 17th century, which would in any case not have been perceptible, but might have resonated with her and her husband's political sympathies at a time of national upheaval. It was to Harriet, who had numerous siblings, that her father entrusted the family bible and the family history.

**APPENDIX II:
THE UNDERGROUND VAULTS
AT 227 DUFFIELD STREET**

The key to the Perris 1855 Brooklyn "fire" atlas, reproduced below, shows "Buildings communicating" (last entry, fourth column) as connected by dashes. The plate showing Duffield Street connects the rowhouses in the terrace running from 129 to 143 Duffield with dashes across the front areaway vaults. 141 Duffield was the original numbering of the Truesdell House, now known as 227. This is exactly as described by residents in the oral histories; they said that years ago the basements were connected through vaults at the front under the sidewalk, connections now only vestigial, due to demolitions and alterations.



SPECIALLY HAZARDOUS	
<p>Brick or Stone Stores</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> First class</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Second class</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Third class</p> <p>Brick or Stone dwellings</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> First class (State or metal roof & eaved)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Second class (State or metal roof not eaved)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Third class (State & shingle roof)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fourth class (Shingle roof)</p> <p>With Stores under</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> First class (State or metal roof & eaved)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Second class (State or metal roof not eaved)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Third class (State & shingle roof)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fourth class (Shingle roof)</p> <p>Front dwellings</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Framed dwellings with stores under</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Brick FIRST CLASS <input type="checkbox"/> Framed</p> <p>Boilers</p> <p>Boat builders</p> <p>Breweries</p> <p>Brush manufactories</p> <p>Cash makers</p> <p>Copper Smith with forges</p> <p>Dyers</p> <p>Flax cloth manufactories</p> <p>Hat manufactories</p> <p>Malt houses</p> <p>Oil manufactories</p> <p>Old cloth manufactories</p> <p>Private Stables</p> <p>Tobacco manufactories</p> <p>Typ and Stereotype foundries</p> <p>Wharves</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Brick SECOND CLASS <input type="checkbox"/> Framed</p> <p>Boat builders</p> <p>Brew foundries</p> <p>Cash makers</p> <p>Cotton presses and cotton mills</p> <p>Iron foundries</p> <p>Linen Stables</p> <p>Flour mills</p> <p>Printers of books and job printers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Brick THIRD CLASS <input type="checkbox"/> Framed</p> <p>Blind and Book makers</p> <p>Bleaching works</p> <p>Cabinet makers work shops</p> <p>Carpenter shops</p> <p>Coal makers</p> <p>Chair makers work shops</p> <p>Dish Mills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Brick THIRD CLASS CONTINUED <input type="checkbox"/> Framed</p> <p>Gas manufactories</p> <p>Flour mills</p> <p>Lock makers - Prater-ink</p> <p>Sash rollers or gutta serena manufactories</p> <p>Lease block & iron block manufactories</p> <p>Looking glass and Picture frame makers</p> <p>Medical instrument makers</p> <p>Shardish stables</p> <p>Organ makers</p> <p>Piano forte makers</p> <p>Rectifiers of Liquors by fire heat</p> <p>Saw makers</p> <p>Tailor makers - chandlers</p> <p>Wool mills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Brick FOURTH CLASS <input type="checkbox"/> Framed</p> <p>Bronze workers</p> <p>Campfires or spirit gas manufactories</p> <p>Coffee and spice mills</p> <p>Chemical laboratories</p> <p>Drug and spice mills</p> <p>Fur wash manufactories</p> <p>Match manufactories</p> <p>Planing, graving or moulding mills</p> <p>Rope and cordage makers</p> <p>Saw mills</p> <p>Sugar refineries</p> <p>Tar boiling houses</p> <p>Turpentine distilleries</p> <p>Woolish makers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Extensions with skylight</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No lights lighting more than</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Skylights lighting the top of</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Boilers of steam engines</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Smoke houses</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Retorts</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Outbuildings</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Buildings communicating</p> <p>Skylights less than 4 feet generally omitted</p>

Village Views

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