

CITIZENS OF GOD'S LITTLE ACRE: THE LIVES AND LANDSCAPES OF
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN NEWPORT DURING THE COLONIAL ERA

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SIGNATURES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to discover biographical information, community interactions, and property ownership regarding the enslaved and emancipated individuals interred in God's Little Acre Cemetery in Newport, Rhode Island. This research will further the understanding of how the African and African American community contributed to the development and cultural landscape within Newport. God's Little Acre Cemetery is one of the oldest African American cemeteries in the United States and is the foundation for this research. The history of slavery and the stories of the enslaved Africans and their emancipated descendants within New England have been discussed, but marginally when considering the amount of documentation involving the enslaved in the Antebellum South. The outcome of this research will expand knowledge of the enslaved and free African Americans within the city of Newport during the colonial period and contribute to a better understanding of that community.

1 GOD’S LITTLE ACRE CEMETERY AND SLAVERY IN COLONIAL NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Newport, Rhode Island is known for its charming colonial homes along narrow streets, the impressive “Gilded Age” mansions that line historic Bellevue Avenue, and the many yachts that fill its harbor in the summer months. Tourists and residents alike flock to Newport for its abundant attractions and maritime activities, but some may not be aware of a history and landscape involving the African and African Americans during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. Their stories were replaced by the Gilded Age wealthy families who once lived opulent lifestyles that forged the well-known cultural landscape of Newport that we know today. The African colonial landscape still exists within Gilded Age attractions, narrow cobblestone streets, and colonial-era homes, and buildings, as well as increasing recognition of their plight and contributions to Newport’s historical landscape.

The enslavement of Africans and their African American families in the Antebellum South was considerable, thus is universally known and is extensively researched, with many of the enslaved recounting their years in bondage through oral histories and written narratives. Slavery within the New England colonies, specifically Rhode Island, was not as sizeable and long-lasting as in the southern states. The transatlantic slave trade contributed to the involuntary movement and servitude of Africans to Newport and the northern colonies from the seventeenth century through the early nineteenth century (Figure 1:1). Additionally, the transatlantic slave trade was instrumental in the development of Newport. The stories of the enslaved Africans and their emancipated descendants within New England have been discussed and researched but, not

as exhaustively when considering the significant documentation involving the enslaved in the Antebellum South.

In the context of Newport, researchers and historians have documented the lives of several enslaved and incorporated those individuals within works that focus on slave owners and slave traders that participated in the enslavement of African and African Americans and the colonial landscape in Newport. To date, extensive documentation involving individual slave accounts and their contributions to the landscape of Newport is lacking. However, this research will contribute to a continued understanding of the enslaved and free African Americans that are interred in Gods' Little Acre Burial Ground by examining a select group of those interred, identifying how they organized as a community, and assisted in building the cultural landscape of Newport. Further research is needed to fully appreciate how these individuals participated and contributed to the development of the City of Newport.

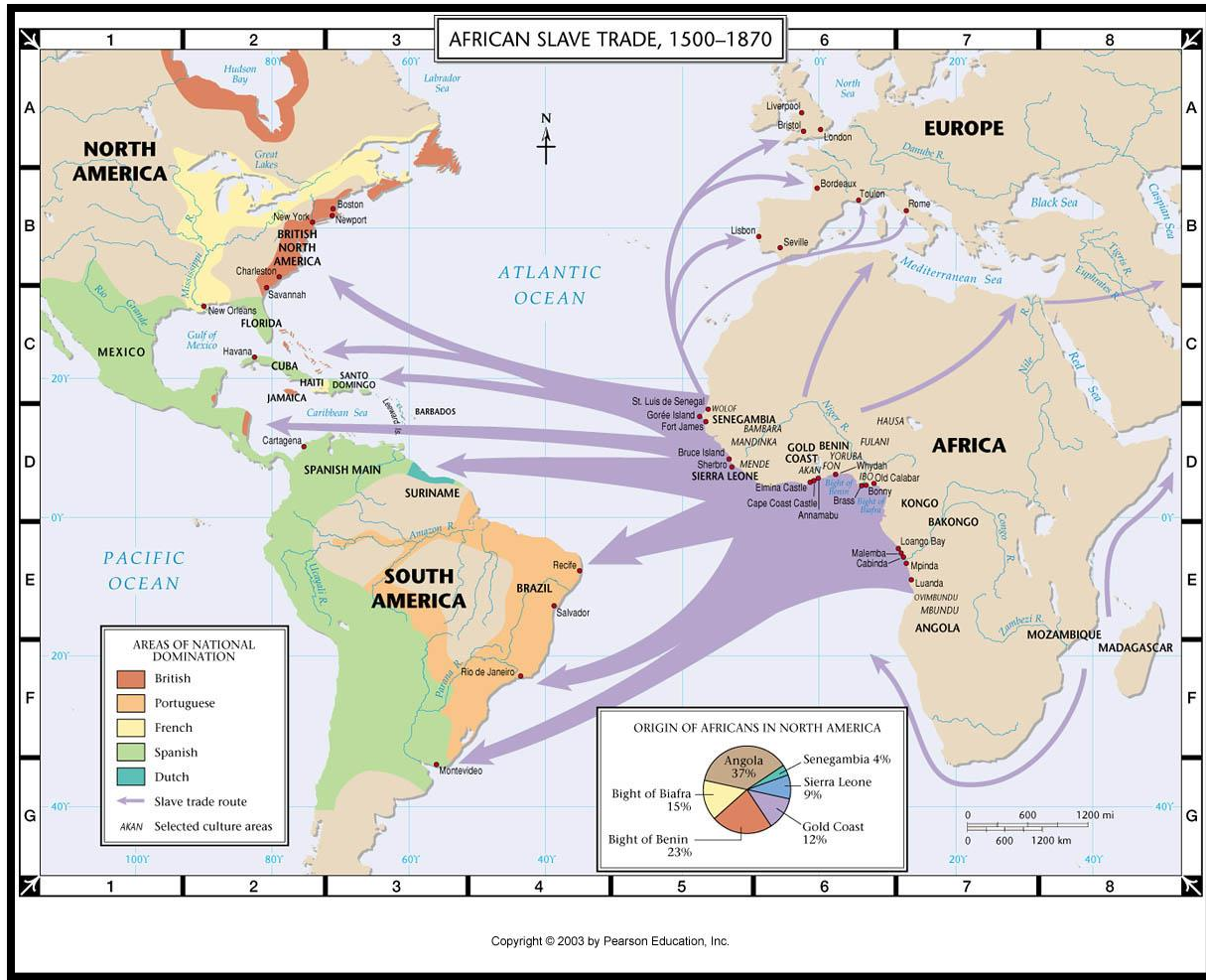


Figure 1:1 Map indicating the distribution of slaves leaving the coast of Africa during the 1500-1870. British North America is in dark red and displays the distribution of slave coming to the eastern seaboard of the U.S. Image taken from, Howell World History: The Atlantic Slave Trade. <https://howellworldhistory.wordpress.com/quarter-one/unit-3-european-global-interactions/the-atlantic-slave-trade-15-4/>

The purpose of this research is to discover biographical information and community interactions regarding the enslaved and free individuals who lived, worshiped, were educated and developed as a community in Newport. This research will further the understanding of how the African and African American community contributed to the development and cultural landscape of Newport.

The Africans and African Americans interred in God’s Little Acre Burial Ground, in countless instances, were transported to Newport for servitude in the homes, businesses,

including the wharves and ships of the wealthy businessmen, merchants and religious figures in the city. Unlike slavery in the Antebellum South, where many slaves lived and worked on large plantations, the enslaved of Newport labored in an urban and coastal setting. The urban and coastal environment provided that the enslaved lived and worked side-by-side with their owners in many cases.

Slavery prohibited those enslaved from moving about the city or congregate without permission from their white owners. Likewise, the free African Americans represent a small population with less restrictions but were regularly marginalized and discouraged from congregating in public buildings and spaces. In 1770 laws were put into place that regulated the enslaved and free, such laws noted:

Those found abroad after nine o'clock at night were to be confined in a cage, instead of the jail, till morning, and then to be whipped with ten stripes, unless redeemed for a small sum by their masters. In cases of manumission the owner was to give proper security that the subject would not become a public charge, and the free papers were to be recorded. Suitable penalties were imposed for violation of this law, and a failure to conform thereto invalidated an act of manumission.¹

However, these regulations did not deter the African American community from and actively pursuing community development in, entrepreneurship, home ownership, and organizational advancement in the form of African American leadership. That leadership was dedicated to the education of their children, religious freedom and a support system for their community. Their determination to live as a community can be seen today, as several homes, churches and buildings associated with the African American community still stand and are evidence of their determination to establish a thriving community.

¹ William Johnson. *Slavery in Rhode Island, 1755-1776*. (Providence: Standard Printing Company. 1894), 22.

The wealthy white men and their family's contribution to the historic cultural landscape of Newport is the focus for visitors and residents of Rhode Island alike. However, with the continued research regarding the individuals interred in God's Little Acre Cemetery and their impact on the City of Newport, visitors and residents can appreciate how the enslaved and free African-Americans were not just 'strangers in a strange land,'² but came together as a community and contributed to Newport's built environment. This research will display evidence through maps, diagrams, and photographs of existing homes, businesses and organizational meeting sites from a selected number of individuals interred in God's Little Acre Cemetery, and further establish evidence of the African and African American population and their impact on the cultural landscape of Newport.

Chapter 1.0 presents the methods used to assemble the data for this research. Materials regarding God's Little Acre Cemetery, its formation and the formation of the Common Burial Ground were used as the framework of this research. Sources will be discussed involving the sampling of those interred in God's Little Acre Cemetery that were used to conduct this research.

Chapter 2.0 will present the literature review that contextualizes the history of slavery and the African Americans present in Newport during the seventeenth, eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries.

Chapter 3.0 investigates the enslaved and free African American community in Newport and further discusses how the African American community strived to introduce African culture into their new colonial environment, an atmosphere that was forced upon them through the

² Journals kept by members of the Free African Union Society in Newport made note that they felt like "strangers in a strange land" on several occasions. The journals are held at the Newport Historical Society as well as a copy of William H. Robinson 1922, "The Proceeding of the Free Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824."

transatlantic slave trade. This chapter also evaluates the free African American mutual aid societies that formed in the 1780 and provided a sense of community, including the Free African Union Society and the Benevolent Society. Several members involved in African American mutual aid societies are interred in God's Little Acre Cemetery and research was conducted to identify their involvement in these societies. Additionally, this chapter demonstrates, through photographs and maps, the locations of dwellings used for mutual aid society meetings.

Chapter 4.0 examines the religious experience of the enslaved and free individuals interred in God's Little Acre and details the individuals that encouraged the abolition of slavery through their religious sermons. This chapter will evaluate the formation of the Colored Union Church that developed in association with the mutual aid society. Through photographs and maps, this chapter will feature locations of religious establishments that incorporated the enslaved and free individuals' religious experience and locations where the African American could worship as a community.

Chapter 5.0 explores the history of Colonial Era education fundamentals and evaluates the educational opportunities given to the enslaved and free community. This chapter illustrates the individuals interred in God's Little Acre that participated in the education of the African American children through annals and biographies. Locations and dwellings that still exist today are displayed with photographs and maps.

Chapter 6.0 examines the African American community through examples of employment opportunities of those interred in God's Little Acre who were supported in an urban port city environment. Newport was a port city during the Colonial Era, and the jobs that were available to the enslaved and free were, in many instances, provided by merchants, businessman and maritime trades alike. Additionally, this chapter illustrates, through land evidence records,

maps, and reports, that several individuals used their employment opportunities to purchase homes and start businesses of their own.

Chapter 7.0 chronicles the dwellings of those African Americans that are interred in God's Little Acre through land evidence records and documented accounts. Maps illustrate locations of African American settlements and discuss the architectural design of the homes. Additionally, this chapter will provide an analysis of the architecture of the homes belonging to the African Americans that exist, as well as an analysis of the African American community with respect to the development of the City of Newport.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODS: GOD'S LITTLE ACRE

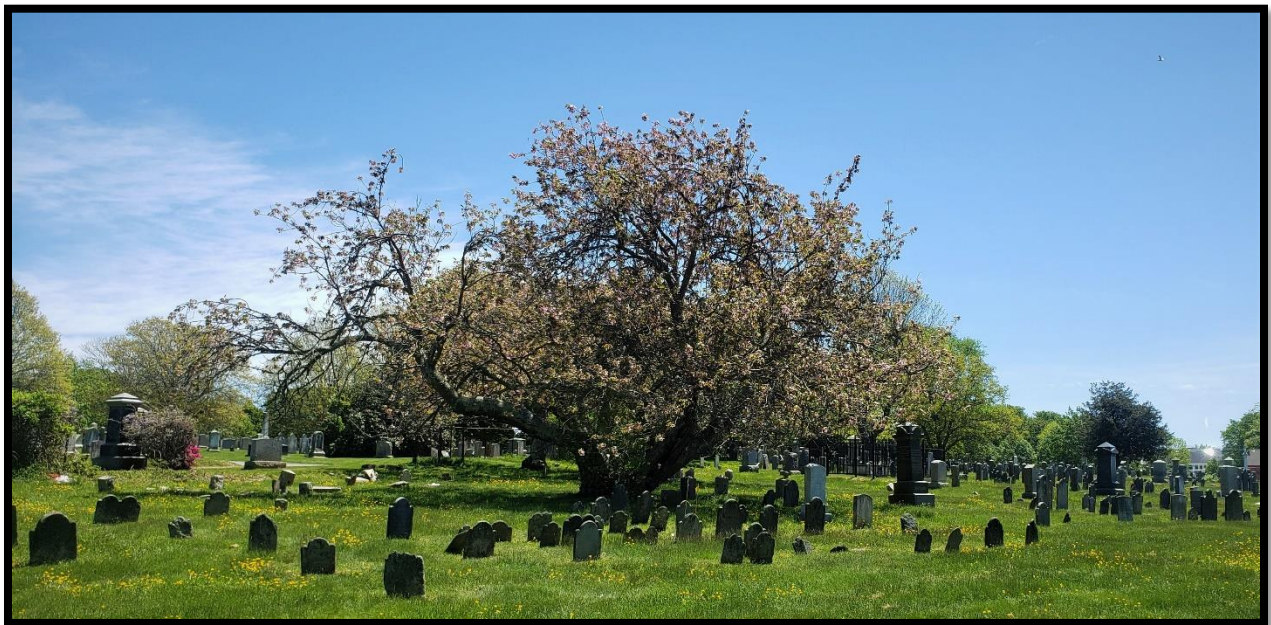


Figure 1:2 God's Little Acre Cemetery. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 21, 2019

This research used a sampling of the enslaved and free African Americans from God's Little Acre Cemetery who were interred between the seventeenth century through the early nineteenth century. God's Little Acre is one of many sources used during this research of the

African Americans that participated in the cultural landscape of Newport. Others include, God's Little Acre Cemetery: America's African Colonial Cemetery web site, which is operated by the Stokes family. Keith Stokes and his wife Theresa are instrumental in the continuing study of God's Little Acre and the African American community that resided in Newport. Mr. Stokes has gathered many significant details concerning the black population of Newport and continues to educate both visitors and residents on the history of the African American community in Newport.

God's Little Acre Cemetery, located within the Common Burial Ground along Farwell and Warner Street, and one of the oldest African and African American cemeteries in the United States, is the foundation for this research (Figure 1:3).³

In 1640, Dr. John Clark granted ten-acres to the City of Newport to establish a burial ground north of the colonial city and remarked "all would be afforded the opportunity to be buried in a common place regardless of social or religious status"⁴ (Figure 1:3 & 1:4). The Common Burial Ground was created in 1665 and perhaps was divided into two sections, one for the white residents of Newport and one for those enslaved, indentured, or free African and African Americans. The white portion of the cemetery depicts family unity, as family members are buried together. God's Little Acre, the black community's final resting place was once located on the fringes of the Common Burial Ground, away from Newport's caucasian community. As James C. Garman notes, "the graves of African Americans lie scattered north of

³ Four-hundred years after the burial ground was established, research continues to uncover why the African American portion was founded and the significance of its name. However, Meg Greene's work in 2008, noted that southern plantation slave owners would give portions of land to slaves for the burial of their dead, and this site was often referred to as, "God's Little Acre." (Greene, 2008) At this time there does not seem to be a correlation between Newport's African American cemetery and Southern Plantation burial grounds yet.

⁴ 1696 Heritage.com <http://www.1696heritage.com/our-blog/>

the main burying ground, an arrangement not without precedent in Eighteenth-Century New England.”⁵ Several of the enslaved that were held in high regard by their owners were not interred in God’s Little Acre, but were buried alongside the white family they served, away from their African American families. George Champlin Mason in 1894 said it best when describing the final resting place of the black community:

The briars and the ivy creep through the grass and cling to stones so moss-grown and crumbling that one often finds it difficult to decipher them; and, in the still more neglected parts, no hand has sought to plant the lily and the rose over the graves of the humble dead.⁶

The earliest Africans buried in the cemetery were born in the late 1600s, and the oldest grave is from the eighteenth century.⁷ The African and African American cemetery includes roughly 1,000 graves, of which less than three-hundred individuals buried are known. Today, work is ongoing to locate and verify the identities of those in unmarked graves.

Historic colonial African and African American cemeteries exist throughout the United States, including the northern states of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. The rediscovery of colonial cemeteries of the enslaved and free African and African Americans in New England in the past several decades confirms their presence and special characteristics. The New York City African American burial ground was uncovered during construction in 1991 and by 1992 over 400 remains of African and African Americans were unearthed. It is estimated that New York’s 1712 burial ground may have between ten and twenty-thousand enslaved and free

⁵ James C. Garman. Viewing the Color Line Through the Material Cultural of Death. *Historical Archeology*. 28, no. 3 (1994): 74-93.

⁶ George Champlin Mason. Reminiscences of Newport. (*Newport: Charles E. Hammett, Jr. 1884*) 107.

⁷ God’s Little Acre: America’s Colonial African Cemetery. Accessed: March 12, 2019.

African and African Americans remains.⁸ God's Little Acre is remarkably different than New York's African American Burial Ground, as the Newport cemetery was not disregarded and built over, but has been cared for and those interred in God's Little Acre have documented histories, which have not been forgotten.

Another African American burial ground was largely forgotten in Kinderhook, New York in the Hudson. It was noted that this "slave" cemetery was overlooked until a few years ago when "cleanup efforts by a few villagers [found] some stone markers in an overgrown field lead to the rediscovery of a forgotten, "slaves' cemetery" in which hundreds of African Americans were buried during the 1800s."⁹ According to the National Register of Historic Places registration form, only nineteen stones exist of the hundreds that are interred in the cemetery. And,

of the existing gravestone, only 11 have full or partially legible inscriptions; of these, three are those of adults, the remaining eight being those of children. Most all of the stones are of a simple tablet type, either square-headed or otherwise segmental arched; there is additionally one example of a lobed type. At least two bear significant damage, presumably the work of vandals.¹⁰

The registration form mentions a few stones with carving and memorial writings, similar to those in God's Little Acre. However, Kinderhook's slave cemetery is not nearly as old as God's Little Acre and does not have as many well maintained and carved stones.

⁸ Christopher R. DeCorse. *Power, Political Economy, and Historical Landscapes of the Modern World.: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. (Albany: State of New York Press. 2019), 189.

⁹ "Local Black History Revealed, in Brought Back to Light." *Hudson Valley Press*, March 7, 2018. Accessed: May 31, 2019. <https://hudsonvalleypress.com/2018/03/07/local-black-history-revealed-brought-light/>

¹⁰ "Persons of Color Cemetery at Kinderhook." *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. National Park Service*. January 13, 2016. Accessed: May 31, 2019. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/16000107.pdf>.

Within the Queens Village section of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania an early nineteenth century African American burial ground was uncovered during a construction project. It is estimated that 5,000 individuals of Philadelphia's African American population were interred under a playground for the children of Queens Village. It was noted that "in the 1800s, no African-Americans could be buried in cemeteries within Philadelphia's city limits. The dead could be buried at potter's fields like Washington Square, but the city forbade any tombstones to mark those who were interred there."¹¹ In contrast, the city of Newport allowed the African and African Americans the respect of gravestones and the cemetery is mostly intact as it is located within Newport's Common Burial Ground.

When walking through God's Little Acre, one cannot help but notice the many hand-carved gravestones that dot the landscape. Glen A. Knoblock (2016) noted that God's Little Acre has some of the "finest examples of gravestone carver's art in all of New England...this phenomenon is not seen elsewhere in New England, where unmarked graves were the norm for blacks. Thus, in this one place may be seen the elaborate gravestones for about 250 people of color who died before 1800, more than anywhere in the region combined."¹² John Wood Sweet discussed why God's Little Acre might have carved gravestones, noting that:

No doubt master intended these gravestones, as least in part, to emphasize the message that good servants would be rewarded with enduring recognition...and master's likely saw these stones not just as reminders to their peers and other townspeople that they had wealth and good taste.¹³

¹¹ Kristen De Groot. *Black Burial Site Discovered Under Philadelphia Playground to get Memorial*. "The Morning Call. July 5, 2018. Accessed: May 31, 2019. <https://www.mcall.com/news/pennsylvania/mc-nws-philadelphia-playground-black-burial-site-20180705-story.html>.

¹² Glenn A. Knoblock. *Gravesites African American Historic Burial Grounds and of New England*. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc. 2016), 169.

¹³ John Wood Sweet. *Budies Politic: Negotiating Role in the American North, 1730-1830*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,2003), 157.

However, Jesmyn Ward (2017) noted that “most of the grave markers are missing as a result of vandalism or landscaping contractors running tractors mowers through it for many years.”¹⁴ Today, work is ongoing by the Newport Cemetery Committee as well as by the Stokes family to preserve the stones that remain and discover unmarked graves. Recently the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Action Fund awarded the Preservation Society of Newport County a \$50,000 grant to assist in the preservation of the burial ground. Leigh Schoberth, recently noted in the Providence Journal that “God’s Little Acre is a critical resource for the exploration of Newport’s African American heritage [and] this support will help us continue to educate the public about the significance of this site.”¹⁵ Within the burial ground, there are many gravestones that still exhibit ornate symbols and writings that provide family names, ages and in some cases the names of the slave owner. Additionally, members of the cemetery organization have attached tags on the back of illegible or broken stones that identify those interred (Figure 1:5 & Figure 1:6).

During the colonial period, the possibility of having a gravestone or marker, that indicated your final resting place, was a luxury and out of reach for the disadvantaged, indentured servant or slave. However, gravestones, some with ornate carvings, do exist in God’s Little Acre and are one of the reasons that this section of the Common Burial Ground is significant.

¹⁴ Jesmyn Ward, Ed. *The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks about Race*. (New York: Scribner, 2017), 49.

¹⁵ “\$50,000 Grant to Support God’s Little Acre Preservation.” *Providence Journal*. July 11, 2019. Accessed July 20, 2019. <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190711/50000-grant-to-support-gods-little-acre-preservation>

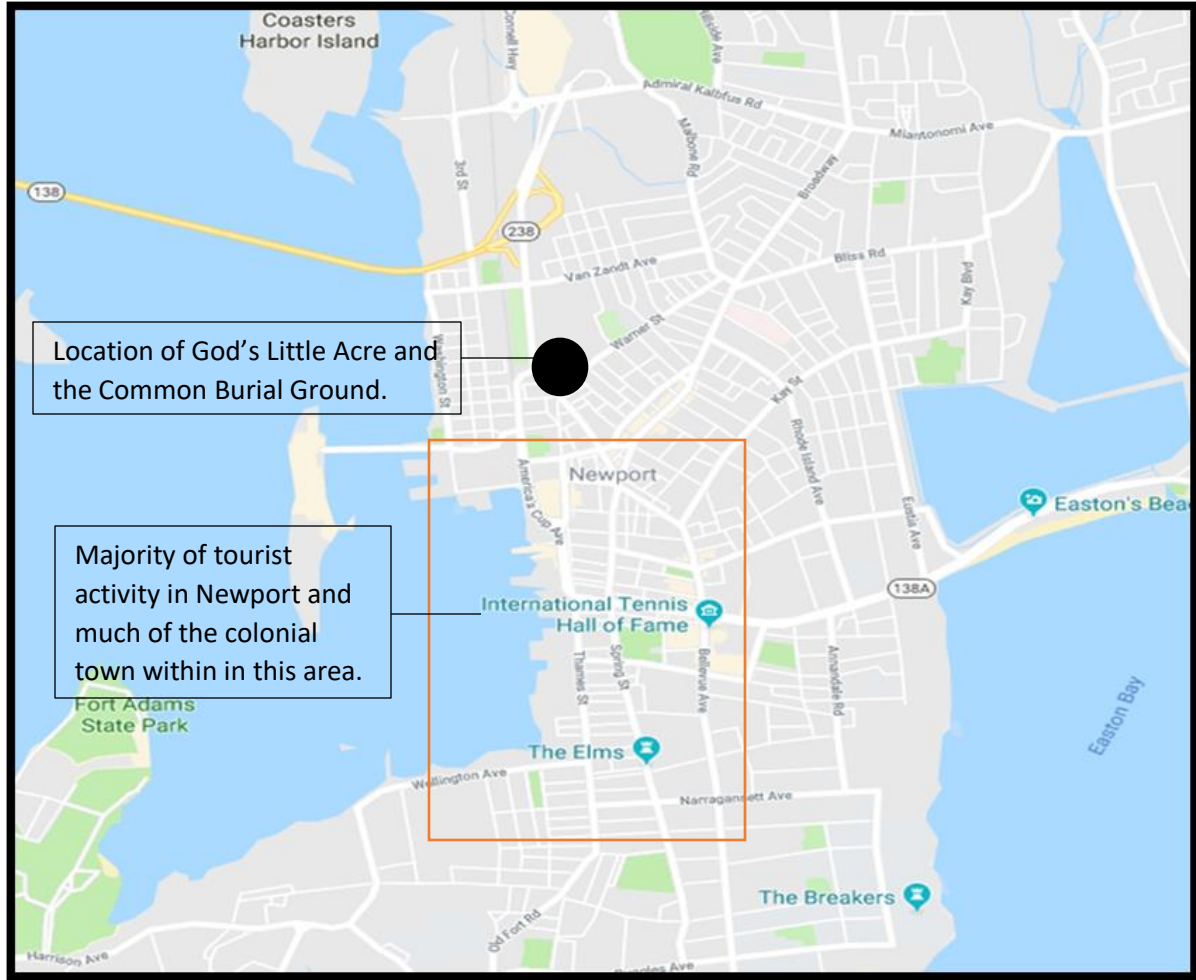


Figure 1:3 Map of the Newport, Rhode Island. God's Little Acre located within the Common Burial Ground. Accessed: Google maps, May 22, 2019.

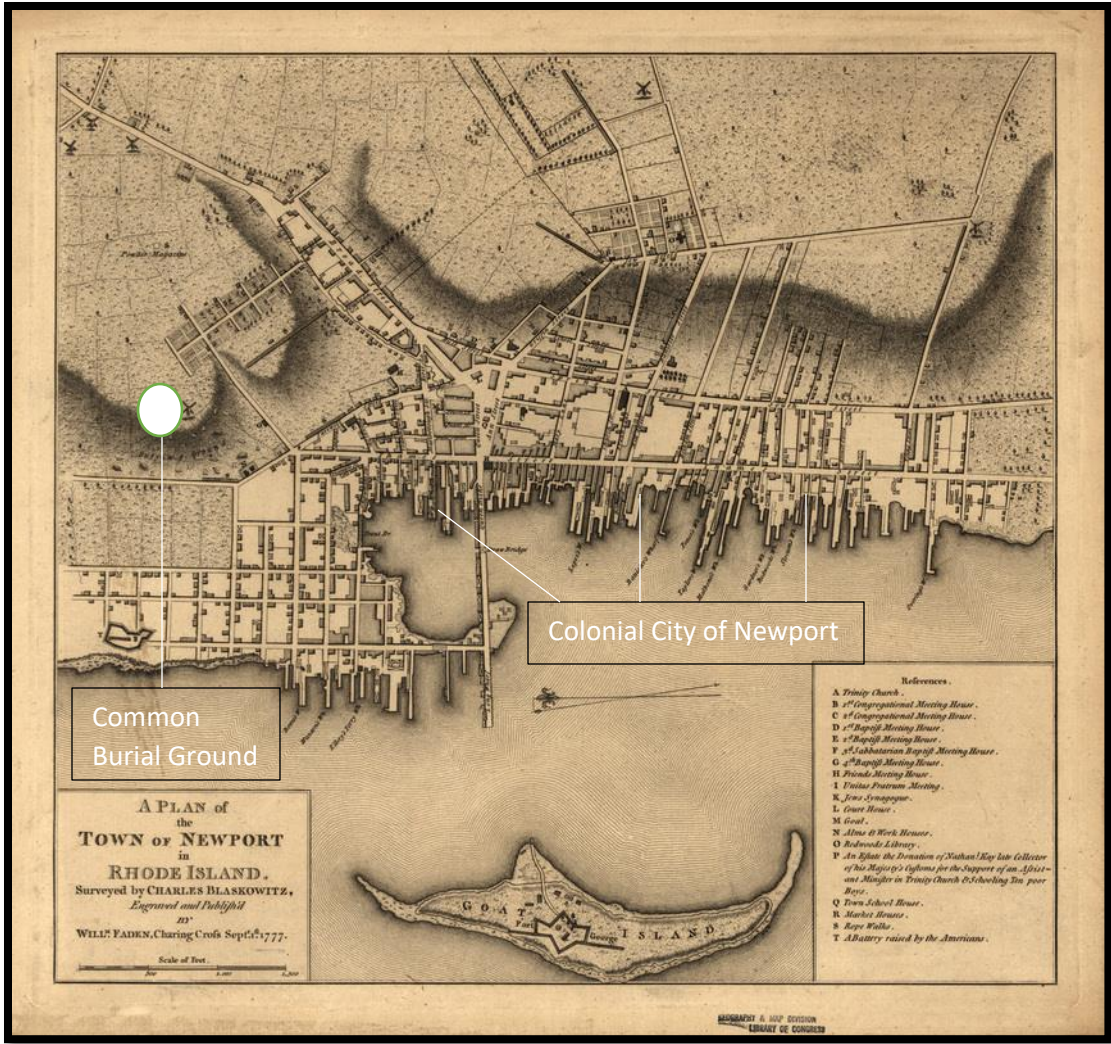


Figure 1:4 1777 Map of Newport, RI. Common Burial Ground was on the fringes of the colonial city. Newport Map Project. <http://newportmapproject.weebly.com/1777---plan-of-newport.html>.



Figure 1:5 Gravestone in God's Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 21, 2019.



Figure 1:6 Front of gravestones in God's Little Acre. Many of these stones are illegible and broken. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 21, 2019.

1.3 SAMPLING OF THOSE INTERRED

This research was conducted on fifty-five randomly gathered individuals interred in God's Little Acre throughout facilities in Newport and Providence, Rhode Island, including the Newport Historical Society Archives, Newport City Hall Probate records and Newport directories to determine their level of contribution to the landscape of Newport. Contributions to the cultural landscape include African and African American community projects and organizations, entrepreneurial efforts, craftsmanship, including cooking/baking, woodworking, stone carving, rope making and construction, and other industrious activities.

This research will not consider all the individuals buried in the cemetery, as there are hundreds of souls interred within the historic burial ground, many of whom are unknown. Additionally, many of the African and African Americans that inhabited Newport did not leave many distinguishing signatures to help identify their presence, which makes this research problematic. Individuals that were under the age of twenty-five at the time of death are discussed, as they may not have influenced much to the cultural landscape of Newport, and in-depth personal information may not be available. The amount of men and woman were chosen randomly as well and when information was indeterminable on a specific person, they were not used for this research.

The Newport Historical Society houses original documents from the Free African Benevolent Society, the African Union Society, diaries from African American educators, and church records. These documents illustrate the struggle and accomplishments of those enslaved and emancipated, further demonstrating their determination to belong to a community and their impact on the cultural landscape of Newport.

Identification of slave owners, their businesses, homes and their relationship to the free and enslaved living in Newport was accomplished with biographies, probate records, land use records, wills, and property inventories housed at Newport City Hall, as well as records located in the Newport Historical Society Archives. Information gathered on slave owners, including occupation and residences aided the research, as it established where the enslaved and manumitted individuals lived and worked, as well as their different connections within the City of Newport.

Historic maps of Newport provided information regarding locations in the colonial city where African and African Americans lived, worked and gathered as a community during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These maps provided documentation and proof that structures existed, as many properties may no longer exist due to Newport's urban renewal program and deterioration or loss of properties over time. Newport's urban renewal began in 1965 when the city declared Washington Square, Historic Hill and the Point Neighborhood a historic district, and developed a four-lane road known as America's Cup Avenue. Later in 1968 philanthropist Doris Duke founded the Newport Restoration Foundation to restore and preserve eighty eighteenth century and early nineteenth century homes in Newport and Middletown. The National Register of Historic Places nomination form states that:

While the impact of these activities is undeniable, the effects are concentrated near the district's edges and modern intrusions within the district are few. Substantial numbers of buildings in the waterfront areas and throughout the district have been restored through the efforts of private individuals, organizations, and the city government. Those buildings that were moved and preserved on new sites within the district continue a well-documented tradition of at least 200 years in Newport. The district contains 1332 buildings, structures, and sites which contribute to its historic and architectural

significance as a colonial seaport and 19th- and early 20th-century resort community.¹⁶

This project moved, demolished and restored homes, businesses and the overall look of Newport, as many structures were dilapidated or abandoned.

The use of twentieth and twenty-first century maps pinpointed structures and dwellings that still exist today and are evidence that the enslaved, and the manumitted individuals and their families were not just “strangers in a strange land,”¹⁷ but became property owners and a permanent part of the fabric of Newport and Rhode Island. Even though slavery brought many of these individuals and their descendants to Newport, it did not deter them from forming a community and attaining homes and businesses.

¹⁶ Newport NHL District, Newport, Newport County, Rhode Island. Section 7. “United States Department of the Interior: National Park Service. April 10, 1995. Accessed: May 30, 2019. http://www.preservation.ri.gov/pdfs_downloads/national_pdfs/newport/newp_newport-hd.pdf.

¹⁷ William H. Robinson, Ed. The proceedings of the Free African Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island. 1780-1825. (*Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island. Paul Company and Union Society. 1976.*), 5.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will discuss the origins of slavery in Newport and those that participated in the transatlantic slave trade during the seventeenth century through the early nineteenth century. Additionally, this review will look at research that focuses on the landscape and community organizations of the African and African American community in Newport. Finally, this review will examine how historians and academics have provided a template for the preservation of African and African American life in the city of Newport.

Much of this literature review covers research that reveals the history of colonial slavery in Newport, the slave owners that participated in the transatlantic slave trade, as well as urban slavery and living conditions of those enslaved. However, information regarding those interred in God's Little Acre Burial Ground is absent from much of the literature found explaining the history of slavery in Newport. Many historians and researchers concentrate on the chronicle of slavery and the key figures who contributed to the trade, rather than those enslaved. This research will concentrate on literature and documentation that involves the individuals that are interred in God's Little Acre, slavery in Rhode Island, and in Newport specifically and the owners of the enslaved with the express desire to identify the contributions of those interred to the cultural landscape of Newport.

Newport, located on Aquidneck Island, along Narragansett Bay, is home to breathtaking ocean views, architecturally remarkable homes, and many historical sites. But before it became known as a playground for the rich and famous, the island was inhabited by Native Americans, followed by Colonial settlers escaping religious persecution. It is sadly ironic that various religious sects, including Quakers, Jews, and Christians, converged onto Aquidneck Island to escape from persecution, only to impose a form of oppression – human slavery - onto thousands

of African, African Americans and Native Americans. James C. Garman (1998) notes, “Euro Americans clearly saw a motivation, however despicable, to use slave labor in agricultural production. Slavery of African Americans and Native Americans quickly became crucial to the economies of the East Bay towns [Newport, Middletown, Jamestown, Bristol].”¹⁸ Garman reexamines several works regarding patterns, economics, agricultural and landscapes concerning slavery within the East Bay through archeology. This work is noteworthy as Garman details the various economic interests involving slaveowners, including farming, fishing, and other agricultural activities that flourished in the East Bay. However, slavery in Newport was not considered agricultural, but an urban and seafaring form of slavery.

Christy Clark-Pujara, Assistant Professor of History in the Afro-American Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison remarked in her work, *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*, how the economics of slavery reinforced the continued importation of slaves into the United States. Clark-Pujara noted that “the institution of slavery literally built Rhode Island [and the] merchants and businessmen of Rhode Island were active participants in the development and maintenance of American Slavery.”¹⁹ Further, Clark-Pujara notes that the enslaved of Rhode Island “labored in distilleries where rum was made to purchase slaves, built the slave ships that transported enslaved Africans, and served as the crew on those ships as they crisscrossed the Atlantic.”²⁰ This work summarizes how Newport prospered financially, offering businessmen and merchants the capital they required to manufacture the landscape of the city and prosper economically. Clark-Pujara’s work also demonstrates the

¹⁸ James C. Garman "Rethinking “resistant accommodation”: Toward an archaeology of African-American lives in southern New England, 1638–1800." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 2, no. 2 (1998): 133-160.

¹⁹ Christy Clarke-Pujara. *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*. (New York: New York University Press. 2016.), 19.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 42

adaptability of the enslaved population, often being ‘rented’ out to perform various duties throughout Newport, including tradesmen, secretaries and sailors. Clark-Pujara’s may not discuss the enslaved by name, but does discuss the names of several prominent merchants, businessmen and religious figures within the City of Newport who held slaves and prospered from the slave trade. This research builds on the work of Clark-Pujara’s by presenting some of the names and occupations of those enslaved and enables others to further the research of those enslaved and free in Newport.

2.1 TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Numerous works detail the history of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade in Rhode Island and Newport including: Lorenzo Greene, *Negro in Colonial New England*, (2016), William Johnston, *Slavery in Rhode Island, 1755-1776* and *Slavery and the Slave Trade in Rhode Island*, (1894), Anne Farrow, Joel Land, and Jennifer Frank’s, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (2006), Oscar Reiss, *Blacks in Colonial America* (1997) and Jay Coughtry’s *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (1981). These works contribute to the growing knowledge of the institution of slavery in Rhode Island and Newport, slave trade routes, the ships that participated in the slave triangle, as well as the individuals’ slave owners and slave labor (Figure 2:1, 2:2).

Before the first slave ships sailed out of the harbors of Providence, Newport, and Bristol, Rhode Island, the colony was steeped in agriculture, but the proximity of the sea would lead Rhode Island into the transatlantic slave trade. Jay Coughtry’s work is noteworthy as it details Rhode Island’s transformation from an agriculture society to transatlantic trade. Coughtry notes that “it was the youth of Rhode Island who first considered commerce and shipping as

alternatives to life of the farm.”²¹ But Coughtry contends shipping and the slave trade was not for all, but the wealthy and privileged, as slaving was expensive and dangerous. Coughtry details Rhode Island’s shift into the slave trade with voyages to the African coast in 1709, 1714 and 1717, but it was not until the 1720’s when the slaving voyages began in earnest to negotiate rum for slaves (Figure 2:3). According to Coughtry, Rhode Island sent 934 slaving ships to Africa between 1709 and 1807, accounting for “106,544 Africans [taken] from their homeland” and brought to the American Colonies.²² The slave trade would become Rhode Island’s prime means of business until the Revolutionary War when voyages were held until the end of the war.

Coughtry remarks that “Newport monopolized the trade [slave trade] before the Revolution and continued her domination as the trade revived in the first decade of peace after the Treaty of Paris.”²³ Coughtry further discusses that before the end of slavery, Rhode Island dispatched about a thousand slaving voyages that transported close to 100,000 Africans. Some of the Africans would be sold at slave auctions within the city of Newport as noted in a Boston Post-Boy article in 1775, “Sale of Cargo of recently imported Gold Coast Slaves owned by John Banister [Newport merchant]. Men, women, boys and girls, the finest cargo of slaves ever brought into New England to be sold at Banister’s store.”²⁴ After 1808 slavery was banned, however that did not stop some from continuing in the trade.

Coughtry’s work is important as it details how the slave trade operated in Rhode Island and Newport, those involved in the slave trade, and Rhode Island’s shift from slavery. However, Coughtry’s work does not explore all the homes and businesses where the enslaved of Newport

²¹ Jay Coughtry. *The Nortorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981),9.

²² Ibid, 26.

²³ Ibid, 6.

²⁴ Ibid, 169.

served. Further analysis is needed to document the dwellings and businesses where slaves lived and worked in Newport.

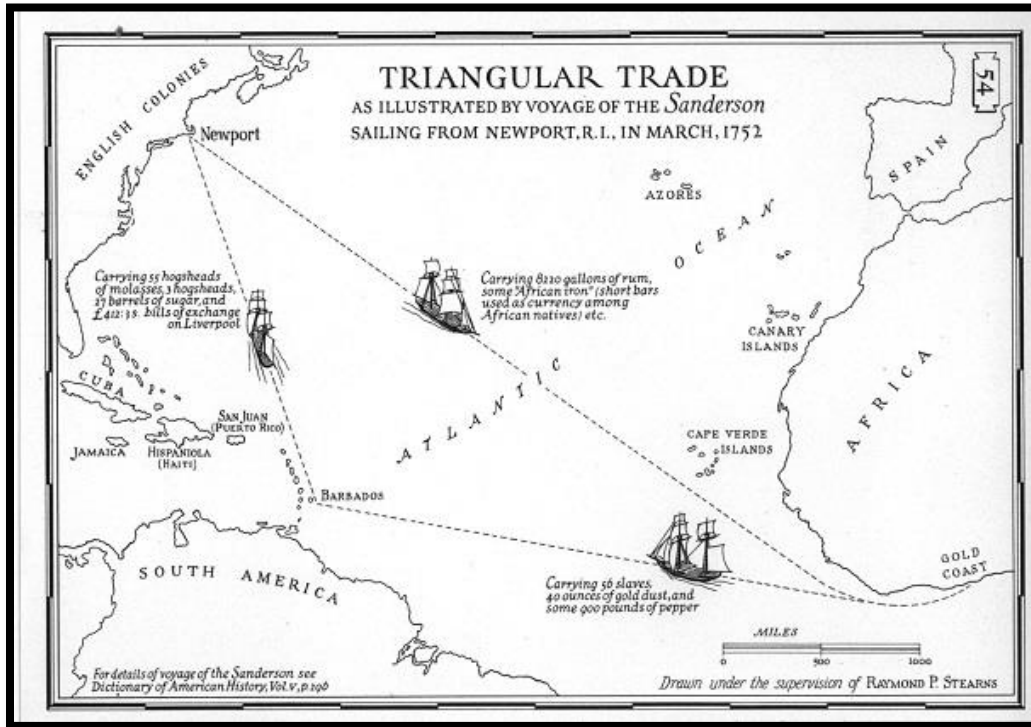


Figure 2:1 Map displaying the Triangular Trade that brought rum to the Gold Coast of Africa in exchange for African Slaves. Vessels would acquire sugar and molasses and return to Newport where rum would be distilled. This continued until the early 19th century. Image taken from History of Massachusetts Blog. <https://historyofmassachusetts.org/slavery-in-massachusetts/>

State	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
Maine	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
New Hampshire	157	8	0	0	3	1	0	0
Vermont	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Massachusetts	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Rhode Island	958	380	108	48	17	5	0	0
Connecticut	2648	951	310	97	25	17	0	0
New York	21193	20903	15017	10088	75	4	0	0
New Jersey	11423	12422	10851	7557	22554	674	236	18
Pennsylvania	3702	1706	795	211	403	64	0	0
Delaware	8887	6153	4177	4509	3292	2605	2290	1798
Maryland/DC	103036	107707	115056	111917	107499	93057	94055	90374
W. Virginia*	4668	7172	10836	15119	17673	18488	20500	18371
Kentucky	12430	40343	80561	126732	165213	182258	210981	225483
Ohio	X**	0	0	0	6	3	0	0
Indiana	X	28	237	190	3	3	0	0
Illinois	X	107	168	917	747	331	0	0
Michigan	X	0	24	0	1	0	0	0
Wisconsin	X	0	0	0	31	11	0	0
Missouri	X	X	2875	10222	25091	58240	87422	114931
Iowa	X	X	X	X	X	16	0	0
Utah	X	X	X	X	X	X	26	29
Nebraska	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
Kansas	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2
Total:	169102	197880	241015	287607	342636	355777	415510	451021
* The census data separated the counties that would make up West Virginia to highlight the differences between this area and the rest of Virginia.								
**Xs note years when a particular state or territory was not yet recognized as part of the United States and thus not included in the census data.								

Figure 2:2 Table indicating the population of slaves in the United States from 1790 until 1860. This graph notes the slave population as 958 compared to 10,3036 in Maryland, 1,2430 in Kentucky and 4668 in Virginia. Slave population continues to rise in the Southern states, whereas it decreases in Rhode Island and the other Northern states. Source: Civil Discourse: A Blog of the Long Civil War Era. <http://www.civildiscourse-historyblog.com/blog/2017/1/3/when-did-slavery-really-end-in-the-north>

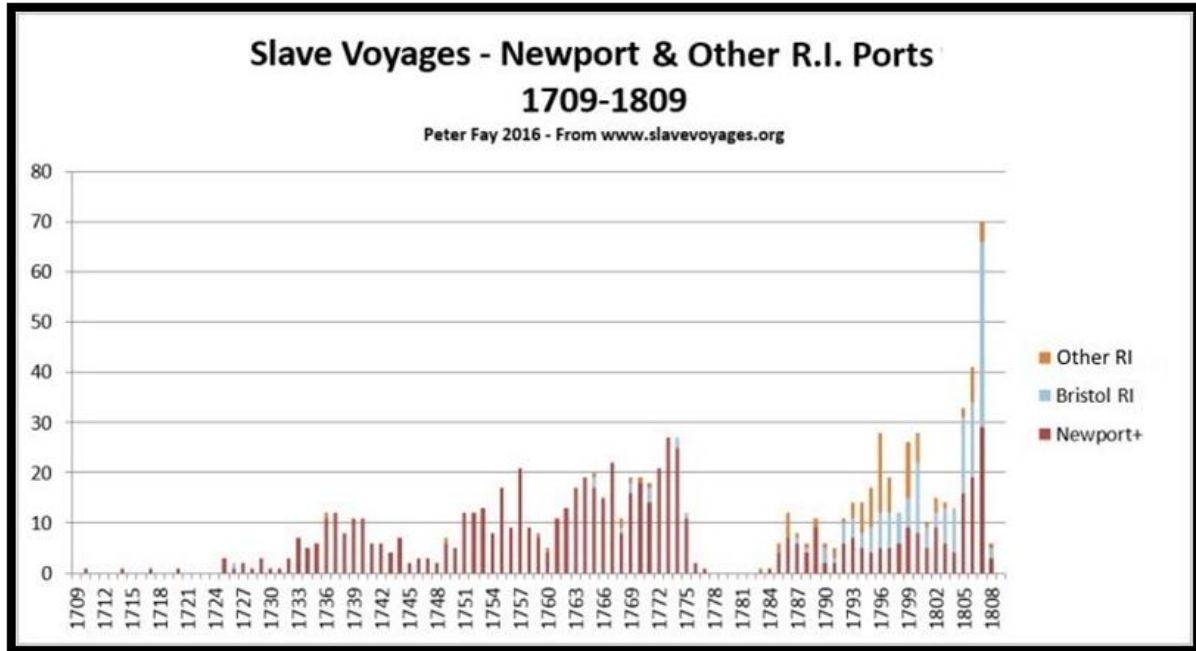


Figure 2:3 Graph displays the number of slave voyages from Newport and other harbors between 1709-1809. Newport's slave voyages are detailed in dark red and the graph displays the increase in voyages from 1733 to its height in 1775. There appears to be a lag in voyages during the Revolutionary War period, but by 1787 voyages continued until 1808, but does not appear to be at the same level as pre-war time. Graph taken from Emory University Prof. Emeritus David Eltis' research project, www.slavevoyages.org. (Eltis' 2016)

H. CENSUS OF 1790

COUNTY	FREE WHITES		Females	OTHER FREE PERSONS	SLAVES	TOTAL
	Males					
	Over 16	Under 16				
Bristol	781	678	1,562	92	98	3,211
Kent	2,157	2,128	4,149	351	63	8,848
Newport	3,231	2,842	7,047	814	366	14,300
Providence	6,154	5,500	11,877	778	82	24,391
Washington	3,696	4,651	8,017	1,372	339	18,075
Total	16,019	15,799	32,652	3,407	948	68,825

Figure 2:4 Table indicates the census of the colony of Rhode Island from 1790. Newport is highlighted in yellow. (Harrington 1932, 70)

2.2 SLAVE OWNERS IN NEWPORT

Several works examine specific slave owners and their contributions to the City of Newport, including manufacturing, shipping, mercantilism, and banking. The chronicle of these men is an important tool to reference those interred in God's Little Acre.

As noted, slaving was not for the poor, but for those who could afford to risk their financial stability on slaving trips to Africa. Rachel Chernos Lin examines who the slave traders in Rhode Island and Newport were, their occupations and their estimated monetary and property values. Lin demonstrates, in her article (The Rhode Island Slave Traders: Butchers, Bakers and Candlestick-makers) that many of the prominent members of Newport society would invest in the slave-trade, but also maintained other business ventures; these include banking, manufacturing, real estate, and the mercantile business. According to Lin, businessmen and traders like Aaron Lopez of Newport, Moses Seixas, founder of bank Rhode Island, Christopher Champlin President of Bank Rhode Island, and William Vernon founder of Newport Bank had shares in and profited from the slave trade. Some part-time investors of the slave trade were members of Rhode Island's political and judicial system, including Attorney General of Rhode Island, William Channing and Newport lawyer Christopher Ellery. Ellery was also a member of Congress and served from 1801-05. These individuals not only owned and profited from slavery but wrote the rules and mandates regarding slavery in the colony (Figure 2:5).



Figure 2:5 Painting depicting prominent members of Newport's Merchant society drinking in Surinam. Titled "Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam." <https://fineartamerica.com>²⁵

Lin remarks that "the slave-trade and slavery were closely tied to the economic growth of New England."²⁶ These ventures were not only tied to the economic growth of New England, but the streets of Newport were paved, its bridges and country roads mended through the duties collected on slave imports. Lin's work affirms that the slave trade in Rhode Island and Newport was not only participated by merchants and slave-traders alone but involved many different individuals, occupations and levels of Newport's society. Lin's article does include several

²⁵ The painting, *Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam* was commissioned by American artist John Greenwood. The art features several influential members of Newport and Providence community. These include: Esek Hopkins, Stephen Hopkins, William Hopkins, Nicholas Cook, Ambrose Page, Joseph Wanton, Godfrey Malbone, Nicholas Powers and Godfrey Malbone Jr. Today the oil on bed ticking painting hangs in the St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.

²⁶ Rachel Chernos Lin. "The Rhode Island slave-traders: Butchers, bakers and candlestick-makers." *Slavery and Abolition* 23, no. 3 (2002): 32.

prominent members of Newport society that participated in the slave trade but did not discuss how many slaves, if any, those individuals owned.

2.3 LANDSCAPES OF SLAVERY

The landscape of slavery in Newport encompasses all aspects surrounding the lives of enslaved and free. These spaces include churches and religious associations, employment establishments, residences and other structures and spaces occupied by the enslaved and free. Some of these spaces and buildings may not exist today, but the Africans, African Americans and the Caucasian population left traces of themselves in records and archeological sites throughout the city and is important to this research and the history of Newport.

Unlike the plantations in the Antebellum South and the plantations of southern Rhode Island, Newport imposed an urban form of slavery. Newport's African Americans were considered servants and worked in households, became mariners, shipbuilders or wharf workers and many were assigned apprenticeships in a trade, including rope making, stone carving, woodworking, masonry, and other disciplines. This form of slavery was vastly different than Antebellum slavery where hundreds of slaves labored on large agriculture plantations.

Because Newport was an urban port city, slaves lived within the homes of the slaveowners, most often in kitchen ells, attics, and cellars. Lynne Withey discusses population growth of the enslaved and free blacks in her work, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century*. Withey notes that the black population increased during the first half of the eighteenth century when Newport was heavily involved in the slave trade. According to Withey, "blacks in Newport ranged from ten percent of the total population at the

beginning of the eighteenth century to eighteen percent by mid-century.”²⁷ As the population grew, according to Withey, authorities in Newport began imposing laws regarding the movement of blacks, including curfew laws and regulations prohibiting social gatherings without owner permission. Withey elaborates on the population growth but does not detail the living arrangements of the black population. Withey, notes that much of the underprivileged population resided on the fringes of the city, but this work does not discuss their living conditions. Additional evidence is needed to comprehend how the increase in African American population affected the free and enslaved living conditions.

Dr. Akeia A.F. Benard’s dissertation thoroughly examines the enslaved and emancipated community’s foundation within the cultural landscape of Newport and provides a better understanding of the African American community that lived within the city during the colonial period. Benard analyzes community development and social interactions of the black community and investigates archeological data from an individual dwelling located in “The Point” area of Newport, as the Point region of Newport is known to have free African American dwellings within the district. A complete analysis of all those interred in God’s Little Acre burial ground which identifies their contributions to the cultural landscape of Newport has not been fully explored. But Benard’s dissertation is one of the most complete studies of the African American population and their participation of Newport’s cultural landscape. However, a complete analysis of those interred in God’s Little Acre that identifies their contributions to the cultural landscape of Newport has not been fully explored. This research will present a sampling of those interred and their contributions to the cultural landscape of Newport, but further research is

²⁷ Lynne Withey. *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century*. (Albany: State University Press, 1984.), 71.

needed to fully appreciate how all the individuals interred participated and contributed to the development of the City of Newport.

William D. Johnson documents the slave trade, living arrangements, community events, deaths and runaway examples in his work, *Slavery in Rhode Island, 1755-1776* and notes contempt of the institution of slavery by many Quakers and other religious societies. Johnson recounts a journal entry by Quaker John Woolman who visited Newport in 1760, “he saw the horrible traffic in human being, - the slave ships laying at the wharves of the town, - the sellers and buyers of men and woman and children thronging the market place.”²⁸ However, Johnson also notes that Woolman commented that the disdain for slavery was not supported by all religious affiliations, citing Reverend Samuel Hopkins who spoke to his parishioners about the sins of slavery, but “many [in the congregation] were partakers in the shame and wickedness [of slavery].”²⁹ Slavery did not differentiate between slave owners affiliated with a religious sect and those who did not have any affiliation with religion.

Sean E. Kelley’s work, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare: A Journey into Captivity from Sierra Leone to South Carolina*, utilized the archives of South Carolina, New York, the National Archives in England, Edinburgh, Newport Historical Society, and Newport City Hall as well as, research letters, journals and probate inventories. He notes that “Newport’s slaves worked in every possible occupation, skilled and unskilled, maritime and shoreside.”³⁰ Kelley’s material corroborates with other scholars; however, Kelley does not identify most of the

²⁸ William D. Johnson, A.B. *Slavery in Rhode Island, 1755-1776*. (Providence: Standard Printing Company. 1894),36.

²⁹ Ibid, 37

³⁰ Sean M. Kelley. *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare: A Journey into Captivity from Sierra Leone to South Carolina*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina. 2016), 18.

buildings, ships or other structures that slaves labored on. This research will document several establishments and dwellings where those interred in God's Little Acre worked and lived.

James C. Garman revealed in *Rethinking "Resistant Accommodation": Toward an Archaeology of African-American Lives in Southern New England, 1638—1800*, that the Gradual Emancipation Act was approved in 1784, and that emancipated African and African Americans moved to the “fringes of the towns, villages and urban centers.”³¹ Many emancipated African Americans not only lived on the fringes of town, but lived in poverty. Editor Judith Weiss Cohen notes in *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* that “Africans were treated as an inferior caste, socially and economically disadvantaged as well as foreign to the mainstream of colonial political life. Moreover, African Americans were hampered by poverty.”³² These works do not include details of how the enslaved or emancipated individuals contributed to the construction of the homes and buildings of Newport.

Richard C. Youngken and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission and Rhode Island Black Heritage Society display a map and photographs of dwellings located throughout Newport that African Americans occupied in *African Americans in Newport: An Introduction to the Heritage of African Americans in Newport, Rhode Island, 1700-1945*. This work provides the reader with details of Rhode Island slave history and the establishment of African American communities and businesses in Newport. Research and archeology discoveries continue today that will build on Youngken work.

³¹ James C. Garman "Rethinking “resistant accommodation”: Toward an archaeology of African-American lives in southern New England, 1638–1800." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 2, no. 2 (1998): 133-160.

³² Judith Weiss Cohen, Ed. *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. Pdf. Volume 11, Number 2. Nov. 1992. Accessed: May 29, 2019. <http://www.rjha.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/RIJH-Notes-Volume-11.2-all.pdf>

Architectural details of Newport's colonial homes have been thoroughly researched, including location, building materials, changes to the buildings over time, usages for meetings, worship or political sites. The identification of historic structures throughout Newport can be problematic due to a revitalization and redevelopment project that occurred in Newport during the twentieth century. This process contributed to the destruction and relocation of many buildings and roads throughout Newport. (Figure 2.8) The loss of buildings and spaces makes it difficult to create a detailed record of slave contribution. Further research is needed to discover which structures African and African Americans built, lived and worked in that remain today.

The landscape of slavery in Newport encompasses all aspects of the enslaved and free life, including the establishments, spaces and residences where they lived, worked and organized as a community. These spaces include churches and religious affiliations, employment establishments, and residences occupied by the enslaved and free. These landscapes of slavery are important to this research as they reveal areas where African and African Americans participated in the cultural landscape of Newport. Some of these spaces and buildings may not exist anymore, the Africans, African Americans and the Caucasian population left traces of themselves in records and archeological sites throughout the city.



Figure 2:8 This gambrel roof, wood-framed dwelling was built in 1717 and was the home of Nathaniel Rodman – buried in God’s Little Acre. It was originally located on Warner St. but was moved during in the 1960’s during Newport’s redevelopment program. Today the dwelling is located on 13 Second Street. Image by Marjorie Drew, May 2019.

3 AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN NEWPORT

At the beginning of the eighteenth-century ten percent of Newport’s population was African American, and by the mid-century, the population increased to eighteen percent (Figure 3). Lynne Withey notes “most blacks were slaves and therefore not part of the public responsibility; yet the growth of slavery required some control, and the small number of free blacks were viewed in much the same light as white transients.”³³ Withey further notes that the residents increasingly encouraged the end of slavery but did not relish the rise in poverty that was expected to occur with the end of slavery. Additionally, the members of the enslaved and free wanted to feel a sense of self-worth and belonging in their new homeland. The need to belong to a community led to several mutual aid societies and religious organizations that brought the enslaved and free together as a community.³⁴

Many of those interred in God’s Little Acre helped establish and participate in elections and mutual aid societies. This chapter discusses those individuals involved in enslaved Lektion day activities and African American mutual aid societies. The chapter will examine the development of mutual aid societies and how these societies contributed to religious and educational activities within the African American community.

YEAR	NEWPORT NON-WHITE	PERCENT OF TOTAL	PERCENT INCREASE
1708	220	10	0

³³ Lynne Withey. *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century*. (Albany: State University Press, 1984.), 71

³⁴ Mutual aid societies and religious organizations that were organized and run by several of the free African Americans in Newport helped establish a sense of community.

1730	797	17	262
1748	1,173	18	47
1755	1,234	18	5
1774	1,292	14	5

Figure 3:1 Number of non-whites in Newport ranged from 10% of the total population at the beginning of the 18th century to 18% by mid-century. (*L. Withey 1984*)

3.1 LECTURE DAY

During the late eighteenth century, every third Sunday in June slaves in New England participated in ‘Lecture Day.’ This yearly event promoted the election of African American governors, judges, sheriffs, and other. The elected enslaved officials would hear cases involving others who were enslaved or brought forth by white owners. The enslaved were tried, convicted and punished by their peers, not their owners, which allowed the enslaved a feeling of power and a shred of freedom, in that they were able to listen to complaints and judge those that came before them.

In Newport, Lecture Day was held, on occasion, under “a large spreading tree which stood in the place where the Liberty Tree now stands at the head of Thames Street.”³⁵ Orville H. Platt in *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* noted that a military parade would escort the Governor to the Colony House as throngs of spectators watched along Queens Street (which no longer exists) (Figure 3.1). For the white Colonists, Lecture Day was “indulgent or much needed therapeutic entertainment.”³⁶ For slave owners, this was not just a need for

³⁵ Orville H. Platt. *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society*. Vol. VI. Negro Governors. New Haven Historical Society. (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Company. 1900.), 324.

³⁶ William H. Robinson. *Black New England Letter: The Uses of Writings in Black New England*. (*Boston: National Endowment for the Humanities Learning, 1922.*)1.

entertainment, but a way to show power, pride, wealth and popularity amongst the other owners.

William Johnson explains that:

the slaves assumed the power and pride and took the relative rank of their masters, and it was degrading to the reputation of the owner if his slave appeared in inferior apparel, or with less money than the slave of another master of equal wealth.³⁷

For the enslaved, election day was not only about electing a Governor or engaging in the political culture of Newport, but celebrating a new year of planting, purification, renewal and to reminisce about celebrations that took place in Africa.

Lection Day was representative of the Odwira Festival of the Yam that took place in the African country of Ghana where many of the enslaved originated. Genevieve Fabre noted in *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Early 20th Century*, that “an election took place in the spring and included a famous rite of purification,”³⁸ and that Negro Election Day “offers evidence of the most striking example of intense creativity, combining styles of performance and artistic expression.”³⁹ By incorporating African customs into their new lives in Colonial America, the enslaved formed relationships with each other, their white owners and the community. Lection Day was also a day for the enslaved and free to come together and celebrate as a community. By 1776, when the British began their occupation of Newport, Lection Day ended.

Pompey Brenton, interred in God’s Little Acre Cemetery, was elected as Newport’s Governor prior to his freedom from slavery by Governor William Brenton or possibly Capt.

³⁷ William D. Johnson, A.B. *Slavery in Rhode Island, 1755-1776*. (Providence: Standard Printing Company. 1894), 32.

³⁸ Genevieve Fabre. *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Early 20th Century*. (New York: Berghahn Books. 2001.), 96.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 91.

Jahleel Brenton and this election allowed Brenton the opportunity to become a community leader (Figure 3:2).



Figure 3.1 Image of Newport Colony House. Image by Marjorie Drew, May 21, 2019.



Figure 3:2 Gravestone of Pompey Brenton. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 21, 2019. Born 1717, Died Nov. 6, 1804.

3.2 AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES

The mutual-aid organizations explained in this chapter formed to bond a community where individuals felt like “strangers in a strange land.”⁴⁰ These groups offered the enslaved and free African Americans a place to worship, educate their children and contribute to the culture of their community. These societies were support services for the black community that, with a membership, included financial aid to members and the families of former members, moral insight, funeral and burial expenses, and educational opportunities.

Robert Harris in *Early Black Benevolent Societies, 1789* concluded that “common historical experiences, shared African ancestry, cultural affinities, and similar grievances brought free blacks together in benevolent societies to provide a sense of security in their new status as freemen.”⁴¹ This freedom and sense of security helped to counter fears of economic survival within the African American community, as noted by Christy Mikel Clark-Pujara:

mutual aid societies were essential to the social development and economic survival of free black communities... Voluntary organizations addressed the specific needs of newly freed blacks who were particularly vulnerable to economic downturns and personal tragedy because they often lacked access to mainstream institutions.⁴²

The societies were not limited to members as the organizations would assist the disadvantaged non-members when called.

⁴⁰ William H. Robinson. *Black New England Letter: The Uses of Writing in Black New England*. (Boston: National Endowment for the Humanities Learning Library Program. 1922.), 20

⁴¹ Robert L. Harris, Jr. *Early Black Benevolent Societies, 1789*. (The Massachusetts Review. Vol. 20, No. 3.), 607.

⁴² Christy Clark-Pujara. *Slavery, Emancipation and Black Freedom in Rhode Island, 1652-1842*. (Thesis & Dissertations, University of Iowa. Accessed: April 19, 2019. <https://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4956&context=etd>.)

Research on the enslaved and free African American benevolent societies, worship locations and the subculture that existed within New England is ongoing and includes works that analyses' the development and history of the societies. Heath W.Carter and Laura Porter in their work, *Turning Points in the History of American Evangelicalism*, provide details regarding Oocramer Marycoo (not buried in God's Little Arce), who helped found the Free African Union Society in 1780. Carter and Porter's work mentions the Free African Union Society but does not reveal specifics about the society or its members. Understanding who was involved in this society and meeting locations would be beneficial in identifying the landscape that African and African Americans occupied within the City of Newport. Carter and Porter used the memoirs of Rev. Samuel Hopkins, works that include information about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music, documents from several Historical Societies and letters from Marycoo for their research.

William Dillon Piersen, in *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England*, noted that members of the Free African Union Society "had met in the home of Abraham Casey."⁴³ Piersen remarked that members of the Free African Union Society and Oocramer Marycoo would organize one of Newport's first black Churches – the Union Congregational Church of Newport. Piersen incorporated scholarly articles, journals, and books into his research, as well as letters, memoirs and archival research. This work connects African and African American subculture to Rhode Island, Massachusetts and other New England Colonies during the seventeenth- and eighteenth- century.

3.3 DESIRE TO MOVE TO AFRICA

⁴³ William D. Piersen. *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England*. (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press. 1988.), 59.

Some African Americans involved in the Newport's mutual aid society favored the idea of one day returning to Africa to build a community, stating that:

God has been pleased of late to raise up many to compassionate and befriend the Africans not only in promoting their freedom and using means for their instruction, but by proposing and endeavoring to effect their return to their own country and settlement there, where they may be more happy then they can be here, and promote the best food of our brethren in that country.⁴⁴

In a letter to the African American population in Providence, written by Newport's Benevolent Society, encouraged those enslaved and free to join them "so that we all may promote on common good."⁴⁵ However, the desire to return to Africa was not completely shared by other organizations throughout the North. The Philadelphia mutual aid society, not interested in returning to Africa, noted in a letter written to the Newport Society in the 1780's,

with regard to the emigration, you mention, to Africa, we have at present but little to communicate on that head, apprehending every pious man is a good citizen of the whole world; therefore let us, as with the heart of one man, continue daily in fasting from sin and iniquity, and the corrupt conversation of the world, that the Lord thereby may be please to break every yoke and let the oppressed go free."⁴⁶

Eventually, the Newport society did travel to Africa, but many of the members died from diseases in Africa soon after arrival.

3.4 AFRICAN FREE UNION SOCIETY

In 1780, the Free African Union Society was established in Newport and "open to any person of color whether male or female, but only members were allowed to vote or hold

⁴⁴ William H. Robinson. *The Proceedings of the Free Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824*. (Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island. 1976.), 8

⁴⁵ William H. Robinson. *The Proceedings of the Free Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824*. (Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island. 1976.), 8.

⁴⁶ William H. Robinson. *The Proceedings of the Free Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824*. (Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island. 1976.), 8

office.”⁴⁷ Later, in 1802, the society changed its name to the African Human Society and petitioned for incorporation from the General Assembly. By 1808, the Society voted to merge with the African Benevolent Society and turn over all its treasury’s assets to the Benevolent Society, as they needed money for a school. For nearly one-hundred years the African Americans in Newport attempted to:

conduct pertinent business among themselves...and in writing down their organizational minutes, resolves, proceedings, and correspondence, these enterprising blacks left behind them a precious record of themselves as a people struggling to be.⁴⁸

Like white organizations, benevolent societies included a president, vice president, judge, secretary, treasurer and twelve committee members. According to one of the ledgers, members would meet:

once in three months, viz on the second Thursday Evening of February, May, August and November yearly. The committee is to meet the first Thursday Evening in each month...The yearly or Annual Meetings are held the 2nd Thursday Evening in Aug. to choose officers for the year ensuing.”⁴⁹

The organization, at one time, counted seventy members and often found it challenging to locate a place to convene. Meetings were usually held in the homes of its members, as public municipal buildings, taverns, and some churches would not accommodate African American gatherings.

In 1824 the society evolved into the Colored Union Church and Society. The Colored Union Church would become the United Congregational Church in 1859. The mutual-aid

⁴⁷ Dorothy Sterling, Ed. *Free Women, 1800-1861: Daughters of Africa/Daughters of America*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 1984.), 106.

⁴⁸ William H. Robinson. *The Proceedings of the Free Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824*. (Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island. 1976.),5.

⁴⁹ William H. Robinson. William H. Robinson. *Black New England Letter: The Uses of Writing in Black New England*. (Boston: National Endowment for the Humanities Learning Library Program. 1922.), 7.

organizations explained in this chapter formed to bond a community. These groups offered the enslaved and free African American a place to worship, learn and contribute to the culture of their community. These societies formed by the free African Americans established a community outreach of sorts. The black community no longer felt as isolated within the City of Newport but belonged to the city. The community was able to participate in educational, social and activism that was out of reach years earlier. The transatlantic slave trade that brought thousands of Africans to the continent of North American was no longer their identifier, but just the means of how they arrived. The African Americans were standing together to build a home and a community within the City of Newport. Today, many of those structures still stand and are an integral part of Newport today.

3.5 MEN INTERRED IN GOD'S LITTLE ACRE INVOLVED IN MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES

Arthur Flagg, originally from Africa and interred in God's Little Acre, was enslaved in Newport in the eighteenth century by businessman Ebenezer Flagg. Arthur Flagg or Arthur Tikey often referred to himself as Nuba Tikey.⁵⁰ – his African. In 1801, Flagg was able to purchase his freedom and then purchase property and become a member of the Sabbatarian Church (Seven Day Baptist). He was also a judge and treasurer in the Free African Union Society (Figure 3:1).

Flagg, in Robinson's rendition of *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society and the African Benevolent Society*, noted that meetings were held in his home, located on Thames

⁵⁰ Arthur Flagg often used his African name, Nuba Tikey or Arthur Tikey in his writings within the pages of the Free African Union notes. It was also noted by Keith Stokes that many of the African Americans within Newport used their African names or mixed their African names with the names given by their white owners. Holding on to their African names was a way for the African Americans to hold a piece of their African roots and heritage.

and Cross St (Figure 3:2 & 3:3). It is unknown if the house still stands today.⁵¹ According to land evidence records located in Newport City Hall, the dwelling was purchased by his granddaughter for \$1.00 in 1857. Flagg may have owned other properties as well, as land evidence records indicate that Mary Jane Benson (buried in God's Little Acre) purchased land and a dwelling located southern on Poplar St. and Westerly on 3rd St. (Figure 3:4 & 3:5). Land Evidence Records and probate documents indicate the property was bequeathed to Flagg's daughters.⁵²



Figure 3:1 Gravestone of Arthur Flagg in God's Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

⁵¹ Today, it is unknown if Arthur Flagg's dwelling is located on Thames and Cross Street, as many dwellings were destroyed or moved during Newport's redevelopment program. I have walked along Thames and Cross Street to locate the dwelling but was unable. I spoke with Keith Stokes as to find the location, but he did not know the location. I was able to photograph the area and noted the photographs in this document.

⁵² Newport City Hall. *Land Evidence Record*, Vol. 8, pg. 336. 1801.



Figure 3:2 Thames and Cross Street today. The exact location of the dwelling is unknown, or if it still exists. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.



Figure 3:3 Another view of Thames and Cross Street today. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.



Figure 3:4 View of Poplar and 3rd Street, Newport. The exact location of the dwelling is unknown or if it still exists. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

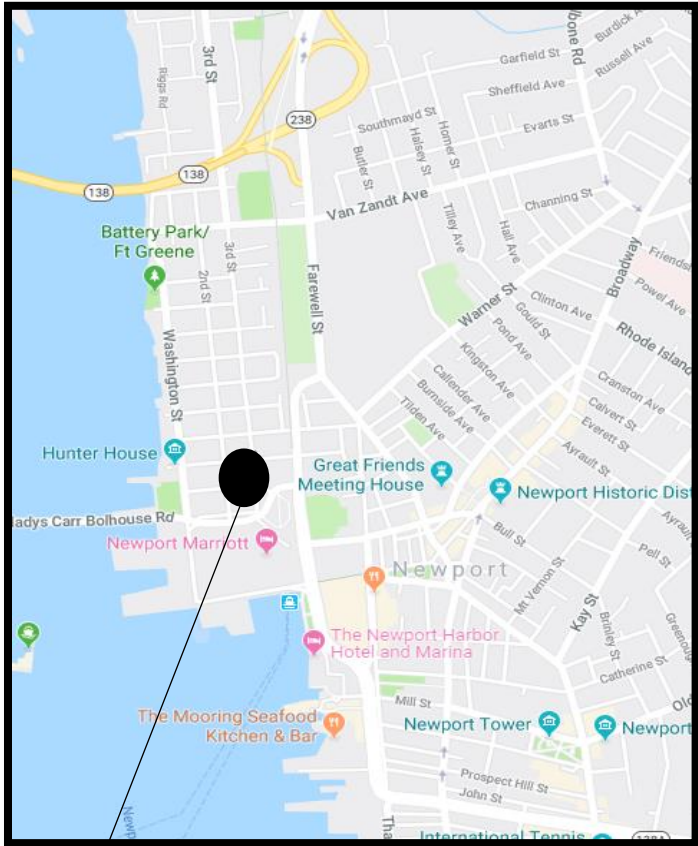


Figure 3:5 Map of Newport indicating Poplar and 3rd Street. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Newport,+RI>

Other members of the Free African Union Society that relate to God's Little Acre Burial Ground include John Mowatt, a grocer by trade who lived on 83 Division Street with his wife Patience Mowatt. (Figure 3:6 & 3:7). It is unknown at this time if any meetings were held at their residence or any other residence that Mowatt occupied. Nathaniel Rodman helped organize the Free African Union Society (FAUS) after the American Revolution with the hope of providing an educational facility for the African American children of Newport (Figure 3:8). It was noted by the God's Little Acre: America's Colonial African Cemetery web site that Rodman's home was originally located on Warner Street but was moved to its current location on 13 Second Street, Newport. However, an article in the Providence Journal, dated June 29, 2017, states the home on 13 Second Street "which has an historic plaque that proclaims it to be "Old Nat's House," built in 1717, has been moved from its original location, thought to be in Middletown. This two-story house is believed to have been built by one of the first freed slaves in Rhode Island. After it was moved to Newport, another former slave, known as "Old Nat," bought the home and lived here."⁵³ Further investigation is needed to determine if this home was moved from Warner Street or Middletown, Rhode Island (Figure 3:9).

Neptune Sisson was one of the founding members of FAUS and belonged until his death in 1794 (Figure 3:10). FAUS records note that Sisson's widow, Dinah, complained several times that money should be taken from the FAUS treasury to pay for her husband's funeral. However, correspondence between Mrs. Sisson and the FAUS indicated that Mr. Sisson was delinquent in paying membership dues and therefore, funeral money was not available. Thomas Ferguson was

⁵³ Christine Dunn. "House of the Week: Newport House Loaded with History and Charm." *Providence Journal*. June 29, 2017. Accessed: July 10, 2019. <https://www.providencejournal.com/entertainmentlife/20170629/house-of-week-newport-houses-loaded-with-history-and-charm>

a member of the FAUS as well, but at this time there is little information on where Ferguson lived and what he did for employment. James Humphrey Weeded, a mariner, was also a member of the society.

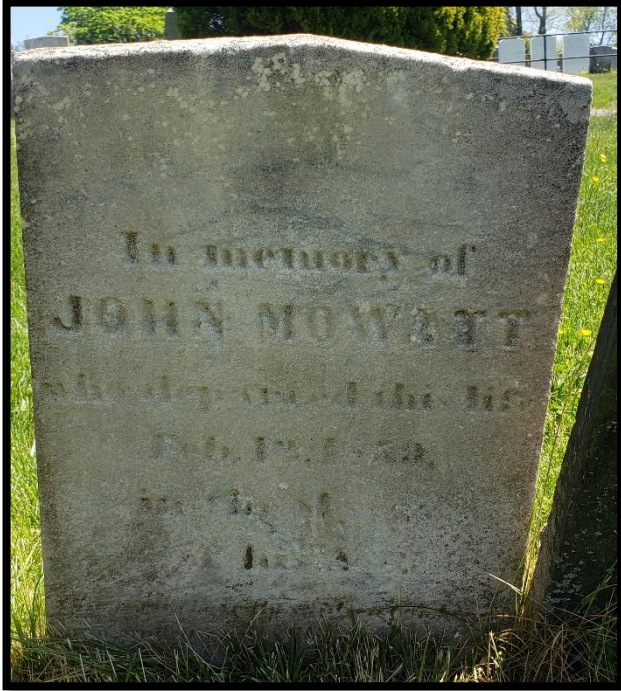


Figure 3:6 Gravestone of John Mowatt located in God's Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.



Figure 3:7 Home of John and Patience Mowatt located on Historic Hill section of Newport on 83 Division Street, Newport. Built 1780/86. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

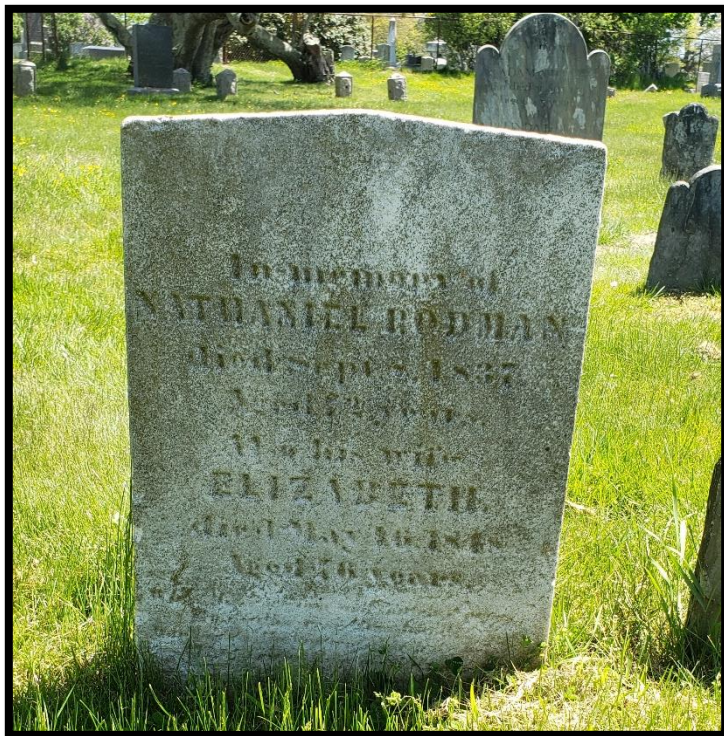


Figure 3:8 Gravestone of Nathaniel Rodman located in God's Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.



Figure 3:9 Image of home on 13 Second Street, Newport, RI. Possibly once owned by Nathaniel Rodman. Image taken by Marjorie Drew, May 2019.



Figure 3:9 Gravestone of Neptune Sisson located in God's Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

3.6 WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES

In 1792, Duchess Quamino was invited to join the Palls and Biers, an entity belonging to the FAUS (Figure 3:11). Glen Knoblock remarked that “Quamino was sold one-sixth share of the business, likely because of her high standing in the black community, thus making her the first black women invited to join a black male organization.”⁵⁴ The Pall and Biers organization facilitated the rental of the biers (casket stand) and the Pall or cloth used during funerals, and these rentals produced money that was distributed to the community.



Figure 3:10 Gravestone of Duchess Quimano located in God’s Little Acre. Gravestone has gone under some preservation. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

In 1809, the African Female Benevolent Society was formed and was focused on the needs of underprivileged children within the black community. The women’s society encouraged

⁵⁴ Glen A. Knoblock. *African American Historic Burial Grounds and Gravesites of New England*. (Jefferson: McFarland Company, Inc. 2016.), 73.

the payment of dues for its members and in 1809 allocated ten dollars to the men's society for the education of the communities' children. By 1810 the society had forty members, including Sarah Melborne and Patience Mowatt, who were founding members (Figure 3:12).



Figure 3:11 Gravestone of Patience Mowatt located in God's Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

4 RELIGION

Newport, Rhode Island was a melting pot for religion in the Colonial Era, as there were Jews, Christians, Quakers, and Baptist all living and working together. Reverend Dr. John Clarke, it was noted, was responsible for the clause in Rhode Island's 1663 charter granted by King Charles II, which allowed the colony to have the first secular entity, and that the absence of a religious hierarchy in Rhode Island made it different than other colonial settlements. It's notable that "there was no state-supported religious authority that intruded in the lives of the inhabitants."⁵⁵ Trinity Church, located on Spring Street and established in 1725-26, Touro Synagogue, established in 1763, and the Quaker Meeting House, built in 1699, are three of the remaining churches that exemplify how religion was different from the rest of the American Colonies. In contrast, Massachusetts did not have a Jewish Congregation until *Ohabel Shalom* in 1843.

4.1 RELIGION FOR THE ENSLAVED AND FREE

The enslaved and free African Americans that were brought to Rhode Island shared the religious experience with their white owners and community members. As noted in *The Negro in Colonial New England*,

as church members, Negroes seem to have enjoyed many of the rights of the free white communicants. They joined in the singing and praying, could be transferred from one church to another, might be excommunicated and also might be restored to membership upon evidence of their repentance.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Kenneth Walsh. *In the Economic History of Newport Rhode Island: From the Colonial Era to Beyond the War of 1812*. (Bloomington: Author House. 2014.),4.

⁵⁶ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, Ph.d. *The Negro in Colonial New England 1620-1776*. (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, Inc. 1942.), 303.

However, it was believed by some that slavery was acceptable because the enslaved were infidels and,

some believed that heathens and barbarians were placed by the circumstances of their infidelity without the pale of spiritual and civil rights and that their souls were doomed to eternal perdition”⁵⁷

Reverend Samuel Hopkins, pastor of the First Congregational Church located on Mill Street in Newport (today, most of the structure is condominiums), believed civilizing and christening Africans and sending them to Africa as missionaries would be appropriate.⁵⁸

Hopkins and fellow pastor Ezra Stiles were staunch abolitionists who documented their desire to end slavery and spoke out against the trade in their sermons.

Several individuals researched and interred in God’s Little Acre were baptized in Trinity Church and in most cases were given Christian names, while others interred were involved with other church organizations, including the First Sabbatarian Church, First Congregational Church, and Colored Union Church and Society. It was noted that only 3 percent of the African Americans in Newport attended church and were converted to Christianity by 1775. Of the 3 percent Quash Dunbar, Phillis and Thomas Ferguson, Arthur Flagg, Sara Malbone were baptized, and John Mowatt, mentioned earlier, was the trustee of the Colored Union Church and Society. Further research is needed to uncover others that participated in religious practices in Newport (Figure 4:1).

Baptism did not mean that the enslaved or free were members of the religious community, as they were segregated, seated in the galleries, in the back rows of the church, and

⁵⁷ Marcus W. Jernegan. “Slavery & Conversion in the American Colonies” *The American Historical Review*. Vol 21, No. 3. (1916): 504-524.

⁵⁸ Carl Russell Gross, "Dr. Carl Russell Gross Collection 3, Manuscript C." *Rhode Island College Digital Commons@ RIC*. (1971), 5. Accessed April 13, 2019.
https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=crgross_papers.

some cases had to manufacture pews at their expense.⁵⁹ However, Ezra Stiles routinely “met a stated intervals in his study, knelt with them in prayer...and explained the most important doctrines and precepts of the Bible to his African American members.”⁶⁰ For his part, Hopkins also disavowed slavery and routinely spoke out against the trade and attempted to convince members of his church to free their slaves. Rev. Hopkins engaged with Stephen Hopkins (no relation) and Quaker merchant Moses Brown, both of Providence, to put forth a bill to the General Assembly to ban the importation of slaves, which passed in 1774. Rev. Hopkins “attempted to atone for his own sins and the sins of the nation by educating pious blacks, whom he privately tutored.”⁶¹

Arthur Flagg was baptized in 1771 in the First Sabbatarian (Seventh Day Baptist Church) and it was noted in the Seventh Day Baptist Church Memorial that “August 7th, after a sermon by Elder John Maxson, another negro man, servant of the widow Mary Flagg, was baptized, and passed under hands, and was admitted a member of the church.”⁶² Flagg, his family, and descendants were members of the church into the 1840’s, as noted in Janet Thomgate’s work, *Slave or Free? African Americans in Newport Seventh Day Baptist Church*.⁶³ The church was constructed in 1730 and is considered one of the “oldest surviving Baptist church buildings in

⁵⁹ Lynne Withey. *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century*. (Albany: State University Press, 1984),74.

⁶⁰ Jared Sparks. *The Library of American Biography. Second Series*. Vol. VI. (Boston: Little Brown Company, 1864), 44-45.

⁶¹ Christy Clark-Pujara. *Slavery, Emancipation and Black Freedom in Rhode Island, 1652-1842*. 144. (Thesis & Dissertations, University of Iowa. Accessed: April 19, 2019. <https://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4956&context=etd>.

⁶² *The Seventh-day Baptist Memorial. Vol. 1, No. 1*. (New York: Seventh-day Baptist Publishing Society. 1852.), 77.

⁶³ Janet Thomgate. *Slave or Free? African Americans in Newport Seventh Day Baptist Church*. (The Sabbath Recorder.) Accessed: May 30, 2019. <https://www.sabbathrecorder.com/2018/09/26/slaves-or-free-african-americans-in-the-newport-seventh-day-baptist-church/>.

America.”⁶⁴ Today the church is attached to the Newport Historical Society, located on Touro Street and restored in 2009 (Figure 4:2 & 4:3).

4.2 AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH

Church and worship are at the heart of the African American community and after the American Revolution the free African Americans that pioneered the mutual aid societies noted earlier, worked to provide their community a place to meet and worship. The authors of *Religion in the Lives of African Americans: Social, Psychological, and Health Perspectives* remarked that:

Black religious institutions are cohesive spiritual and social communities that foster the religious and social well-being and integration of individuals and families. Their important and central position within the black communities is demonstrated by the variety of secular activities and they function they perform. These include facilitating linkages to community health resources and providing various forms of instrumental, social, and psychological support.⁶⁵

The formation of a church was the culmination of decades of feeling like outsiders in Newport. By 1824 members of the mutual aid society formed the Colored Union Church and Society intending to have their own “mutual edification, the prosperity, and happiness of their children, and the promotion of their best interest of the people of color.”⁶⁶ The church was located on the corner of Church Street and Division Street (4:4 & 4:5). John Mowatt, a member of the Free African Union Society, was a trustee of the church.

In 1835 the 4th Baptist Meeting House was acquired for meetings and worship, but between “1858-1863 the church lost its community aspect recognized by the council and in

⁶⁴ “Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House.” *Visit Rhode Island*. Accessed: July 22, 2019. <https://www.visitrhodeisland.com/listing/seventh-day-baptist-meeting-house/1063/>

⁶⁵ Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters and Jeff Levin. *Religion in the Lives of African Americans: Social, Psychological and Health Perspectives*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 2004), 13.

⁶⁶ Arthur A. Ross. *A Discourse Embracing the Civil and Religious History of Rhode Island: Delivered April 24, 1838*. (Providence: H.H. Brown. 1838), 150.

March 1859 became the Orthodox Congregational Church. In the fall of 1859, it was re-incorporated as the Union Congregational Church of Newport.”⁶⁷

Community and religion were, and continues to be, important to the African American and with the support of several essential individuals in Newport, the African Americans in Newport were able to build and maintain a religious community for themselves. The church became a place that promoted educational, spiritual unity that was lacking in colonial white churches.



Figure 4:1 Large gravestone of Thomas Ferguson located in God’s Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

⁶⁷ Carl Russell Gross, "Dr. Carl Russell Gross Collection 3, Manuscript C." *Rhode Island College Digital Commons@ RIC*. (1971), 8. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=crgross_papers.

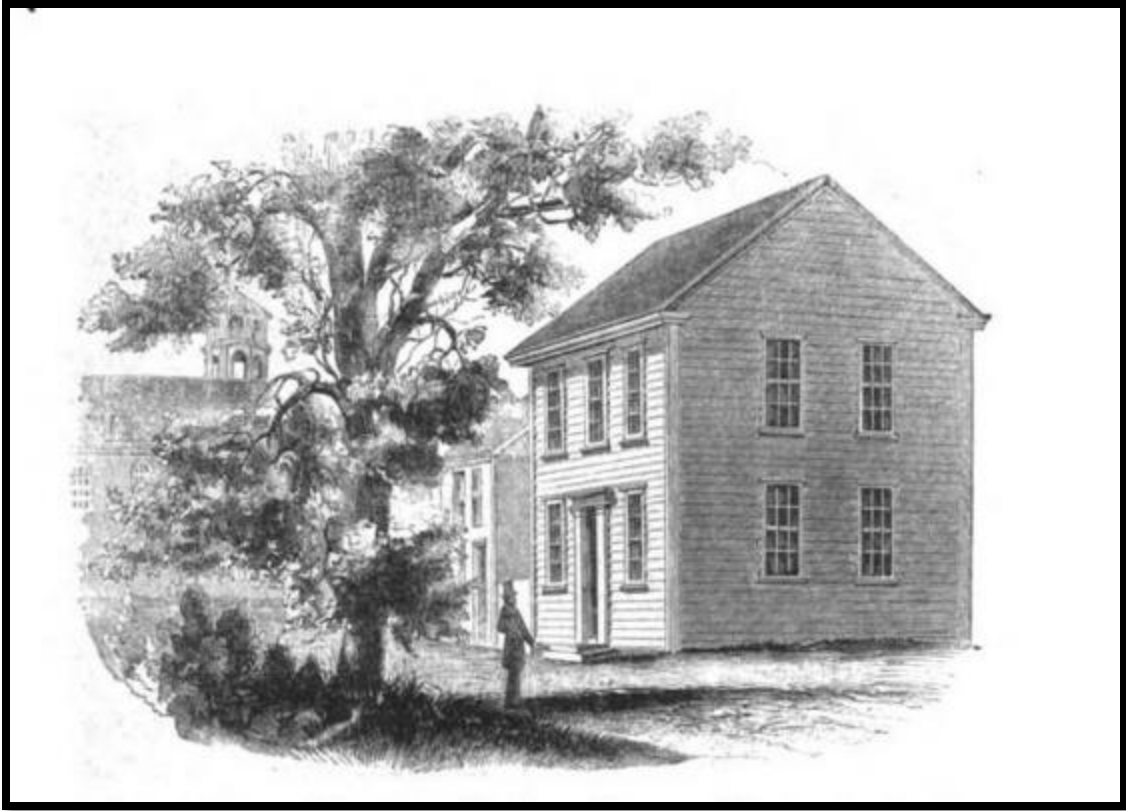


Figure 4:2 Drawing of the Seventh-day Baptist Church in Newport. Built in 1729.



Figure 4:3 Image of the inside of the Seventh-day Baptist Church in Newport. Today the church is located within the Newport Historical Society building. <https://newporthistory.org/properties/7th-day-baptist-meeting-house/>.

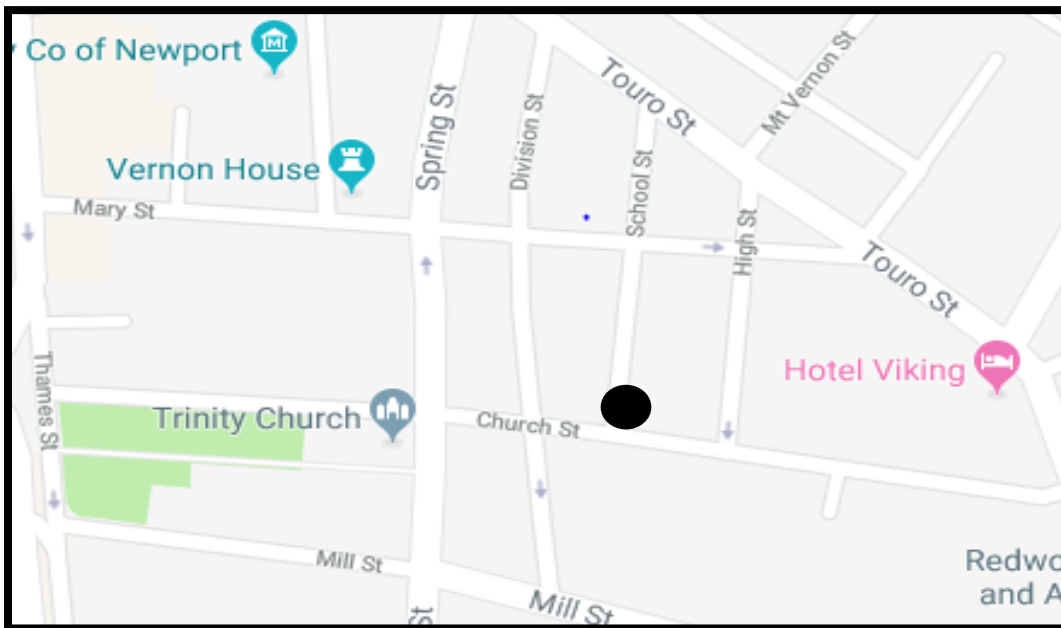


Figure 4:4 The black mark indicates the corner of Church and Division Street where the Colored Union Church was in 1824. (Google Maps n.d.)

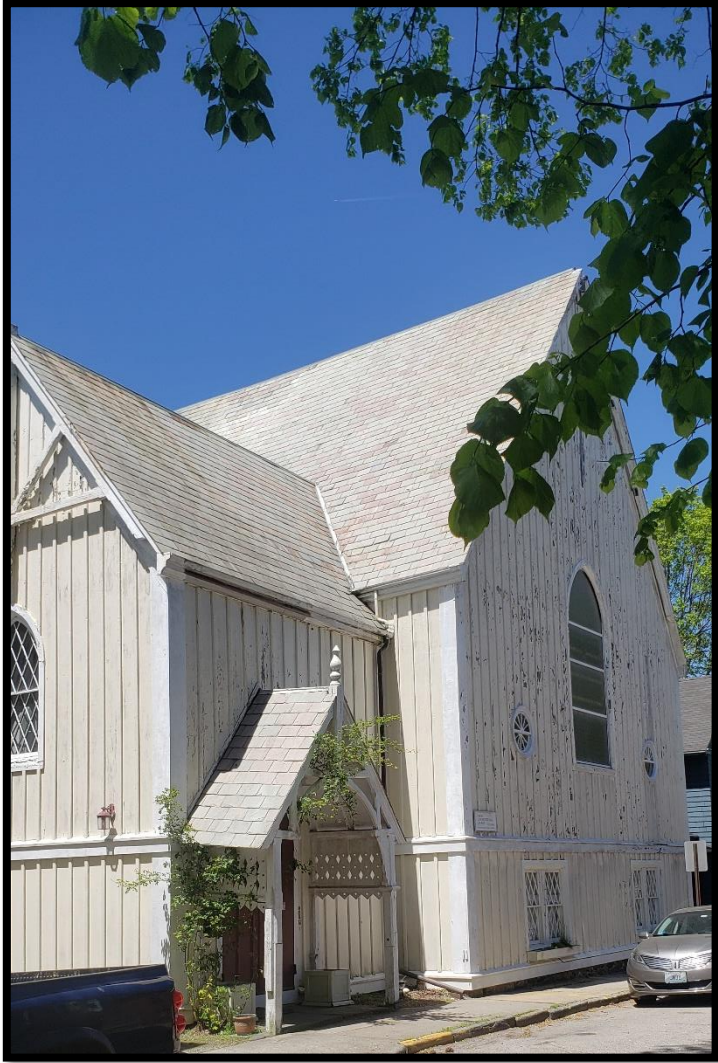


Figure 4:5 Image of the Colored Union Church on Church Street. Today the building is a private residence. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.

5 EDUCATION

The sampling of individuals interred in God's Little Acre revealed that two women interred there were associated with the education of Newport's African American children, Mary Jane Benson, a teacher and Ann Seixas, a student (Figure 5:1 & 5:2). Nathaniel Rodman, mentioned earlier, facilitated in the organize of the African Benevolent Society with hopes of providing educational instruction to African American children within the City.

Colonial-Era formal education was dedicated to the wealthy, white male and many times out of reach for the underprivileged and the African American. However, because of several dedicated individuals, the African American children of Newport were granted an education. Unfortunately, school enrollment was low during the formative years, perhaps due to the unwillingness of owners to allow their enslaved children the opportunity of formal education, and the turmoil of the years consumed by the Revolutionary War. The African American community joined together to form a society that allowed for the education of their children. The formation of the Benevolent Society, in part, for the development of a school is further proof that there was a strong committed African American community in Newport during the Colonial Era.

5.1 AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION

For the children of the enslaved or free African American, education was not easily attained. In 1731, £400 and a lot of land was requested to build an African American school, but there is no evidence the school was erected. In 1773, a Rhode Island woman advertised education classes, "morning and afternoons for [white] young misses." Ironically, within the same advertisement, she added that she was selling "a likely well-limbed Negro lad, eleven years

old.”⁶⁸ This advertisement is noteworthy as a school was established in Newport for the children of the enslaved and free about that time in 1763.

Reverend Marmaduke Brown, a rector of the Trinity Church, established a school in 1763 on the corner of Division Street and Mary Street (Figure 5:4). It was noted in the *Annals of Trinity Church* that societies in London, established by the Church of England’s benevolent clergymen, “offered to furnish means to sustain schools of this kind [free negro schools].”⁶⁹ The school offered Negro children the opportunity for “rudiments of education and domestic work [for girls], and boys received class-room work and apprenticed to blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, etc.”⁷⁰ Brown, a native of Ireland, became the Minister of Trinity Church in 1760 until his death in 1771. Brown was also a trustee and fellow of what is now known as Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island in 1764.

After the death of Brown, the school was managed by Mrs. Mary Brett, and held classes in her home on High Street until the Revolutionary War (Figure 5:4 & 5:5). However, by 1773 an advertisement appeared in the *Newport Mercury* that announced that the school may close, noting:

It hath been found difficult to supply the said school with the number of children required; notice is hereby given that the school is now kept by Mrs. Mary Brett in High Street, nearly opposite to judge Johnson’s, and it open to all societies in the town, to send their young blacks, to the number of thirty.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Thomas B. Stockwell. *A History of Public Education in Rhode Island: From 1636-1876*. (Providence: Providence Press Company. 1876), 10.

⁶⁹ George C. Mason. *Annals of Trinity Church, Newport, Rhode Island 1820-1894*. (Philadelphia: The Evens Printing House.) 225. Accessed: May 20, 2019.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433081908513?urlappend=%3Bseq=235>.

⁷⁰ Carl Russell Gross, "Dr. Carl Russell Gross Collection 3, Manuscript C." *Rhode Island College Digital Commons@ RIC*. (1971), 4. Accessed April 13, 2019.
https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=crgross_papers.

⁷¹ Thomas B. Stockwell. *A History of Public Education in Rhode Island: From 1636-1876*. (Providence: Providence Press Company. 1876), 10.

The advertisement also noted that, if the number of children required to attend was not achieved the school would close within the next six months. At the end of the Revolutionary War, Brett re-opened the school at her own expense, but upon her death in 1799, the school was once again closed.⁷²

In 1808 the school was re-opened, but this time under the management of the African Benevolent Society. This would be significant – it was first time in “educational history in the United States that a school would be under the supervision of an administration and the first funded by a black organization.”⁷³ The school had a charter that required officers, a board of directors, of which five were to be African American, and tuition of fifty cents yearly. An advertisement was placed in the Newport Mercury in 1808 to notify the community of the opening of the new African American school, located on 8 School Street (Figure 5:3). The City of Newport, in 1842, moved to transfer the school into the care of the City and all the records, books and papers were kept with the Colored Union Church and Society.

Education for the African American, enslaved or free, was not a priority for many members of the elite community in Newport during the Colonial Era. The poor, disenfranchised, and African American were not given the same opportunities as the children of the wealthy businessman or merchant. For many children, education was a family matter, children were taught at home, and formal education was for “select, wealthy, white males.”⁷⁴ For most

⁷² It is noteworthy that the article states that Mrs. Mary Brett kept the school on High Street, nearly opposite to Judge Johnson’s home. As Judge Johnson’s home is located on the corner of Division and Mary Street, a few streets from High Street. Judge Johnson’s home has remained on Division Street since it was built around 1721.

⁷³ William H. Robinson. William H. Robinson. *Black New England Letter: The Uses of Writing in Black New England*. (Boston: National Endowment for the Humanities Learning Library Program. 1922.), XI.

⁷⁴ Alice O’Connor and Gwendolyn Mink. *Poverty in the United States: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics & Policy*. Vol. 1, A-K. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc. 2004), 276.

children within the colony of Rhode Island, education was in the form of apprenticeship, which enabled the youngsters the ability to learn a trade that would provide them with a future income.

5.2 APPRENTICESHIP

The colonies of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts required children to be in a ‘learning and labor’ environment. If at any time the city or state believed the child was neglected, the children “were taken from their parents and bound out as apprentices. If neglected, [the children] were taken from their masters and bound to others. Poor and orphans were subject to apprenticeship as well -- boys until twenty-one and girls until eighteen.”⁷⁵ Boys received more education during the Colonial Era than girls, and some boys were assigned to an apprenticeship to learn a trade. Many girls, according to *America: A Catholic Review of the Week*, “might be taught reading, spelling, sewing, knitting, and ‘work samplers.’ But such abstruse subjects as writing, arithmetic, grammar and geography, were held to be quite beyond a comprehension of the female mind.”⁷⁶ Today, we understand that the female mind is capable of such ‘abstruse subjects.’

⁷⁵ Robert Francis Seybolt. *Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Education in the Colonies of New England and New York*. (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University. 1917), 60.

⁷⁶ “America: A Catholic Review of the Week.” Vol. XIII, No. 23, New York: America Press, 1915. Accessed: April 25, 2019. https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=B1Y_AQAAMAAJ&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP1.



Figure 5:1 Gravestone of Mary Jane Benson in God's Little Acre. Photo: <http://www.colonialcemetery.com/burial-markers/>. Accessed: May 30, 2019.



Figure 5:2 Gravestone of Ann Seixas located in God's Little Acre. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019. Stone has received some restoration work.

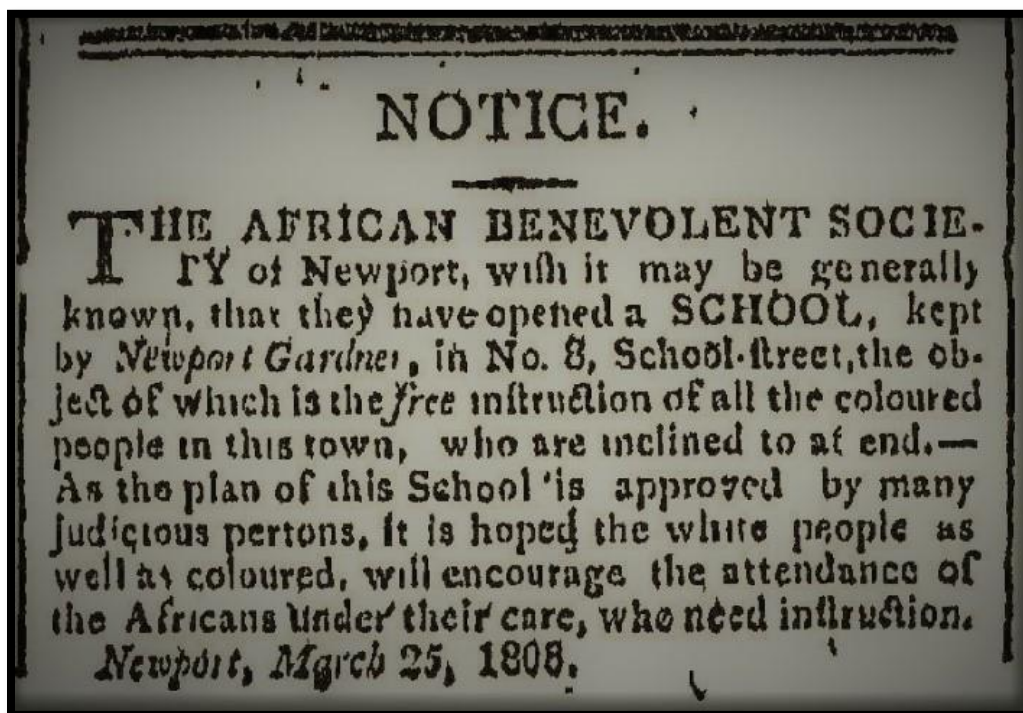


Figure 5:3 Members of the African Benevolent Society advertise the opening of a school on 8 School Street. (Preceden 2019)

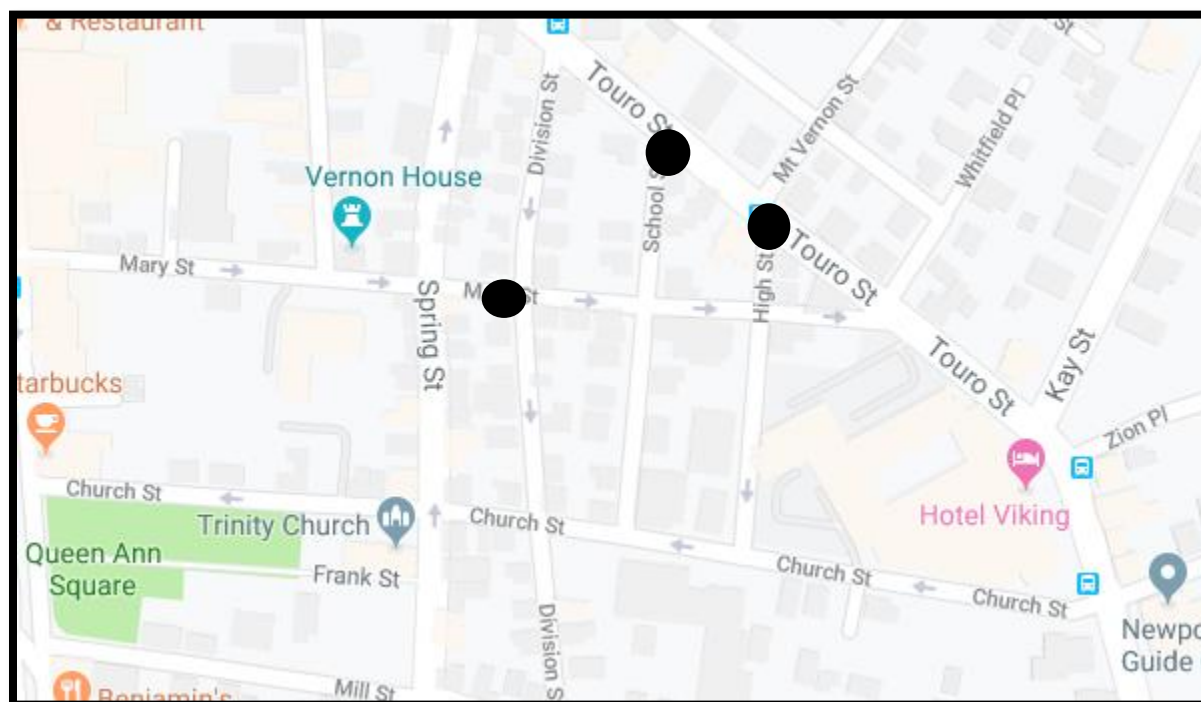


Figure 5:4 Map indicating High Street, School, Division and Mary Streets. Black marks indicate educational spaces that were used for African American children.



Figure 5:5 Peter Bours House on Division Street, Newport, Rhode Island. The residence was built in 1765 and its thought that Mrs. Brett used this dwelling for educating African American children. This residence was also used as a meeting site for the Free African Union Society. Photo by Marjorie Drew. May 25, 2019.

6 EMPLOYMENT

Newport during the eighteenth century was a bustling port that was in constant motion with ships transporting merchandise to and from the wharves. The narrow streets and colonial wood- framed homes were located close to the waterfront, as merchants wanted to keep a close eye on their merchandise and employees. Elaine Forman Crane paints an animated picture of Newport's waterfront life in *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era*, describing the landscape as:

Wharves stretched for about a mile along the marvelously protected harbor. Sometimes if the warehouses or wharves were filled to capacity, the tall ships, their billowy sails now semi-furled, would wend their way in and out of the old wooden piers searching for a likely spot to unload merchandise. The seagulls attracted by the smell of fish and spilled run, screech their delight, adding to the cacophony of the waterfront.⁷⁷

The merchants, their wharves and ships provided a place of employment for both the free African American and the white population (Figure 6:1). Sources of pay were granted to men by working as coachmen, gardeners, cooks, shop workers, sail makers, ship riggers, carpenters, coopers, rope makers, painters, caulkers, masons, gravestone carvers, cabinetmakers, and furniture makers. Women served in the homes of the wealthy merchants and businessmen, doing household chores and caring for children.

Dinah Redwood, buried in God's Little Acre, was a slave in the household of Abraham Redwood, founder of Newport's Redwood Library and owner of a sugar plantation in Antigua. It is unknown what Dinah's responsibilities were within the Redwood household, but it is assumed that she participated in household chores. Redwood bequeathed Dinah and her child in his last Will and Testament, writing "I give and bequeath unto my said daughter Mehetable

⁷⁷ Elaine Forman Crane. *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era*. (New York: Fordham University Press. 1992), 49.

Ellery my Negro woman called Dinah with her child called Rittah.”⁷⁸ It was not unusual for slave owner to bequeath their slave to family upon their death.

Shipping constructed at Rhode Island Ports 1790-1859								
(Tons By Admeasurement)								
Ports	1790 to 1799	1800 to 1809	1810 to 1819	1820 to 1829	1830 to 1839	1840 to 1849	1850 to 1859	1790 to 1859
Bristol	108	186	48	32	1,217	4,527	3,403	9,521
Newport	2,176	2,071	824	2,568	6,487	2,923	2,498	19,547
Providence	8,539	8,767	3,848	2,186	2,893	2,088	3,566	31,887
Warren	6,795	2,089	1,399	691	84	6,437	13,055	30,550

Figure 6:1 Displays shipping construction in Rhode Island. Between 1770 and 1859 Newport built 19,547 ships. Information gathered from the Rhode Island Report: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, April 1975.

6.1 SEAFARING AND WHARF EMPLOYMENT FOR THE FREE AND ENSLAVED AFRICAN AMERICANS

John Banister, a local merchant and slave trader, profited from the sale of goods and humans often trading with England and the West Indies. Banister frequently hired the slaves of others to work on his ships and wharves according to his journals, including those interred in God’s Little Acre. Fortune Cahoon and Quash Dunbar and Hercules Brown are individuals that were listed as workers in Banister’s ledgers. Cahoon labored for thirty days on several of Banister’s ships, including the *Snow*, *American*, *Handly*, and the *African*. It is not recorded what Cahoon did, but it’s likely he was paid thirty-three pounds to work on the wharf moving cargo or repairing ships. Adam Miller, also buried in God’s Little Acre, was noted to be a mariner, as

⁷⁸ Probate Record, Vol. 2 pg. 232. Newport City Hall

well. It is unclear on what vessel he sailed, although census records indicate that he died at sea in 1799 and buried in God's Little Acre (Figure 6:2).



Figure 6:2 Image of Adam Miller's gravestone in God's Little Acre. It is noteworthy that Miller has two gravestones on either end of the burial ground. The reason for this is unknown at this time. Photo by Marjorie Drew. May 25, 2019.

James Humphrey Weeden, a member of the Free African Union Society, and interred in God's Little Acre, was a seaman in the early 1800s, as he is listed on the *Rowena* ship's log.⁷⁹ The *Rowena*, owned by Christopher Grant Champlin Esq, was a brig, or two-masted sailing ship

⁷⁹ Martha S. Putney. *Black Sailors: Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whaleman Prior to the Civil War*. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1987), 151.

imported from Martinique. In 1804, the ship was carrying coffee and sugar enroute to Antwerp when the vessel was seized by the “His British Majesty’s hired armed cutter the Griffin.”⁸⁰ It is unknown if Weeden was onboard the vessel but he was listed as being a crew member the previous year.

6.2 ROPEMAKING

Newport, as a port city, relied heavily on ropes to secure ships and hold cargo as it was transported. Newport Historical Society, in their History Bytes blog, notes that “ropewalks were essential to outfitting ships, and the space necessary to spin, tar and lay cordage was considerable. Rather than take up space along the already crowded waterfront, the ropewalk sheds were built at the edges of the colonial city”⁸¹ (Figure 6:3). Today, the ropewalk sheds have been replaced by the residential neighborhood of Kay and Catherine Streets. (Figure 6:4) According to the *Manufactures of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the original returns of the eighth census*, “Newport, Rhode Island, which at the Revolution rivaled Boston in trade and was much ahead of New York, there were five or more ropewalks in operation in 1769.”⁸² African Americans, including Arthur Flagg, noted earlier, worked in the rope making business. Arthur was enslaved by Ebenezer Flagg, who with Henry Collins “owned a rope-making business that supplied Newport’s merchants and privateer ships.”⁸³ It is unknown at this time if any of the rope-making structures on Kay or Catherine Streets were owned by Flagg and Collins.

⁸⁰ “Madison Papers: To James Madison from Samuel Elam.” December 11, 1805. *N.d. National Archives: Founders Online*. Accessed: April 20, 2019.

⁸¹ “History Bytes: Theophilus North’s Nine Cities of Newport, Part 3.” *Newport Historical Society*. February 13, 2019. Accessed: April 19, 2019. <https://newporthistory.org/history-bytes-nine-cities-part-3/>.

⁸² James Madison Edmond. *Manufactories of the United States in 1869: Compiled from the Original Return of the Eighth Census*. (Washington: Government Printing Office. 1865), cxiv.

⁸³ Zara Anishanslin. *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World*. (New Haven: Yale University Press. 2016), 291.

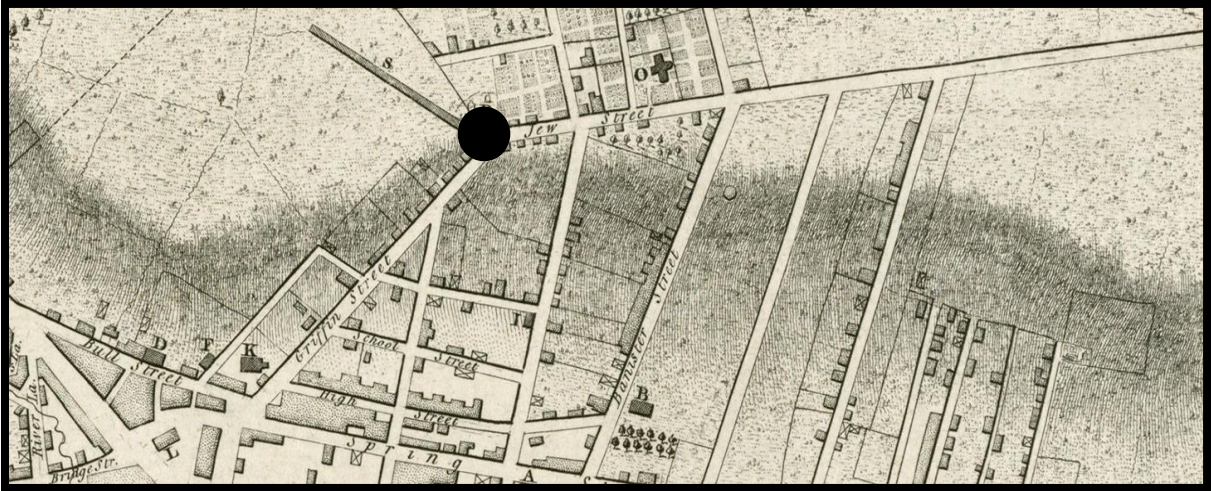


Figure 6:3 1777 map of Newport that shows a long rope walk structure. Image from the Newport Historical Society.

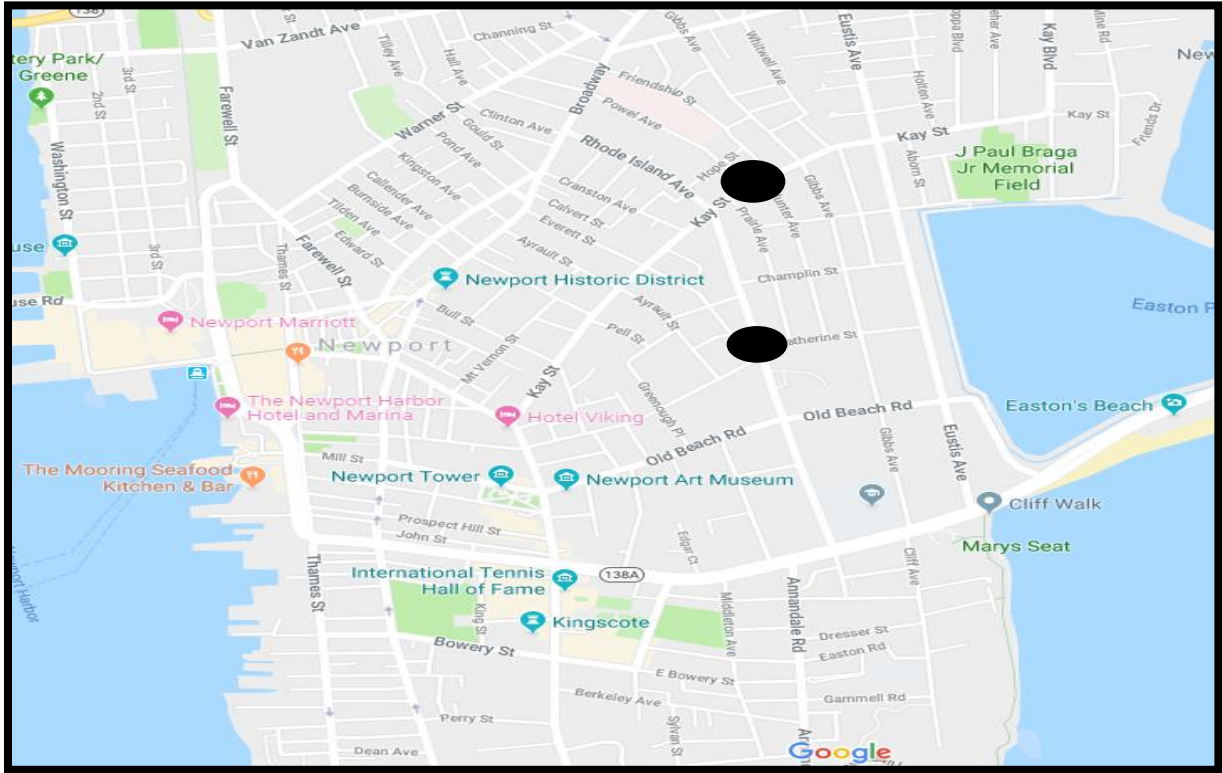


Figure 6:4 Black dots indicate where Kay and Catherine Streets are located today. Image from Google Maps.

6.3 FOOD SERVICE

The African Americans in this section represents only a small fraction of the thousands of enslaved and free individuals that made an impact on the landscape and development of Newport during the Colonial Era and beyond. These individuals conducted commerce and manufactured critical items that shipped throughout the world.

Duchess Quaminao, buried in God's Little Acre, was known for her pastries and was often referred to as the pastry queen of Rhode Island and was enslaved in the home William Channing on 24 School Street (Figures 6:5 and 6:6). Charity "Duchess" Quaminao was born in Africa and at the age of fifteen was captured by slave traders and transported to Newport where she initially worked in the home of John Channing. After the death of Channing, Quaminao began working for his son, William Channing. It was in the home of William Channing that Quaminao began her pastry business. Laura Schenone explained that Quaminao was regarded as "Newport's best pastry chef and known for her frosted plum cakes, which were in high demand at events such as Washington's birth night ball."⁸⁴ Quaminao was married to John, who perished aboard a ship off the coast of North Carolina in 1799, attempting to make enough money to buy the freedom of his wife and children. The year after her husband's death the Channing's manumitted Quamino, but she continued to live with the family and worked as their nanny and cook. Quamino was able to purchase a "small home with money that she made selling her pastry's out of the Channing home and at the Newport Market."⁸⁵ However, I could not locate any reference to a home in Quamino's name in the Newport City Land Evidence Records.

⁸⁴ Laura Schenone. *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company. 2003), 69-70.

⁸⁵ Catherine Adams and Elizabeth H. Pleck. *Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 2010), 179.



Figure 6:5 Photo of Duchess Quamino’s gravestone. It appears that Quamino’s stone is undergoing restoration. It was noted that Quamino’s stone as well as the stone of her daughter, Violet was missing for 37 years, but found in suburban Philadelphia and returned and restored in 2016.⁸⁶ Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 25, 2019.

⁸⁶ Ray Belmore. *Duchess and Violet Quamino Gravestones Returned to Newport’s Common Burying Ground*. “What’s Up Newport.” May 14, 2014. Accessed: April 19, 2019. <http://whatsupnewp.com/2017/05/duchess-and-violet-quamino-gravestones-return-to-newports-common-burying-ground/>.



Figure 6:6 Image of William Channing home on School Street. It was noted that Duchess Quamino worked in this residence as well as made pastries. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 25, 2019.

Prince Updike, enslaved by the Updike family of Wickford, Rhode Island and buried in God's Little Acre, was hired by Portuguese Jewish merchant Aaron Lopez (Figure 6:8). Lopez was involved with the slave trade, instrumental in the founding of the Touro Synagogue and engaged in the manufacturing of spermaceti, chocolate among other ventures. Updike was a master chocolate grinder who, noted in Lopez journals, was able to grind 2000 to 5000 pounds of chocolate between 1768 and 1776.⁸⁷ It was noted that chocolate in the Colonial Era was produced by using:

a *mano*, an oblong stone, like a blocky rolling pin, on a *metate*, a concave, heated stone, to grind his chocolate. The grinding and the heat

⁸⁷ Louis Evan Grivetti and Howard-Yana Shapiro, ed. *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage*. (Somerset: Wiley, 2011), 63.

released the cocoa butter from the nibs, and the resulting paste had to be thoroughly worked to achieve the desired consistency. Grinding also involved the mixing in of herbs and spices to refine the flavor of the chocolate. Updike may have used cinnamon, nutmeg, anise, dried orange rind, dried chili pepper, salt or vanilla and for some added color, annatto.⁸⁸

Chocolate became the drink of choice during the British tax on tea and was used for its healing powers and as home remedies (Figure 6:7). Updike was paid 5 shillings for every pound that he produced.⁸⁹ Updike was also involved in military action during the Revolutionary War and it was noted that the Rhode Island General Assembly resolved that every:

negro, mulatto, and Indian slave, belonging to the inhabitants of this State, are permitted to enlist into the Continental battalions, ordered to be raised by this State, and are thereupon forever manumitted and discharged from service of their maters.⁹⁰

For Updike, and many other enslaved blacks in Newport, the idea of joining the military was a way out of slavery.

⁸⁸ Christopher Martin. *Edible Rhody: Celebration of the Bounty of Rhode Island, Season by Season*. December 1, 2014. Accessed April 19, 2019. <http://ediblerhody.ediblecommunities.com/things-do/taste-chocolate-colonial-newport>.

⁸⁹ GERALYN DUCADY. *Chasing Chocolate: Chocolates Voyage from Mesoamerica to Colonial Rhode Island*. Summer/Fall 2017, Vol 75, No. 2. Accessed: April 19, 2019. http://www.rihs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/RHS_Journal-75-2-pages.pdf.

⁹⁰ Bartlett, Ed., *Records of the State of Rhode Island & Providence Plantation in New England Vol. VIII 1776-1779*, 399.



Figure 6:7 Image of Prince Uplike's gravestone. Image from Find A Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/65394515>



Figure 6:7 Image of a coffee pot dated from the 1790's. Pots like this were used for serving chocolate as well as coffee. Image from the Collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society Museum Collection. Taken from Rhode Island History: Summer/Fall 2017, Vol.75, number 2. http://www.rihs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/RHS_Journal-75-2-pages.pdf

6.4 INDENTURE

Indentured servitude replaced African American slavery in Newport as the 1784 gradual emancipation law freed children born to slave mothers. However, these individuals were not truly free as noted by Stanley Lemons in, *Rhode Island History: A Rhode Island Publication*, “children were to serve apprenticeships until the age of twenty-one and their pay was to go to the mother’s owner.”⁹¹ Clark-Pujara stated it best when describing the gradual emancipation which “allowed white northerners to slowly wean themselves off of slaveholding.”⁹² Indentured servitude was another way of continuing African American servitude, which required the indentured individual to sign a contract for an allotted amount of time.

As I was researching individual African American property ownership, I examined several indentured contracts in Land Evidence Records located in Newport City Hall. One such record was that of Rosanna Taylor (maiden name Flagg), buried in God’s Little Acre. In 1801, Taylor signed an indentured lease to Charles Davenport, with an agreement that Taylor would work for Davenport for the term of five years and would be paid twenty dollars a year. Taylor would also be granted a lot of land and dwelling abutting the land of Robert Taylor and Arthur Flagg⁹³ (Figure 6:9). It is unknown if the dwelling is still standing. The record does not indicate what Taylor would be indentured for, but as a woman, presumably, she would be working within the Davenport household.

⁹¹ Stanley Lemons. *Rhode Island Slave Trade*. “Rhode Island History: A Rhode Island Publication.” 2002, 96.

⁹² Christy Mikel Clark-Pujara. *Slavery, Emancipation and Black Freedom in Rhode Island, 1652-1842*. “Theses and Dissertations, University of Iowa, 2009, 162.

⁹³ Newport City Hall. “*Land Evidence Record*.” Vol. 8 Pg. 366. Newport, Rhode Island.

366
 This Indenture of Lease made this Twenty eighth Day of October
 in the year of Our Lord One thousand and eight hundred & eleven the said
 Taylor of Newport in the County of Newport and State of Rhode Island & William
 of the one part and Charles Davenport of the same Newport, Heirs of the other
 part Witnesseth: That the said Rosanna Taylor for and in consideration
 of the yearly Rent and Covenants hereafter mentioned on the part of the said
 Charles Davenport to be paid and performed & that the said Charles Davenport
 for and in consideration of the sum of one hundred and twenty dollars to be
 paid by the said Rosanna Taylor her Executors Administrators or Assigns to the
 said Charles Davenport his Executors Administrators or Assigns of the one part
 a certain lot of land with a Dwelling House thereon standing situate in the town of
 Newport of an area or extent bounded and measured thus to wit
 Northernly Twenty three feet on land of Robert Taylor Easternly fifty feet on land
 of said Newport Southernly ninety feet on land of Arthur Dwyer Westernly
 fifty feet on a highway by the same more or less or otherwise otherwise bounded
 or measured as described together with all and singular the Wages Waives Rights
 Liberties Privileges and Appurtenances to the same belonging or in anywise
 To have and to hold the said Leased Premises with their appurtenances
 belonging or in anywise appurtenant unto him the said Charles Davenport his
 Executors Administrators or Assigns for and during the Term of five years next
 ensuing the Date hereof provided in consideration whereof the said Charles
 Davenport doth hereby Covenant Promise and obligeth himself his Executors
 Administrators or Assigns to pay unto the said Rosanna Taylor
 her Heirs Executors Administrators or Assigns the Rent of Twenty
 Dollars yearly at every year during the said Term and at the expiration
 of said Term shall deliver and yield up the said land premises together
 of the said Leased and Leased Premises unto her the said Rosanna
 Taylor her Heirs or Assigns All Which Premises of the said Rosanna Taylor
 have herein set their Hands and Seals the Day and Year first above written
 Charles Davenport
 Rosanna Taylor SEAL
 Charles Davenport SEAL
 Jonathan May
 Witness my Hand and Seal this 28th day of October 1811
 Charles Davenport
 Rosanna Taylor
 Jonathan May

Figure 6:9 Image of Indenture Lease between Rosana Taylor and Charles Davenport from 1801. Land Evidence Record, Vol 8, pg. 366. Newport City Hall.

6.5 AGRICULTURE

Newport was an urban seaport landscape that relied on the distribution of commerce for its financial security and growth. Enslaved and free African Americans participated in a wide variety of occupations throughout the City of Newport and helped establish the landscape that we know today. Many of the wharves and buildings may no longer exist, but parts of the modern landscape still have architectural characteristics that help us recall the African American community that existed during the Colonial Era.

Neptune Sisson, an active member of the Free African Union Society and buried in God's Little Acre, may have been involved with agriculture, as it was noted in Benard's work that Ceasar Lyndon (African American not buried in God's Little Acre) brought "turnips the market house to sell for Neptune and bought a pig for Neptune."⁹⁴ Newport during the Colonial Era was not known for its agriculture, but Sission may have grown a garden at his residence. At this time, it is unknown where Sisson resided.

The individuals discussed in this chapter worked as enslaved and free within the city of Newport and helped establish the city grow and become an important trading port in New England. For some of these individuals, the choice of jobs was not an elective opportunity but forced labor. However, even though slavery brought these individuals to Newport and provided them with work and skill, they were not defined by slavery, but were able to use these jobs as means to become active in their community. For some, the jobs allowed them to purchase freedom and a home of their own.

⁹⁴ Akeia A.F. Benard. *The Free African American Cultural Landscape: Newport, RI, 1774-1826*. (University of Connecticut, 2008.)

7 AFRICAN AMERICAN RESIDENCES

The homes where the enslaved and free African Americans resided have changed over time, while others have been destroyed due to years of decay or urban renewal. In Newport, most homes were constructed of wood, although some constructed of brick and stone. It is not clear in the Land Evidence Records what materials were used in the homes owned by African Americans, but wood homes would have been more affordable.

The dwellings featured in this research, once the homes of Nathaniel Rodman and John and Patience Mowatt, are wood framed, two-story dwellings, however it is not known if they were two-story dwellings when Rodman and Mowatt occupied them. John and Patience Mowatt's dwelling is a three-quarter Georgian style wood framed dwelling with paired interior chimneys. The façade is wood clapboards with 12/12 lights with flat lintels and a triangular pedimented entrance with four lights in transom above the paneled door. Today, the dwelling is listed as a multi-family home on Division Street (Figure 7:1).

The dwelling on 13 Second Street that Nathaniel Rodman possibly owned was built between 1717 and 1786 is a 1-1/2 stories, gambrel-roof cottage with dormers, a central chimney, and stone foundation. The wood clapboard façade has two 12/12 windows with two 4/8 small dormer windows, and eight lights over the front door (Figure 7:2). Any changes over time to this dwelling is unknown at this time, however it was noted that the home was moved to its current location from an unknown location.

In 1862, Phebe Brown, buried in God's Little Acre, purchased land and house westerly on Cottage Street, but sold the property for \$5,000 in 1872. That same year, Phebe husband Perry Brown purchased a dwelling on the South Side of Filmore Street (Figure 7:3). According

to an 1893 atlas, the dwelling was owned by the Mt. Zion Society (Figure 7:4). It is unknown if the Browns sold the property to the Mt. Zion Society, as Land Evidence Records did not indicate the Browns sold the property to the society. More research is needed to understand who owned the property after the Browns.

Where did the African Americans reside in the City of Newport? Historians and researchers have actively investigated sites that belonged to African Americans throughout Newport. Through my research, including land evidence records, books, dissertations and other theses, many of the African Americans lived on the edges of the colonial city. These locations were once considered the ‘fringes,’ but today are in some of the most popular and expensive areas of Newport. Figure 7.5 displays some of the locations where homes, churches, and businesses were, and are still located today, where the African American community once occupied.



Figure 7:1 Home of John and Patience Mowatt located on Historic Hill section of Newport on 83 Division Street, Newport. Built 1780/86. Photo by Marjorie Drew, May 22, 2019.



Figure 7:2 Image of home on 13 Second Street, Newport, RI. Possibly once owned by Nathaniel Rodman. Image taken by Marjorie Drew, May 2019.

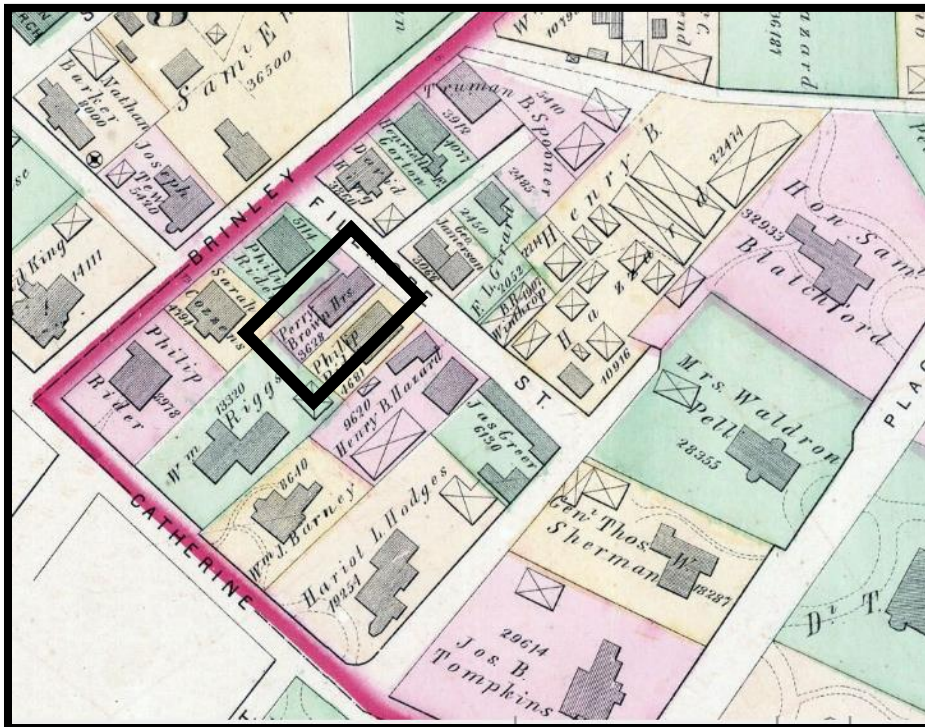


Figure 7:3 Map indicating the home of Perry Brown in 1876. Accessed from Historic Maps Works, Plate G. <http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/11532/Plate+G/Newport+1876/Rhode+Island/>

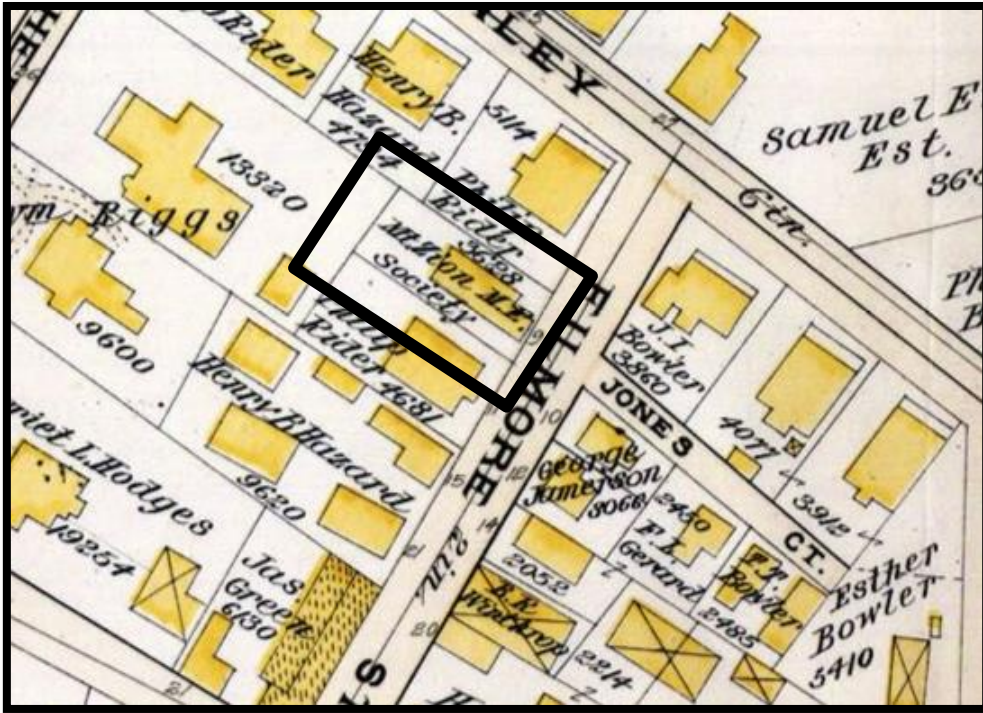


Figure 7:4 1893 map indicates the dwelling on Filmore Street is now the Mt. Zion Society. Unknown at this time if Phebe and Perry Brown sold the dwelling to the society. Image from Historic Map Works, Plate M.
<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/14676/Plate+M/Newport+1893/Rhode+Island/>

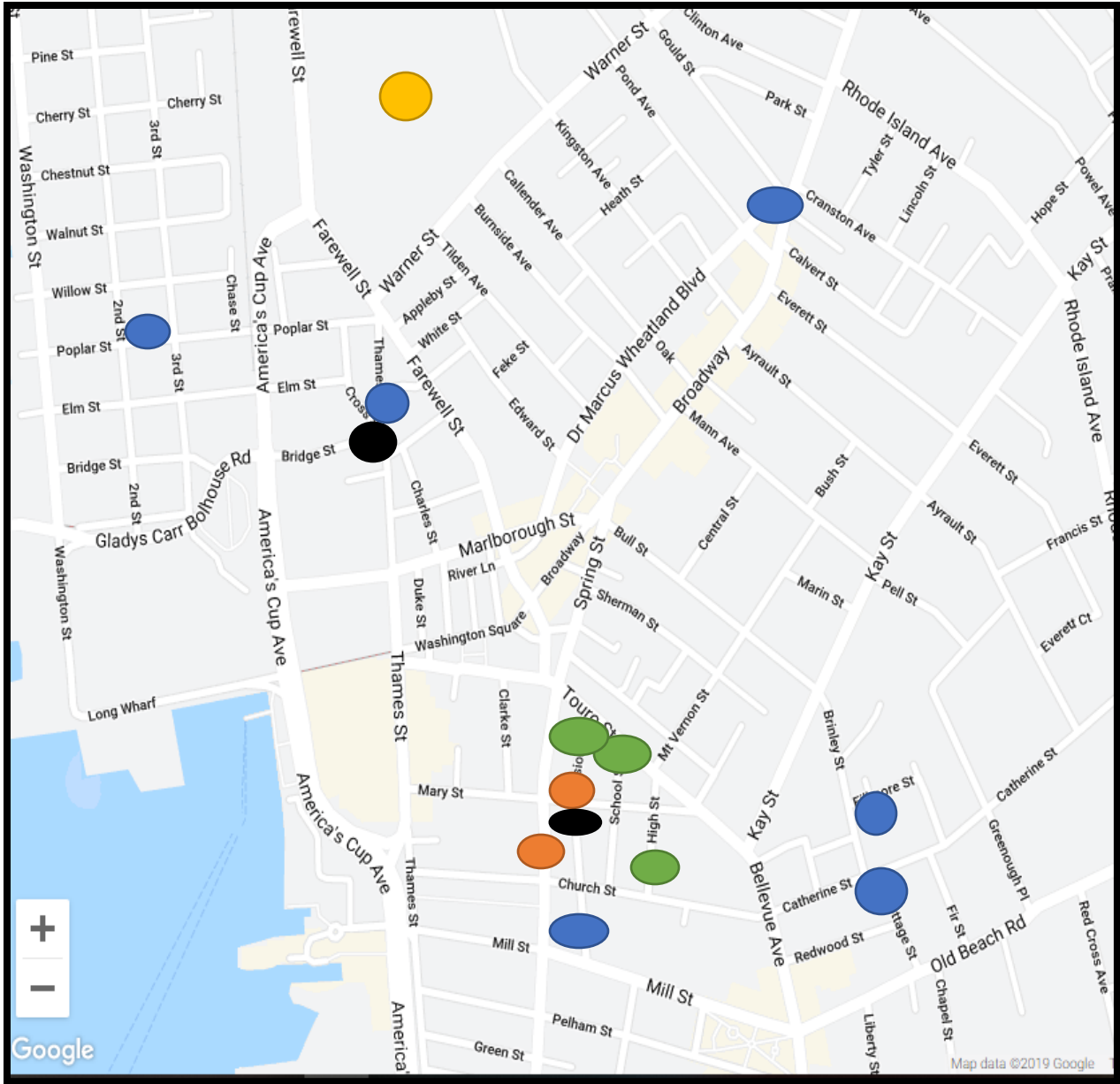


Figure 7:5 Map of Newport, Rhode Island. <https://snazzymaps.com/editor/customize/48985>

- Red – Religious Structures
- Blue – Homes
- Black – Mutual Aid Locations
- Green – Educational Sites
- Orange– God’s Little Acre

7.1 OUTLINE OF LAND EVIDENCE RECORDS, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND INDICATING THE PROPERTY OWNED BY INDIVIDUALS INTERRED IN GOD'S LITTLE ACRE.

MARY JANE BENSON

Land Evidence Book - volume 34, page 18

Mary Jane Benson and Ann Benson purchased land and dwelling from Elisa Flagg, October 29, 1857.

The land was located: northerly on land of Harriet Hazard, easterly on land of Lewis Caleb, southerly on Poplar St. and westerly on 3rd Street. The property included dwelling house and the building standing being the same estate that was given in the last will of Arthur Flagg to his daughters Rosanna Taylor and Phebe Benson.

Land Evidence Book - volume 34, page 51

Mary Jane Benson, Ann Benson and Eliza Flagg sold land to Thomas Brown of Boston. north on land formally of Robert Taylor, easterly on land formally of Paul Munford, southernly of land formally Arthur Flagg, westerly on a highway called "Green Lane." October 29, 1857.

Land Evidence Book - volume 34, page 19-20

Eliza Flagg paid \$1.00 to Ann Benson and Mary Jane Benson property easterly on Thames Street., northerly on land of George W. Ellery, westerly on Cross Street. and southerly on land of William Messer. Estate formally owned and occupied our grandfather Arthur Flagg. October 30, 1857.

Land Evidence Book - volume 36, page 248

Mary Jane Benson sold land to her sister Ann Benson for \$1.00. The property was located on Poplar Street. January 31, 1863.

Land Evidence Book – volume 37, page 630

Mary Jane Benson's property sold at public auction on May 2, 1864 for \$510. The property was purchased John Ulter and located west on 3rd St., north on land of Harriet Hazard, east on Lewis Cables and south on Poplar.

PHEBE L. & PERRY BROWN

Land Evidence Book - volume 23, page 463

Perry Brown grantee from Edward T. Williams for land on the east side of State Street, October 1841.

Land Evidence Book- volume 36, page 539

Phebe purchased land/house for \$1.00 from Charles Van Zandt on Aug. 14, 1862. This property was located "Westerly on Cottage Street, Northerly on land of Simon Brown and John West, Southerly on land of Johnathan R. Gander.

The property was sold for \$5,000 November 1872.

Land Evidence Book - volume 44, page 169

Perry Brown husband to Phebe purchased land and dwelling on the South Side of Filmore from Philip Rider in November 1872 (Figure 7:4).

ARTHUR FLAGG

Land Evidence Book – Volume 10, page 283

Arthur Flagg purchased land and a dwelling in 1807. The property was located “Easterly on lot 112, westerly on 3rd street, northerly on lot 109, and southerly on Poplar Street.

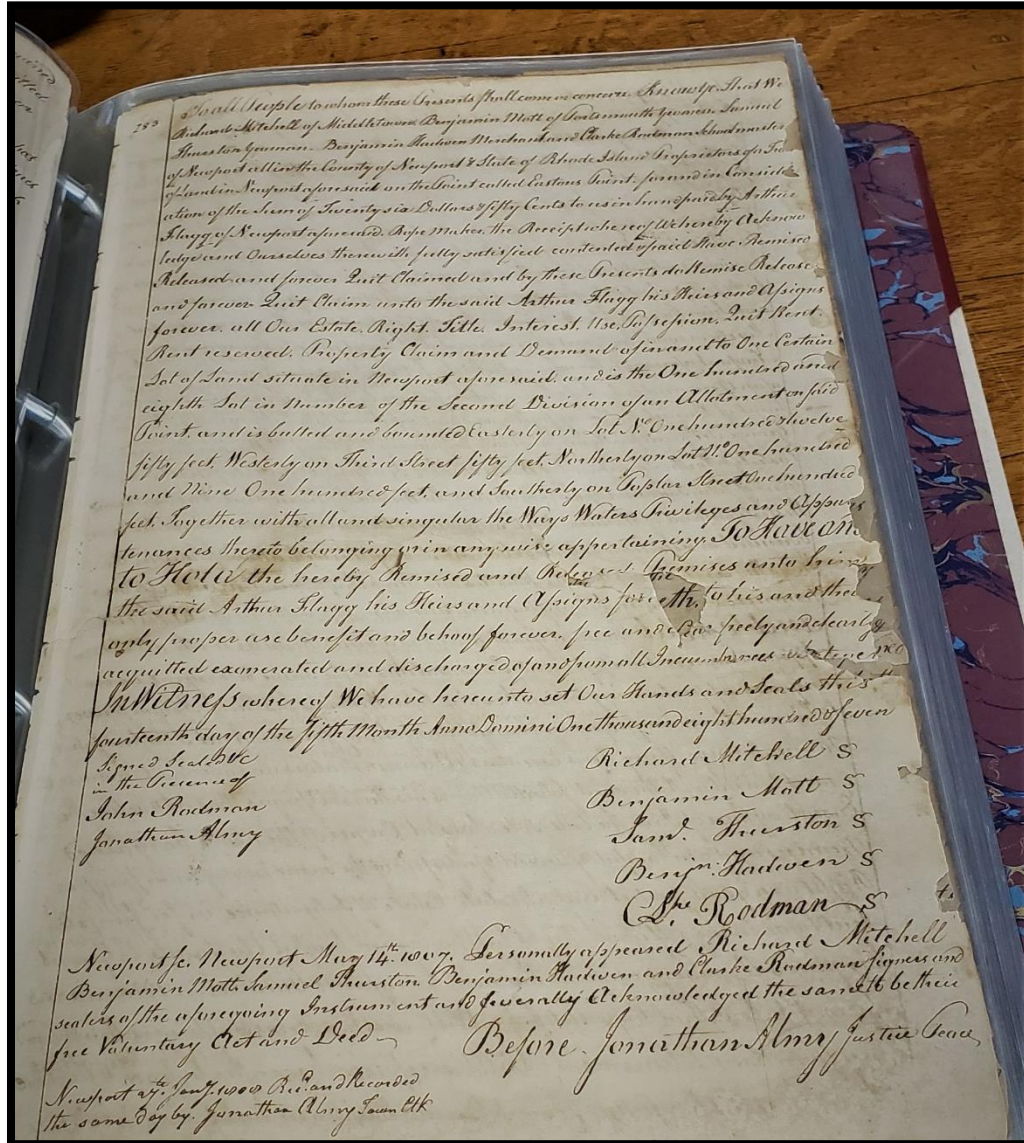


Figure 7:6 Land Evidence Record exhibiting the purchase of land and dwelling by Arthur Flagg in 1807.

SARAH RODMAN

Land Evidence Book – volume 26, page 397

Widowed colored woman purchased property for \$190.42 on Easton's Point, west on 3rd Street.

Sarah is the daughter of Zingo Stevens (not interred in God's Little Acre) It was noted that when Zingo passed he bequeathed Sarah a lot that adjoined her property. And that when Rodman passed, she was insolvent with a balance of \$123.96 against her estate.

ANN SEIXAS

Land Evidence Book – Volume 38, page 379

Ann Seixas sold land/house for \$5.00 to Abby Gardiner. Property located on Caleb Earl Street.

8 CONCLUSION

During the eighteenth century, thousands were taken from their African homeland and brought to the shores of Colonial Newport and enslaved in the homes and businesses of its wealthy merchants and businessmen. Many of the children of the enslaved would spend part, if not all of their childhood enslaved with little chance of freedom, education or the opportunity to own property. However, many of the individuals that have been discussed had a desire to change their life story. These African and African Americans brought some of their history and culture with them and in doing so, provided their community with a hint of their homeland in Lection Day festivities and their predisposition for close families and community. Further, the citizens of God's Little Acre were able to establish mutual aid societies, educational opportunities for their children and religious programs that soon developed into a social fabric that became a part of Newport's cultural landscape. Several individuals were able to buy their freedom and purchase property. These individuals, as well as some, who may not have been born into slavery, but were minorities in colonial Newport, were able to purchase property and bequeath it to their children (Figures 8.1 -8.3).

More research is needed to fully understand how all the citizens of God's Little Acre contributed to the cultural landscape of Newport, but this work demonstrates that several individuals of God's Little Acre did have an impact on the cultural landscape of Newport.


An Inventory of the Personal Estate of Arthur Flagg a freeman of Colow
 taken by us the Subscribers this 11th day of May A D 1010

1 Maple Desk \$3. 50.	1 small Table 50 Cts	1 Old Toilet Table 20 Cts	2 Old Chairs 50 Cts	\$4. 70
1 Feather Bed Bolster & Pillows \$14.	1 Cover laid & 2 Blankets \$4.	Wearing Apparel \$1		19 "
				\$23. 70

Job Townsend
 Robt. Dunbar
 Daniel Denham Junr.

Figure 8:1 Image of Arthur Flagg estate inventory. Probate Record, Vol 4, page 685.

In the name of God, Amen.
 I, John Mowatt of Newport in the County of Newport,
 and State of Rhode Island &c. - Under, being advancing in
 years, and of a sound disposing mind and Memory, and
 knowing that it is appointed for all Men once to die, and the
 time wisely hidden from man; do make and ordain this my
 last Will and Testament, in manner and form following,
 Principally, and first of all I give and recommend my
 Soul to God, its Author, through the merits of our divine
 Saviour, and my body I commit to the Earth, to be decently
 buried. - And my worldly Estate which by the smiles of a
 good Providence I am blessed with, -
 I give, devise and Bequeath the same in the following manner. - -
Imprimis. My mind and Will is that my just debts (if any)
 and funeral expences, be well and truly paid in some convenient
 time after my decease.
First. I give and devise to my faithful and beloved wife
 Patience Mowatt, all my Real Estate situate in Division Street,
 in said Newport, to will and dispose of as she pleases, or to her
 heirs and assigns, forever.
Second. I give and bequeath to my said wife all my household
 furniture; together with all other of my personal Estate, where-
 ever to be found, to her sole use and benefit, forever. -
Lastly. I give, devise and bequeath unto my said wife all the
 residue and remainder of my Estate, or Estates, both real and personal,
 to her, forever, trusting to the Hon. Court of Probate, with the advice
 and consent of my wife, to nominate and appoint some suitable person
 to Execute this my last Will and Testament. - - -
 In testimony whereof, I do hereunto set my hand and seal this
 twenty seventh day of January in the Year of our Lord, one Thousand
 Eight Hundred and Twenty Seven.

John Mowatt. 

Signed, sealed, published, pronounced and declared by said John Mowatt as
 and for his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us, who at the
 same time at his request, and in his presence, and in the presence of
 each other hereunto set our Names as witnesses to the same, on
 the twenty seventh day of January, as above written.

Eliagar Trench.

Norton Willbor

William S. G. Helms.

at true copy attest.

Recorded by
 R. D. Mowatt
 Feb 27

(see letter page 397)

Figure 8:2 Image of the last will and testament of John Mowatt. Mowatt was able to purchase a home and bequeath that home to his wife Patience. Probate Record, Vol 19, Pg. 394.

herewith to said Robert J. Barker Adm - Newpore Feb 21. 1866

{ 5 Cent U.S. Inc
 New Stamp on
 original }

John C. Selman
 James A. Greene
 W. J. H. Selman } apprais.

Newpore Feb 21. 1866.

Inventory of the goods and chattels, rights and credits which were of Patience Mowatt, late of Newpore (deceased), set forth and shown to us by Robert J. Barker Adm on the estate of the said Patience Mowatt

8 Chairs c 50 c	4.00
1 Table	2.00
1 Carpet	5.00
Clock	2.00
4 pictures	.50
1 Stool	1.00
	<u>\$ 14.50</u>

John C. Selman
 James A. Greene
 W. J. H. Selman } apprais.

Cent. U.S. Inc
 New Stamp on
 original

Figure 8:3 Image of Patience Mowatt's estate inventory, February 21, 1866. Probate Record, Vol 23, Pg. 520.

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APPENDIX: INDIVIDUALS INTERRED GOD'S LITTLE ACRE

Name	Birth	Death	Free/ enslaved	Occupation	Residence	Grave marker	Spouse	Owner	Organizations
BENSON, MARY JANE	1812	May 2, 1863		School teacher at colored school	Spring St. 15 third				
BORS, ABRAHAM	1692	Dec 18, 1750				John Steven II			
BRENTON, POMPEY	1717	Nov. 6, 1804	Enslaved					Gov. Brenton or Jahleel Brenton, Esq.	Was elected Governor of Newport during 'Lecture Day' events.
BRENTON, WILLIAM	1697	April 6, 1759	Enslaved				? Elizabeth Jefferson. March 23, 1739.	Jahleel Brenton, Esq.	
BROWN, HERCULES	1732	Jan 11, 1762	Enslave	Ship Captain		John Steven II		John Brown	
BROWN, PERRY	1791 in Delaware	Jan. 29, 1871		Laborer	1840 census show 5 individuals living in the household. 1850 census shows 8 individuals living in the household.		Phebe Brown		
BROWN, PHEBE L.	Dec 1, 1792 (in Africa) 1860 census born RI	Nov 7, 1887		Housewife 1885 census	RI (13 people lived in the household in 1850 1879, 1881/2 - 2 Fillmore court 1883-1887 - 9 Fillmore court		Perry Brown 1882 census		
BULL, CAMBRIDGE	1713	DEC 3, 1769				John Bull			

Name	Birth	Death	Free/ enslaved	Occupation	Residence	Grave marker	Spouse	Owner	Organizations
BUTCHER, HECTOR	1683 Barbados	Aug 12, 1720	Enslave			John Stevens		Ann Butcher	
COOK, CAESAR	1724	June 6, 1764	Enslave			Stevens Shop		John Cook	
CAHOON, FORTUNE	1717	Dec 23, 1749	Enslaved	Worked on John Banister ships		Stevens Shop	Bridget Brenton July 19, 1747		
CHANNING EMMANEUL	1730	June 13, 1792				John Stevens Shop			
CRANSTON, CATO	1729	Nov. 5, 1766	Enslaved					Thomas Cransto n	
CRANSTON, GEORGE	1709	Nov. 13, 1772	Enslaved			John Stevens		William Cransto n	
CRANSTON, JACK	1727	April 3, 1772				John Stevens III			
CRANSTON, MARGARET	1695/97	May 15, 1779	Enslaved			John Stevens III		Servant to gov. Cransto n	
DAVIS, JACK	1756	Oct. 17, 1836				William Stevens			
DeBLOIS, PRIMUS	1755	Nov. 27, 1775				John Stevens II			
DUNBAR, QUASH	1700	May 18, 1770	Enslaved baptized May 24, 1761 trinity church, Newport	Worked on John Banister ships		William Stevens		? Ann Dunbar	
FERGUSON, THOMAS	1744 Baptized May 6, 1787 in Trinity Church	May 17, 1800	Free census 1790			H. Bull			Member of the African union society 1787- 1810
FERGUSON, PHILLIS	1744	sept 18, 1814	Free census 1800 baptized May 6, 1787 trinity church, Newport						

Name	Birth	Death	Free/ enslaved	Occupation	Residence	Grave marker	Spouse	Owner	Organizations
FLAGG, ARTHUR/NUBA TIKEY	1733	March 16, 1810	Enslaved - free 1800 census baptized 1771					Mary Flagg	One of the founding members of the African Free Union Society
FOLGER, JANE	1707	May 10, 1788				John Bull			
MALBONE, SARAH	1875 Baptized April 1, 1797	March 2 1818							Member of the African Female Society
MILLER, ADAM	1756	1799? died at sea				Stevens shop	? Nelinda Freebody Aug. 15, 1779		
MOWATT, PATIENCE	1783/87 Mulatto	Dec. 1865			1850 census living with John. 1860 census she is no longer with John		John Mowatt		Member of the African Female Society
MOWATT, JOHN	1799/80	Feb. 12, 1859	Free	Grocer	1820 - 38 Division, h 36 Division (1856 - also says carder lee's Warf's) 1868 directory says 38 Division)		Patience Mowatt		Member of the African Free Union Society. Founding member of the Union Colored Church. First meeting to organize the black masonic lodge was held at his house.
OVERING, COMFORT		Jan. 5, 1844	Free						
QUAMINO, DUCHESS(Charity)	? Born in 1739 in Africa. Transporte d to Newport at the age of 15.	Jun 29, 1804	Bought freedom from selling her foods	Worked in the home of John Channing and William Channing.	24 School St. Lived on Mary St.	John Stevens III	John died in 1799 off North Carolina		Member of the Palls & Biers section of the African union society.
REDWOOD, DIANA	1739	April 22, 1822	Enslaved	Lived in the Redwood household				Abraha m Redwoo d. After Abraha ms death,	

Name	Birth	Death	Free/ enslaved	Occupation	Residence	Grave marker	Spouse	Owner	Organizations
								Diana was bequeathed to Redwoods daughter.	
REDWOOD, NEWPORT	1716	Feb. 21, 1766	Enslaved			John Bull		Abraham Redwood	
REDWOOD, THOMAS	1732	Feb. 19, 1767	Enslaved					Abraham Redwood	
RIVERA RODRIGUEZ, JUDITH	1748	Nov. 9, 1773	Enslaved			John Stevens III		Jacob Rodriguez Rivera	
RODMAN, SARAH	1769 or June 1772	Jan 29, 1863	Free					Owned property on Easton's Point, west on 3 rd St.	
RODMAN, CUFFE	1769	May 7, 1809	Free			Stevens shop	Sarah Rodman		Served in the military during the Revolutionary war.
RODMAN, NATHANIAL	1765	Sept 8, 1873	Enslaved Later Freed		Lived on Warner St His house was moved to 2 nd St. after 1960.				Member of the African Benevolent Society
RODMAN, RACHEL	1734	Oct 7, 1825					Crubay Rodman		
RODMAN, SARAH	1769/1772	Jan 29, 1863	Free		Poplar St.		Cuffe Rodman		
RODMAN, SCIPIO	1699	March 2, 1759				William Stevens			
RYDER(RIDER/RIDERS, NEWPORT	1710	Sept 29, 1760							
SCOTT, PRINCE		July 10, 1768	Enslave					George Scott	
SEIXAS, ANN	1796/97	Sept 18, 1881	Free	Was a student in the African	Newport asylum (Insane)		Single	Moses Seixas	

Name	Birth	Death	Free/ enslaved	Occupation	Residence	Grave marker	Spouse	Owner	Organizations
				American school.	1878 census. Owned a home on Caleb Earl St.				
SISSON, NEPTUNE	1730	Oct 9, 1794		Made a number of purchases and engaged in several business transaction with Caesar Lyndon.			Dinah		African Free Union Society for 5 yrs. before his death
SISSON, SYPHAX	1737	Nov. 4, 1800							
STEVENS, VIOLET	1742	Jan 1, 1803				Stevens shop	Zingo Stevens 3rd wife		
TANNER, HAMMOND	1735	June 26, 1772							
TAYLOR, ROSANNA (MADIEN NAME FLAGG)	1772	May 18, 1847	Indentured	1801 indentured lease between Taylor and Charles Davenport. Term of 5 yrs.	Lived paid for from indentured lease.				
TAYLOR, TONEY	1722	Jan 10, 1799						Gardiner Thurston	
SLOCUM, JACK	1697	March 6, 1761 drowned				William Stevens			
SMITH, MARY	1768	July 18, 1843							
THURSTON, BESS	1696	Jan 5, 1746				William Stevens	Sondry Saunders		
UPDIKE, PRINCE	1711	1781		Chocolate grinder			Enslaved by the Updike family in Wickford, RI. Hired by Aaron Lopez		Served in the military during the Revolutionary war.
WEEDEN HUMPHREY, JAMES	1769	April 22, 1852		Worked on the Ship "Rowena"					Member of the Free African Union Society

