

Home of Asa B. Smith and Hannah Comstock Smith (once standing across the street from the William R. and Eliza Smith House)

Southern Slaves Once Beat Path to Two Friendly Refuges
in Macedon



The Reeve Homestead, near Macedon, was one of the depots on the Underground Railroad during Civil War days.

By MILDRED HAMPSHIRE

Macedon—Time has erased the path beaten by bare feet to freedom and the stigma of slavery from the Negro race in America, but standing a silent memento to Civil War days is a series of underground railroad depots in Wayne County, marking the final stretch of the slave trail to freedom.

In the Quaker settlement south of Macedon are two of these depots. A Quaker preacher, Arnold Bristol, occupied the present H. B. Pierce house and another Quaker occupied the 125-year-old Reeve Homestead.

In those days of 1860 feeling against slavery ran high. It was in the friendly atmosphere of this Quaker settlement the slaves were given refuge.

On Route to Port

A path was beaten across Garnaqua Creek (Muddy Waters) to the two houses and again northward to Marion, and on to Pultneyville, then a large shipping port. From Pultneyville the slaves were taken at night aboard vessels bound for Canada. Once they were out of the United States, they were free.

Living today on the Reeve Homestead, one mile south of Macedon on the Victor Road, are Frank Reeve, 65, and his sister, Mrs. George, 77.

Mrs. Alles has lived there for more than 30 years and her father before her. On a tour of the 12-room house Mrs. Alles pointed out how the circular staircase came down to a small passage in the west side of the house, indicating that this was the "secret" door in years gone by.

It now opens into a kitchen. In 1860 the main road of travel ran by this door. Near the front door, still visible though boarded up, is the cellar door through which slaves stealthily crept at night to seek refuge from possible pursuers.

Floor Worn Smooth

In the cellar is a huge fireplace and many small rooms. The dirt floor is worn smooth. Indentions in the brick walls point to where Mrs. Alles claims were partitions forming stalls into which slaves were put for a night's lodging.

As added precaution against searchers, an underground cellar was dug. It is believed to be located 20 feet southeast of the house, under the driveway.

Mr. Reeve said that as a boy he recalls filling in with stones this huge declivity in the front lawn. "There was a hole big enough to hold a horse," he said. It kept sinking in, he said, so he and his brothers kept adding

more stone. Later they learned it was the secret room where the slaves were concealed.

Another Refuge Nearby

A hundred yards north of the Reeve place, nestled among century-old fir trees is a second slave refuge. Here slaves were also taken in and fed; then, secreted in wagon loads of hay, they were transported northward to Pultneyville, where they were kept in friendly homes until word was received of a vessel bound for Canada.

Mrs. Pierce, a Rochesterian who has occupied this farm for little over a year was unaware of its history. A. T. Briggs, Macedon assessor 20 years ago, said he recalls going through the Pierce house and seeing the series of stalls which resembled those provided for horses.

In an inspection of the cellar Mrs. Pierce showed one section that is but partially white washed. Here at equal distances are two-by-fours that lend the appearance of having once been partitions of the stalls Mr. Briggs saw.

There are several houses in Wayne where slaves were taken in, but old settlers claim the Quaker settlement route was the favored road to freedom before the Emancipation.

Rochester Times-Union, March 13, 1937

Asa Smith and Elizabeth D. Smith House, 1812 and later
713 Erie Street
Town of Macedon, New York

Significance: Elizabeth D. Smith and perhaps also her father Asa Smith were active Quaker abolitionists and Underground Railroad supporters. Elizabeth D. Smith was also a signer of the Declaration of Sentiments at the first woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls on July 19-20, 1848.



Spring 2008

Description: Originally, this house was a plain frame building with a two-bay, two-story main block and a one-story three-bay wing with a door in the middle on the east side. It had six-over-six windows and unsoffited eaves. Late twentieth century changes included two dormers on the wing, changed fenestration, and a new doorway into the main part of the house.

Once on the main road north, the house is now on a dead-end road, surrounded by later homes. It sits on its original location, however, with its same basic form, reflecting both Federal houses, with its broad side to the street, and the simplicity of Quaker values.

Significance: Elizabeth Durfee Smith (b. Farmington 1818) was the oldest of seven children born to Anna Herendeen (b. Farmington, September 17, 1799-August 19, 1830) and Asa Smith (born Farmington, June 8, 1795-died Macedon, March 18, 1858). She was related to many other Quaker abolitionist families, including the Herendeens, Durfees, Willets, Aldriches, and Dotys. She was also one of the core group of activist Quakers affiliated with Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends, both as abolitionists and Underground Railroad supporters and as woman's rights activists.⁷²

⁷² Ancestry.com, <http://trees.ancestry.com/owt/person.aspx?pid=63260967>. Elizabeth Smith was a common Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County

Although we have no specific Underground Railroad stories associated with this house, much documentary evidence suggests that Elizabeth D. Smith and her father Asa Smith were likely supporters of the Underground Railroad. As early as 1838, Elizabeth D. Smith contributed \$4.00 to agent William L. Chaplin the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. As part of the group affiliated with the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, Elizabeth D. Smith took part in major women's abolitionist organizing in central and western New York. Most likely, this is the Elizabeth Smith who was elected a "councilor" of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, at its fourth annual meeting on December 28, 1846. Along with other women from the surrounding area, including Wayne County (with Susan Doty, Esther Hathaway, and Maria Wilbur from Farmington/Macedon, Caroline Halstead and Julia Parker from Walworth, and Eliza Cooper from Williamson), Elizabeth Smith signed "An Address of Anti-Slavery Women on Western New York," published in the *North Star*, March 24, 1848. "Knowing that without associative action we cannot render efficient aid to this holy cause," they asked for support for the anti-slavery fair to be held in Rochester in December.

We hope no one will feel too poor, nor any too rich, to enlist in this holy cause. The Christian's influence, in whatever situation, is always salutary, and will certainly produce its good effects. We ask for the aid of men and of women; - we call on the old and the young, the farmer, the mechanic, and the merchant. We ask all and every one to give us their help; to devote what they can spare, either of money or of the fruits of their labor, to the work of restoring men and women to themselves, to their manhood, to the rights and blessings with which they were endowed by our Creator. . . .

We ask the females in the adjoining towns and country around us, to get up sewing circles, and prepare such articles as will be most saleable, and to come, furnish tables, give us their company, and help us, not only in selling those things thus prepared, but in convincing the public mind of the necessity of our perseverance and fidelity, and thus be helpers in hastening the day of emancipation.⁷³

With her father Asa Smith and other anti-slavery families in Macedon (the Dotys, Wilburs, Getchells), Elizabeth D. Smith also helped organize an anti-slavery fair in Macedon in 1849. Frederick Douglass attended and reported that, although "there are but few abolitionists in town,"

this anti-slavery exhibition of art and skill, was conducted with much spirit; and passed off to the gratification, we believe, of every one present. The room in which it was held was very tastefully and abundantly decorated with evergreens; and the tables were beautifully furnished with useful and fancy articles of a rich and choice description, arranged with neatness and elegance. The refreshment table was abundantly supplied with delicacies of various descriptions.

The fair raised only \$50.00, but to Douglass, the most important results were not monetary but the fact that the large audience "saw, perhaps for the first time, that white and colored persons could meet together in the same room, and treat each other with kindness and respect - an important end attained in this Christian country!"⁷⁴

Elizabeth Smith was also a subscriber to the *North Star* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, as was her father Asa Smith. Almost certainly, she was the woman referred to as "Elizabeth J. Smith" who worked with the committee of women who raised \$1000 for a silver pitcher for Underground

name, and we have assumed in some cases that "Elizabeth Smith" or "Elizabeth J. Smith" was really Elizabeth D. Smith.

⁷³ "July-Aug New York State Anti-Slavery Society Treasury Fund records," *Friend of Man*, August 15, 1838; *North Star*, March 24, 1848; "Rochester Anti-Slavery Bazaar," *North Star*, November 10, 1848.

⁷⁴ F.D., "Fair at Macedon," *North Star*, August 24, 1849.

Railroad agent William Chaplin. She delivered the pitcher, along with a book containing a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier and another by James Russell Lowell, to Chaplin on his wedding day in August 1851.⁷⁵

Elizabeth D. Smith was also one of six Quakers from the Farmington/Macedon area who signed the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments in 1848.

When Asa Smith died in 1858, he left this house to his daughter Elizabeth D. Smith, in her own name.⁷⁶

Primary Sources:

1) ADDRESS OF ANTI-SLAVERY WOMEN OF WESTERN NEW YORK.

North Star, March 24, 1848.

Courtesy Accessible Archives

Under a deep and abiding impression of the duty we owe to God and our fellow beings, the Anti-Slavery women of Rochester feel constrained to continue to persevere in their efforts for the oppressed and suffering bondmen who still remain toiling unrequited in the Southern prison house. We are frequently brought painfully to remember that not only is their labor wrested from them unremunerated; not only do they suffer from intense hunger and cold; not only are the females, OUR SISTERS, subjected to the cruel and passionate outrages of their tyrannical masters and overseers; but there are daily instances of sundering the dearest ties in nature, thus separating them forever. And can we expect anything better - can we look for benevolence or fine feelings from a system so foul and fiendish as slavery? It would be unreasonable, because "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Therefore, knowing that without associative action we cannot render efficient aid to this holy cause, we affectionately invite the co-operation of the citizens of Rochester and the public generally. We ask them to bear in mind the injunctions of Jesus, "All things whatsoever ye would men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Remember, also, the beautiful parable in which he calls our attention to the sick and to those who are in prison, and concludes by the forcible assertion, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We feel assured all that have hearts to feel, and are careful to attend to the monitions of conscience - all who are determined to live for the good of our race, instead of devoting all their time to their own personal ease - all who feel bound to improve the precious time allotted to them here, by promoting as much as possible the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth, will come forward in the work of laboring to banish forever the demon of slavery from our land; and in so doing, instead of an example of corruption and wickedness, we should be a "light to the world."

We hope no one will feel too poor, nor any too rich, to enlist in this holy cause. The Christian's influence, in whatever situation, is always salutary, and will certainly produce its good effects. We ask for the aid of men and of women; - we call on the old and the young, the farmer, the mechanic, and the merchant. We ask all and every one to give us their help; to devote what they can spare, either of money or of the fruits of their labor, to the work of restoring men and women to themselves, to their manhood, to the rights and blessings with which they were endowed by our Creator.

For this object we propose holding a Fair in December next. We ask the females in the adjoining towns and country around us, to get up sewing circles, and prepare such articles as will be most saleable, and to come, furnish tables, give us their company, and help us, not only in selling

⁷⁵ *North Star*, August 24, 1849; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, August 27, 1852, October 6, 1854; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, January 14, 1847, May 20, 1852.

⁷⁶ Deed, Sale of property to Elizabeth D. Smith by heirs of Asa Smith, "being all that portion of the Home farm of the late Asa Smith, deceased, October 1, 1860, Liber?, ?, Wayne County Clerk's Office.

Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County

Historical New York Research Associates

Wayne County Historian's Office

Preserve New York, 2007-2009

those things thus prepared, but in convincing the public mind of the necessity of our perseverance and fidelity, and thus be helpers in hastening the day of emancipation.

ABIGAIL BUSH, Rochester. SARAH D. FISH, do. SARAH L. HALLOWELL, do. MARY H. HALLOWELL, do. [] do. MARGARET A. LARSON, do. ELIZABETH SULLY, do. PHEBE TREADWELL, do. CHARLOTTE S. WILBER, do. HULDA ANTHONY, do. RHODA DE GARMO, do. CATHARINE A.F. STEBBINS, do. AMY POST, do. HENRIETTA PLATT, Bath. SUSAN R. DOTY, Farmington. MARIA WILBUR, do. **ELIZABETH SMITH**, do. ESTHER HATHAWAY, do. CAROLINE HALSTEAD, Walworth. JULIA PARKER, do. ELIZA COOPER, Williamson. AMY MOTT, do. REBECCA M.C. CAPRON. Auburn. MRS. HAMLIN, Port Byron. MARGARET PRIOR, Waterloo. MARY ANN McCLINTOCK, do. LAURA MURRAY, Victor. MRS. MACKINTYRE, Darien.

2) Smith Family and the Macedon Anti-Slavery Fair

North Star, August 24, 1849

Courtesy Accessible Archives

Fair at Macedon.

This anti-slavery exhibition of art and skill, was conducted with much spirit; and passed off to the gratification, we believe, of every one present. The room in which it was held was very tastefully and abundantly decorated with evergreens; and the tables were beautifully furnished with useful and fancy articles of a rich and choice description, arranged with neatness and elegance. The refreshment table was abundantly supplied with delicacies of various descriptions. Macedon is not distinguished for its anti-slavery. There are but few abolitionists in that town; so that the burden of making the necessary preparations for it, and especially the furnishing of the refreshment table fell upon two or three families. We were particularly indebted for aid to Mr. and Mrs. Doty and family - to Mr. Esick Wilbur and family - **Asa Smith** and family, and William Getchell and family, to all of whom we return our sincere and heartfelt thanks. Several towns around were represented at the fair. Our friends from West Walworth made themselves very efficient, and contributed much towards the success which attended this anti-slavery effort. The receipts of the fair, as was expected, were small, being little more than fifty dollars. The value, however, of the fair is not to be estimated by the money realized. Those who labored industriously and zealously in its behalf, must seek their reward in the happy moral effect produced by the occasion. A large assemblage of persons was secured to hear the anti-slavery subject considered, and to see anti-slavery principles practically carried out in a manner that they had never seen before; and we have good reason to think there was much prejudice removed, and much interest excited among them. They saw, perhaps for the first time, that white and colored persons could meet together in the same room, and treat each other with kindness and respect - an important end attained in this Christian country! The evening previous to the fair we delivered a lecture to the Macedonians, in the Baptist Church, which was kindly thrown open to us by the trustees, without cost; but there was so little anti-slavery in the place, that no one volunteered to light up the house, and our meeting would have been defeated but that our friend Doty succeeded in purchasing a few candles, at a late hour. After the house was lighted, the villagers came in, giving us a large audience, who listened with attention, and manifested considerable interest in the important subject which we humbly strove to set before them. The moral darkness here is great, and must be keenly felt by any anti-slavery lecturer who may visit the place. We obtained, three subscribers for the *North Star*, and have the promise of four more in a few days. We hope the lecture, together with the fair, has prepared the way for other laborers in this part of our anti-slavery vineyard, and that the seed now sown will yet produce a large anti-slavery harvest. - F.D.

3) Elizabeth J. [mostly likely D.] Smith and the Chaplin Committee
Frederick Douglass Paper, August 21, 1851
Courtesy Accessible Archives

For Frederick Douglass' Paper. THE SILVER PITCHER. The sub-committee who were authorized and instructed by the general committee appointed by the Fugitive Slave Convention held at Cazenovia in August, 1850, to receive ten cent donations for the purpose of purchasing a Silver Pitcher, to be presented to William L. Chaplin, as a testimonial of their regard for his character and his eminent services in behalf of the slave, respectfully submit the following report: That soon after the imposition of their trust, a sufficient amount was received to carry into execution the object of the donors, and a plain massive pitcher, worth one hundred dollars, was procured, on which were the following inscriptions: TO WILLIAM L. CHAPLIN IN PRISON From one thousand of his friends: A TESTIMONIAL Of their high regard for his character. August 8th, 1850. Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. - Ps. XI. 1. At the time the pitcher was procured, it was, on consultation with his friends, deemed unadvisable to present it while in prison, fearing it might provoke his enemies and render more difficult his release. Since then, the committee have postponed the matter from time to time in the hope that an opportunity might offer at which a large portion of the donors might be present to witness the presentation. Fearing it impracticable to get the donors together at any given place and time, the committee regarded it appropriate to present it on his wedding day. - Accordingly, on the 12th day of August, 1851, after the marriage ceremony was over, Miss Elizabeth J. Smith, on behalf of the contributors, presented publicly, with suitable remarks, the pitcher to Mr. Chaplin. He responded in a very feeling and happy manner, acknowledging that while he felt unworthy of the gift, it was nevertheless very grateful to his heart to know that one thousand of his friends approved of a course which had left him in so great a minority of his fellow-countrymen, and requested the committee to convey to the donors his sincere thanks and heartfelt regards. Our Treasurer received a few dollars over the sum necessary to pay for the pitcher, which was presented to Mr. Chaplin in a purse wrought by two of his friends for the occasion. The committee also procured a blank-book of the best paper and binding, on one side of which was stamped in gold letters, "The Silver Pitcher," and on the other side, "Aug. 8th, 1850," - the day in which he fell into the hands of his enemies. This book was presented with the pitcher. In it was recorded, in a legible and beautiful handwriting, the following introduction, furnished by John G. Whittier at the request of the committee: THE HERO OF TODAY. Shame on the man who loves to turn To Eaton by the way of Derne, And speak the praise of him who gave Deliverance to the Moorman's slave, Yet brands with obloquy and crime The heroes of our land and time - The self-forgetful ones who stake Home, hope and life, for Freedom's sake! God mend his heart who cannot feel The impulse of his holy zeal, Nor measure with his sordid eyes Their beautiful self-sacrifice. Though in the sacred place he stands, Uplifting consecrated hands, Unworthy are his lips to tell Of Jesu's martyr-miracle, Or name aright that dread embrace Of suffering for a fallen race. Then followed the proceedings of the Cazenovia Convention relative to this subject, and the following letter: WILLIAM L. CHAPLIN - DEAR FRIEND: The subscribers having been appointed to carry into execution the object of the "Chaplin Pitcher Committee," herewith present you a silver pitcher, which, on behalf of the donors whose names follow, we beg you to accept, as a memorial of their love and of their admiration of your untiring efforts in the cause of humanity. With sentiments of high regard, Very truly your friends, PHEBE HATHAWAY, ELIZABETH J. SMITH, PHOEBE GARDNER, C. G. HAMBLIN, ANNE P. ADAMS. This book contained a list of each donor's name and post office address, and at the close the following extract from James Russell Lowell: Then to side with truth is noble, when we share her wretched crust, Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just; Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside, Doubting in his abject spirit till his Lord is crucified, And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied. For Humanity sweeps onward: where to-day the martyr stands, On the 'morrow

crouches Judas with the silver in his hands; Far in past the cross stands ready, and the crackling faggots burn, While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe return to glean up the scattered ashes into History's golden urn. All which is respectfully submitted by the committee, PHEBE HATHAWAY, ELIZABETH J. [D.] SMITH, PHOEBE GARDNER, C.G. HAMBLIN, ANNE P. ADAMS. August 12th, 1851.

Wayne County NY Historian

**Wesleyan Methodist Church
Victor Road, Pumpkin Hook
Town of Macedon**

Significance: Church that hosted several antislavery meetings.



Description: This simple frame meetinghouse with its gable end to the street was built after 1846 by Wesleyan Methodists, on land deeded by Quaker abolitionist J.C. Hathaway. Although a vestibule was added and windows changed, the simple form of this building, returns on the gable, and stone foundation reflect its early origins,

Significance: Committed to abolitionism and unwilling to retain membership in a denomination that included owners of people in slavery, Wesleyan Methodists broke away from mainstream Methodist churches in 1843. Local people (including some of Quaker background) organized this Wesleyan Church on January 12, 1846. In July 1846, they held an antislavery meeting in the church. J.C. Hathaway, local Quaker abolitionist reported to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on an antislavery meeting held in the church:

We held a meeting on the 10th, at Farmington, which was addressed by our friend, Charles Lenox Remond. It was an interesting one. The house was much crowded, and a number went away, who could not gain admittance. It was held in the Wesleyan Methodist

meetinghouse, which is not a large building, but is *always open* to Anti-Slavery.⁷⁷

The congregation died out about 1890. Since 1892, the building has been the home of Farmington Grange No. 431.⁷⁸

Although we do not have a list of members of this church, many Wesleyan Methodist congregations included both European Americans and African Americans, often people who had escaped from slavery. All Wesleyan Methodists supported abolitionism, and they were typically associated with the Underground Railroad. This church offered an alternative meeting place for local abolitionists when the Orthodox Meetinghouse in Farmington was not available. We know of at least two abolitionist meetings held in this meetinghouse.

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⁷⁷ J.C. Hathaway to Sidney Howard Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, written July 22, 1846, published August 6, 1846.

⁷⁸ George S. Conover, ed., Lewis Cass Aldridge, comp., *History of Ontario County, New York* (Syracuse: D. Mason, 1893). <http://history.rays-place.com/ny/farmington-ny.htm>

Site of Esek and Maria E. Wilbur Mill
SE corner Route 31 and Canandaigua Road
Village of Macedon, New York

Significance: The 1853 map of Macedon, Wayne County listed a mill on this site as owned by E. Wilbur. Esek Wilbur was a member of Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends (Hicksite). Maria E. Wilbur belonged to Farmington Monthly Meeting (Orthodox). Both were part of the core group of Quaker abolitionists who supported the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society and the Underground Railroad. Maria E. Wilbur also signed the Declaration of Sentiments at the Seneca Falls woman's rights convention.



Looking southeast
March 2008



Looking northwest
December 2008



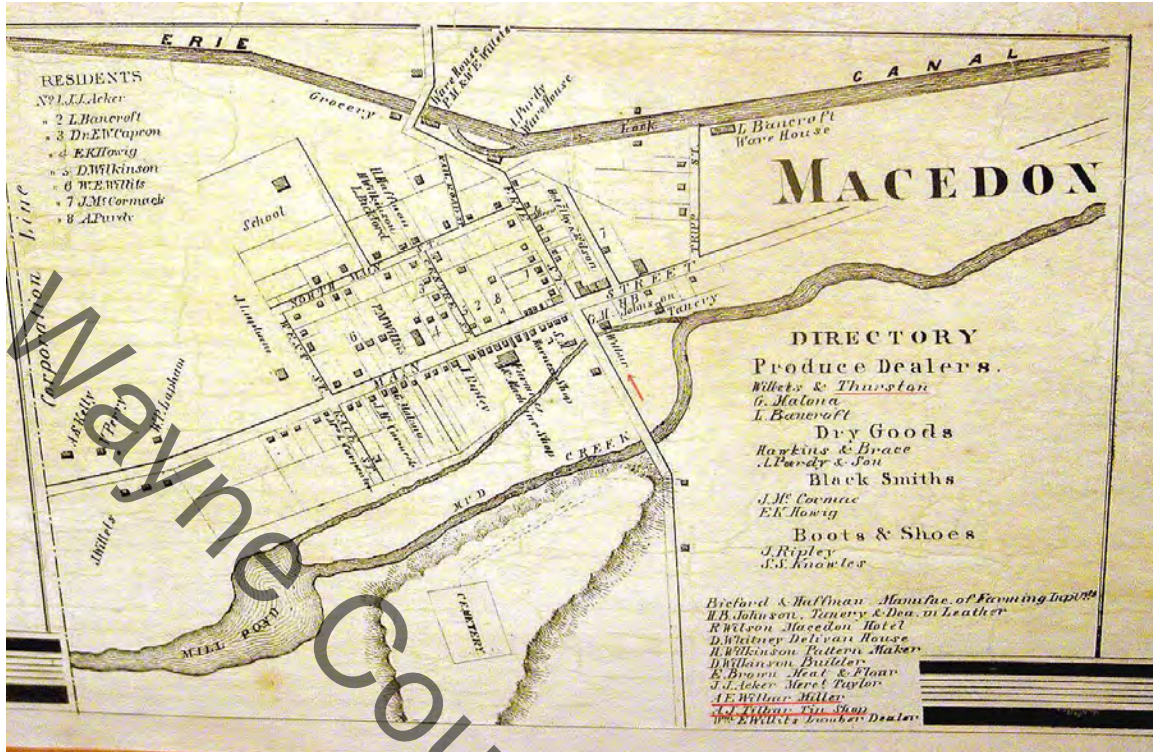
Andrea T. Evangelist, *A Gathering of Memories* (Macedon Historical Society, 2005), 67.



Esek and Maria E. Wilbur
Photo courtesy of Charles Lenhart

Description: Esek Wilbur owned a mill on this site, as noted in the 1858 Gillette map of Wayne County. There is some confusion, however, about whether this building was the original mill. In 1871, a man named Atherton bought this property. About 1910, a local resident noted that "In 1874 a part of the old Wood shop from the Drill Works was moved onto this land and was then used for a workshop and barn." Between March 2008 and December 2008, the structure collapsed. In March 2009, it was no longer standing.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Research by Charles Lenhart and Sally Millick. Email from Sally Millick to Charles Lenhart, January 9, 2009.
Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County
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Wayne County Historian's Office
Preserve New York, 2007-2009



Map of Wayne County, New York (Philadelphia: John E. Gillette, 1858).

Significance: Esek Wilbur and Maria Ellison Wilbur were part of the core group of Quaker abolitionists and women's rights advocates who worked with the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. Both Maria and Esek were active abolitionists. Maria E. Wilbur also attended the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and signed the Declaration of Sentiments. Both belonged to Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends, but Maria was Orthodox and Esek was Hicksite.

Maria Ellison Wilbur (March 22, 1798-February 22, 1880) and Esek Wilbur (December 17, 1795- November 22, 1865, in Pickwick, Minnesota) were born of Quaker parents in the Town of Milan, Dutchess County, New York. They married October 22, 1817, and moved to Jerusalem, Yates County, New York, by 1825. By 1832, they lived in the Farmington/Macedon area, where Esek had a mill. They moved to 42 Monroe Avenue, Pittsford, New York, in the 1850s.⁸⁰

Both Maria and Esek Wilbur were Quakers, members of Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends. Following her parents (including her father Thomas Ellison, a noted Quaker minister in Bethel, New York), Maria E. Wilbur became an Orthodox Quaker at the time of the separation in 1828, while Esek became Hicksite. Membership records of Farmington Monthly recorded in 1832 list Esek as "Friend," i.e. Hicksite, and Maria as "Orthodox." In 1845, both Maria and Esek signed an epistle from Friends of Genesee Yearly Meeting (Hicksite). Maria E. Wilbur also signed this letter, with a note that she was "a member of the Orthodox meeting." Both Maria and Esek became part of the group of radical Quakers associated with abolitionism and woman's rights in western New York.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Charles Lenhart, Wilbur Genealogy.

⁸¹ Hazard Index, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, www.swarthmore.edu/Library/friends/hazard/fhlreport.php.

Esek Wilbur early became an active abolitionist. At the organizational meeting of the Wayne County Anti-Slavery Society, held at the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra on December 1, 1837, he became a member of the Executive Committee. In July 1839, he attended an antislavery convention in Auburn. He was chosen vice-president of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society convention in Waterloo in February 1840. In 1845, he signed a petition sent by residents of Macedon, asking Congress to reject the annexation of Texas as a slave-holding state. He signed another petition in 1850, asking Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.⁸²

At the time of the 1848 convention, Maria was 50-year-old wife of Esek Wilbur, a mill owner in Macedon, New York, mother of six living children. The two youngest, a son who turned 13 on June 20, and a daughter 16 were likely still at home. She would have been saddened earlier that year as the six-year-old daughter of her oldest daughter had died in February.⁸³

Maria probably traveled to Seneca Falls with other Friends from Macedon, including Susan and Elias Doty, Elizabeth D. Smith, and William and Caroline Barker.⁸⁴ She is likely to have known Lucretia Mott, and Lucretia would likely have known, at least, Maria's father as a Quaker preacher from their earlier days living in the Nine Partners Boarding school area in Dutchess County, New York.

On December 12, 1847, Maria E. Wilbur was chosen a member of the Executive Committee of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, and Esek Wilbur served the following year. In 1849, both Maria and Esek helped sponsor an anti-slavery fair in Macedon. In October 1849, Maria E. Wilbur was one of five Quaker women who signed a circular announcing the creation of a school for African American girls, including Emily and Mary Edmondson, who had tried to escape from slavery in Washington, D.C., on the famous *Pearl*.⁸⁵

About 1853, the Wilburs moved to Pittsford, New York. They continued to own the mill in Macedon, however, which their son operated. Maria transferred her Quaker membership from Farmington Monthly Meeting to Rochester Monthly Meeting on March 25, 1853. In 1860, she was dismissed from Rochester.⁸⁶

At some point, probably between 1848 and the mid-1850s (since Abigail Bush moved out the area in the mid-1850s), Maria E. Wilbur signed an undated document with other early women's rights advocates. Now in the Susan B Anthony House, this document includes names of Abigail Bush, Sarah L. Willis, M.E. Wilbur, Gerrit Smith, Sarah Owen, William C. Nell, Lucretia Mott, Sarah L. Hallowell, Amy Post, Isaac Post, Mary H. Hallowell, Rhoda De Garmo, and Wm. R. Hallowell.⁸⁷

⁸² *Friend of Man*, December 20, 1837, July 3, 1839; March 11, 1840. Antislavery petitions from National Archives and Records Administration, Library of Congress Box 137 and HR31A-g4.1 Tray #960.

⁸³ Mary Louise Eldredge, comp. *Pioneers of Macedon* (Fairport, New York: Mail Printing House, 1912), 88; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, February 11, 1848.

⁸⁴ Record, Junius Monthly Meeting of Friends, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, from Anne Derousie, Historian at Seneca Falls Women's Rights National Park.

⁸⁵ *North Star*, January 7, 1848; December 29, 1848; August 24, 1849; October 26, 1849.

⁸⁶ Hazard Index, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, www.swarthmore.edu/Library/friends/hazard/fhlresults.php

⁸⁷ Webpage prepared by University of Rochester, Rare Books and Special Collections, <http://winningthevote.org/F-CStebbins.html>.

A vertical strip of handwritten signatures in cursive, including names like 'Gurite Smith', 'William C. Bell', and 'Mary B. Sutherland'.

Signatures congratulating Catharine Fish Stebbins and Giles B. Stebbins, n.d.

M.E. Wilbur's signature is third from the top.

Courtesy Anthony House and Rochester Public Library

winningthevote.org/F-CStebbins.html

After a move to help their son, Arthur John Wilbur, living in Homer, Minnesota. Esek Wilbur died in Pickwick, Minnesota, on November 22, 1865. A neighbor wrote to Gulielma Wilbur Sutherland, recounting the circumstances of Esek's death: "We all felt we could not part with him," she wrote, "for he was loved and respected by everyone. You have lost a kind father and we a kind friend and neighbor but in the midst of life we are in death."⁸⁸

In the 1870s, Maria lived in Deloit, Crawford County, Iowa, with the family of her son, Arthur Ellison, not too far from Council Bluffs where Amelia Bloomer resided.

Reform-minded Wilbur Relatives

The Wilbur family was also tied to the Anthony family. Daniel Anthony (Susan B. Anthony's father) who was second cousin to Mary Lapham Wilbur, Maria's sister-in-law. Today, such relationships may seem distant, but when Daniel Anthony went to the Nine Partners Boarding school near where Mary Lapham lived, such ties could be of assistance and companionship.

Maria E. Wilbur's niece, Julia A. Wilbur (daughter of Stephen and Mary Lapham Wilbur) was also an important abolitionist-woman's rights advocate. She became a teacher in Rochester, N.Y., in the 1840s. Both Julia Wilbur and Susan B. Anthony made proposals to the New York State Teachers convention in 1857 to improve teachers' salaries. During the 1850s Julia served as member and secretary for the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society (RLASS). During the Civil War, she was sent to Washington, D.C. to distribute clothing to freed slaves sent by the RLASS. There, Julia worked with Harriet Jacobs, the black author of a book on her life as a slave. After the war, Julia took a job with the Federal Patent Office, when Elisha Foote, also a signer of the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments, was Commissioner of the Patent Office. During this time, Julia was an active member of the National Woman Suffrage Association and tried on several occasions to vote in Washington, D.C.

An obituary clipping from a Nunda, New York, paper found in the Livingston County Historian's files summarized Julia's life:

⁸⁸ Mrs M.M. Grannis to Gulielma Wilbur Sutherland, November 25, 1865. Original letter in possession of Charles Lenhart.

Sprung from sturdy Quaker stock, she early in life took up arms against slavery. For many years she engaged in active partisan labor for the cause of freedom, and was intimately associated with all the great anti-slavery leaders and workers of the time. (This would have included her activities prior to the Civil War as member and secretary for the RLASS who among other efforts supported Frederick Douglass.) The breaking out of the war brought her to Washington where she labored long for the amelioration of the Negroes and the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers. After the war she was appointed a clerk in the patent office, which position she held until her death.

After Julia died in 1894, the suffrage association held its twenty-eighth annual convention in the Church of Our Father, Washington, D. C., in June, 1895. Susan B. Anthony spoke about her cousin: "We have also lost in Julia Wilbur of the (Washington, D.C.) District a most useful woman, and one who was faithful to the end. This is the first convention for twenty-eight years at which she has not been present with us."⁸⁹

Julia Wilbur's diaries from 1844 to 1894 are found at Haverford College near Philadelphia with microfilmed copies especially pertaining to her Civil War time at Alexandria, Va. Public Library. Her minutes of the RLASS are at William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. A few letters are at the Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York. There is a surviving flag Julia made for her youngest sister, Mary Wilbur Van Buskirk, living out in Michigan. Mary's 3-year-old daughter, Minnie, was seen draped with the flag around her as her father, Joseph, went off to war in 1861, and can be viewed at http://www.michigan.gov/mikids/0,1607,7-163-15941_20554---8,00.html

Charles Lenhart and Judith Wellman

⁸⁹ *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4 (1883-1900) (Rochester, New York, 1902), 260.

Town of Marion

**Elias Durfee House
Site of Thomas and Nelson D. Young House**

Wayne County NY Historian



Town of Marion
 Map of Wayne County, New York (Philadelphia: John E. Gillette, 1858).

Elias Durfee House
3850 Walworth Road
SE Corner, Route 21 and 29
Village of Marion, New York

Significance: Home of Quaker abolitionist. Strong oral tradition that this house as an Underground Railroad site.



Description: This elegant cut limestone stone four-bay house, with its broad side facing the main road, stands on a prominent corner of the Town of Marion, surrounded by huge old maple trees. Federal in form, this house also has a wide frieze under the eaves. The main section has eight rooms, with eight more in the frame addition. Apparently the Durfees moved here between 1828 and 1831. ¹

Discussion: Elias Durfee was a Quaker affiliated with Farmington Monthly Meeting who became one of the area's earliest abolitionists. He was one of the children of Gideon Durfee and Ann Bowen Durfee, who had twelve children and ninety-five grandchildren. As part of this large extended family, Elias Durfee was related to other known abolitionist sympathizers, including Welcome Herendeen, Stephen Durfee, and Weaver Osband. ²

Elias Durfee signed the call for the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1835, and he was a vice-president of the first Wayne County Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Palmyra in December 1837. In 1849, he donated \$1.00 to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, most likely for a subscription. He attended the Western NYS AS Convention of Jan 10-12,

¹ Cecilia B. Jackson, "Elias Durfee-Boerman Home," *Historic Homes In and Around Arcadia*, 1982, originally published in the *Newark Courier Gazette*, April 29, 1976.

² Cecilia B. Jackson, "Elias Durfee-Boerman Home," *Historic Homes In and Around Arcadia*, 1982, originally published in the *Newark Courier Gazette*, April 29, 1976.

1838. In 1852, he contributed to a collection taken by Abby Kelley Foster and Stephen S. Foster for the American A.S. Society.³

Elias Durfee was not only an abolitionist but also an active local politician. He served as town supervisor for several terms (1828-1834; 1834; 1837; 1838; 1855-1860).

Elias Durfee died in 1864, and on the third of sixth month, the well known Hicksite Quaker preacher, Sunderland P. Gardner, preached his funeral sermon in the Christian meetinghouse in Marion. Elias's son Elias Hicks Durfee purchased the farm.⁴

Primary Sources

President—Asa B. Smith, of Macedon.
 Vice Presidents—Ira Lapham, Durfee Osborn, of Macedon; Samuel W. Moore, Dr. J. S. Eggleston, of Palmyra; Samuel C. Cuyler, of Williamson; Rev. John Sears, Elias Durfee, of Marion; Daniel Lyon, Joseph Cook, of Walworth; George W. Blount, Columbus Croul, of Lyons; De Forest Parsons, of Arcadia; Dr. Hendricks, of Galen, and Eli Clark, of Sedus.
 Secretary—John J. Thomas, of Palmyra.
 Treasurer—George Beckwith, of Palmyra.
 Executive Committee—Rev. G. R. H. Shumway, Faek Wilbur, Rev. Samuel W. Wooster, Win. R. Smith, Otis Clapp.
 The following resolutions were adopted:
 Resolved, That American slaveholding is a system of fraud and wrong, by which its victims are plunged into the deepest wretchedness; that it is alike at war with the government of Jehovah, the pure precepts, the just, impartial principles of the gospel, and the foundation doctrines of republican institutions:
 Resolved, That the existence and continuance of the despotic power usurped by the American slaveholder, is a deep reproach to the nation, greatly weakens the impression which a free people ought to make in favor of human liberty by their experiment of self-government, and is a constant source of grief and mortification to the disinterested advocates of the equality of rights and privileges, all over the world.

Partial Minutes of the first meeting of the Wayne County Anti-Slavery Society, held in Palmyra.

Elias Durfee was listed as a vice-president.

Friend of Man, December 20, 1837

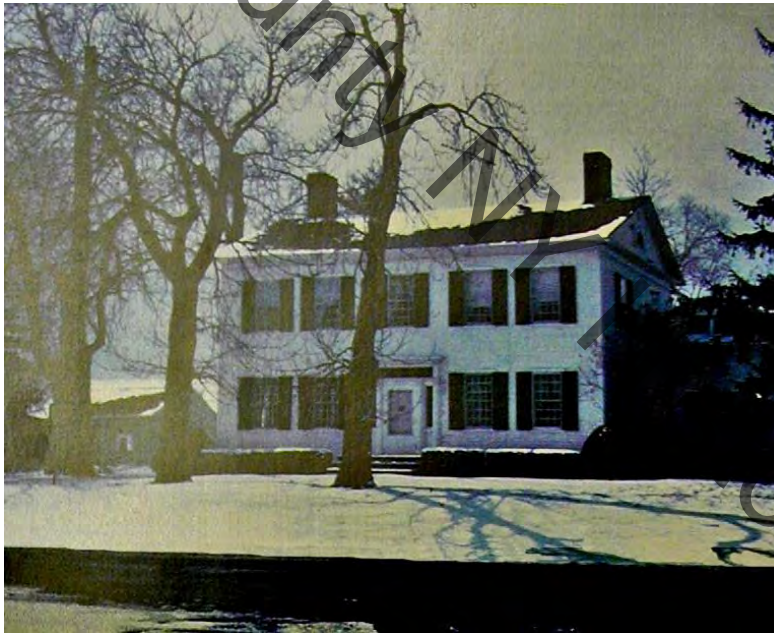
³ *Wayne Sentinel*, October 2, 1835 and December 6, 1837; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 15, 1852.

⁴ *Memoirs of Sunderland P. Gardner*, 123-124.

**Thomas, Phebe, and Nelson D. Young House, Site of
(House itself now in Pittsford, owned by Andrew Wolfe)
Route 21, just east of the Village of Marion**



Looking east, March 2008



Description: This house, a five-bay Federal home with twelve-over-twelve window sashes and central doorway with sidelights and transom, was moved in the 1960s to Mitchell Road, Pittsford, where it became the home of noted publisher Andrew D. Young. Extant house on this site may have been part of the original barn. Site is identified with a marker, which reads: “THIS HOUSE erected in 1830 was a station of the Underground Railway in the days of slavery.”⁵

⁵ Andrew Wolfe, *Architecture Worth Saving in Pittsford* (Pittsford: Historic Pittsford, 1969).

Discussion: No specific documentation has been found that connects this house with the Underground Railroad, but the Youngs were related to Quaker families, including the Durfees and Hathaways, who were involved. Thomas Young married Phebe Durfee (June 9, 1788-November 27, 1875), daughter of Lemuel and Prudence Hathaway Durfee. Their son, Nelson Durfee Young ([Nov. 1] 1809-[Sept. 30]1884), attended the Western New York Anti-Slavery convention held in Rochester on January 10-12, 1838. ⁶

Wayne County NY Historian

⁶ *Friend of Man*, January 31 1838; Records, Marion Cemetery, <http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:nKxp7URrBNUJ:www.rootsweb.com/~nywayne/cemeteries/marnuw.html+Nelson+Durfee+Young+%22Wayne+County%22+Cemetery&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us>

Wayne County NY Historian

Town of Ontario

John and Sabra Young House (site of)



Map of Wayne County, New York (Philadelphia: John E. Gillette, 1858).

John and Sabra Young
6771 Ontario Center Road
Ontario, New York

Significance: John and Sabra Young were among the pioneer settlers of Wayne County, New York, arriving before 1820. (Note: Name is also found as “Youngs”, but in majority of documents name appears as “Young”.)



Site of Young home, looking west



Site of home of John and Sabra Young, Spring 2008

Description: This is most likely not the one inhabited by John and Sabra Young. Both died in the 1870s (Sabra in 1874 and John in 1879), and the steep gables of this house suggest construction in the 1870s, perhaps after their son Robertson Young sold the land to Pliny T. Sexton of Palmyra.

Significance: John Young was born a slave about 1796 in Virginia and it is said he made his way to the frontier of Wayne County shortly after the end of the War of 1812.¹ The 1820 census did not list a John Young as head of a household, yet there were two households headed by white men (Eli Clark and Stephen Wood) that include a free black male, aged between 14 and 26 years and John would have been about 24 years old at the time.² In the 1830 census, the John Young household consisted of one male under age 10; 1 male age 24 to 36; 1 female age 10 to 24 and 1 female age 24 to 36.³

John Young married a woman named Sabra (last name unknown), who was born about 1794 in Connecticut. This appears to have been a second marriage for Sabra who according to the 1865 census had been married 2 times and was the mother of nine children.⁴ Three of the children of John and Sabra have been identified as Juliette (born about 1833); Robertson (born about 1834) and Margaret (born about 1836). Another possible child was named Ann. An Ann Jones, age 30 was listed with the John Young family in 1850. In 1855 census of the town of Ontario there was an Ann Youngs, black, age 30 and born in Wayne County, listed in household of Nelson Hoxie as a servant.⁵

On October 1, 1855, John Young paid attorney Joseph Fellows \$390 for a tract of land in the south west part of lot no. 52 in the east division of township number 14 in the third range of townships containing almost 42 acres, excepting twelve acres deeded to his son Robertson Young.⁶ It is very likely that John and Sabra had been living on this land for some time, but that this transaction formalized the ownership. Interestingly John Young sold his land to Pliny Sexton of Palmyra in 1857, but by all indications they continued to live on the property. On the other hand, Robertson held onto his twelve acres in Lot number 52 until 1876 when he sold it to Pliny T. Sexton, son of Pliny Sexton.⁷

John Young was consistently listed as a farmer by occupation in the census between 1850 and 1875. The 1850 Federal Agricultural Census indicated that the cash value of his farm was \$1200 and that his livestock consisted of two horses, two milch cows, 6 other cattle, 9 sheep and 2 swine, valued at \$235. During the previous year the farm had produced 70 bushels of wheat, 60 bushels of Indian corn, 30 pounds of wool, 50 bushels of Irish potatoes, 200 pounds of butter and 5 tons of hay.⁸ In the 1860 census the agricultural schedule indicated that the farms of John and Robertson Young were considered one unit, valued at \$2000. In the year preceding, the farm had produced 125 bushels of rye, 300 bushels of Indian corn; 200 bushels of Irish Potatoes and 100 bushels of barley. The farm continued to increase in value under the management of Robertson Young and by 1870 it was valued at \$5000 with production of Irish potatoes being a dominant crop.⁹

It is very likely that John Young and his wife supported the antislavery efforts of local activists. He may be the John Young who at a meeting of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, held in Palmyra on February 2, 1841, was listed as donating "on the spot" one pig worth \$2.50.¹⁰ Records also show that their daughter Margaret Young spoke out against slavery in public settings. In a deposition written in behalf of Margaret (Young) Cortright's application for a Civil War widow's pension Thomas J. Holmes stated the following:

¹ Newark Union Gazette, October 4, 1879, 4:3. Obituary, John Youngs.

² 1820 Federal Census, Town of Ontario, Ontario County, New York.

³ 1830 Federal Census, Town of Ontario, Wayne County, New York.

⁴ 1865 New York State Census, Town of Ontario, Wayne County, New York.

⁵ 1850 Federal Census, Town of Ontario, Wayne County, New York; 1855 New York State Census, Town of Ontario, Wayne County, New York.

⁶ Wayne County, New York Deeds, Book 64, page 541.

⁷ Wayne County, New York Deeds, Book 68, page 100; Book 117, page 402.

⁸ 1850 Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, Ontario, Wayne County, New York, pp. 65-66.

⁹ 1860 Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, Ontario, Wayne County, New York, p. 67; 1870 Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, Ontario, Wayne County, New York, p. 70.

¹⁰ National Anti-Slavery Standard, February 18, 1841.

Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County

Historical New York Research Associates

Wayne County Historian's Office

Preserve New York, 2007-2009

I have been acquainted with Margaret Cartwright from time she was a girl. My acquaintance with her began in Ontario Wayne Co., N.Y. where I used to live – she was the first colored woman I ever knew, remember how she came to the school house in Ontario and preached about slavery. Her name then was Margaret Youngs and she lived with her parents and they were the only colored family around there.¹¹

Sabra Young died in 1874 and was buried in the Ontario Village Cemetery. John Young died on September 30, 1879 and was buried alongside his wife. Also buried in the family plot was Juliette, who died on February 7, 1880, just four months after her father. Juliette had married Samuel Gregor, son of James and Almira Gregor, about 1863, but apparently the marriage was not a happy one. Juliette was listed as a “Young” in the 1870 census and was living with her parents and her tombstone also read “Young”. During the settling of Juliette’s estate, her siblings, Robertson Young and Margaret Cortright, attested that Samuel had no claim on the estate as he had been confined to Auburn Prison.¹²

Margaret Young married George W. Cortright, son of Prime and Amy (Ayres) Cortright of Huron, in 1863. Margaret and George had three children – Georgianna, Frederick and Ella May – before separating about 1870. Margaret also took back her maiden name and her children went by the name of Young, although she and George were never divorced.¹³ Margaret and her daughter Georgianna moved to Rochester about 1880. Margaret Young Cortright died in 1906. George, Margaret and their son Frederick (1867-1868) are all buried in the Young family plot in the Ontario Village Cemetery.¹⁴

Robertson Young left Ontario briefly in the mid 1860s and in 1866 was living in Victor, New York.¹⁵ In the 1870 census he was back in Ontario and running the farm for his father who was listed as a “retired farmer”.¹⁶ Robertson was not listed in the 1875 census of the town of Ontario and may have already moved to Brownsville, Pennsylvania, where he was a resident in April 1876 when he sold his Ontario property to Pliny T. Sexton.¹⁷ In the 1880 census, Robertson, age 44, was a resident of Bridgeport, Fayette County, Pennsylvania. His occupation is given as “physician”. His wife Margaret A., age 36 and born in Pennsylvania, was a music teacher. They have a five month old son named William E. S. Young. Also living with the couple was Lucinda Lee, Margaret’s mother.¹⁸ The family was still living in Bridgeport in the 1900 census. Margaret indicated that she was the mother of four children, of which none were living at that time.¹⁹ In August 1902, Robertson Young sold to Pliny T. Sexton the property in the town of Ontario that he had inherited from his sister Juliette in 1880. The record showed that he was a widower and living in Brownsville, Fayette County, Pennsylvania.²⁰

The Young family exhibited the strength and fortitude required of African Americans that lived in the predominantly white world of rural Wayne County, New York in the nineteenth century. The parents were well respected by their neighbors and the children became productive members of their respective communities. The fact that Robertson was able to become a physician was indeed a major accomplishment. Daughter Margaret was definitely a strong woman who in keeping her maiden name made a definite statement for her rights as a woman. When Georgianna Young was

¹¹ Civil War Pension File, NARA, George W. Cartwright, Certificate No. 603.820.

¹² Wayne County, New York Surrogate Court Records, File #01324.

¹³ Civil War Pension File, NARA, George W. Cartwright, Certificate No. 603.820.

¹⁴ Wayne County, New York Cemetery Tombstone Inscriptions, Ontario Village Cemetery.

¹⁵ Wayne County, New York Deeds, Book 91, page 69.

¹⁶ 1870 Federal Census, Town of Ontario, Wayne County, New York.

¹⁷ Wayne County, New York Deeds, Book 117, page 402.

¹⁸ 1880 Federal Census, Bridgeport, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, ED #45, p. 300A.

¹⁹ 1900 Federal Census, Bridgeport, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, ED #2, p. 15B.

²⁰ Wayne County, New York Deeds, Book 191, page 198.

Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County

Historical New York Research Associates

Wayne County Historian’s Office

Preserve New York, 2007-2009

asked why her mother had used her maiden name she responded, “That was her notion – guess she thought it would make him [husband George] mad. Sometime she would go under the name of Young and sometimes Cortwright, but us children have always gone under the name of Young as mother told us to do so as father didn’t support her.”²¹

Marjory Allen Perez

Wayne County NY Historian

²¹ Civil War Pension File, NARA, George W. Cartwright, Certificate No. 603.820.
Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County
Historical New York Research Associates
Wayne County Historian’s Office
Preserve New York, 2007-2009

Town of Palmyra

George Beckwith House
Lydia Bogart House (site of)
Aaron and Betsey Brister House (site of)
Otis and Mary Clapp House
Stephen and Mary Durfee House (site of)
Horace and Anna Webster Eaton House
Perry B. and Eliza Lee House
Palmyra Baptist Church
Palmyra Friends Meetinghouse (site of)
David H. Ray Barbershops
Pliny and Hannah Sexton House
Western Presbyterian Church, Palmyra
Williams House (site of)

Wayne County NY Historian



Town of Palmyra

Map of Wayne County, New York (Philadelphia: John E. Gillette, 1858).

George Beckwith House

West Main Street

Palmyra, New York

Significance: Home of early abolitionist, one of twenty from Palmyra who signed the call to the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, held in Utica in October 1835.



Looking north, April 2008

Description: This elegant double-wing house stands on a large lot on Main Street in Palmyra. The three-bay main section has a gable facing the street, with full pediment and sidelights and transom on the front door.

Significance: George Beckwith was an early abolitionist in Palmyra. In 1835, he signed the call to the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, held in Utica. In 1837, he served as Treasurer of the Wayne County Anti-Slavery Society, organized in the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra on December 1, 1837. ¹

Beckwith was born in East Haddam, Connecticut, in 1789. He became a teacher in New England until he migrated to Palmyra on horseback in 1813. He became a merchant in Palmyra, where “his education, his force of character and his upright life soon won the respect and confidence of the early settlers. Just, generous, loyal and true in all relations of life, his influence was ever for good.” On August 1, 1814, he married Ruth Matson Clark. He died in Palmyra in 1868. ²

¹ “To the Friends of Immediate Emancipation in the State of New York,” *Liberator*, October 3, 1835; *Friend of Man*, December 20, 1837.

² “Beckwith, George.” *American Ancestry*, vol. III, wayne.nygenweb.net/.

Site of Lydia Bogart House
Northwest Corner of West Main and Carroll Streets
Palmyra, New York

Significance: Lydia Bogart and her children moved into a home situated on this lot at the corner of West Main Street and Carroll Street in the 1850s, just two doors east of the home of Perry B. Lee. The stone building had previously been used as a school.



Looking west
 March 2008

Description: In 1835 three stone schoolhouses were erected in the village of Palmyra to serve three districts. District #2 school was located on the northwest corner of Main and Carroll Streets. In 1847 the school districts were consolidated into one district and the buildings were sold. The District #2 school was used for several years as a shoe shop. According to Thomas L. Cook in *Palmyra and Vicinity*, the building's "last occupant was Mrs. Bogart (colored) and at her death the old school house was torn down. Now [1930] it is a vacant lot in the P. T. Sexton Estate."³ Mrs. Bogart died in 1878.

Significance: The Bogart family represents one more example of African Americans making their way and leaving their mark in Wayne County. Lydia (Sutfin) Bogart, a widow with three children, moved to the village of Palmyra between 1850 and 1855. Mrs. Bogart was not a new resident of Wayne County as she had married Lafayette Bogart on January 15, 1834, in the town of Ontario, New York.⁴ It is very likely that both Lafayette Bogart and Lydia Sutfin had moved to Wayne County, New York from New Jersey, possibly Monmouth County or Middlesex County. Circumstantial evidence links the Bogart family to the family of Richard Sutphen which moved to

³ Thomas Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity*, 267.

⁴ Civil War Pension Files, National Archives, Lydia Bogart, Certificate #64.222

Ontario, Wayne County, New York about 1825. In 1865, Lydia Bogart applied for a Civil War pension as a dependent mother of George Washington Bogart (aka George Washington), deceased. As part of the documentation Mrs. Bogart stated that her maiden name was Sutphin.⁵ In the 1830 census, Town of Ontario, Wayne County, New York the household of Richard Sutphen (white) included one free black male between the ages of 10 and 24 years – perhaps Lafayette.⁶ In the 1850 census, town of Walworth, Wayne County, New York, the household headed by Reuben Sutphen (white), son of Richard, included Benjamin F. Bogart, aged 10, son of Lafayette and Lydia Bogart.⁷ The story of Lafayette and Lydia (Sutphen) Bogart would be much more complete, if the exact relationship between the Bogart and Sutphen families could be established.

Lydia and Lafayette Bogart started their married life in the town of Walworth, New York. In the 1840 census their household included two boys and two girls – all under the age of 10. At least one more child would be born to the couple before Mr. Bogart's death on July 21, 1845, in Ontario, New York.⁸ Lydia Bogart and three of her children – Franklin (age 16), Matilda, (age 15) and Mary H. (age 8) - were living in the town of Macedon at the time the 1850 census was taken.⁹ Her son George W. (age 10) was living with the Sutphen family in Walworth. An interesting part of the Bogart family story has to be the names of the male members of the household. In addition to the father's name of Lafayette, the sons were given the names of two other icons of the American Revolution – Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. One has to wonder if Lafayette Bogart was a student of American History who named himself and his two sons.

Two sons of Lydia and Lafayette Bogart served in the Union army during the Civil War. The first to leave was the younger son, George Washington Bogart, who joined the 14th Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, a unit that would be renamed the 11th United States Colored Troops Heavy Artillery. He enlisted using the name of George Washington, which created problems for his mother when she applied for a pension as a dependent mother. David H. Ray, Sr. provided a deposition stating that he had been the recruiting officer of George Washington Bogart and had personally taken the young soldier to Providence, Rhode Island where he had formally enlisted on December 9, 1863, and that the young man often went by the name of "George Washington."¹⁰ George W. Bogart (alias George Washington) died in the Regimental Hospital at Camp Parapet, Louisiana on August 5, 1864, of dysentery and intermit fever – the scourge of the Civil War soldier.¹¹

Franklin Bogart enlisted in Company B of the 20th USCT on August 17, 1864 – just days after the death of his younger brother.¹² He was reportedly a substitute for Pliny T. Sexton, but the military records do not make mention of this fact.¹³ Franklin Bogart was a 30-year-old married man with an infant son named Charles Franklin. Franklin had married Mary A. Cooley, daughter of Charles and Amanda Cooley on July 31, 1862.¹⁴ Franklin and Mary Bogart lived on Catherine Street in the village of Palmyra for much of their married life.¹⁵ Mary Cooley Bogart died April 14, 1894 and Benjamin Franklin Bogart died on October 23, 1902.¹⁶

⁵ Civil War Pension Files, National Archives, Lydia Bogart, Certificate #64.222

⁶ 1830 Federal Census, Ontario, Wayne County, New York, p. 58

⁷ 1850 Federal Census, Walworth, Wayne County, New York, 100

⁸ Civil War Pension File, Lydia Bogart, Certificate #64.222.

⁹ 1850 Federal Census, Macedon, Wayne County, New York

¹⁰ Civil War Pension Files, National Archives, Lydia Bogart, Certificate #64.222

¹¹ Civil War Pension Files, National Archives, Lydia Bogart, Certificate #64.222

¹² Civil War Military Records, National Archives, Film M1823, Roll 2.

¹³ Thomas Cook, "Palmyra and Vicinity", 32.

¹⁴ Western Presbyterian Church Archives, Palmyra, New York

¹⁵ Thomas Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity*, 32.

¹⁶ Register of Deaths, Palmyra, New York, 1882-1900, #911; Register of Death, Palmyra, New York, 1900-1913, #1426.

The 1865 Census record indicated that Lydia Bogart was the parent of six children, but only four have been identified.¹⁷ Daughter Matilda was last listed with her mother in the 1855 census and it is possible that she died or married and moved from Palmyra before the 1860 census. The youngest child was Mary Helen who continued to live at home until the death of her mother in 1878. Lydia Sutfin Bogart's funeral was held on May 20, 1878 - very likely in the Western Presbyterian Church. According to notes made by the Rev. Mr. Horace Eaton there was a "large attendance of colored people." The Rev. Mr. Eaton used as his text for the service 1 Corinthians: 15:26 - "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death,"¹⁸

About 1878 Mary Helen Bogart married John Baxter, who had escaped from slavery during the Civil War and come north with the Failing brothers of Lyons, New York.¹⁹ According to the obituary of Mr. Baxter, he and his wife Mary "pitched their home-stakes under the great trees of Main and Carroll streets." It appears that the Baxter family lived in a small house on the same lot as the site of the stone house, once occupied by the Bogart family.²⁰ Mary and John Baxter raised two sons - William and Charles - in their home on West Main Street. Mary (Bogart) Baxter died on January 16, 1920, and her husband John Baxter died on July 6, 1921. Both were buried in the family plot in the Palmyra Village Cemetery.²¹ Their son William H. Baxter continued to live in Palmyra where he died on December 16, 1944.²² With his death the last descendant of Lafayette and Lydia Bogart was gone from Wayne County after almost 125 years.



Franklin and Mary Bogart, perhaps at the time of their wedding in 1862
 Courtesy Western Presbyterian Church Archives, Palmyra, New York

¹⁷ 1865 New York State Census, Palmyra, New York.

¹⁸ Surname File Cards, Kings Daughters Library, Palmyra, New York.

¹⁹ *Palmyra Courier*, July 13, 1921.

²⁰ Thomas L. Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity*, 119.

²¹ Register of Deaths, Village of Palmyra, 1914-1922, p. 112; *Palmyra Courier*, July 13, 1921.

²² Palmyra Village Cemetery Records.



Book inscribed to the Bogarts by Rev. Horace Eaton, July 31, 1862
Courtesy Western Presbyterian Church Archives, Palmyra, New York

Site of Aaron and Betsey Brister Home
322 Vienna St.
Palmyra, New York

Significance: Aaron and Betsey Brister were among the first freedom seekers to settle in Wayne County, escaping from Captain William Helm and arriving in Palmyra, New York, before 1812. Austin Steward, their nephew, documented part of their lives in slavery in *Twenty Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*.



Looking north, March 2008

Description: The house currently standing at 433 Vienna Street is a three-bay, gable-end-to-the-street frame house with a porch across the full width of the façade. A back door opens into a small back wing. According to deeds, Betsey Brister paid \$300 for this quarter-acre property in 1823, suggesting she purchased a house here as well as the lot. After Betsey's death in 1851, the family sold the property in 1856 for \$488. It was next sold in Jan. 1870 for \$450. The next transaction was also dated Jan. 1870, and the price was \$900. It was not sold again until 1932. It is possible that the original house was remodeled or torn down and rebuilt between 1856 and 1870.

Significance: Aaron and Betsey Brister first came to the area as slaves of Captain William Helm, who moved from Virginia about 1797, settling first on the shores of Sodus Bay and later moving to Bath, New York. We can thank Austin Steward with preserving a portion of the story of this couple in his book *Twenty Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*. Other valuable sources include the Revolutionary War Pension File of Aaron Brister and the Probate File of Betsey Brister.

Steward provided an interesting view of his uncle Aaron and related how his uncle Aaron Brister became a fugitive slave, taking with him his wife and two children in the following excerpt from his autobiography: ²³

The Captain sold my aunt Betsy Bristol to a distinguished lawyer in the village [Bath, New York], retaining her husband, Aaron Bristol, in his own employ; and two of her children he sold to another legal gentleman named Cruger. One day Captain Helm came out where the slaves were at work, and finding Aaron was not there, he fell into a great rage and swore terribly. He finally started off to a beach tree, from which he cut a stout limb, and trimmed it so as to leave a knot on the but end of the stick, or bludgeon rather, which was about two and a half feet in length. With this formidable weapon he started for Aaron's lonely cabin. When the solitary husband saw him coming he suspected that he was angry, and went forth to meet him in the street. They had no sooner met than my master seized Aaron by the collar, and taking the limb he had prepared by the smaller end, commenced beating him with it, over the head and face, and struck him some thirty or more terrible blows in quick succession, after which Aaron begged to know for what he was so unmercifully flogged.

"Because you deserve it," was the angry reply. Aaron said that he had ever endeavored to discharge his duty, and had done so to the best of his ability; and that he thought it very hard to be treated in that manner for no offence at all. Capt. Helm was astonished at his audacity; but the reader will perceive that the slaves were not blind to the political condition of the country, and were beginning to feel that they had some rights, and meant to claim them.

Poor Aaron's face and head, however, was left in a pitiable condition after such a pummelling with a knotty stick. His face, covered with blood, was so swollen that he could hardly see for some time; but what of that? Did he not belong to Capt. Helm, soul and body; and if his brutal owner chose to destroy his own property, certainly had he not a right to do so, without let or hindrance? Of course; such is the power that Slavery gives one human being over another.

And yet it must be confessed that among the poor, degraded and ignorant slaves there exists a foolish pride, which loves to boast of their master's wealth and influence. A white person, too poor to own slaves, is as often looked upon with as much disdain by the miserable slave as by his wealthy owner. This disposition seems to be instilled into the mind of every slave at the South, and indeed, I have heard slaves object to being sent in very small companies to labor in the field, lest that some passer-by should think that they belonged to a poor man, who was unable to keep a large gang. Nor is this ridiculous sentiment maintained by the slaves only; the rich planter feels such a contempt for all white persons without slaves, that he does not want them for his neighbors. I know of many instances where such persons have been under the necessity of buying or hiring slaves, just to preserve their reputation and keep up appearances; and even among a class of people who profess to be opposed to Slavery, have I known instances of the same kind, and have heard them apologize for their conduct by saying that "when in Rome, we must do as the Romans do."

Uncle Aaron Bristol was one of Capt. Helm's slaves who had a large amount of this miserable pride; and for him to be associated with a white man in the same

²³ Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave & Forty Years a Freeman* (1857; Reading Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1969), p. 99-103. NOTE: Steward in his book used the name Bristol.

humble occupation, seemed to give him ideas of great superiority, and full liberty to treat him with all the scorn and sarcasm he was capable of, in which my uncle was by no means deficient.

At this time the Captain owned a fine and valuable horse, by the name of *Speculator*. This horse, groomed by uncle Aaron, stood sometimes at Bath and sometimes at Geneva; and at the latter village another horse was kept, groomed by a white man. The white groom was not very well pleased with Aaron's continual disparagement of the clumsy animal which my uncle called "a great, awkward plow-horse;" and then he would fling out some of his proud nonsense about "*poor white people* who were obliged to groom their own old dumpy horses," &c.

Well, things went on in this unpleasant manner for several weeks, when at last the white groom and Aaron met at Geneva, and the horse belonging to the former, designedly or accidentally, escaped from his keeper, and came with full speed, with his mouth wide open, after *Speculator*. When the fiery fellow had overtaken uncle Aaron he attempted to grasp the withers of *Speculator* with his teeth, instead of which he caught Aaron on the inside of his thigh, near the groin, from whence he bit a large piece of flesh, laying the bone entirely bare; at the same moment flinging Aaron to the ground, some rods off; and the next instant he kicked *Speculator* down a steep embankment. Aaron was taken up for dead, and Dr. Henry sent for, who dressed his wounds; and after several months' confinement he finally recovered. It is probable that the biting and overthrow of Aaron saved his life, as he must have otherwise been killed in the encounter of the two horses.

A while after his recovery, uncle Aaron succeeded in procuring a team and some kind of vehicle, in which he put his wife and children, and between two days, took "French leave" of his master as well as of the lawyer to whom his wife belonged.

The lawyer, however, was far from being pleased when he missed his property, and immediately set his wits to work to reclaim her. All was kept secret as possible, but it was whispered about that it was to be done by a State's warrant, for removing the clothing and furniture they had taken, and so, being thus arrested, "Madam Bristol" would be glad to return to her work in the lawyer's kitchen. But Aaron was a smart, shrewd man, and kept out of their reach, where he soon found friends and employment, and could go where he pleased, without having an infuriated master to beat and disfigure him with a knotted stick, until his clothes were bespattered with blood. They appreciated their liberty, and lived and died in peace and freedom.

It is estimated that the Brister family arrived in Palmyra between 1805 and 1810. There is some evidence that the move to Palmyra took place as early as 1805. Susan Stuart [very likely the mother of Austin Steward] in August of 1843 stated that Betsey Toliver and Aaron Brister had been married in either 1777 or 1778 and "that sometime afterwards to wit. about fifteen years the said Aaron & the said Betsey his wife moved to the town of Bath County of Steuben and State of New York where they remained till about the year eighteen hundred & five when they moved to Palmyra in the said County of Wayne where they remained till his death in August 1821..."²⁴ Thomas L. Cook in his book "Palmyra and Vicinity" also placed the arrival of the Brister family about that time when he wrote that the east end of Vienna Street was called Aarondale in honor of "Aaron Bristee [sic], the only colored man in town with a family".²⁵ Vienna Street was laid out in 1805. The 1810 census of

²⁴ Revolutionary War Pension File, National Archives, Aaron Brister, Pension #17341. M804.

²⁵ Thomas L. Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity*, 1930, p. 17.

Palmyra, Ontario County, New York does not include a listing for Aaron Brister, but there is a listing for a Benjamin Bristol, free person of color, with household of four persons. This may not be Aaron, but a brother or relative of Aaron, who was also formerly enslaved by William Helm. Aaron Brister may have found it more prudent to not have his name listed in the 1810 census.

An incident of great importance in the history of African American life in Wayne County took place in Palmyra in 1818 at the home of Betsey and Aaron Brister. Captain William Helm devised a plan by which he would recapture many of his former slaves who had fled to the area. Austin Steward told the story in his autobiography as follows:

The Captain's plan was to collect all the slaves he had once owned, many of whom had escaped to the surrounding villages, and when once in his grasp, to roll them speedily into a slave State, and there sell them for the Southern market. To carry forward this hellish design, it was necessary to have recourse to stratagem. Some person must be found to lure the unsuspecting slaves into the net he was spreading for them. At last he found a scoundrel named Simon Watkins, who for the consideration of fifty dollars, was to collect as many of the slaves as he could at one place; and when he had done so, he was to receive the money, leaving Capt. Helm to do the rest.

Simon set immediately about the business, which was first to go to Palmyra, and in great kindness and generosity, give a large party to the colored people, - desiring that all Capt. Helm's former slaves, *in particular*, should be present to have a joyous re-union, and celebrate their freedom in having a fine time generally.

Invitations were sent to all, and extensive preparation made for a large "social party," at Palmyra, at the house of Mrs. Bristol. My parents were invited; and Simon took the pains to come to Farmington to give me a special invitation. When the time arrived for the party, I went to Palmyra with the intention of attending. I had not the least suspicion of any thing wrong; yet, by some mysterious providence, or something for which I can not account, a presentiment took possession of my mind that all was not right. I knew not what I feared, and could in no way define my apprehensions; but I grew so uneasy, that I finally gave up the party and returned home, before the guests were assembled.

Capt. Helm and his assistants came on to Palmyra in disguise, before evening, and secreted themselves in one of the hotels to await the arrival of their victims.

At the appointed hour the slaves began to assemble in large numbers and great glee, without the least suspicion of danger. They soon began their amusements, and in the midst of their mirth, Capt. Helm and party stealthily crept from their hiding place and surrounded the house; then bursting in suddenly upon the revelers, began to make arrests. Such a tumult, such an affray as ensued would be hard to describe.

The slaves fought for their lives and their liberty, and the Captain's party for their property and power. Fists, clubs, chairs, and any thing they could get hold of, was freely used with a strength and will of men who had tasted the joys of freedom. Cries and curses were mingled, while blows fell like hail on both sides. Commands from our old master were met with shouts of bold defiance on the part of the Negroes, until the miserable kidnappers were glad to desist, and were driven off - not stealthily as they came, but in quick time and in the best way they could, to escape the threatened vengeance of the slaves, who drove them like "feathers before the wind." But it was a terrible battle and many were severely wounded; among them was my father. He was taken to his home, mangled and bleeding, and from the effects of that night's affray he never recovered. He lingered on in feeble health until death finally released him from suffering, and placed him beyond the reach of

kidnappers and tyrants.

A large piece of the Brister family story can be gleaned from the Revolutionary War pension file of Aaron Brister. In 1818, Mr. Brister was successful in securing a pension, having served between 1777 and 1779 in the 3rd Virginia Regiment in company commanded by Thomas Helm. In papers dated 1820, he indicated his family at that time consisted of his wife Betsey and minor children James, Mina, and Betsey. He also stated that "I am by occupation a day laborer and by age and bodily infirmity (being lame in both knees) I am able to perform but very little labour." His total assets were valued at \$115 and included $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of land and small house on which he owed \$100. Aaron died on August 8, 1821, aged about 60 years.²⁶

The pension file also contains papers relating to the application made by Betsy Brister for a widow's pension. Beginning in 1843 and continuing through 1850 Betsy and her supporters worked to secure her pension. It appeared that Aaron had little trouble in securing his pension, although he apparently had no documents proving his service and the only proof offered were the statements provided by two friends – Robert Stewart [most likely the father of Austin Stewart] and Benjamin Brister. In 1818 Ira Selby attested that Benjamin Brister and Robert Stewart "Men of color whom I well know and verily believe to be credible witnesses and free" and this proved to be enough to secure Aaron Brister his pension. Mrs. Brister on the other hand met with many obstacles in her pursuit of a widow's pension.

First there was the issue of her correct age. In the 1820 document provided by her husband, he gave Betsy's age as 46 which made her too young to have been married in 1777 or 1778 as stated by her supporters. Numerous statements were sent to the pension office stating that Betsy Brister was indeed about 80 years old in 1843. Even Dr. Alexander McIntyre, a local physician, made a statement that he had "no hesitation in saying that the said Betsey, widow of [Aaron Brister] is eighty years old and upwards and that whatever statements may have been made by the late husband during his life time & more particularly in 1820 in which he alleged his said wife the said Betsey to have been younger than she really was, must have been by those who examined him on that point, misunderstood or inadvertently set down wrong, as her general appearance, and anatomy conclusively indicates her age to be Eighty Years and upwards..."²⁷

Second was the requirement by the pension office for an official document establishing the marriage between Betsey Toliver and Aaron Brister. Robert Brister, son of Aaron and Betsey made a statement for the record that "the said Aaron & his mother the said Betsey never kept a family record of the marriage ... that there is now no record of the marriage ... either private or Public – that he has taken a good deal of pains to ascertain whether any such record exists & that he has not been able to find any record of their marriage..." Thomas C. Miller wrote a rather indignant letter to the Commission of Pensions in 1844 regarding the request for a certified copy of marriage bond. Miller stated that "The parties at the time of the marriage were slaves and no license was issued or record made of it as it was never done in such cases. Therefore it would be impossible to furnish any such proof."²⁸

The long ordeal of the pension was finally resolved in May 1850 when a certificate was issued to Betsey Brister, widow of Aaron. Her pension was set at \$80.00 per year, "commencing on the 4th of March, 1848, and continuing for life, unless she should again marry..." A question of Betsey's status must have arisen because on April 24, 1851 William H. Southwick, Justice of the

²⁶ Aaron Brister, Revolutionary War Pension File, Pension #17341(National Archives, Washington, D.C.) M804

²⁷ Aaron Brister, Revolutionary War Pension File, Pension #17341 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.), M804

²⁸ Aaron Brister, Revolutionary War Pension File, Pension # 17341 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.), M804

Peace wrote to the Pension Office certifying that “I am well acquainted with the said Betsey Brister, and know that she is now alive.” Did Betsey Brister ever receive her pension? The file contains a letter dated July 2, 1851 from her son Robert Brister puts the matter into question. Robert wrote “about eighteen months since a Mr. Southwick of Palmyra Wayne County drew my Fathers [sic] Pension for my mother Betsey Brister living at Palmyra and I have never been able to ascertain [sic] the amount of Pension drawn by him....”²⁹ Betsey Brister died on October 19, 1851 and was buried in the old Baptist Burying Ground (also called Bryant Cemetery), located just the west of the village of Palmyra. Her tombstone no longer stands, but once was inscribed with the words “Betsey Brister, wife of Aaron, A Revolutionary War Soldier”.³⁰

Betsey Brister’s last will and testament reveals much about her personality. Brister laid out her wishes in a most precise manner, dividing her property among her four surviving children, Lucy, Jemima, Betsey, and Robert. While appointing her son as executor, she stated clearly that her directions be carried out as written and that her friends James Jenner and General Thomas Rogers were to be final arbitrators should any disagreements arise. There would be no “suit or suits in law or equity ... commenced or prosecuted for and concerning the same [will].”³¹ This woman who had survived slavery and been able to accumulate a small estate through her hard work was nobody’s fool when it came to understanding human nature.

Of course the story of Aaron and Betsey Brister does not end with them. Their daughter Lucy Brister Jarvis, wife of John and granddaughter Amelia Jarvis Highwarden Taylor raised families in Palmyra. The Jarvis family lived on Railroad Avenue not far from the home of Betsey Brister Robert Brister moved to Buffalo in the 1830s and then onto New York City and finally Brooklyn, New York where he worked as a cooper. Daughter Jemima Brister Thompson resided in Chatham, Ontario, Canada, at the time of her mother’s death in 1851. One granddaughter, Catherine Jarvis Stevenson was a resident of San Francisco as early as 1862. Some of their great grandchildren moved to the Syracuse area where descendants still live.

Aaron and Betsy Brister were among the pioneer settlers of Wayne County, New York. They were also freedom seekers who found haven in Palmyra, New York, in the early 19th century. Their story is essential to understanding the history of Wayne County, New York.

Marjory Allen Perez

²⁹ Aaron Brister, Revolutionary War Pension File, Pension # 17341 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.), M804

³⁰ Cemetery Inscriptions (Wayne County Historian, Lyons, New York.

³¹ Will of Betsey Brister, File #0310 (Wayne County, New York Surrogate Court, Lyons, New York.

Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County

Historical New York Research Associates

Wayne County Historian’s Office

Preserve New York, 2007-2009

Primary Sources

Captain Helm's Attempt to Re-enslave People

The Captain's plan was to collect all the slaves he had once owned, many of whom had escaped to the surrounding villages, and when once in his grasp, to roll them speedily into a slave State, and there sell them for the Southern market. To carry forward this hellish design, it was necessary to have recourse to stratagem. Some person must be found to lure the unsuspecting slaves into the net he was spreading for them. At last he found a scoundrel named Simon Watkins, who for the consideration of fifty dollars, was to collect as many of the slaves as he could at one place; and when he had done so, he was to receive the money, leaving Capt. Helm to do the rest.

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Capt. Helm and his assistants came on to Palmyra in disguise, before evening, and secreted themselves in one of the hotels to await the arrival of their victims.

At the appointed hour the slaves began to assemble in large numbers and great glee, without the least suspicion of danger. They soon began their amusements, and in the midst of their mirth, Capt. Helm and party stealthily crept from their hiding place and surrounded the house; then bursting in suddenly upon the revelers, began to make arrests. Such a tumult, such an affray as ensued would be hard to describe.

The slaves fought for their lives and their liberty, and the Captain's party for their property and power. Fists, clubs, chairs, and any thing they could get hold of, was freely used with a strength and will of men who had tasted the joys of freedom. Cries and curses were mingled, while blows fell like hail on both sides. Commands from our old master were met with shouts of bold defiance on the part of the Negroes, until the miserable kidnappers were glad to desist, and were driven off - not stealthily as they came, but in quick time and in the best way they could, to escape the threatened vengeance of the slaves, who drove them like "feathers before the wind." But it was a terrible battle and many were severely wounded; among them was my father. He was taken to his home, mangled and bleeding, and from the effects of that night's affray he never recovered. He lingered on in feeble health until death finally released him from suffering, and placed him beyond the reach of kidnappers and tyrants.

The Captain and his party, enraged and disappointed in their plans at Palmyra, returned to Bath to see what could be done there toward success, in getting up a gang of slaves for the Southern market. When they came among the colored people of Bath, it was like a hawk alighting among a flock of chickens at noon-day. They scattered and ran in every direction, some to the woods, some hid themselves in cellars, and others in their terror plunged into the Conhocton River. In this manner the majority of the negroes escaped, but not all; and those were so unfortunate as to get caught were instantly thrown into a large covered "Pennsylvania wagon," and hurried off, closely guarded, to Olean Point. Among those taken were Harry Lucas, his wife, Lucinda, and seven children; Mrs. Jane

Cooper and four children, with some others, were also taken.

When Capt. Helm arrived at Olean Point with his stolen freight of human beings, he was unexpectedly detained until he could build a boat, - which, to his great dismay took him several days.

The sorrow and fearful apprehension of those wretched recaptured slaves can not be described nor imagined by any one except those who have experienced a like affliction. They had basked for a short season in the sunshine of liberty, and thought themselves secure from the iron grasp of Slavery, and the heel of the oppressor, when in the height of their exultation, they had been thrust down to the lowest depths of misery and despair, with the, oppressor's heel again upon their necks. To be snatched without a moment's warning from their homes and friends, - hurried and crowded into the close slave wagon, regardless of age or sex, like sheep for the slaughter, to be carried they knew not whither; but, doubtless to the dismal rice swamp of the South, - was to them an agony too great for endurance. The adult portion of the miserable company determined at last to go no farther with their heartless master, but to resist unto death if need be, before they surrendered themselves to the galling chains they had so recently broken, or writhed again under the torturing lash of the slave-driver.

Harry Lucas and wife, and Jane Cooper, silently prepared themselves for the conflict, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible. When they were nearly ready to start, Jane Cooper sent her oldest daughter and younger sister, (she who is now our worthy friend Mrs. P. of Bath), into the woods, and then when the men undertook to get Lucas and the two women on board the boat the struggle commenced. The women fought the Captain and his confederates like a lioness robbed of her whelps! They ran and dodged about, making the woods ring with their screams and shouts of "Murder! Murder! Help! Help! Murder!" until the Captain's party, seeing they could do nothing to quell them, became so exceedingly alarmed lest they should be detected in their illegal proceedings, that they ran off at full speed, as if they thought an officer at their heels. In their hurry and fright they caught two of Harry's children, and throwing them into the boat, pushed off as quick as possible, amid the redoubled cries of the agonized parents and sympathizing friends, all trying in every way possible, to recover from the merciless grasp of the man-stealer, the two frightened and screaming children. Guns were fired and horns sounded, but all to no purpose-they held tightly the innocent victims of their cupidity, and made good their escape.

Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave & Forty Years a Freeman* (Rochester, William Alling, 1857), 116-22, from Documenting the American South, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/steward/steward.html>

NOTE: Steward in his book used the name Bristol.

Brister, Aaron, Revolutionary War Pension Application, File #3494 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives)

Transcription:

On the 27th day of April 1818 before me Stephen Phelps a Judge of the Court of Common pleas in and for the County aforesaid Personally appears Aaron Brister age 56 years resident of the town of Palmyra in said County who being by me first duly sworn according to Law doth on his oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the provisions made by the Late act of Congress Entitled an act to provide for certain persons Engaged in the _____ service of the United States in the Revolutionary war that he the said Aaron Brister Enlisted in the town of Dumfries in Prince William County and State of Virginia in the company commanded by Captain Thomas Helm in the 3rd Virginia Regiment commanded by Colonel Weaden for two years in 1776 and that he continued to serve in the said corps until the Expiration of the aforesaid term of time where he was discharged from service at Philadelphia that he was in the Battle of York Island and White plains and that he is in reduced circumstances and stands in need of assistance of his county for support and that he has no other Evidence now in his power of his said services

Aaron X Brister

State of New York
Ontario County

On this nineteenth day of August 1820 personally appears in Open Court being a Court of Common Please in aforesaid county and constituting a court of R____ according to the Course of the Common Law with a Jurisdiction _____ point of among and Keeping a record of its proceedings and recognizes as such court by the Laws and judicial decisions of said State Aaron Brister aged sixty two years resident in the town of Palmyra is said county who being first duly sworn according to Law doth on his oat declare that he served in the Revolutionary War as follows for the term of One Year and nine months with Company commanded by Capt. Helms in the 3rd Virginia Regiment commanded by Col. Weadon commencing in the spring of the year 1777 and that he made application for a pension on the Twenty Seventh day of April 1818 and that he received a pension Certificate No. 3494 - And I do solemnly swear that I was a resident citizen of the United States on the Eighteenth day of March one thousand eight hundred and eighteen And that I have not since that time by gift, sale or in any manner disposed of my property or any part thereof with intent thereby so to diminish it as to bring myself within the provisions of an act of Congress Entitled "An act to provide for certain persons Engaged in the land and naval service of the United States in the Revolutionary War" passed on the 18th day of March 1818 and that I have not nor has any person in trust for me any property or securities contracts or debts due to me nor have I any income other than what is contained in the Schedule hereto annexed and by me subscribed Viz:

Three fourths of an acre of land in possession by verbal Contract with a small house Over and Above_____ towards which there is due One hundred dollars what is due towards it

	\$100
One Hog and 4 small pigs	4.00
1 Three pail [?] Kettle	3.00
1 Tea Kettle 1.00 1 Spider .25	1.25
1 Kettle .50 Frying pan .75	1.25
2 Barrels 1.00 2 Tables (Old) 1.00	2.00

4 Chairs	1.00	1 Hoe	.50	1 old Ax	.50	2.00
6 Cups & Saucers	.25	8 plates	.50			.75
A few other articles of crockery &c.						1.00
						\$115.25

Aaron X Brister

The foregoing sworn and declared in Open Court the 19th day of August 1820 before me.

Wm Rogers a Judge of Ontario Com Please

At a court of Common Pleas held at the Court House in Canandaigua in and for the County of Ontario before the Judges of said court on the 19th day of August of the term of August in the year one thousand Eight hundred and twenty.

Present Moses Atwater Judges

Micah Brooks

William Rogers

Stephen Bates

Will of Betsey Brister (Wayne County, New York, Surrogate Court, File # 0310)

Transcription:

I Betsey Brister of the town and Village of Palmyra Wayne County New York in contemplation of the uncertainty of human life, and being desirous of making a just disposition of my property, do make and publish this my last will and testament, in manner following – that is to say:

First – I give and bequeath to my daughter Lucy Jarvis wife of John Jarvis one feather bed and suitable & sufficient [sic] bedding for same to be designated by my Executor hereinafter named. also Five dollars in money.

Second – The remainder of my household furniture and all my clothing I give and bequeath to my daughter Betsey Brister – also Twenty five dollars in money.

Third – I give bequeath and devise to my son Robert Brister [Robert Brister inserted] the undivided one quarter of all the remainder of my real and personal estate which I have at the time of my death wheresoever situate

Fourth All the remainder of my Estate both real and personal I give devise and bequeath to my son Robert Brister in Trust for the following uses and purposes – that is to say -

1 To receive the rents and profits of the real estate and apply them to the use of my daughters Betsey, Jemima and Lucy for their support at such times, in such sums and in such manner as he thinks best & most for their interest in the following proportions to Betsey four [replaced “three”, which was crossed out] eighths, to Jemima three eighths and to Lucy one eighth

2. To sell if he thinks proper said real estate and apply the avails for the support and use of my said daughters in his discretion, in the manner above provided and in the same proportion –

3. To convert all the personal property into money, to keep same securely invested and apply same both principal and interest to the use and support of my said daughters as above provided in reference to the rents and profits of the real estate and in the same proportion

Fifth - In case of the death of either of my said daughters before her said proportion of the said estate is exhausted as above provided I give bequeath and devise the remainder of the proportion of the said deceased daughter to her child or children whether born in lawful wedlock or not

Sixth - I hereby appoint Robert Brister my said son, of the City of New York sole Executor of this my last will & testament hereby revoking all former [inserted] wills by me made –

Also lastly my express will and meaning is and I do hereby order & appoint that if any difference, dispute, question or controversy shall be moved, arise or happen concerning any matter or thing in this my will given or bequeathed, expressed or contained, that then no suit or suits in law or equity shall be brought commenced or prosecuted for and concerning the same but the same shall be referred wholly to the award order and determination of my friends James Jenner and General Thomas Rogers both of Palmyra and what they shall order, direct or determine therein, shall be binding and conclusive to all & every person therein concerned & final in the premises[?].

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand & seal the twelfth day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight hundred & fifty one.

her
Betsey - X Brister
Mark

The above instrument of one sheet was now here subscribed by Betsey Brister the Estatrix in the presence of each of us and declared by her to be her last will and testament. And we, at her request, sign our names [inserted] hereto as attesting witnesses - The words “Robert Brister” and “former” interlined before execution - also the word “four” before eighths – “one” before eighths” written over a word before execution & the word “three” before eighths erased.

W.F. Aldrich of Palmyra, N.Y.
James Jenner “ Do [ditto]“ “

**Otis and Mary Dyer Ramsdell Clapp House (Site of)
Cuyler Street
Palmyra, New York**

Significance: Otis and Mary Ramsdell Clapp were part of core group of abolitionist Quakers affiliated with Palmyra Preparative Meeting and Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends.

Description: No photo available.

Discussion: Otis and Mary Clapp illustrate the importance of family ties in creating a network of Underground Railroad operatives. Otis (b. between 1800-1810, d. November 11, 1847) and Mary D. Ramsdell Clapp (January 14, 1810-February 8, 1844) were Quaker abolitionists affiliated with Palmyra Preparative Meeting of Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends. Otis Clapp was received as a member of Farmington meeting (Hicksite) by request on April 26, 1832. On February 28, 1833, he married Mary Ramsdell, from Perinton, Monroe County, who on August 28, 1832, was listed as a minor and member of Farmington Monthly Meeting (Orthodox). Mary was the daughter of Gideon and Hannah Ramsdell, who kept a well-known Underground Railroad station in Perinton, and the niece of Asa B. Smith and Hannah Comstock Smith, who kept an Underground Railroad station in Macedon. Otis was listed again as an acknowledged member of Farmington meeting on June 24, 1841.³²

Clapp operated a general store and owned both a grist mill and saw mill. Otis and Mary D. Clapp had four children (Margaret, Hannah, Henry, and Mary D.).³³

While they lived in Palmyra, Otis and Mary Clapp took a leadership role in organized abolitionism. On October 3, 1835, the *Liberator* published a call to the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, held in Utica and Peterboro on October 21, 1835. Otis Clapp (along with his father-in-law Gideon Ramsdell) signed this call.³⁴

On October 19, 1836, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society returned to the Bleecker Street Church in Utica for its first annual meeting. Otis Clapp was one of three men from Wayne County (the others were J.J. Thomas and G.H. Moore) who attended. Otis Clapp also served on the committee to nominate officers.³⁵

On December 20, 1837, Otis Clapp was one of five people (the others included Presbyterian minister Rev. G.R.H. Shumway, Methodist minister Rev. Samuel Worcester, and Quakers William R. Smith and Esek Wilbur) elected to the Executive Committee of the Wayne County Anti-Slavery Society at its meeting in the Western Presbyterian Church in Palmyra.³⁶

That same day, December 20, 1836, Palmyra women met at the home of Rev. Shumway to form a Female Antislavery Society. Mary D. Clapp was appointed chair and "1st Directress." Quoting the Biblical passage, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Jesus Christ," the women argued that slavery changed people from this "true image of God" to "mere things and chattels personal."³⁷

³² *Wayne Sentinel*, March 20, 1833; Clapp family genealogy by Charles Lenhart; Hazard Index to New York Yearly Meeting of Friends, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore.

³³ Deed Liber 38, 217, Wayne County Clerk's Office.

³⁴ *Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

³⁵ *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the New-York State Anti-Slavery Society, convened at Utica, October 19, 1836* (1836), http://www.archive.org/stream/proceedingsoffir00newy/proceedingsoffir00newy_djvu.txt.

³⁶ *Friend of Man*, December 20, 1837; "Pastors of the Methodist Episcopal Church," *Palmyra*, compiled by Women's Society of the Western Presbyterian Church (1907); *Friend of Man*, May 9, 1838.

³⁷ *Friend of Man*, February 28, 1838.

Mary Clapp's father Gideon Ramsdell also continued his abolitionist activism. In 1840, he was on the electoral committee of the Liberty Party, when it ran James G. Birney for President and Gerrit Smith for Governor. He gave money to the *North Star*, and he cared for abolitionist singer George W. Clark when Clark dislocated his hip in a carriage accident.³⁸

The depression of 1837 affected people all over the country, including Otis and Mary Clapp. On February 28, 1838, Otis and Mary Clapp (along with co-owners Lorenzo and Lydia Hathaway, Mary Clapp's sister) sold three pieces of property to Mary's father Gideon Ramsdell, including eighty acres of land, their three-story brick store on the north side of Main Street in Palmyra (then occupied by Henry and May, Druggists), and part of their grist mill. They retained a sawmill. Their losses continued to grow, however, and in 1842, Otis Clapp declared bankruptcy.³⁹

Mary D. Clapp died in 1844. On August 6, 1846, Otis remarried. His second wife was Lucy Ramsdell (June 2, 1813-April 18, 1893), Mary D. Ramsdell Clapp's sister. Otis was dismissed for marrying contrary to discipline on November 26, 1846. The family most likely moved from Palmyra to Boston, Massachusetts. Otis Clapp died on November 10, 1847, at the home of his father-in-law Gideon Ramsdell in Perinton, New York.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Colored American*, October 10, 1840; *North Star*, July 27, 1849; September 8, 1854.

³⁹ Deed Liber 38, 217, Wayne County Clerk's Office; *Wayne County Whig* and *Wayne County Argus*, April 13, 1842, Wayne County Historian's Office.

⁴⁰ Hazard Index to New York Yearly Meeting of Friends, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore; Clapp family genealogy, Charles Lenhart.

Site of Stephen and Mary Durfee House
2374 Jeffrey Road
SE Corner of Maple Avenue
Town of Palmyra, New York



Description: Although the back wing may be earlier, the house as it now stands was probably built in the 1850s. Stephen Durfee's name appears on this site on the 1853 and 1858 maps of Wayne County.

Significance: Stephen Durfee (b. 1776) and Mary Durfee were key members of Palmyra Preparative Meeting of Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends (Hicksite). Mary was an enrolled Quaker minister. In 1824, Farmington Monthly Meeting appointed Stephen Durfee as one of two people to administer land kitty corner across the street from their home as a meetinghouse for Palmyra Preparative Meeting, and Palmyra Preparative Meeting became a major catalyst for abolitionism. Although Mary Durfee died in 1842 and probably never lived in this house as it now stands, her diary gives a revealing glimpse into the lives of these Quaker reformers in the late 1830s.

Stephen was one of twelve children of Gideon Durfee (b. 1738, whose 1811 home still stands on North Creek Road) and Ann Bowen Durfee. Gideon and Ann's children were Earl, born Oct. 27, 1757; Lemuel, April 18, 1759; Mary, Dec. 2, 1761 who married Humphrey Sherman; Job, Sept. 19, 1763 who married Susanna Burden; Gideon, Feb. 21, 1765; Hannah, July 27, 1766 who married Weaver Osband; Elizabeth, March 29, 1768, who married Welcome Herendeen in 1794; Pardon, born Jan. 24, 1770; Edward, Dec. 10, 1771; Ruth, Mar. 13, 1774 who married William

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Wilcox; Stephen, born April 28, 1776 and Anna, Mar. 8, 1780.⁴¹

Mary Durfee kept a diary in 1837 and 1838 in which recorded details of regional Quakers. This journal brings to life the world in which she lived--of farm families and Quaker reformers, connected in myriad ways (including transportation, religion, and politics) to national issues.⁴²

In her diary, Mary Durfee mingled references to social visiting, household chores, Quaker meetings, and national affairs. On December 29, 1837, she listed "Discoveries since 1814":

Printing by steam power; sterotype plates; the circular saw; sugar from the root of beets; anthracite coal; lithographic impressions, 1816. Musical boxes, 1817. Safety lamps; chain cables, 1820. Chronometers perfected; power looms for cloath, stockings, etc; tread mills for prisons; the stomach pump; railways; lead and coal mines in the United States; Craniology, 1832. Gum elastic shoes, boots, and cloath, 1833.

Examples of diary entries include references to a trip to Ledyard/Scipio in Cayuga County, from January to March 1838, in which the family stayed with Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock both going and coming. Thomas M'Clintock was Clerk of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends, meeting at Farmington, from 1838-43. Mary Durfee was an enrolled Quaker minister (Hicksite), as was her friend Hannah Sexton. Her description of the annual meeting of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends at Farmington is particularly important for its references to the rights of Seneca Indians and people in slavery. Seneca leaders attended this meeting to ask for Quaker help in fighting the Treaty of Buffalo Creek, adopted by the Senate in June 1838, that would have sent all Seneca people west of the Mississippi River in a "trail of tears." Mary Durfee included a copy of an anti-slavery petition sent by women Friends from Farmington to Congress in 1838.

On a trip to Michigan in July 1838, a group of women attending an abolitionist convention boarded their canal boat at Lockport. For the first time in her life, Mary Durfee heard a person of color give a talk.

Durfee used the Quaker system of dating, referring to January as "1st month," for example. 11th mo. 10, 1837..cold yet, snows again this morning. -- grows warmer. Pliny S. & Hannah & Harriett & the little girls called here after meeting I stayed at home for want of a conveyance snow melts.

1st month of 1838

1.2 A white frost; sun rises clear & pleasant warm; we make 65 dozen candles. in the afternoon Widow Starkweather & her daughter Harriett, Malissa Smith & Clarrissa Durfee came here. War & fighting in Canada - men are listing in almost every neighborhood extreme folly. [A reference to the Patriot's War.]

2.3 Attended the Select m...g staid with S. U. & _____

3..4 Warm & muddy attended Quarterly Meeting, pretty large Thomas McClintoc [sic, Clerk of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1838-43] delivered an interesting discourse satisfactory to me. our meeting held late. lodged at Gideon Herrendeens, rather dry; the weather warm.

⁴¹ Cecilia B. Jackson, *Historic Homes In and Around Arcadia*, 1982. Articles appeared originally in *Newark Courier Gazette*.

⁴² Transcription of Mary Durfee's diary in Wayne County Historian's Office, transcribed by Marjory Allen Perez.

4.5 Attended Meeting Hannah Sexton [minister from Palmyra] addressed the people in a clear feeling & energetic manner; dined at Isaac Laphams, his mother is there 82 years old. warm & very muddy. hear of distresses in Buffalo, and at Navy Island, where the Canadian Patriots are stationed. report says 1000 men are killed by drifting over the falls of Niagary!! do we live in a christian land? I say it is barbarous, savage & cruel

3rd month, 1838

2.6 A cold frosty morning trees white & shine brilliant in the sun. Set off for home [from a visit to Ledyard, Cayuga County]. crossed the Lake on the ice. good sleighing; stopped in Waterloo & dined with our friends Thomas & Mary Ann McClintock. then rode to Palmyra we were cold & tired & called to warm.

4.1 A pleasant morning, weather moderated attended meeting my mind was occupied on the subject of performing worship to the great author of all things that are good. & it seemed clear to me that silent meditation was the most constant; seeing our finite state, and the infinitude of deity. we stand in need of every thing, deity of nothing. we know nothing but what we have received; He knows all things; is everywhere present; without beginning, & without end.

11.1 A warm pleasant day. attended Meeting at W. dined with Griffith & Eliza M. Cooper. The snows is running off fast. some bare ground.

5th month, 1838

14.2 Warm & pleasant S.. went to Wmson I went to see Caroline Halsted. called on S'n D & family

24.5 Cool & rainy. Monthly Meeting at P...a we had to dine with us Arnold Bristol & wife & child. J.M Howland & wife, Wm Barker & wife, Edmund Vail & wife Sunderland Gardner & Mary Pugsley, Richard Birdsall & one Joes [?] from Canada Daniel Underwood came & staid the night.

6TH month 1838

2.7 Clear cool day. Pliny & Hannah Sexton came here after Sarah Thayer to work for them. Apple trees are in blossom.

YEARLY MEETING—1838

9.7 A pleasant morn'g - attended the select yearly Meeting of Ministers & Elders. - Jemima Keese from Peru - Rachel Hicks from Long Island Benjamin Mather from Pennsylvania, Samuel Comfort from P...a were in attendance. We dined at Arnold Bristoll's. Richard Glazier came home with us. Benjamin Hussey & wife & son & daughter & Erastus Hussey & wife & daughter - staid with us.

10.1 A very warm morning floating clouds - attended Meeting Richard Glazier, Sarah Underwood & Hannah Sexton held forth truths important. Hannah Tripp, Thorn Hoxie & Betsey B.H. & wife son & daughter -