



African Americans in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh, Vermont, 1790–1860

Black Vermonters were, by definition, oddballs—a tiny minority who chose the country over the city. How did they fare in this rural environment? What sort of work did they find in Vermont’s agrarian economy? Did they own farms or homes? Were they able to marry and raise families? Were their children educated in district schools? Did they participate in town meeting? Did they belong to local churches?

By JANE WILLIAMSON

Historians have spent several decades uncovering the lives of African Americans—enslaved and free—in the North. But from overviews of the “first emancipation” and the northern free black experience to more focused studies of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, it has been an almost exclusively urban story.¹ This is partly a legacy of northern slavery, which was concentrated in coastal cities, but it also reflects the choices of newly freed people, who voted overwhelmingly with their feet and migrated cityward.²

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One northeastern state—Vermont—has been left almost totally out of this picture.³ And why not? It remained mostly devoid of European settlement 130 years after the first enslaved Africans landed in the British colonies. When the other northern states were ending slavery within their borders at the end of the eighteenth century, much of Vermont was still a frontier. Lacking an historic enslaved population *and* a city—coastal or otherwise—Vermont was destined to have a minuscule African American community.

That northern free blacks overwhelmingly chose urban life over rural is indisputable. Cities offered more opportunities for employment and the personal and social advantages of life in communities of color. The countryside, meanwhile, provided little prospect of success for former slaves who lacked the capital to purchase farms and become productive members of the agricultural economy. And many were no doubt eager to establish new identities as free people elsewhere.⁴

For some few, however, that “elsewhere” was Vermont. Black Vermonters were, by definition, oddballs—a tiny minority who chose the country over the city. How did they fare in this rural environment? What sort of work did they find in Vermont’s agrarian economy? Did they own farms or homes? Were they able to marry and raise families? Were their children educated in district schools? Did they participate in town meeting? Did they belong to local churches?

For this initial investigation, I chose an area in Vermont’s Champlain Valley that included all of Addison County and the adjoining Chittenden County towns of Charlotte and Hinesburgh. I was aware of some black families that had lived in the area and this work would build on my own and others’ research. I turned for information to the usual public records, beginning with the eight federal censuses from 1790 to 1860. They supplied the basic data that would form my universe. Nineteenth-century censuses are well known for errors and undercounting, and I found plenty of both, but they remain a necessary and invaluable source. I analyzed the gross population data by household type, number of independent households, and total population for each town to establish an overview. The results are presented in the first section below.

I then compiled census data into a roster listing every independent black household, a total of 104 names, and began to search for these men, women, and families. Community life in antebellum Vermont took place at the level of the town, both privately and publicly, and town clerks recorded all manner of town and individual business—in theory, at least. The lax record keeping of the nineteenth century and the loss of many documents over the years have left a patchwork of sources that limits our knowledge of ordinary Vermonters, black *and* white.⁵ Still, I

was surprised at how much I learned from the dusty pages in town vaults. Two other sources, church and probate court records, also proved frustrating. Local congregations maintain information on church membership, baptisms, marriage, and death, and many of these records have also disappeared over the years. A fire in the Addison County Courthouse in 1852 means that probate records, which could provide wonderful insight into family economics and relationships, occupation, and domestic life, are virtually nonexistent.

POPULATION DATA

Table 1 shows the number of black Vermonters in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh by type of household from 1790 to 1860.⁶ A few numbers appear anomalous and suggest the likelihood of census taker error, which, of course, was common throughout the nineteenth century. For example, the census recorded whether African Americans lived in white or independent “colored” households, and no independent households were listed in Vergennes in 1810, the only year in which that was the case. The number of independent black households listed in Ferrisburgh jumped to ten that year with a total of forty-one individuals, the largest number in any year. The two towns are contiguous, so the Vergennes households may have been counted in Ferrisburgh by mistake. Similarly, 1830 lists only five African Americans in white households in the entire region, a fraction of the number in every other census. Again, many must have been missed. Finally, in 1810 the census takers for Charlotte and Hinesburgh did not bother to list African Americans separately, regardless of household type, providing only an aggregate number at the end of the tally for each town.

The number of African Americans in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh increased steadily in the early decades—when the state’s population was growing exponentially—but peaked at 161 in 1810. Black residents were not evenly dispersed throughout the county, however; some towns had no residents of color at all during the period (and thus are not included in the table), and others did only temporarily. Only three Addison County towns—Ferrisburgh, Middlebury, and Vergennes—counted black residents in every census. Together, these three towns accounted for more than half the aggregate number of blacks in the county during the period. When Bristol is added to the numbers for Ferrisburgh, Middlebury, and Vergennes, the four towns accounted for two-thirds of African Americans in Addison County during the period. Charlotte and Hinesburgh also had relatively substantial black populations, with Charlotte counting African American residents in every census and Hinesburgh in all but one. As a proportion of the population

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statewide, black Vermonters never accounted for even .5 percent from 1790 to 1860. The percentages among Addison County towns, however, varied widely. In 1790, for example, African Americans made up 7 percent of residents in Vergennes and 2.5 percent of those in Ferrisburgh. These relatively high percentages are partly artifacts of the extremely

TABLE 1 African Americans in White (W) and Independent Black (IB) Households, Addison County,* Charlotte and Hinesburgh, 1790–1860

Town	1790		1800		1810		1820		1830		1840		1850		1860	
	W	IB	W	IB	W	IB	W	IB	W	IB	W	IB	W	IB	W	IB
Addison	2				1	3					2					1
Bridport			1		1	15	1	16								
Bristol							1			10	1	15	1	31	3	26
Cornwall						1					1		2			1
Ferrisburgh	12		5	5	7	41	5	6		10	4	10	2	4	3	14
Leicester							2	5						1		
Lincoln													14	1	4	1
Middlebury	2		8		5	1	13	12		17	2	13	4	14	2	7
Monkton				6					1		1	7				
New Haven			1			3	1	4		10	1	9	2	4		
Orwell*														1		
Panton							2	10		6	1	9			5	9
Salisbury								4	2		1					
Shoreham	1	4	1	10	7	10	4	3	2		1					1
Starksboro				1												
Vergennes	8	6	17	10	21		8	15		25	4	13	11	20	9	7
Waltham					1		2					1				
Weybridge	1									4						
Whiting	1		1										1			
Subtotal	27	10	35	31	43	71	42	75	5	82	20	90	26	82	21	68
Total	37		66		114		117		87		110		108		89	
Ind HH	27%		47%		62%		64%		94%†		82%		76%		76%	
Charlotte	3		13	3	15		2	9		16	3		1	9	2	13
Hinesburgh			4	5	32		4	21		19	1	18	2	16	3	28
Subtotal	30	10	52	39	...		48	105	5	117	24	108	29	107	26	109
Total	40		91		161		153		122		132		136		135	
Ind HH	25%		43%		...		69%		96%†		82%		79%		81%	

*Several towns had no black residents during the period and were not included; Orwell was part of Rutland County until 1850.

†This percentage is surely too high, as there were probably more than five African Americans in white households in 1830—a case of census taker error.

small populations at this early date, especially in Vergennes, which had a population of 200 in 1790. Although it started high, the percentage of African Americans in Vergennes declined at every census, from 7 to 5 to 3 to 2 and finally 1 percent in 1860, as the white population grew. Middlebury provides a counterpoint: It also had relatively large numbers of African Americans, although rarely as many as Vergennes, but it never had a high *percentage* because the white population was so much larger. Middlebury was the commercial center of the county and the largest town by 1810. Its highest proportion of African Americans —.9 percent—came in 1820, when its total population was 2,535, three times that of Vergennes.

Table 1 also compares the number of African Americans in black-headed households with those living in white homes. The proportion of independent black households increased substantially at every census until 1840, when it declined slightly and then leveled off at more than three-quarters. Although eventually most African Americans lived in independent households, once again the total numbers are very small. The number of independent black households increased from a low of two in 1790 to twenty-seven in 1830, but then declined. Rarely did a single town count more than five black households in a single census. Vergennes had eight in 1830, and Hinesburgh had seven in 1860, but three of the eight households in Vergennes were part of one extended family (Storms).

African Americans living in white households were not recorded by name until 1850, so many remain untraceable. We can, however, get some sense of who they were by looking at aggregate data (see Table 2). First, they lived what must have been a lonely existence; most were alone in white households (and often the only person of color in town) in all but two censuses, 1800 and 1810. Census takers began to record the sex and age of African Americans living in white households in 1820. The breakdown by sex was about equal in each census, with slightly more men in 1820 and 1860 and slightly more women in 1840 and 1850. The number of young children dropped significantly after 1820, when children younger than fourteen accounted for one-third of blacks in white households. Without age breakdowns for 1790 to 1810, however, there is no way to know if this marked a trend or if 1820 was anomalous. It is important to remember that the comparisons in Table 2 are based on extremely small numbers, and a difference of just one in either direction translates into several percentage points.

Persistence⁷ is an important measure with an obvious impact on the size of the African American population over time. Although African American persistence declined at every census until 1840, it was not out of line with the overall rate. Vermonters were, after all, a famously

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TABLE 2 Number, Sex, and Age of African Americans in White Households, Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh, 1790–1860*

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. in Household</i>		<i>Sex</i>		<i>Age</i>		
	<i>One</i>	<i>≥Two</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i><14</i>	<i>14–26</i>	<i>≥27</i>
1790	19 (63)	11 (37)	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
1800	21 (40)	31 (60)	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
1810	18 (42)	25 (58)	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
1820	42 (87)	6 (13)	26 (54)	22 (46)	17 (35)	19 (40)	12 (25)
1830 [†]							
1840	18 (75)	6 (25)	11 (46)	13 (54)	1 (4) [‡]	8 (33) [‡]	15 (63) [‡]
1850	20 (69)	9 (31)	14 (48)	15 (52)	1 (3)	19 (66)	9 (31)
1860	23 (92)	2 (8)	14 (56)	11 (44)	4 (16)	14 (56)	7 (28)

*Numbers are given first, followed by the percentages of the total.

[†]Only five African Americans were listed in white households in the 1830 census, very likely an error and too few to make meaningful comparisons.

[‡]Age ranges reported varied from census to census, and those given here for 1840 differ slightly from the column heads; they are <10, 10–24, and 25 and older.

mobile lot. Two-thirds of those African Americans first listed in the 1800 census were present in 1810, 58 percent remained in 1820, and one-third lived in Vermont to their deaths. Half of those first listed in 1810 remained in 1820, 40 percent of those listed in 1820 were counted in 1830, and one-third first listed in 1830 persisted in 1840. The rate then reversed, increasing to 59 percent from 1840 to 1850. In his study of Addison County, Jeffrey Potash found considerable out-migration before 1800, although losses varied from town to town. Forty percent of Cornwall's residents left every five years in the early years of statehood, and the growth of large-scale sheep farming contributed to "sizable population loss" between 1820 and 1840. One historian writing about Vergennes before 1820 asserted that the period could be summed up in one word: transience. Only 30 percent of households listed in the 1810 census remained in 1820, although the total population changed hardly at all.⁸

One thing that might have affected persistence among African Americans in the early years was warning out. Selectmen were allowed to "warn out" any newcomers they thought might become chargeable to the town and did so frequently until 1817, when the law was changed. Joanne Pope Melish reported that some New England towns used warning out as an "explicit strategy" to rid themselves of unwanted blacks and that the practice intensified after 1820. People of color accounted

for 50 percent of those warned out of Rhode Island in 1800, for example.⁹ This was not the case in Vermont. I found nine African American heads of household warned out of five Addison County towns. Those warned out did not have to leave immediately—or at all, necessarily—and four remained in the towns that had warned them out, according to the next census. Others had just moved to nearby towns. Only Nimrod Greenleaf moved very far, from Ferrisburgh to Bennington.¹⁰ So it seems that warning out had a negligible impact on African American migration.

PROPERTY AND OCCUPATION

Land was the great attraction of Vermont in the decades after statehood. It drew thousands from southern New England, and the state's population more than tripled from 1790 to 1810. The fertile soils of Addison County's Champlain Valley were especially attractive to landless laborers and the sons of farmers who were not going to inherit viable holdings at home. The majority of these rural white New Englanders acquired property and established farms.¹¹ What were the land-owning prospects for the small number of African Americans in this great migration? Black household heads owned property throughout the period, and the number increased at every census; the highest percentage of landowners, 56 percent of all African American households, came in 1850 and 1860. Landowners lived in the towns with the greatest African American population, with one exception. Charlotte, Ferrisburgh, Hinesburgh, Panton, and Vergennes all had black property owners. Middlebury, on the other hand, had only one from 1790 to 1860, and he was a farmer in a remote location.

One of the two independent black household heads recorded in the 1790 census owned land; Cull Payne purchased fifty acres in Shoreham in 1786 and owned it for the next thirty years. Two more of the twelve household heads recorded in 1800 owned land. William Ferris purchased land in Ferrisburgh in 1793 and again in 1794, but sold it three years later. He was listed in Ferrisburgh in the 1810 census, but was gone by 1820. Two other early black landowners were also short-term residents. Anthony Edwards purchased 50 acres in Ferrisburgh in 1807 and sold them in 1812 for \$550. Edwards more than quadrupled his investment, suggesting that he was speculating like so many others at this time. Noah Morris also bought land in Ferrisburgh, but sold it within a year and made only \$10.¹²

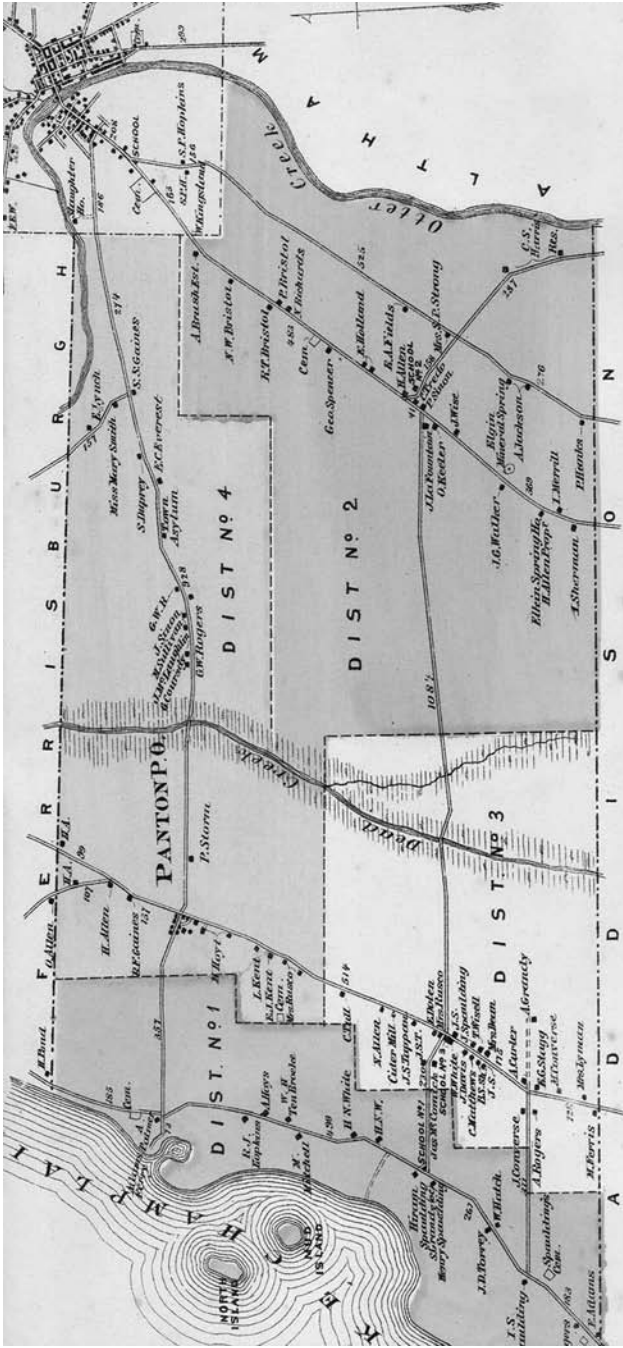
Shubael Clark, one of the landowners listed in the 1800 census, represented a different pattern. With his purchase of 100 acres in Hinesburgh in 1795, he established a farm that his extended family would

occupy until the Civil War. The Clarks were joined a few years later by Samuel and Prince Peters, who purchased land nearby and also put down roots for their children and grandchildren.¹³ A third black farmer, Primas Storms, purchased land first in Ferrisburgh and then in neighboring Panton. His eight children inherited the Panton land, but most lived in the adjoining village of Vergennes, where they owned their homes and were not farmers.¹⁴ These men and their descendants accounted for the majority of black landowners in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh during the period.

Amos Morocco also owned land, but he was more mobile. Although he was not listed in the Charlotte census until 1830, Morocco had purchased land there in 1811 and can be found in all the extant Charlotte grand lists from 1812 to 1827. He sold his Charlotte land in the late 1830s and was counted in the 1840 census in Lincoln, a hill town fifteen miles south, where he purchased ninety acres. The Moroccos stayed in Lincoln long enough to be listed there in 1850, but were selling off their land in pieces throughout the 1840s. Amos's widow, Rhoda, had moved to the nearby village of Bristol by 1860, where she, too, owned property and had members of three other black families living with her. Another black farmer, Prince King, arrived later, purchasing a seventy-acre farm in Middlebury in 1841. Although King stayed on his land for more than forty years, he did not marry and did not have children to inherit his property.¹⁵

Most of these early purchases were made without the benefit of mortgages. Shubael Clark used a mortgage to acquire a second 100-acre property in 1796, this one just over the Hinesburgh line in the adjoining town of Huntington. Prince Peters and Prince King also had mortgages on their farms and paid them off. Only a quarter of land purchases made by these black Vermonters before 1830 carried mortgages, but more than half did after that.¹⁶ Black landowners also used their property to secure loans. Primas Storms's son Philip borrowed \$150 from his African American neighbor Rachel Robinson in 1836, using his Vergennes house lot as security; the note was not repaid until after his death nearly twenty years later. Rhoda Morocco mortgaged her land in Lincoln twice in the early 1850s and repaid both loans promptly. Several members of the Storms family used their Panton land to secure loans. Susannah Storms relied on it for security in old age; in 1841 she deeded the property to Joseph Rogers, in whose Ferrisburgh household she then resided, "in consideration of a good and comfortable maintenance during my natural life survival."¹⁷

According to Jeffrey Potash's definition of a subsistence farm for an Addison County family of five,¹⁸ these black landowners built viable



Map of Panton, Vermont, showing property of Primas Storms, from Atlas of Addison Co., Vermont (New York: F. W. Beers & Co., 1871).

TABLE 3 African American Farm Ownership in Addison County, Charlotte and Hinesburgh, 1790–1860

Name, Town	Year*	Land [†]	House	Cows	Steers	Horses	Pigs	Sheep	Oxen
<i>Subsistence, family of 5[‡]</i>	c. 1800	15–25	Yes	5–6	2	3–4	5–6	6	NR
Shubael Clark, Hinesburgh	1830	40	NR	5	4	2	NR	50	2
Hiram Clark, Hinesburgh	1860 AC	70	NR	2	0	1	1	0	0
Lewis Clark, Hinesburgh	1834	45	\$200	3	0	3	NR	65	2
Lewis Langley, Hinesburgh	1860 AC	60	NR	2	0	0	1	0	2
Prince Peters, Hinesburgh	1830	40	\$77	3	0	2	NR	20	0
Jos. Peters, Hinesburgh	1839	30	\$25	2	0	2	NR	34	0
Edw. Williams, Hinesburgh	1860 AC	40	NR	2	0	2	1	8	2
P. Storms, Ferrisburgh [§]	1814	40	Yes	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Amos Morocco, Charlotte	1824–26	15–30	\$50	2–4	NR	1–2	NR	10	0–2
Prince King, Middlebury	1860 AC	50	NR	3	2	2	2	0	2

*The year of the grand list from which data were taken or the 1860 Agricultural Census (AC).

[†]Improved acres only.

[‡]The minimum Jeffrey Potash estimated as a subsistence farm for a family of five.

[§]No grand lists survive in Pantton, where the Storms family owned land for most of the period.

farms (see Table 3). Most of them had more than the fifteen to twenty-five improved acres he specified, but they had less livestock than he called for with one exception. Overall, they had fewer cows, horses, and pigs but more sheep. Some raised significantly more sheep, indicating their participation in Vermont's thriving Merino wool economy. They clearly opted to devote some energy to producing a crop for sale on the market. Lewis Clark, for example, had sixty-five sheep in 1834, and although this was a small flock by Addison County standards, it was more than ten times the six needed for subsistence. It may also explain how he acquired a house valued at \$200 in 1834.

Most Vermonters made their living by farming, but some worked at other trades—as merchants, millers, and laborers. The census provided occupational information for fewer than half of the African American heads of household (44 percent) in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh from 1790 to 1860. In some years the census did not include that information and in others enumerators failed to record it. About a third of black household heads were listed as laborers, day laborers, or farm laborers. No doubt many of those without occupational data listed also worked as seasonal and temporary hands on Vermont farms. The Robinson family, whose farm today is Rokeby Museum, employed several African American laborers whose work is recorded in account books in the museum's collection. Mingo Niles, for example, was associated with the Robinsons for more than thirty years and had charge of their vegetable garden every year. The Robinsons also employed Aaron Freeman, whose family had owned land and farmed in Charlotte, and Jedidiah Emery, who lived in Lincoln and Bristol.¹⁹ Many young farm laborers—black and white—lived in their employers' households, and they were identified by name in the 1850 and 1860 censuses. Seven young black men were listed this way in 1850 and five in 1860.

It's hard to know how precise the census occupational terms are. "Day laborers" worked at the most menial jobs and lived with the insecurity of a daily search for employment. "Laborers" may have worked by the day or on the farm, but also held mill or factory jobs. In the 1860 census, for example, six of the seven men listed as laborers lived in the industrial towns of Bristol and Vergennes, where they may have held jobs in one of the mills, tanneries, or other small industries clustered at the site of waterpower. A few of these laborers seem to have made more than a subsistence living. Although he was listed there in the 1850 census only, William H. Howard owned a home in Vergennes valued at \$275 in the grand lists from 1847 to 1851 (the median home value in 1850 was \$450). Primas and Pamela Storms's sons Philip and Joseph both owned their homes in Vergennes. Their brother John, on the other

hand, was more marginally employed “as a hewer of wood and drawer of water,” classic day laborer activities, according to his obituary. His death notice also described him as “unfavorably situated for mental advancement,”²⁰ suggesting that he was mentally disabled, which no doubt limited his opportunities. Neither Mark Roberts of Bristol nor Samuel Titus of Vergennes owned their homes, which would certainly have been the norm for African American laborers.

Three black heads of households were identified specifically as working in manufacturing trades or as mechanics: Brewster Bennett of Shoreham and Leicester, Cyrus Dolby of Middlebury, and Andrew Santee of Bristol. Andrew Santee first appeared in the Bristol census in 1830 and four years later paid \$300 for property that included the “trip hammer shop and privileges thereto, it being the same trip hammer shop now occupied by said Santee.” Santee was not only a skilled artisan, but was also able to purchase the shop he worked in along with the house that went with it. He remained in the Bristol Census in 1840, after selling part of his property—what was described as a house lot—in 1838, but was not listed in 1850. Thus despite having a trade and owning his own business, Santee was relatively transient.

Neither Cyrus Dolby nor Brewster Bennett owned property. Cyrus Dolby lived in Middlebury, where he was counted in the 1840, 1850, and 1860 censuses. He was identified as both a farm laborer and a mechanic, and his death record described him as a “tinker.”²¹ Middlebury, with its waterpower and mills in the center of town, made a good home for a man with Dolby’s talents. He must have found work at the Weybridge paper mill, as he and his family lived in the Paper Mill School District in 1840. His listing as a farm laborer suggests that demand for his mechanical skills was not steady enough to support his family and that he took farm and other odd jobs as necessary.

A few young men who did not yet head their own households worked in other occupations that may have offered a chance to rise above the level of unskilled laborer. Andrew and Joseph Storms, sons of Joseph and Betsey, were working in Vergennes as steamboat cooks in 1850, and their brother Philip was employed as a clerk for Charles Bradbury, a Vergennes flour merchant. Twenty-one-year-old Abial Anthony worked as a barber in the R. W. Adams Hotel in Middlebury in 1860. Clerking for a merchant required reading, writing, and math skills, and possibly more, and could be the path to something better, if promotions were forthcoming. And barbering was one of the primary occupations of middle-class African Americans during the period.

Free blacks in the North were “no more skilled than the slaves they replaced,” and historians have reported a range in level of skill depending

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Mingo and Phebe Niles, pencil sketches by Rowland Evans Robinson, undated, Rokeby Museum.

on location. White workers' fear of competition often rendered black workers' skills a moot point, however, as they successfully barred them from employment.²² This conflict played out mostly in northern cities, where the African American population was concentrated and the opportunity for skilled employment was greatest, but the small number of artisans and other skilled workmen in Addison County may be evidence of its impact in rural Vermont.

Seventeen of the 104 heads of household listed in the 1790 to 1860 censuses were women. Four of these women were widows of male heads, and another eight who had children in their households may also have been widows. Only one female household head—Rachel Robinson of Vergennes—had her occupation listed. She was a domestic servant as, no doubt, were most of the other women. Mary Ann Henry, for example, who was listed in Charlotte in the 1850 census, worked for the Robinsons at Rokeby, as did Phebe Niles, wife of the family's gardener, Mingo Niles; both women are recorded in household account books and family correspondence.²³

The majority of black women did not head their own households, of course, so another way to discover their occupations is to look at those listed in white households. African Americans living in white households were not identified by name until 1850, and that census did not record occupations for women, but the 1860 census did. Eight of the eleven

women enumerated had their occupations identified, and all worked as servants. Presumably, some of the wives of black household heads also worked for wages—we know that Phebe Niles did, for example—but this information was rarely recorded.

One black woman apparently attained a measure of success. Pamela Storms, who was counted in the Stevens Hotel in Vergennes in 1850, worked there as a cook. The *Vergennes Vermonter* described her as “proverbially the best cook in all the region” and asserted that “not a few of the choice dishes discussed at the Stevens Hotel were the result of her culinary experience and skill.”²⁴ Pamela Storms also owned property, although she was never listed in her own household in the census. She inherited land in Pantton when her father Primas died in 1842, and she owned a house—and for a short time, two—in Vergennes. Her will provides further evidence of her economic success; she left Merino wool and silk dresses and shawls to her sisters-in-law and friends.²⁵

Although three of the seven female landowners were widows who inherited land at their husbands’ deaths, others, like Pamela Storms, were single. Pamela’s sister Susannah also inherited land in Pantton and owned property in Vergennes. Rachel Robinson purchased a house next door to Philip Storms’s East Street home in Vergennes in 1834 and lived there until her death thirty years later. She was included in Vergennes grand lists from 1844 to 1869, but her home was modest. It was one of only six homes valued under \$100 in the 1850 grand list.²⁶

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Most male black household heads in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh were married. The early censuses did not specify relationships among those enumerated, but when a man and woman of marriageable age were listed in a household, I counted them as married. Together, the confirmed and “probably” married accounted for 70 percent of heads of households. Only eight African Americans were listed in one-person households from 1790 to 1860.

Finding a marriage partner was probably not easy in a community that had such a small African American population and in which interracial marriage was socially taboo. An interesting bit of evidence turned up in a letter in the Rokeby Museum correspondence collection. George Robinson, son of Quaker abolitionists Rowland Thomas and Rachel Gilpin Robinson, wrote home from Savannah, Georgia, in 1847. Twenty-two-year-old George had a message for Aaron Freeman, who was then nineteen years old and working as a hired hand on the Robinsons’ farm. “Tell Aaron I could get him a very nice wife here, either a little black, a good deal black, or as black as tar, as we

have all varieties.”²⁷ This passage suggests not only that Aaron was having trouble finding a young woman to court, but also that he discussed it with George and George’s older brother, Thomas, to whom the letter was addressed.

Aaron Freeman did find a wife, but not until ten years later. He married Rachel Williams, daughter of Edwin and Phoebe Williams who farmed in Hinesburgh, in 1857 when he was twenty-eight and she was seventeen.²⁸ The uncommon difference in their ages and her relative youth seems to confirm that black Vermonters faced some difficulty in forming families. It also suggests that the inability to marry and form families not only resulted from, but also *contributed to* the small (and, over time, declining) black population in Vermont.²⁹

Some African Americans in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh did not find black marriage partners; eight of the male heads of household had white wives. Vergennes, in particular, was home to two or three interracial families continuously from 1820 to 1860. William H. Howard and his wife, Adalin, for example, had two children and, as noted above, owned their home in Vergennes. Still, despite this apparent success, they were there only long enough to be counted in the 1850 census.

The extended Storms family, with a total of six independent households in 1840, accounted for four of the eight interracial marriages. All but one of Primas and Pamela Storms’s five sons married white women. Their oldest son, Joseph, came of age in 1810 and was married to Betsey Myres before 1820. Brother Henry was married by 1840, to a white woman named Sarah, and lived on family land in Panton. Primas Jr., the youngest of the Storms sons, married Anna Ayres in the 1840s. Unlike his brothers, John Storms married later in life; he came of age in 1824, but did not marry until the 1850s. The 1850 census counted him in Vergennes with his elderly mother and sister. Also living with them was Mary Keller, a young white woman born in Ireland, who may have been a domestic servant. By 1860, John had a white wife named Mary and an infant son named Primas, and the family was living in Rutland. Only Philip, Primas and Pamela’s second son, married a black woman; her name was Rebecca.

If tracing African American male heads of household is difficult, tracing women, whether black or white, is even harder. Betsey Myres, wife of Joseph Storms, is the only one of these women to emerge, if dimly, from the shadows. She was the daughter of John and Chloe Myres of Ferrisburgh. John Myres owned 50 acres of land and a house, but no outbuildings, taxed at \$5.50 in the 1814 grand list. Betsey’s father-in-law, Primas Storms, also included in Ferrisburgh’s 1814 grand list, owned a similar property—40 acres, a house, and no outbuildings—but his taxes

were only \$2.00. John Myres and Primas Storms were both in the lower ranks of Ferrisburgh property owners.

Betsey Storms's four sisters-in-law remain mostly unknown. Primas Jr.'s wife, Anna Ayres, had her maiden name recorded, but I have been unable to identify her family of origin. Mary Keller, an Irish immigrant, has also remained elusive. Perhaps her marriage to an African American man twenty years her senior was the happy ending to an unexpected May–December romance. Or was it evidence of her (and his) limited options or—even worse—an unintended pregnancy?³⁰ Neither Sarah nor Rebecca had their maiden names recorded in any documents unearthed so far, so their pasts remain hidden.

Shubael and Violet Clark of Hinesburgh had several daughters—Almira, Phoebe, and Harriet—who might have married the Storms sons. Marriage across communities was common, indeed necessary. But Almira Clark married William Langley of Rutland, which is even further from her home than Vergennes. Phoebe married Edwin Williams, who may have been a fugitive slave, and, after her death, so did her sister Harriet. The Clarks' oldest child, Lewis, accounted for another of the eight interracial marriages; his wife, Ruth Brown, was white.

Although they were a minority, these interracial couples were not unique, and seem to have been the inevitable result of a small African American population living among whites. Unlike other New England states, Vermont did not prohibit interracial marriage. According to James and Lois Horton, New England was unusual in the number of marriages between black men and white women.³¹ And all of the Addison County marriages from 1790 to 1860 were of black men and white women, suggesting that African American women may have faced even greater odds. Two of the Storms's daughters never married. And Pamela Storms, the Stevens Hotel's legendary cook, did not marry until she was forty-five years old. Her husband, Lewis Langley of Hinesburgh, was eleven years her junior, and they were married for less than a decade.³²

Some African Americans lived in extended households of kin and non-kin. Although this was no doubt a common practice throughout the period, the census did not record this information until 1850. That year there were seven such households. Jedidiah and Harriet Emery of Bristol, for example, had John, Mariah, and Emma Freeman in their household. And Phebe Niles and her daughter, Cynthia, formed an all-female household with Rachel Robinson in Robinson's East Street home in Vergennes. Phoebe Knight headed an interracial multi-family household in Vergennes in 1860; two laboring families, one African American and one Irish, made their homes with her. Rhoda Morocco headed the largest extended household recorded in this period. In 1860

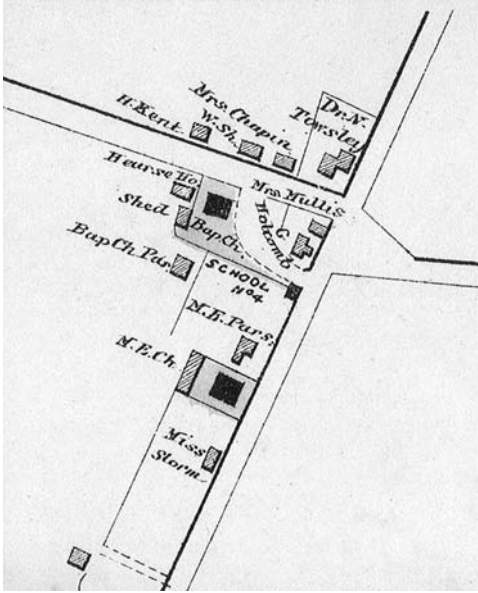
her Bristol household of sixteen included two entire families (Alonzo and Angeline Day's family of four and Eugene and Julia Crosier's family of six), four Brinton children ranging in age from three months to eight years, and thirteen-year-old Edward Nelson. An interesting arrangement turned up in the land records in Shoreham, where Sharper Allen lived in a house he had built on land owned by Cull Payne.³³

COMMUNITY AND CIVIC LIFE

The franchise—the proud mark of citizenship—was denied people of color in many northern states, but not in Vermont. And the right to vote in town meeting was one of the most significant and treasured aspects of Vermont life. Strange then, that it was among the least often recorded in Addison County town records. Theoretically, all adult men who wanted to participate in town business took the Freeman's Oath and were then qualified as voters. But lists of these men were kept rarely and randomly, regardless of color. Shubael Clark and his sons and sons-in-law had their swearings-in recorded in Hinesburgh town records, as did several members of the Peters family. Four of Primas and Pamela Storms's sons—Joseph, Philip, John, and Primas, Jr.—all voted in Vergennes town meetings regularly from the 1830s to 1850s. Indeed, Philip Storms not only voted, but was also elected pound keeper twice, in 1834 and 1835.³⁴

John Jackson was sworn a freeman in Charlotte in 1844, and Aaron Freeman was so sworn in 1848.³⁵ Jackson owned land in Charlotte, but Freeman did not, although his family had owned land and lived in Charlotte since the end of the eighteenth century. Officially, all black male heads of household from 1790 to 1860 were free to vote. How many did cannot be ascertained from town records.

African American parents certainly understood the importance of education, and their children were free to attend school in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh. Records of district schools in Charlotte, Bristol, Middlebury, Ferrisburgh, and Panton show that many did, including those from even the poorest families. The 1850 and 1860 censuses also recorded many black children as “at school.” The Vergennes schools would have counted four Storms children among their pupils in 1840 and 1850. Susannah Storms recognized the importance of education when she leased a small parcel of land—“on which the Stone School now stands”—to the town of Panton for as long as the school remained active. This school would have educated two of Susannah Storms's nieces and nephews in 1840 and four in 1860. Perhaps some of the interracial marriages noted above had their beginnings in these integrated classrooms.



Detail from inset, map of Panton, Vermont, showing locations of the Stone School, the Methodist Church, and the property of Miss Storms, from Atlas of Addison Co., Vermont (New York: F. W. Beers & Co., 1871).

Annual reports from 1845 to 1853 for School District 13 in Ferrisburgh present an intriguing possibility. The reports list four or five African American students every year. The odd thing is that the census listed their parents in other towns. Mary Ann Henry, for example, had two children listed in every one of these reports, but according to the 1850 census she lived in Charlotte. Similarly, Jedidiah Emery had a daughter in this school, but resided in Lincoln, if the census is correct. The clerk of School District 13 was Rowland T. Robinson, the primary leader of radical abolition in Vermont; one wonders if he made special arrangements to enroll black students in this school.³⁶ Both Mary Ann Henry and Jedidiah Emery worked in the Robinson household during these years.

The signatures on many documents and a few extant letters also testify to a broad level of basic literacy, or sometimes more, among black Vermonters. Andrew Storms, Joseph and Betsey's youngest child, was across the state attending the Academy in Chelsea, Vermont, in 1855. He wrote to Vergennes attorney Fred Woodbridge for help collecting on a note so that he could pay his tuition for another term.³⁷ Loudon Langley of Hinesburgh wrote several letters for publication during the Civil War, in which he served with distinction. Langley was both eloquent and passionate in his missives to Vermont's *Green Mountain Freeman* and *The Weekly Anglo-African*, published in New York.³⁸

The church was an essential center of community life and sociability in New England throughout the nineteenth century, and Vermont was no exception. Church membership also served as a badge of respectability and a source of mutual aid when needed. The African American population in Addison County was too small to support a church of its own, but some belonged to local white congregations. Many towns had Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist congregations or sometimes a “union church” of two or three denominations. Once again, loss of records presents a barrier to full understanding, but I found that some African Americans were active church members.³⁹

Primas Storms and his daughter Susannah joined the Pantton Baptist Church in 1807, apparently during a revival. A church committee “visited” Primas in 1820 for absence from worship services, and he lost his membership for the same reason six years later.⁴⁰ And although records of Pantton’s Methodist congregation have not survived, town records show that Susannah’s brother Henry Storms donated the land on which the church stands, so he no doubt was a church member.

The Clarks and Peters of Hinesburgh were also Baptists. Shubael and Violet Clark were accepted as members in the Hinesburgh Baptist Church in 1815, and many of their children were also baptized in the church. Shubael was clearly regarded with respect, as he served on numerous committees. His daughter and son-in-law, Almira and William Langley, brought a letter of recommendation from their congregation in Rutland when they moved to Hinesburgh and were also welcomed as members.⁴¹

African Americans also belonged to Addison County’s Congregational Churches. Several members of the Storms family belonged to the Vergennes Church. Philip, his wife Rebecca, their children, and his sister Pamela were all baptized in the late 1830s, a time of revivalism, as were Rachel Robinson and Mary Ann and Nancy Walters, from another local African American family. Andrew Storms, son of Joseph and Betsey, was baptized in 1851. Harvey F. Leavitt, who was called to minister at the Vergennes Congregational Church in 1836, also served as president of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society during most of its existence.⁴² Records of the Middlebury Congregational Church document seven African American members from 1806 to 1838, all of them women. The black congregants included Phebe Colvin, who was accepted in 1821 and later married Mingo Niles.⁴³

BLACK AND WHITE TOGETHER?

The degree to which African Americans were integrated into community life in antebellum Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh

—school, church, town—was significant, especially when compared with northern cities. Certainly the evidence gathered here bears little resemblance to the separate galleries in churches and other public venues, legal prohibitions against voting and intermarriage, inferior segregated schools, and squalid housing that historians have documented in cities throughout the North. Leonard Curry’s study of free blacks in America’s fifteen largest cities, for example, chronicles a relentless round of discrimination, poverty, segregation, and harassment bolstered by occasional outbreaks of mass violence.⁴⁴

African Americans clearly sought the support, protection, and comfort of the urban black community throughout the nineteenth century. Historians have suggested that the anonymity it provided acted as a buffer against day-to-day white hostility. But the size of the urban black population also contributed to the problem: The larger, more visible, and successful the black community, the greater the perceived threat among whites and the more pressing the need to strike back. Although Vermont put up few official barriers—it did not prohibit voting or intermarriage, nor did it mandate segregated schools—the evidence presented here suggests that by keeping white fear at bay, the small size of the black population made segregation unnecessary.⁴⁵

African Americans in Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh were clearly not invisible to their white neighbors, but they were too few to raise an alarm. Racial prejudice was the norm in Vermont, as it was everywhere in the United States, but the need to act it out in harsh or violent ways was reined in by the small size of the black population. As long as whites felt no serious threat, their need to control their black neighbors was kept in check. Thus, for example, when abolitionist speakers of the 1830s and 1840s were pelted with stones and eggs in Middlebury or Vergennes, the “mob” could not move on to attack black neighborhoods and institutions, as happened in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, because there were none to attack.⁴⁶ In this way, the size of Addison County’s African American population was both a blessing and a curse. Too small to call down the wrath of whites, it was also too small—and, critically, too scattered—to create a viable community.

Historians have defined the “black community” as one that was large enough to support a church and some sort of mutual aid society.⁴⁷ If all 161 African Americans who lived in the area in 1810 had made their homes in Vergennes, let’s say, then they might have gathered for worship or organized for self-help. But their small numbers were scattered through twelve towns that year, leaving most with few or no neighbors of African descent nearby. Although it was spread out, the black population was not evenly dispersed. There were a few what we might

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call “clusters,” small concentrations made up primarily of one or two extended families: the Clark, Peters, Langley, and Williams families in Hinesburgh; the Freeman, Jackson, and Morocco families in Charlotte; and the extended Storms family in Vergennes and Pantton. Although they persisted through several decades, these family enclaves were not the germ of something larger or permanent. They did not continue to attract new families and expand, but slowly declined, as children and grandchildren moved away.

Ephemeral though they were in the long term, that these clusters were recognizable to their white neighbors is clear from their place names, some of which remain to remind us of their former inhabitants. The Freeman and Morocco families, for example, lived in a part of Charlotte known then as “Guinea” and recalled today by Guinea Road. A Chittenden County map distributed by a local bank as late as the 1980s showed “Nigger Hill Road” where Lincoln Hill Road crosses the town line from Hinesburgh into Huntington. And some Ferrisburgh residents still recall “nigger orchard,” where the Storms family first settled.⁴⁸

These place names suggest the kind of prejudice that black Vermonters faced in the nineteenth century. Barriers need not be legal or official to be effective, and this is where the value of public records breaks down. They tell us that four Storms brothers voted in Vergennes town meeting over several decades, but not whether they were jeered or cheered for doing so; that Cyrus Dolby’s three children attended school in Middlebury, but not if their classmates shunned or welcomed them. A stunning example of white prejudice was recorded in the abolitionist household of Rowland Thomas and Rachel Gilpin Robinson. Although the Robinsons were thoroughgoing Garrisonian abolitionists, none of their four children shared their views. Their second son George, who never married and lived at home with his parents, was particularly

*Detail from map of
Chittenden County,
distributed by the
Howard Bank,
mid-1980s.*



resentful and outspoken. He expressed a sort of rank-and-file racism that, for George, had the extra advantage of spiting his parents.

George Robinson's sentiments were recorded in letters to his absent brother Rowland Evans Robinson in 1858 and 1859, concerning household help hired by his mother. Two white domestic workers had left and been replaced by African Americans, Sarah and Clara, in December 1858. "So you see," wrote George, "the Black Star is decidedly in the ascendant, whereby the damned niggers are more than ever impressed with the idea that we can't keep house without them . . . the rest of the family being as firm in the colored persuasion as ever." George bemoaned Sarah's departure in January 1859, "so we are out of a maid. I suppose the next move will be to get Mary Ann or Frances, unless by chance, they find one somewhere that can out-stink even them." Mary Ann was Mary Ann Henry, whose work for the Robinsons was recorded in family account books and who headed an independent black household in Charlotte; Frances was her daughter. George was obsessed with the racist notion common at the time that African Americans smelled badly and more so than whites. He said of Frances in February 1859, "I think her odor improves finely, for I can't pass within four feet of her without holding my breath."⁴⁹

Familiarity definitely bred contempt for George Robinson, but not so for the neighboring Rogers family. This evidence comes from a diary kept by Quaker Mary Rogers on an almost daily basis from 1841 to 1848. Unmarried middle-aged siblings Mary and Joseph Rogers lived with their elderly father on their farm in Ferrisburgh. Also living in this white household, as she had almost continuously since 1816, was Susannah Storms, Primas and Pamela Storms's oldest child. Susannah had come "to help mother" for a time in 1815 and then "came home to live with [us]" the following year. "Susa," as Mary usually called her, may have joined the Rogers household as a domestic servant, although this is not clear.⁵⁰ Whatever Susannah Storms's arrangement with the Rogers family had been, in 1841 she deeded her family's Panton land to Joseph Rogers "in consideration of a good and comfortable maintenance during my natural life survival." Then fifty-three years old, Susannah evidently wanted to protect herself should she become sick or disabled as she aged. The arrangement was dissolved four years later when Joseph Rogers deeded the land back for "\$1 and relinquishment of any claim she may have had."⁵¹

Mary Rogers's diary is a remarkable document. Susannah Storms figures on nearly every page and seemed to have been an equal and fully participating member of both the household and the community. When she was sick, neighbors came to sit up with her, as did Mary and some

members of her own family. Susa visited various white neighbors and sat up with them when they were sick. She and Mary occasionally rode to Vergennes together to shop, deliver cheese or wool, or visit. The main focus of Mary Rogers's diary, however, was household labor, which she and Susa seemed to undertake on an equal footing along with one or two other women who did not live in the Rogers household. They laundered and ironed clothes, prepared and preserved food, cleaned house, and sewed. Susa seemed to have had a special knack for spinning and making cheese.

Susannah Storms was not the only person of color welcomed in the Rogers household. Her own relatives, naturally, were among the African American visitors. Susa's white sister-in-law Betsey and her two children stopped for dinner on their way to a religious camp meeting, for example. And Amos Morocco, an African American farmer then living in Lincoln, stopped for dinner and to stay the night on numerous occasions. The scene Mary Rogers depicted was one of comfortable and natural interaction among neighbors, regardless of race.

So which was it—grudging, nasty racism or neighborly acceptance? Both, of course. The attitudes of white Vermonters covered a wide spectrum in the nineteenth century. Most may have clustered at one end with George Robinson, but others held opposite views. Of course, the cross-racial experiences of black and white Vermonters would have been utterly different. Association with their black neighbors was a matter of choice for white residents of Addison County, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh, and most would have shunned it. African Americans, on the other hand, faced unavoidable daily contact with the majority white population in every aspect of their lives—work, school, church, store, street. And for black Vermonters, these daily interactions no doubt ranged from friendship to tolerance to hostility, which they would have done their best to navigate. Those who became respectable in the eyes of whites—the church goers and property owners—no doubt found greater acceptance than struggling day laborers.

MORE QUESTIONS

This initial investigation proved more promising than I anticipated and raised some intriguing questions that should be answered for the state as a whole. Many black emigrants in the early years were born enslaved in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York. Some came to Vermont with owners and then gained freedom; others came on their own after emancipation.⁵² Can we learn more about the transition from bondage to freedom from these experiences? What about the post-Revolutionary hope for improved race relations? One historian

found that blacks lived in more “urban” settings, even in rural upstate New York, moving from farms to towns after emancipation.⁵³ Were black Vermonters also concentrated in the larger villages and towns? The majority in Addison County resided in Vergennes, Middlebury, and later Bristol, but many also lived in Ferrisburgh, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh—all farming communities. And were black families in the larger towns clustered together in neighborhoods or scattered? How many African Americans across the state were able to acquire farms? Were black farmers accepted into the “network of obligation” on which rural families depended? Joanne Pope Melish argued that emancipation may have made African Americans free men, but that their white neighbors would never allow them to become freemen—fully functioning citizens.⁵⁴ Are the cases of voting documented in Vergennes, Charlotte, and Hinesburgh typical for Vermont? Were black Vermonters in fact allowed to become freemen? Was interracial marriage as common throughout the state? How were these relationships formed and how did these couples and their children fare over time?

One issue that deserves particular attention is harassment. I found no incidents like those suffered by the Prince and Brace families in Windsor and Rutland Counties—the two Vermont counties with the highest proportion of African Americans at every census.⁵⁵ Abijah Prince and Jeffrey Brace both achieved freedom after the American Revolution and eventually settled in Vermont, where they purchased land. Both had white neighbors who waged campaigns of physical and verbal harassment in an effort to drive them off their land. Lucy Terry Prince fought her family’s case all the way to the Vermont Supreme Court. The Braces were less successful and eventually sold out to their tormentor in Poultney and moved to Franklin County. And the Braces faced an even more dangerous attack when a member of the Manchester Selectboard attempted to indenture two of their children against their will. Remember, the Vermont Constitution countenanced childhood slavery at this time. Lucy Prince’s courage and eloquence in standing up to the white establishment earned her a celebrated place in Vermont history (and memory), and Jeffrey Brace published his autobiography.⁵⁶ How many other African American families were similarly hounded and harassed but left no record of their trials? That I uncovered no incidents in Addison County, Charlotte, or Hinesburgh should be interpreted with caution, and the search should definitely not stop here.

NOTES

I am grateful to Amy Godine, Gary Nash, James Brewer Stewart, Amani Whitfield, and Kari Winter for comments on various drafts of this paper, and to *Vermont History* reviewer Elise Guyette.

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¹ Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Robert J. Cottrol, *The Afro-Yankees: Providence's Black Community in the Antebellum Era* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999); Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770–1810* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991).

²The most detailed presentation is Gary B. Nash, "Forging Freedom: The Emancipation Experience in the Northern Seaport Cities, 1775–1820," in: Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983).

³Several works have begun to fill this gap: Kari Winter, ed., *The Blind African Slave* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2004); Elise Guyette, "The Story of Lincoln Hill, 1790–1870: From the Dustbins of History into the Classroom" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vermont, 2007); and Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Mr. and Mrs. Prince* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

⁴Nash, "Forging Freedom," 10, 72; Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 182, 187; White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 155.

⁵The land, school, vital, and town meeting records referenced here are maintained in town halls. "Grand lists" record information on and assess the value of land, buildings, and livestock to determine taxes owed; the exact data recorded varied from year to year. Vermont town clerks kept incomplete records throughout the nineteenth century. The Vermont Legislature enacted stricter rules for recording vital statistics in 1857, and improvement is evident after that in some towns. Survival of records is also a problem; some towns have no school records, for example, and others no extant grand lists. The only town records that were well kept and remain complete are land records, and for families that owned land and persisted through several generations, they often answer many questions. Despite these shortcomings, I was able to find information on many of these African American families. For residents of Hinesburgh, I relied heavily on Elise Guyette's doctoral dissertation, "The Story of Lincoln Hill, 1790–1870: From the Dustbins of History into the Classroom."

⁶This table and those that follow were constructed from federal census data, available on microfilm and through a number of online databases.

⁷I gauged persistence at the state level, which seemed a fairer measure. I checked to see if household heads listed in only one Addison County census were listed elsewhere in Vermont in subsequent years. I found that seven had moved within the state, and most had not gone far, settling in adjoining Rutland County.

⁸P. Jeffrey Potash, *Vermont's Burned-Over District: Patterns of Community Development and Religious Activity, 1761–1850* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1991), 54, 83, 104; Kenneth Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson* (Vergennes, 1996), 14.

⁹Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 190–191.

¹⁰Alden M. Rollins, *Vermont Warnings Out, Vol. 1–Northern Vermont* (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1995), 26, 37, 54, 56, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 77, 79. Selectmen had one year to issue the warning to new residents, thus establishing the town's lack of responsibility for their welfare should it ever become an issue. Many were warned out but not actually expected to leave.

¹¹Michael Sherman, Gene Sessions, and P. Jeffrey Potash, *Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont* (Barre: Vermont Historical Society, 2004), 131–133.

¹²Cull Payne: Shoreham Land Records, Volume 2, 221; William Ferris, Jr: Ferrisburgh Land Records Volume 8, 151, Volume 3, 169, Volume 4, 225; Anthony Edwards: Ferrisburgh Land Records, Volume 7, 567 and Volume 9, 233; Noah Morris: Ferrisburgh Land Records Volume 9, 253, 286.

¹³Guyette, "The Story of Lincoln Hill," 49, 69.

¹⁴Land transactions of the various members of the Storms family are too numerous to list here; sales relating to their land in Panton alone include more than fifty deeds recorded in five different volumes of land records.

¹⁵I am grateful to Amy Mincher, who shared her considerable research on Prince King. King had a white housekeeper named Miranda (or Amanda) McHurd in his household in the 1850, 1860, and 1870 censuses. Whether she was his housekeeper or his common-law wife is open to speculation, but there was clearly a strong bond between them. Each prepared a will leaving everything to the other in 1876 and 1877, Addison County Probate Records, Volume 44, 110–116 (King) and Volume 35, 572–575 (McHurd).

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¹⁶Sellers held nearly all the mortgages I found. A deed conveying the property was followed by a second deed recording the mortgage and detailing how the loan was to be repaid. This is in contrast to practice in the Connecticut River Valley. Randolph Roth found that African Americans living east of the Green Mountains “remained poor because they were denied credit” and that 60 percent of mortgages were held by town “capitalists.” *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 23, 25. Mortgage holders included Shubael Clark (1796), George Hazard (1806), Joseph and Philip Storms (1815), Lewis Clark (1821), Prince Peters (1824), William Langley (1826), Joseph Storms (1840), Prince King (1841), William H. Howard (1846), Henry Langley (1851), Lewis Langley (1851), and George Walter (1865).

¹⁷Philip Storms, mortgage deed (\$150) to Rachel Robinson, July 8, 1836, Vergennes Land Records Volume 5, 317. Rhoda Olive Morocco, mortgage deed (\$66) to Joseph Richardson, December 21, 1850, Lincoln Land Records, Volume 7, 199 and Rhoda Olive Morocco, mortgage deed (\$58.34) to Stephen M. Colby, April 19, 1853, Lincoln Land Records, Volume 7, 421. Susannah Storms, mortgage deed to Joseph Rogers and William Hazzard, March 17, 1841, Pantton Land Records, Volume 6, 259.

¹⁸Potash, *Vermont's Burned-Over District*, 82.

¹⁹Rowland Evans Robinson, “Mingo: A Silhouette,” in: Rowland E. Robinson, *Out of Bondage* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1936), 65–69; Robinson Farm Account Book, 1833–1892, Carton 1, Volume 5: Mingo Niles, 30, 1838–1841; Jedidiah Emery, 40; Robinson Farm Account Book, 1845–1852, Carton 1, Volume 6: Aaron Freeman in 1846, 1851.

²⁰“Death of ‘Jack’ Storms,” *Vergennes Vermonter*, 7 August 1868.

²¹Middlebury Marriages, Births, Deaths, Volume II, 1857–1886, 180.

²²Ira Berlin, “The Structure of the Free Negro Caste in the Antebellum United States,” *Journal of Social History* 9 (Spring 1976), 301; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 117–118; Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 28. Gary Nash has argued that fewer colonial slaves were trained as artisans “than historians have sometimes supposed.” He also makes the relevant point that “it is impossible to know” the exact number of skilled slaves, “Forging Freedom,” 15.

²³Robinson Farm Account Book, 1845–1852, Carton 1, Volume 6: Mary Ann Henry, December 10, 1843, July 10, 1844, September 5, 1844, and July 27, 1845, Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vermont.

²⁴“Death of ‘Jack’ Storms,” *Vergennes Vermonter*, 7 August 1868.

²⁵Pamela Storms was listed in the Vergennes grand list from 1844 to 1858 with property valued as high as \$279. Her will—under her married name of Pamela Langley—was dated October 9, 1865, and is recorded in the Chittenden County Probate Court. I want to thank Elise Guyette for sharing a copy of the will.

²⁶Rachel Robinson’s house was assessed at \$93 down to as low as \$40 over the years; the median home value in Vergennes in 1850 was \$450.

²⁷Aaron Freeman’s work at Rokeby is documented in farm account books, see note 19. George G. Robinson to Thomas R. Robinson, Jr., Savannah, Georgia, 7 March 1847. Robinson Family Papers, Rokeby Museum, on deposit at the Stewart-Swift Research Center, Henry Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont.

²⁸Rachel Williams was younger than most brides, and the age difference between her and her husband was greater than usual. The Hortons say in their study of Boston that black men married in their late twenties and women in their early twenties, and that the typical difference in age was about two years. Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*, 21.

²⁹In his statistical portrait of African Americans, Clayton Cramer says of the small and declining population in Northern New England, “This suggests that free blacks were failing to marry and raise families.” *Black Demographic Data, 1790–1860* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1997), 36.

³⁰Mary Keller’s status in the Storms household is unclear. In 1850 John Storms headed a Vergennes household that included his ninety-six-year-old mother, his sixty-seven-year-old sister, and sixteen-year-old Mary Keller. Was she employed as a domestic or did she merely board with the family? I assume that she is the white Mary Storms listed as John’s wife in 1860, as both women were born in Ireland. She was probably older than sixteen in 1850, however; her age was recorded as forty-two in 1860 and forty-six in 1870.

³¹Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 49.

³²Vergennes Marriage Records Volume I, 997.

³³Sharper Allen: Shoreham Land Records Volume 5, 130 refers to “my now dwelling house standing on land of Cull Pain.”

³⁴Vergennes Town Records, Volume B, 1814–1844, 225, 239, 261, 265–66, 271, 283, 285, 290, 299, 310, 318, 326, 334, 342, 350, 362; Vergennes Town Records Volume C, 8, 14, 20, 30, several unnumbered pages.

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³⁵ Charlotte Town Records, Volume 3, 124, 154.

³⁶ I am grateful to Jennifer Staats for calling these school reports to my attention. They are housed in an unmarked document box in the Ferrisburgh Town Clerk's office.

³⁷ Andrew Storms to F. E. Woodbridge, 2 April 1855, Weeks Collection, Stewart-Swift Research Center, Henry Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont.

³⁸ James Fuller, "The Letters of Loudon S. Langley," *Vermont History* 67 (Summer/Fall 1999): 85–91.

³⁹ Substantial records of the Congregational and Baptist Churches in Charlotte survive, but I could identify no black members in either congregation; both sets of records in possession of the Charlotte Congregational Church. I found almost no records of Methodist Churches during the period; a transcribed list of members in North Ferrisburgh in 1842–1843 showed no African American names.

⁴⁰ Records of Pantton Baptist Church, Book I, 1794–1817. Pages are not numbered, but entries can be found readily by date; Susan Storms, October 3 and 18, 1807, and Primas Storms, December 5–6, 1807. The records of Primas Storms's discipline are August 31, 1820, and September 2, 1826; records in possession of Pantton Baptist Church.

⁴¹ Guyette, "The Story of Lincoln Hill," 59–61.

⁴² Records of Vergennes Congregational Church, Volume I, 1793–1846, 207, 209, and 230; Volume II, 1846–1862, 186, 190, 192, 200, and 219; records in possession of Vergennes Congregational Church.

⁴³ Records of the Middlebury Congregational Church, Volume I, 1790–1853, 17, 20, 22, 24; records held by Stewart-Swift Research Center, Henry Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont.

⁴⁴ Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America*; Litwack, *North of Slavery*; Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*.

⁴⁵ Emma Lapsansky stresses the importance of black success in "Since they got those separate churches: Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia," *American Quarterly* (Spring 1980): 54–78. The Hortons also comment on the relationship between the size of the black population, its perceived threat, and white hostility, *In Hope of Liberty*, 9, 28, 103, 209. See also Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 134, 137.

⁴⁶ Leonard L. Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing": *Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). Richards sees anti-black violence as an outgrowth of anti-abolitionist violence, an assertion Melish disputes, *Disowning Slavery*, 199.

⁴⁷ Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, ix, 149–150; Nash, *Forging Freedom, 73*; Harry Reed, *Platform for Change: The Foundations of the Northern Free Black Community, 1775–1865* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994).

⁴⁸ William Wallace Higbee, *Around the Mountains: Historical Essays about Charlotte, Ferrisburgh and Monkton* (Charlotte, Vt.: Charlotte Historical Society, 1991), 26, 65, 122. Higbee says of Guinea, "so called on account of the numerous colored folks who answered to the name of Morocco."

⁴⁹ George Robinson had a drinking problem as well, and it was a continual source of conflict with his parents. For letters quoted, see: George G. Robinson to Rowland Evans Robinson, 26 December 1858, 9 January 1859, 30 January 1859, 21 February 1859, and 27 March 1859, Robinson Family Papers on deposit at the Stewart-Swift Research Center, Henry Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont.

⁵⁰ Mary Rogers kept her diary in ten small booklets made of paper folded and sewn. She seems to have been copying over old notations and in the middle of 1842 (Volume 2) began adding entries from 1811 to 1816, when she was a student at Nine Partners, a Quaker boarding school in Dutchess County, New York. Her entry for April 24, 1816, says, "Susannah Storms came home with me to live with us and she staid with us till the [blank] of 2nd month 1828 and I think she was never absent more than three weeks at a time all the while that was only once a year when she would go home to do some work for herself she would go home and be gone once in a while two or three nights at a time sometimes only one day but not often." Susannah Storms was listed in her own household in Ferrisburgh in the 1830 census; what her living arrangements were and why she left the Rogers household, I have not discovered. Mary Rogers Diary, Volumes 1–10, Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vermont.

⁵¹ Vergennes Land Records, Volume 6, 259, 372. Mary Rogers commented on this in her diary, although she did not explain why Susannah took this step. "Susa gave Joseph & William Hasard a deed of her land and went to Pantton to carry the deed to be recorded & went and informed her parents what was done and Joseph went and brought her things from there in the evening." Mary Rogers Diary, Volume 1, 17 March 1841, Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vermont.

⁵² A few black Vermonters arrived as slaves in white households; how they gained their freedom remains obscure in most cases. Mingo Niles, for example, was born enslaved in Rhode Island and moved to Ferrisburgh as part of the Champlin family. He was living independently by 1810. Primas

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and Pamela Storms and three of their children were enslaved by Platt Rogers and came with him to Vermont, but were listed in their own household in 1800. Town histories report that Rogers intended to free the family at his death, but that the task was left to his children. I found nothing in the record to support or refute this, as no will or estate papers survive. One wonders what these men intended by bringing slaves into a state that had outlawed adult slavery. Did they expect to keep them in bondage somehow? Or were they prepared to grant them freedom? Ferrisburgh records document the freeing of two slaves, Frank Negro and Harry Collins, in 1797. Abel Thompson entered quit claim deeds to both men, relinquishing “all right and title I have or ever had to said Frank or his service of time as a slave.” Ferrisburgh Land Records, Volume 4, 171, 172.

⁵³Kathryn Grover, *Make a Way Somehow: African American Life in a Northern Community, 1790–1965* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 27.

⁵⁴Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 119–120.

⁵⁵The University of Virginia Library maintains a web page with tables and maps showing the African American population in each county for 1820 to 1860 at: <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong2.php>.

⁵⁶Gerzina, *Mr. and Mrs. Prince; Winter, Blind African Slave*.