

AIM: Where did New York's "Founders" stand on the abolition of slavery?

Lesson developed by Diane Maier, Long Beach (NY) Middle School

BACKGROUND: During the American Revolution, New Yorkers fervently debated the implications of enslavement in a society founded on the propositions that "All men are created equal" and are endowed with "inalienable rights." In 1777, John Jay, who headed the New York City delegation to the state Provincial Congress, unsuccessfully lobbied for an emancipation act. At the state's first Constitutional Convention, a majority of the delegates voted for a clause guaranteeing gradual emancipation. Gouverneur Morris wrote a statement supported by thirty-one of the thirty-five delegates that declared "Every human being who breathes the air of the state shall enjoy the privileges of a freeman." Despite these lofty pronouncements, the legislature refused to act during the war and ultimately decided only to support manumission for enslaved Africans who had fought for independence against the British. However, in 1785, it did vote to outlaw the slave trade in the state and in 1788, to declare free any enslaved African sold in New York. After the American Revolution, the abolitionist movement in New York City and State included many prominent leaders of the new nation. The Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves was headed by John Jay and Alexander Hamilton. It purchased the freedom of people held in bondage and founded the African Free School. Jay, Hamilton, and Aaron Burr, helped win nearly three dozen legal cases in defense of the freedom of Black New Yorkers threatened with kidnapping and being sent to the south as slaves. Among the members of the society were former local slave owners and slave traders, including representatives of the Livingston family. Extended activity sheets are available on-line.

DO NOW: Review the Declaration of Independence.

MOTIVATION: The Declaration of Independence states that "All men are created equal." How can a nation based on this statement have slavery?

ACTIVITY: Where did New York's "Founders" stand on the abolition of slavery?

Students will be split up into 3 groups. Each group will read and answer the questions to a different handout, A. Gouverneur Morris, B. Alexander Hamilton, C. John Jay

Students will discuss their readings with the class using their answers as discussion points.

The class will compare and contrast Morris' views with Hamilton's views. They will then debate how they think each man would have reacted to the Gradual Abolition Act.

KEY QUESTIONS:

How do the views of Gouverneur Morris compare with those of Alexander Hamilton and John Jay?

Why do you think many people supported the idea of gradual abolition?

What problems did people fear would occur with immediate emancipation?

How do you think Morris and Hamilton reacted to the Gradual Abolition Act?

What evidence have you found that John Jay was an influential figure in the development of the United States?

Do you believe that John Jay believed in the principles stated in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution? Explain.

Do you think that John Jay's ownership of slaves hurt his argument for abolition? Explain.

In your opinion, was John Jay a moral politician or a political opportunist?

SUMMARY QUESTION: Why did these early leaders of New York State oppose slavery?

HOMEWORK: Pretend you are a resident of New York State in the year 1799. Write a letter to your Senator expressing your views on the Gradual Abolition Act. Be sure to state the reasons for your ideas.

APPLICATION: Pretend you are about to address the influential politicians of the early 19th Century. Write a speech describing your feelings on John Jay and his positions on slavery.

Where did New York's "Founders" stand on the abolition of slavery?

A. Gouverneur Morris: Gouverneur Morris was born in 1752 on his family's Morrisania estate in what is now the Bronx. His family was politically influential and wealthy. His mother owned enslaved Africans and his half-brother was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. From 1775 to 1777, Morris represented Westchester County in New York's Revolutionary Congress and he helped draft the first New York State Constitution. At the state's Constitutional Convention, he proposed a motion, which was defeated, to abolish slavery in New York.

Motion proposed by Gouverneur Morris at the New York State Constitutional Convention, 1777.

"The rights of human nature and the principles of our holy religion call upon us to dispense the blessings of freedom to all mankind. . . . It is therefore recommended to the Legislatures of the State of New York to take measures consistent with the public safety for abolishing domestic slavery."

B. Alexander Hamilton: Alexander Hamilton was born on the island of Nevis in the British West Indies in 1757. As a child and young man, he witnessed the brutal system of slavery on the sugar plantations. During the Revolutionary War, Hamilton argued that Africans had the same natural abilities as Europeans and that slaves should be recruited as soldiers and given "their freedom with their muskets."

Letter from Alexander Hamilton to John Jay, President of the Continental Congress, March 14, 1779.

I believe we should "raise two, three or four battalions of negroes; . . . I have not the least doubt, that the negroes will make very excellent soldiers, with proper management. . . . I mention this because I frequently hear it objected to the scheme of embodying negroes that they are too stupid to make soldiers. . . . I think their want of cultivation . . . joined with the habit of subordination which they acquire from a life of servitude, will make them sooner become soldiers than our White inhabitants. . . . It should be considered that if we do not make use of them in this way, the enemy probably will. . . . I believe this will have a good influence upon those who remain, by opening a door to their emancipation."

C. John Jay: In 1777, John Jay led an unsuccessful effort to include the abolition of slavery in New York State's first Constitution. Jay was an advocate for Black education and in 1787, he helped found New York's African Free School. In 1799, Governor John Jay signed into law a measure providing that from July 4th of that year, all children born to slave parents would be free (subject only to apprenticeship) and that the export of enslaved people to other states would be prohibited.

John Jay on Manumission, 1780.

"Till America comes into this Measure [abolition], her prayers to Heaven for Liberty will be impious. . . This is a strong expression, but it is just. Were I in [the] Legislature I would prepare a bill for the Purpose with great Care, and I would never cease moving it till it became a Law or I ceased to be a member. I believe God governs this world, and I believe it to be a Maxim in his as in our Court that those who ask for Equity ought to do it."

Questions

1. Why did Gouverneur Morris believe that slavery should be abolished?
2. Why Alexander Hamilton believe African Americans could help the Revolutionary cause?
3. What problems did Hamilton expect in recruiting them?
4. John Jay says that "those who ask for Equity ought to do it." In your opinion, what does he mean?
5. In your opinion, how did the War for Independence advance the battle to end slavery?

AIM: What was life like for African Americans in upstate New York?

Lesson developed by Monica Longo, Kennedy High School, Bellmore, NY

BACKGROUND: As Americans moved west in the decades following independence, people of African ancestry became more of a presence in upstate and western New York. Joseph Hodge, also known as “Black Joe,” was one of the first permanent non-native settlers in the region near Buffalo. George W. Nicholas tells the story of enslaved Africans being brought to Geneva. Austin Stewart was born into slavery in Virginia in 1793. As a young man, he was brought to upstate New York where he escaped from bondage and eventually settled in the Rochester area. In excerpts from his memoirs, Solomon Northup describes his family’s experience in Minerva (Essex county) and Saratoga Springs (Saratoga county).

DO NOW: Locate Buffalo, Geneva, Rochester, Albany and Saratoga Springs on a map of New York State.

MOTIVATION: Why was upstate New York an attractive place for Blacks to settle in the early 19th century?

ACTIVITY: Student teams will read excerpts about Black life from different sections of upstate New York. They will answer questions and prepare to report back to the class on their findings.

KEY QUESTIONS:

What was the relationship between African Americans and native Americans?

What does it mean to be emancipated?

Does emancipation mean that someone has full and equal citizenship rights?

SUMMARY: What was life like for African Americans in upstate New York in the decades between independence and emancipation?

APPLICATION: Create a poem/rap/song/picture of what life would be like as a free Black in upstate New York.

“Section 4: The Struggle for Emancipation and Citizenship” in the on-line version contains the following lessons:

How did the institution of slavery influence the authors of the Federal Constitutional Convention?

Where did New York’s “founders” stand on slavery?

Why did some New Yorkers view abolitionists as a threat to the nation?

How did conditions change for New York’s African American population after passage of the gradual emancipation act?

What was life like for enslaved Africans on Long Island at the start of the new nation?

What was life like for African Americans in upstate New York in the decades between independence and emancipation?

What were race relations like in Brooklyn (Kings County) in the early years of the new nation?

Why did New Yorkers debate voting rights for African Americans?

Should enslaved Africans rebel against their masters?

What steps did New York and the United States take to end slavery and slave trade at the beginning of the new nation?

How did New York City’s African American population campaign to end slavery?

A. The First “American” to Settle in the Buffalo Region (1784)

Source: <http://www.buffalonian.com/history/articles/%3C1800/whitebjoe.html>

Ontario County, in western New York State, was created by the state legislature in 1789. It was later divided into fourteen counties, including Genesee (1802), Allegany (1806) Chautauqua (1808), Cattaraugus (1808), Niagara (1808), Erie (1821) and Orleans (1824). The first federal census in 1790 listed 105 White families in Ontario County, but none in the area near Buffalo Creek that later became Erie County. While there was a Seneca Village and a British fort in Erie, there is a dispute over who was the first “American” to settle in the area. The leading candidates are Joseph Hodge and Cornelius Winney. ,

Joseph Hodge, also known as “Black Joe,” was taken prisoner by Seneca Indians during the Revolutionary War. He was released to United States authorities at Fort Stanwix in December, 1784. Hodge then returned to Seneca Nation where he married into the tribe and became a fur trader. His presence at Buffalo Creek was noted in a report on a counsel meeting of the Seneca tribe by the Rev. Kirkland in 1788. According to contemporary accounts, by 1792, Hodge was established as an Indian trader on Cattaraugus Creek. In 1796, Perry Smith wrote that Hodge was a “negro” who “had an Indian wife, who bore him children. He understood the Seneca language and was often employed as interpreter. He was supposed to be a runaway slave, and died at an advanced age, on the Cattaraugus Reservation.”

Cornelius Winney, also known as “Dutchman,” migrated to the region from the Hudson River Valley. He is referred to in written accounts from the era starting in 1791. Winney’s small log store was about four miles from the Seneca Village. Hinds Chamberlain, who visited Buffalo Creek in 1792, described the settlement. “We arrived at the mouth of Buffalo Creek the next morning. There was but one white man there. I think his name was Winney, an Indian trader. His building stood first as you descend from the high ground. He had rum, whiskey, Indian knives, trinkets, etc. His house was full of Indians. They looked at us with a good deal of curiosity. We had but a poor night’s rest. The Indians were in and out all night, getting liquor.” There is also a letter signed by Winney to General Chapin, the local Superintendent of Indian Affairs. It is dated August 3, 1792. “I inform Gen. Chapin that about seventy-nine of the Canadian Indians is gone to Detroit. They seem to be for war, and a number of Indians to go up. I further inform you that the Indians of this place are to go up in the first King’s vessel that comes down. Prince Edward is arrived at Fort Niagara. Should I hear anything worth while to write, I shall let you know.”

Questions

1. Who were Joseph Hodge and Cornelius Winney?
2. Why is there a dispute about the history of the settlement in the area that becomes Erie County?

B. Bringing Slaves to Geneva, New York (1803)

Source: Kathryn Grover (1994). *Make a Way Somehow, African-American Life in a Northern Community, 1790-1965* (Syracuse University Press), 17.

This is from a family oral history passed from generation to generation. George W. Nicholas wrote down the story as told by his uncle in 1873. “We left Hampstead (the name of the plantation in Stafford County, VA) on Sunday, October 21st 1803 . . . There were two stage coaches with four horses each, a driver and a postillion riding one of the leaders, a “coachee” with four horses, driver and postillion. The two stages were made at Hampstead by their own workmen [slaves] from timber cut on the place, the hubs of the wheels from locust trees near the house and after their arrival at Geneva, they were sold to Levi Stevens and ran on stage line from Albany to Geneva. . . . Four, four-horse wagons for the colored people and their baggage came with about seventy five colored people directly over the Alleghanies [*sic*] in charge of Col. John Fitzhugh. The men and the women, who were able, walked; the invalid women and small children rode in the wagons. They went about half a mile together, then the whites turned to the right, and the blacks to the left and did not meet again until they met in Geneva [New York] about the middle of November. The whites came by Albany, the blacks directly north thru Pennsylvania. They had had parties here for two years previously raising crops and making preparations.

Questions:

1. How did the groups travel from Virginia to New York?
2. In your opinion, why did Blacks and Whites travel in different ways?

C. Austin Steward's Journey from Slavery to Freedom (1817)

Source: [http:// docsouth.unc.edu/steward/steward.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/steward/steward.html).

Austin Steward was born in 1793 in Prince William County, Virginia. As a youth, he was brought to upstate New York where he eventually secured his freedom and established himself as a merchant in Rochester. In his memoirs, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman* (Rochester, NY: William Alling, 1857), Steward wrote: "Everywhere that Slavery exists, it is nothing but slavery. I found it just as hard to be beaten over the head with a piece of iron in New York as it was in Virginia. Whips and chains are everywhere necessary to degrade and brutalize the slave, in order to reduce him to that abject and humble state which Slavery requires" (107-108). Read the excerpts from Steward's memoirs and answer the questions that correspond to each reading.

1. We traveled northward, through Maryland, Pennsylvania, and a portion of New York, to Sodus Bay, where we halted for some time. We made about twenty miles per day, camping out every night, and reached that place after a march of twenty days. Every morning the overseer called the roll, when every slave must answer to his or her name, felling to the ground with his cowhide, any delinquent who failed to speak out in quick time. After the roll had been called, and our scanty breakfast eaten, we marched on again, our company presenting the appearance of some numerous caravan crossing the desert of Sahara. When we pitched our tents for the night, the slaves must immediately set about cooking not their supper only, but their breakfast, so as to be ready to start early the next morning, when the tents were struck; and we proceeded on our journey in this way to the end (52-53).

2. I managed to purchase a spelling book, and set about teaching myself to read. . . . Every spare moment I could find was devoted to that employment. At last, however, I was discovered. . . . I had been set to work in the sugar bush, and I took my spelling book with me. When a spare moment occurred I sat down to study, and so absorbed was I in the attempt to blunder through my lesson, that I did not hear the Captain's son-in-law coming until he was fairly upon me. He sprang forward, caught my poor old spelling book, and threw it into the fire, where it was burned to ashes; and then came my turn. He gave me first a severe flogging, and then swore if he ever caught me with another book, he would "whip every inch of skin off my back" (82-83).

3. My master . . . hired me out to a man by the name of Joseph Robinson. . . . Robinson lived about three miles from the village of Bath, on a small farm, and was not only a poor man but a very mean one. He was . . . tyrannical and cruel to those in his employ; and having hired me as a "slave boy," he appeared to feel at full liberty to wreak his brutal passion on me at any time, whether I deserved rebuke or not; . . . he would frequently draw from the cart-tongue a heavy iron pin, and beat me over the head with it, so unmercifully that he frequently sent the blood flowing over my scanty apparel, and from that to the ground, before he could feel satisfied (92-93).

4. In September, 1817, I commenced business in Rochester. . . . I established a meat market, which. . . . was liberally patronized by the citizens; but there were butchers in the village who appeared to be unwilling that I should have any share in public patronage. Sometimes they tore down my sign, at others painted it black, and so continued to annoy me until after I had one of their number arrested, which put a stop to their unmanly proceedings. . . . So strong was the prejudice then existing against the colored people, that very few of the negroes seemed to have any courage or ambition to rise from the abject degradation in which the estimation of the white man had placed him. . . . I purchased a lot of land, situated on Main street. Having secured my land, I began making preparations for building, and soon had a good two story dwelling and store, into which I moved my effects, and commenced a more extensive business (124, 131-132).

Questions

1. What were conditions like on the trip from Virginia to New York?
2. What happened when Austin was caught trying to teach himself to read?
3. How was Austin Steward treated by Joseph Robinson?
4. What challenges did Austin Steward have to overcome after he became a free man?

D. Solomon Northup Describes Life and Work on the Champlain Canal and in Saratoga Springs

Source: Solomon Northup (1853/1969). *Twelve Years a Slave*. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 18-28.

1. During the winter [1831-1832] I was employed with others repairing the Champlain Canal, on that section over which William Van Nortwick was superintendent. David McEachron had the immediate charge of the men in whose company I labored. By the time the canal opened in the spring, I was enabled, from the savings of my wages, to purchase a pair of horses, and other things necessarily required in the business of navigation. Having hired several efficient hands to assist me, I entered into contracts for the transportation of large rafts of timber from Lake Champlain to Troy.

With the return of spring, Anne [my wife] and myself conceived the project of taking a farm in the neighborhood. I had been accustomed from earliest youth to agricultural labors, and it was an occupation congenial to my tastes. I accordingly entered into arrangements for a part of the old Alden farm, on which my father formerly resided. With one cow, one swine, a yoke of fine oxen I had lately purchased of Lewis Brown, in Hartford, and other personal property and effects, we proceeded to our new home in Kingsbury. That year I planted twenty-five acres of corn, sowed large fields of oats, and commenced farming upon as large a scale as my utmost means would permit. Anne was diligent about the house affairs, while I toiled laboriously in the field.

On this place we continued to reside until 1834. In the winter season I had numerous calls to play on the violin. Wherever the young people assembled to dance, I was almost invariably there. Throughout the surrounding villages my fiddle was notorious. Anne, also, during her long residence at the Eagle Tavern, had become somewhat famous as a cook. During court weeks, and on public occasions, she was employed at high wages in the kitchen at Sherrill's Coffee House.

2. In March, 1834, we removed to Saratoga Springs. . . . I frequently met with slaves, who had accompanied their masters from the South. They were always well dressed and well provided for, leading apparently an easy life, with but few of its ordinary troubles to perplex them. Many times they entered into conversation with me on the subject of Slavery. Almost uniformly I found they cherished a secret desire for liberty. Some of them expressed the most ardent anxiety to escape, and consulted me on the best method of effecting it. The fear of punishment, however, which they knew was certain to attend their re-capture and return, in all cases proved sufficient to deter them from the experiment. Having all my life breathed the free air of the North, and conscious that I possessed the same feelings and affections that find a place in the white man's breast; conscious, moreover, of an intelligence equal to that of some men, at least, with a fairer skin. I was too ignorant, perhaps too independent, to conceive how any one could be content to live in the abject condition of a slave. I could not comprehend the justice of that law, or that religion, which upholds or recognizes the principle of Slavery; and never once, I am proud to say, did I fail to counsel any one who came to me, to watch his opportunity, and strike for freedom. . . .

At this time we were the parents of three children - Elizabeth, Margaret, and Alonzo. Elizabeth, the eldest, was in her tenth year; Margaret was two years younger, and little Alonzo had just passed his fifth birth-day. They filled our house with gladness. Their young voices were music in our ears. Many an airy castle did their mother and myself build for the little innocents. When not at labor I was always walking with them, clad in their best attire, through the streets and groves of Saratoga. Their presence was my delight; and I clasped them to my bosom with as warm and tender love as if their clouded skins had been as white as snow.

Questions

1. What kind of work did Solomon Northup do to earn a living?
2. How did Solomon Northup support his family during the winter?
3. What did Solomon Northup learn from enslaved Africans who were travelling with their owners?
4. In your opinion, how did Solomon Northup's life most sharply differ from the life of an enslaved person?

AIM: What were race relations like in Brooklyn (Kings County)?

BACKGROUND: During the years immediately after the American Revolution, Kings County (now known as Brooklyn), largely consisted of farms and small towns. The county had the highest percentage of African Americans as part of its population in the state of New York. Documents included in the history-mystery are Francis Guy's "Snow Scene of Brooklyn in 1820"; excerpts from Henry R. Stiles, *A History of the City of Brooklyn*; Changing Population of Kings County; Indentured Servant Papers; Slavery in the Town of New Lots; Slave Owning Families Among the Founders of Kings County Banks; and Stephen L. Vanderveer's *New Lots Recollections*. The Guy painting is more easily viewed on the internet at (www.dayhops.com/.../images/1_d_winter_scene.jpg)

MOTIVATION: How has the world changed in the last decade? In what ways has it remained the same? In this lesson we will go back in time to Kings County (Brooklyn), New York about two hundred years ago. Our goal will be to use primary source documents that survive from that period to understand race relations in the early years of the new nation.

ACTIVITIES: In this lesson, students examine and discuss a series of documents that illustrate the Black presence in Kings County during the first decades of the new nation. Their task in this "History-Mystery is to use these primary documents to reconstruct the history of race relations in Kings County and to write their own historical narrative of events and the time period.

KEY QUESTIONS:

What do these documents tell us about life in Brooklyn (Kings County) in the early years of the new nation?

SUMMARY QUESTION: Based on your research, what were relations like between Blacks and Whites in Kings County (Brooklyn) in the early years of the new nation?

HOMEWORK: Using the information gathered from the history mystery, students create an encyclopedia entry on the African American Experience in Kings County (Brooklyn).

APPLICATION: A number of streets and place names in Brooklyn are named after people who owned enslaved Africans. Should these people continue to be honored or should street and place names be changed? Explain.

In your opinion, do banks and businesses that are descended from banks and businesses started by slave owning families have any obligation to "make right" on the injustices of the past? Explain.

A. Francis Guy's "Snow Scene of Brooklyn in 1820"



Francis Guy's painting (www.dayhops.com/.../images/1_d_winter_scene.jpg) shows an interracial Brooklyn Heights street scene about 1820. African American men are shown in the foreground center. An African American man named Jeff is working as a chimney-sweep. In Brooklyn, at this time, African Americans could be either free or enslaved. At least two local White men, Thomas W. Birdsall and Abiel Titus, are known to have owned slaves.

Questions

1. How is life in this scene different from life in Brooklyn or your town today?
2. There are both Whites and African Americans in this painting. What does that tell you about life in Brooklyn during that period?

B. Characters from the Early History of Brooklyn

Henry R. Stiles (1867-1870). *A History of the City of Brooklyn including the Old Town and Village of Brooklyn, the Town of Bushwick, and the Village and City of Williamsburgh, vol. II*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Pub. by subscription.

A. The north-east corner of Prospect street and Stewart's alley, is most pleasantly associated, in the mind of early Brooklynites, with a famous restaurant kept there for many years, by John Joseph, otherwise better known as Johnny Joe. He was a native of Martinique, West Indies, from whence he was brought, about 1795, by a Frenchman, who left him in New York, to serve for a time as a waiter in several families. At the commencement of the war of 1812, he accompanied Captain Alexander Hamilton (son of the great statesman), to Governor's Island, which was then occupied as a recruiting station. From there he went to Canada with Captain Jeremiah Hayden. He returned here in 1825, with a snug little fortune of some \$1,600 in gold, the result of diligent industry and careful economy; married a West Indian mulatto woman, and taking a lease of the building on Prospect Street, opened a restaurant which he continued for some twenty years. He expended (spent) considerable money in the repairs of these buildings, and was not fortunate in his tenants. In the end, although his immediate business had been popular and successful, the expenses of his real estate swallowed up his earnings. He surrendered his lease and retired upon a small piece of land in Queens county, near Jericho, at a place called Bushy Plains, where he resides with his wife in a settlement of colored people, working very diligently for a living. . . .

B. Israel and Timothy Horsfield were men of mark [wealth] in their day. They were the sons of Timothy Horsfield, of Liverpool, England, where they were born. Israel came to this country in 1720, and became a freeman [citizen] of New York, on the 13th of December, of the same year. About three years after, his brother Timothy arrived and entered into business with him, as butchers. Long Island at that time furnished the New York market with most of its live stock. They built a wharf at the foot of the present Doughty Street, together with a slaughtering place and the necessary buildings for residence. The next year they leased the two best stands in the Old Slip Market in the

city of New York; their dressed meats being brought over daily, in rowboats by their own slaves, to their stands in the market. Israel Horsfield, in 1738, had a family of ten persons, three of whom were colored men, and slaves. He and his brother afterwards had the misfortune to lose some of their “chattels” [slaves] who were put to death for complicity in the “Great Negro Plot” of 1741. The Horsfields accumulated a large property and owned a considerable amount of land on the Heights, near the ferry. Israel, Jr. succeeded his father in the business of a butcher, but not with the same success. In 1755, he had one slave, Chalsey. John Carpenter was also a butcher. He and his brother Benjamin were sons of George and Elizabeth Carpenter, who came from Long Island, about 1718, to the city of New York, of which the father became a freeman [citizen], entering into business as a butcher, which he continued until his death, about 1730. His widow then carried on the business, with the help of her sons, and became a very successful butcheress. In the Negro Plot of 1741, she lost two of her most valuable butcher slaves, one of whom was burned at the stake, and another transported; while in 1756, she lost one by running away, and again in 1759.

Questions

1. Why did Johnny Joe close his business?
2. In your opinion, why did this real estate become so expensive?
3. Why were the Horsfield’s an important family in Brooklyn society?
4. What happened to enslaved Africans accused of participating in the “Great Negro Plot” of 1741?
5. What do we learn about African American life from these passages?

C. Population of Kings County Towns, 1791 and 1801

Sources: Wilder, Craig (2000). *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*, 37.

1791				1801		
Town	Enslaved	Free Black	White	Enslaved	Free Black	White
Brooklyn	405	14	1,184	445	196	1,737
Flatbush	378	12	551	341	39	566
New Utrecht	206	10	346	213	39	526
Gravesend	135	5	286	162	11	316
Flatlands	137	0	286	128	13	352
Bushwick	171	5	364	188	34	434
Total	1,432	46	3,017	1,477	332	3,931

Population of Kings County (1790-1860)

Year	Total	Black	Black as %
1790	4,495	1,478	33.0
1800	5,740	1,811	32.0
1810	8,303	1,853	22.0
1820	11,187	1,761	16.0
1830	20,535	2,007	9.8
1840	47,613	2,846	6.0
1850	138,882	4,065	2.9
1860	279,122	4,999	1.8

Questions

1. Which town in Brooklyn has the largest percentage of its population as enslaved Africans in 1791?
2. What happened to the ratio of slaves to free Blacks in Brooklyn from 1791 to 1801?
3. What happens to the Black population of Brooklyn from 1790 to 1860?
4. Draw a graph displaying date from each of these charts.

D. Brooklyn, New York Indentured Servant Papers (1811-1819) (Edited)

Source: *Schenck Family Papers*, New York Historical Society

This indenture made the 15th day of May, 1811, witnessed that Elias Hubbard Jr. and Jeremiah Elsworth, Overseers of the poor of the Town of Flatlands and the State of New York, by and with the consent of two Justices of the Peace whose names are subscribed, do put and place a poor Black male child named Peter as a servant to Nicholas Schenck of Flatlands in Kings County, with him to dwell & serve from the day & date hereof until the said servant shall accomplish his full age of Twenty One years according to the Statute in such case made and provided. The said male child was born the 27th day of January, 1801, during all which term the said servant his master faithfully shall serve in all lawful businesses according to his will, power, and ability, honestly, orderly, and obediently, and in all things demean himself to his said master and all his during his said term.

And the said Nicholas Schenck does for himself his executors & administrators, covenant & grant to . . . the said Peter, the said Servant, shall & will Teach & Instruct or cause to be instructed in the duties of a servant in the best way & manner that he can & shall & will during all the term aforesaid find provide & allow the said servant competent & sufficient meat drink & apparel lodging & washing & all other things necessary & fit for such a servant that he may not be a charge to the Town of Flatlands or its inhabitants but of & from all charges shall & will save the said town & inhabitants harmless of indemnity [legal responsibility] during the said term & also that the said Nicholas Schenck shall cause the said servant to be taught & instructed to read & write & shall also give unto said servant a new Bible at the expiration of his term of service. In witness whereof the parties abovesaid have hereunto set their hands & seals the day and year above written.

Questions

1. Who are Nicholas Schenck, Elias Hubbad and Jeremiah Elsworth?
2. Why is Peter being assigned as an indentured servant?
3. According to this indenture agreement, what are the duties of Peter?

E. Slavery in the Town of New Lots (1820)

Source: Alter Landesman (1977). *A History of New Lots, Brooklyn to 1887*, 215-217

Household	Free People	Enslaved Africans	Others
Hendrick Suydam	6	3	
Charles Vanderveer	4	3	
Jeromus Vanderveer	5	1	
Mrs. Van Sinderen	7	3	1
Williamson Rapalje	6	7	
John Wyckoff	8	2	
John Harper	1	3	1
John Van Siclen	5	1	
Christian Duryea	5	1	
John Blake	11	7	
Mrs. Dinman	3	8	
Peter Rump	12	1	2
Samuel Miller	6	1	
Mrs. Denton	4	5	

Household	Free People	Enslaved Africans	Others
Johannis Eldred	4	4	
John Drew	9	1	
Henry Eldred	8	1	
Isaac Eldred	4	2	1
Thomas Betts	7	2	
Mrs. Betts	5	7	
Isaac Snediker	5	6	
Jane Howard	4	2	
Tunis Schenck	11	7	
John Snediker	7	2	
William Howard	8	2	
William Furman	3	2	
Samuel Moyser	5	1	
George Williamson	5	1	
John Vanderveer	6	4	

Questions

1. Which household has the most enslaved persons?
2. What is the approximate ratio of slaves to free members of these Brooklyn households?

F. An Old Farmer's Talk: Stephen L. Vanderveer's *New Lots Recollections*

Source: *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 19, 1886, 6

<http://eagle.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/APA2.5.122/PrintArt.asp?Title=Id%3D696%20%3>

When the flat lands nearest to the sea began to get overcrowded with farmers, the immediate descendants of the original settlers began moving eastward and located in what they called the New Lots, where I and my father were born. No well regulated community can get along without a place to deposit their dead. For a time the deceased members of a family were buried on the farms, but as the residents became connected by marriage and other ties and attended church in Flatlands, they concluded to have a burying ground of their own, and thus resolved they located it two miles from here, on the New Lots road and directly opposite the church we now worship in, and the cemetery we know as the new one. You may doubt me, but that old graveyard is nearly two hundred years old and many of my ancestors are resting therein: the last one I remember of was my great uncle, Johnnes Vanderveer, who died at the ripe old age of 87 years. In those days there were as many Negroes as whites in this neighborhood. The latter were buried in front by the roadside and the former away back near the swamp.



Left: New Lots Reformed Church and cemetery. Top: Schenck Park is constructed over the "Black" section of the old cemetery.

We worshiped in Flatlands, while we buried our dead up the New Lots road. In 1824 our people thought it best to have a place of worship near the last resting place of our forefathers, and at an extra meeting of the Classic, held on August 12 of that year, it was decided to build the new church. Abraham Van Sieten and his wife, Cornelia, deeded over to Tunis Schenck, Isaac Snediker, John Blake, Christian Duryea, John Wyckoff, John Williamson, Jr., Nicholas Livingston, and my granduncle, Johannes Vanderveer, one fourth of an acre for the sum of \$35. The witnesses to the deed were Charity Rapalje and Phebe Van Sieten, and the edifice was erected at a cost of about \$3,500. My sister, Anne, was the first child christened in the new church, and she still lives on the New Lots road. The Rev. William Crookshank was our first pastor. We paid him semi annually the sum of \$150, and as he received the same amount from the church in Flatlands he could very well keep the wolf away from the door.

In 1841 we saw the necessity of having a new burying ground, as the black people were overcrowding us in the old one. Therefore we purchased the ground alongside the church and removed a great many of the dead from across the road. I have not taken up all my people yet, but I expect to do so before long. The first person buried in the new grounds was a young man named Jim Cozine. He took the measles down in Brooklyn and caught cold while his father was bringing him home and died.

Questions

1. Why was the original cemetery opened?
2. Why was a new cemetery started?
3. What do historians learn about race relations in Brooklyn from this article?

AIM: Why did New Yorkers debate voting rights for African Americans?

Lesson developed by Monica Longo, Kennedy High School, Bellmore, NY

BACKGROUND: In 1827, enslaved Africans in New York were finally emancipated. However, many White New Yorkers continued to have reservations about whether former slaves should be allowed to participate as full citizens with voting rights. Amongst the prominent figures who debated these issues were Erastus Root and Robert Clarke of Delaware County. At the 1821 New York State convention to revise the state constitution, Root argued that although Blacks were free, they should not be considered citizens, could be denied voting rights and should be shut out of the political arena. He compared former slaves to unnaturalized immigrants. Robert Clarke argued that freed Blacks should be entitled to voting rights. Clarke used the Declaration of Independence and the mechanisms of the U.S. Constitution to argue for equality and against disfranchisement. He believed that protecting Black civil rights was the least that Whites owed the victims of slavery. The debate at the convention ended without a formal decision. The issue of full citizenship rights continued to divide White New Yorkers and remained a threat to the rights of the state’s African American population.

DO NOW: List what you consider to be the most important rights in a democratic society.

MOTIVATION: Which rights did you list? Why?

ACTIVITY: Student teams examine the arguments for and against suffrage for free Blacks. Groups must be prepared to defend either the affirmative or negative position.

SUMMARY QUESTION: Why did New Yorkers debate voting rights for African Americans?

HOMEWORK: Design a political cartoon or poster supporting one of the speakers.

APPLICATION: Discuss what it means to be a citizen.

DEBATING BLACK VOTING RIGHTS

Opposition to Black Suffrage	Support for Black Suffrage

Debate Over Voting Rights for Black New Yorkers (1821)

Source: D. Gellman and D. Quigley, ed. (2003). *Jim Crow New York, A Documentary History of Race and Citizenship 1777-1877*. NY: New York University Press, 114-122. As New York's emancipation day (July 4, 1827) approached, many New Yorkers expressed reservations about whether former slaves should be allowed full citizenship rights. This debate on the right to vote took place at the 1821 convention to revise the State Constitution. Delegates met in the New York State Assembly chamber in Albany.

1. Opposition to Black Suffrage: Erastus Root of Delaware County compared African Americans to foreign-born aliens, who paid taxes, were not required to serve the nation in war, and did not have the right to vote. He charged that in New York City, when Blacks had the right to vote, they did the bidding of their wealthy employers. He proposed that only people eligible for service in the militia (White males) be eligible for the franchise.

“[I]n the case of an alien, who may hold property and be protected by the laws of your country, . . . he is not allowed to vote. . . . The reasons are, that notwithstanding he may live among us and enjoy the benefit of our freedom, he may have a partiality for some foreign country. . . . The black population have a right to hold property, and are protected in the enjoyment of it by our laws: but, sir, in case of an invasion or insurrection, neither the alien nor black man is bound to defend your country. They are not called on, because it is supposed there is no reliance to be placed in them, they might desert the standard and join your enemy - they have not any anchorage in your country which the government is willing to trust. At present the number of blacks who are voters is so small, that if they were scattered all over the state, there would not be much danger to be apprehended; but if we may judge of the future by the past, I should suppose there was some cause of alarm - when a few hundred free negroes of the city of New York, following the train of those who ride in their coaches, and whose shoes and boots they had so often blacked, shall go to the polls of the election, and change the political condition of the whole state. . . .

2. Support for Black Suffrage: Robert Clarke was also from Delaware County. He believed that the idea of equality in the Declaration of Independence and the rules established by the U.S. Constitution prohibited the disfranchisement of African American men. Clarke argued that protecting Black civil rights was the least that Whites owed the victims of slavery.

“The constitution says, “representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the different states, according to the inhabitants thereof, including all free persons.” All colours and complexions are here included. It is not free “white” persons. . . . [I]n connection with the Declaration of Independence, I think you cannot exclude them without being guilty of a . . . violation of every principle of justice. We are usurping to ourselves a power which we do not possess, and by so doing, deprive them of a privilege to which they are, and always have been, justly entitled - . . . the right of suffrage. Because we have done this people injustice, by enslaving them, and rendering them degraded and miserable, is it right that we should go on and continue to deprive them of their most invaluable rights. . . . My honourable colleague has told us “that these people are not liable to do military duty, and that as they are not required to contribute to the protection or defence of the state.” . . . But, sir, whose fault is this? Have they ever refused to do military duty when called upon? . . . [I]t is said these people are incapable of exercising the right of suffrage judiciously; that they will become the tools and engines of aristocracy, . . . on whom they depend for bread. This may be true to a certain extent; but, sir, they are not the only ones who abuse this privilege; and if this be a sufficient reason for depriving any of your citizens of their just rights, go on and exclude also the many thousands of white fawning, cringing sycophants, who look up to their more wealthy and more ambitious neighbours for direction at the polls, as they look to them for bread.

Questions

1. With whom does Erastus Root compare free Blacks? Why?
2. According to Root, why should free Blacks be denied voting rights?
3. According to Clarke, how do the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence support Black suffrage?
4. How does Clarke respond to Root's arguments?
5. In your opinion, who makes the stronger case? Explain your views.