

A Report to the Rector, Wardens, Vestry, and Congregation of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity Church
on the Slavery Research Project - May 23, 2021

- The Rev. Dr. Craig Townsend, Associate for Faith Formation, St. Ann and the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church; Visiting Scholar, Saint Ann's School

By the time of the first national census in 1790, Joshua Sands had left Cow Neck on Long Island, served as a captain in the Revolutionary forces, made his fortune with his brother Comfort in the West Indies trade, purchased 160 acres with Comfort in what is now Dumbo, and moved his growing family from Manhattan into a Federal-style mansion on that property that was the largest house in Brooklyn. In 1778, he and his wife Ann began hosting a small group of Episcopalians for gatherings in their living room, and Joshua subsequently served as one of the founding trustees when that group incorporated as the Episcopal Church of Brooklyn in 1784. In 1795, when the church had obtained its own building on Washington Street, the congregation re-incorporated as St. Ann's Episcopal Church. The saint was chosen by the leadership to honor the role Joshua and Ann had in the establishment of the parish. In that 1790 census, Joshua is listed as head of a household that included six slaves.

This was discovered last fall by one of the six students at Saint Ann's School who worked with me on this project. Claire came to class to announce that, as she put it, "the church and my school are named for a slaveowner." This is perhaps the most visceral piece of evidence of what this report will outline: that both of our founding parishes were in many ways complicit in the institution of slavery and its economic benefits. Jesus said to his disciples, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32) As a congregation, we have some difficult truths to face about this history. It is my hope that facing them will set us free to pursue racial justice and reconciliation.

At the 2006 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, a resolution was adopted that called on all Episcopal congregations to explore whether they have a history of complicity in the institution of slavery and in deriving economic benefits from it. Under our current Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Curry, the Episcopal Church has renewed that call as part of its Becoming Beloved Community campaign. And the past eighteen (or more) months' rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the accompanying resurgence of awareness of continued White privilege, forms of White supremacy, and violence and prejudice toward Black Americans by White-dominated structures and populations, has raised this issue at our immediate parish level: if we wish to participate credibly as a congregation in ongoing racial justice movements, we need to begin with an awareness of our own historic participation in the foundations of racial injustice. To that end, I undertook this academic year to research the earliest years of our two original congregations, St. Ann's Church, founded in 1784 (when slavery was still legal in this state), and Church of the Holy Trinity, founded in 1847 (twenty years after slavery finally ended in New York), to determine the extent to which the parishes were involved with slavery and

slavery-produced commodities. Two seniors and four juniors at Saint Ann's School earned academic credit doing this archival and primary source research with me.

We began with an 1845 history, *St. Ann's Church*, by F.G. Fish, which included a list of communicants from the earliest years. Fish also listed the wardens and vestry members for the years 1832-44, but only occasionally named them for the prior years; he did, however, list the founding trustees and the delegates to the diocesan convention every year. From his work, then, we compiled a list of 45 parish leaders, and a number of other communicants, that we researched. We also found Roscoe Brown's *Church of the Holy Trinity*, published in 1922, that listed wardens and vestry members for each year; from that we obtained 27 names of those who served prior to the Civil War.

The Institution of Slavery

The end of slavery in New York State did not come easily. The Gradual Emancipation Act of 1799 freed all children born of enslaved persons after July 4 of that year, but they were automatically indentured to their mother's owner until they turned 25 for girls and 28 for boys. In 1817, a law was passed that set July 4, 1827, as the end of slavery for those born before 1799. It is clear from the structuring of these laws that the state legislature was more interested in making sure that slaveowners could recover their financial investments in enslaved persons (i.e., supporting their property rights) than in bringing a speedy end to slavery itself. This is hardly surprising, given the ubiquity of slavery throughout the state right through the Revolution and beyond. More locally, historian Craig Wilder asserts that by 1800 well over 60% of Kings County families owned slaves, while a quick count of the 1790 census shows 47% of households in the village of Brooklyn (what is now Brooklyn Heights and Dumbo) holding slaves. And while slavery declined rapidly in Manhattan after the 1799 law was passed, with the population of free Blacks surpassing that of enslaved Blacks around 1795, Kings County did not see that decline in slavery occur until 1820. Slavery was simply the norm in this area at that time. This is not an excuse for anyone's participation in the practice of owning persons, but it is an important part of the historical context.

We have compiled a list of 32 leaders who served St. Ann's Church between 1784 and 1827. Of those founding trustees, early wardens and vestry members, and delegates to convention (who were most likely vestry members), we found 23 (72%) that owned slaves at some point. Six of the seven original trustees, for example, were slaveowners; the same is true of both wardens and seven of eight members of the vestry of 1795 that reincorporated the parish with the name of St. Ann's Church. In addition, we found 26 other parish households in this period that owned slaves. A table listing these persons is attached. A number of these slave-owning parishioners have streets named for them in and around Brooklyn Heights, as they owned the property on or through which those streets were built. This includes Sands, Remsen, Hicks, Middagh, Boerum, Schermerhorn, Furman, Nostrand, Sackett, and Luquer Streets, as well as the original name for Third Avenue, which was Powers Street.

Our primary resource in this research was the New York Slavery Records Index (<https://nyslavery.commons.gc.cuny.edu/search>), an online database compiled by John Jay College graduate students under the direction of Professors Ned Benton and Judy-Lynne Peters. We were also indebted to Charles Egleston, retired Archivist of the Diocese of Long Island, for the work he did making photographic copies of the first two volumes of the St. Ann's parish register and then researching the records of both free and enslaved Black marriages and baptisms, which confirmed a few more parishioners as slaveowners. And Henry Stiles, Librarian of the Long Island Historical Society in the late 1800s, published histories of both Brooklyn and Kings County in 1867 and 1884, respectively, that were very helpful in finding out who was who and what was what.

Benefitting from Slavery

When slavery legally ended in New York in 1827, it hardly ended the ways that many New Yorkers profited from slavery in the South, the West Indies, and Brazil. And thus it hardly ended the support of the majority of New Yorkers for the existence of slavery in the Southern states, and their ambivalence toward, if not outright antipathy for, the antislavery movement. The riots of 1834 are the most egregious example of this: mobs of White men disrupted a meeting of the Antislavery Society led by the brothers Arthur and Louis Tappan and then went on a week-long rampage of violence against Blacks and Black-owned property in Manhattan.

A number of scholars have focused attention over the past two decades on the economic history of slavery, which included research on the ways New Yorkers and Brooklynites in particular benefitted from the business of slavery-produced commodities. We relied on the work of Craig Wilder (*A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*, 2000), Edward Baptist (*The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, 2014), and Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds. (*Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, 2016), to inform our research into parishioners of St. Ann's who profited from slavery while it was still legal in New York, and members of both parishes who did so after 1827. Such profiting ranged from the selling of slavery-produced commodities in a local dry goods store, to trading in those commodities on the national or international market as a merchant or warehouseman, to investing in that trade, or investing in loans to Southern slaveowners for the purchase of more land and more slaves, both personally and as directors of banks and insurance companies. The details for many specific individuals are sketchy, so some assumptions have been made about those listed in contemporary directories as "merchants," as well as those involved in banking and insurance, based on the work of those historians.

We assert, then, that nine of thirteen St. Ann's leaders in the years after slavery had ended in New York very likely were deriving profits from slavery-related businesses, and at least two of the earlier leaders who were not slaveowners were probably as well. And we believe the same to be true of 14 of the 27 wardens and vestrymen of Holy Trinity Church who served prior to the Civil War. These persons are

listed in the attached tables. James Burtis and Cyrus Bill, for example, had dry goods stores; they would have most certainly had cotton textiles, sugar, and tobacco among their wares. Conklin Brush, onetime mayor of Brooklyn and warden at Holy Trinity, helped to incorporate the Brooklyn docks, was director of that corporation, and had warehouses of his own on those docks, which certainly would have stored cotton or tobacco or other such products for shipping; he then became the founding president of Mechanics Bank and served on the boards of the Dime Savings Bank and the Atlantic Fire Insurance Company, all of which were investing in the slavery economy. And William Carter, Holy Trinity vestryman in the 1850s, was a merchant for Tucker, Cooper, and Co., in Manhattan, which meant he was purchasing slavery-harvested hemp and cotton to make rope.

In fact, the work of the historians cited above makes it clear that no one living in Brooklyn or New York City in the post-Revolution and antebellum periods can be said to have escaped involvement in the slavery economy, as slavery and its products permeated every aspect of the lives of these populations. Edgar Bartow, who built Holy Trinity with his own funds, never owned slaves and made and lost his fortune in the paper industry; yet his cotton clothing came from slavery, the sugar in his coffee came from slavery, and his ancestors - some of whom were members of St. Ann's Church - were slaveowners.

Conclusion

Donations by all of the parishioners listed in the attached tables were fundamental to the founding and early economic well-being of the two churches. Some of these are documented: the support of Joshua and Ann Sands, the support of John and Sarah Middagh, the \$1000 donation of George Powers, just to name a few at St. Ann's. The Van Nostrand family was of great support to both St. Ann's and then Holy Trinity later on - the lectern in the latter was given in memory of John Van Nostrand by his wife Louisa and son John James. But we can assume financial support that is not documented: the funds given by slaveowners, the funds given by the merchants and dry goods salesmen and bank presidents. There is always more research that could be done to pin down more of these stories, more of the finances - but I believe that we have accomplished sufficient research at this point to state unequivocally that the histories of the congregations of both St. Ann's and Holy Trinity are stained with direct connections to the institution of slavery.

Other St. Ann's Members				
Last Name	First Name	Joined St. Ann's	Slaveowners?	Slavery-related business?
Bartow	Augustus, et al.	1799	yes	
Boerum	Jane and Martin	1788	yes	
Brower	Adolphus and Aeltje	1805	yes	
Brown	Josiah	1790	yes	
Carpenter	Sarah and John	1802	yes	
Clarke	James and Eleanor	1807	yes	
Cornell	Whitehead	1787	no	warehouses
Dayrell/Durrell	Paul and Mary	1791	yes	
Field	Joseph and Elizabeth	1804	yes	
Fisher	John and Diana	1807	yes	
Furman	William	1804	yes	
Hammel	John and Jemima	1804	yes	
Hicks	various	1802	yes	
Horsfield	Israel	1790	yes	
Johnson	Tunis	1809	yes	
Johnston	John	1808	yes	
Luquer	Nicholas and Sarah	1831	ancestors	
Morris	Taylor and Sarah	1800	yes	
Patchen	Jacob and Abigail	1790	yes	
Pierrepont	Hezekiah and Anna Marie	1808	ancestors	warehouses
Remsen	Anne and Jeremiah	1811	yes	
Sackett	Samuel and Elizabeth	1803	yes	
Sands	Comfort	1824	yes	West Indies trade
Schermerhorn	Abraham and Helen	1820	yes	father was slave trader
Titus	Jacob and Mary	1802	yes	
Titus	Bart and Abigail	1804	yes	
Tredwell	Jane and Adam	1811	yes	
Van Pelt	John	1802	yes	

Holy Trinity Church - early leaders						
Last Name	First Name	Warden, Years	Vestry, Years	Other church connection	slavery-related business?	business/home (directory year)
Adams	James L/A		1851-53		merchant	merchant NYC, Schermerhorn nr Boerum (48 & 51)
Baldwin	Augustus O		1860-66		clothes/textiles	clothier NYC, 20 Monroe Pl (62)
Barnard	Daniel P		1855-61			Wall St lawyer, alderman, 56 Court (56), 25 Court off 55 Court home (62)
Barrow	Edgar J		1851-56	built the church	married a descendant of slaveholders	paper merchant NYC, 169 Washington (48; NYC 53); paper warehouse, 32 Pierrepont (56)
Baker	Charles H		1860-61			Timothy Baker & Sons (whiting manufacturing), 9 Pierrepont (56), 11 Pierrepont (62) - gentleman (48)
Brush	Conklin	1851-56			bank president, ins co board, oversaw Bklyn docks and warehouses	dir, Atlantic Fire Ins board - in 48, incorporated the Atlantic docks and was director
Carter	William H		1854-58		hemp for rope-making	merchant Tucker, Cooper & Co (rope), South St NYC, 74 Montague (56) 94 Pierrepont (62)
Clark	Peter		1854-55			wheelwright, 5 Lawrence Pl (56)
Cook	Moses		1851-54		merchant/importer	merchant NYC, 49 Willow (48), 91 Willow (51); importer, 71 Bway, h 91 Willow (NYC 53)
Deming	George		1857-59			ins agent 96 Wall, 139 Livingston (56 & 62)
Elliot	Thomas			sexton, memorial window		
Fenton	Aaron D	1857-60	1851-56, 61		dry goods, clothes/textiles	dry goods NYC, Remsen nr Court (56); clothier NYC, Oxford nr Lafayette (62)
Grimell / Grinnell	George B		1851-53		merchant	merchant NYC, Dean nr Hoyt (51); commercial merchant (NYC 53)
Lees	Thomas K		1855-65, 84-96			watches NYC, 79 Pineapple (56), sec. gas co NYC (62)
Leonard	William B	1869-93	1856-68	memorial tablet	dry goods	dry goods NYC, 46 Sidney Pl (56), h 121 Columbia (62)
Marvin	Daniel		1851-56			lawyer NYC, 79 Clinton (56), 540 Pacific (62)
Morse	Nathan B	1851-61	1851-55		merchant	lawyer 9 Court; bds 71 Warren (56); off 855 Fulton, h 48 Livingston (62)
Phelps	William R					merchant 43 Bway NYC, 101 Clinton (56)
Read	George W		1856-65	altar memorial		hats & caps NYC, 20 Pierrepont (56); strawgoods (62)
Slow	George W		1857-59			hardware Pearl NYC, 40 Willoughby; merchant, h 135 Amity (62)
Todd	Edward		1862-74			gold pen manu, Maiden Ln NYC, Clinton nr Atlantic (66 & 62)
Townsend	Charles A	1862-68, 81-94	1861-62, 69-80		Home Life Ins Co founder, merchant	merchant NYC, 135 Amity (56); 101 Remsen (62)
Van Nostrand	John				descendant of slaveholders	
Van Nostrand	Phoebe S			lectern, book rest memorials	descendant of slaveholders	
Webster	Hosea	1861-81	1851-56	memorial tablet	Brooklyn Savings Bank pres	Pres, Bklyn Savings Bank, 119 Henry (56), 90 Pierrepont (62)
Willard	George L	1856	1851-56		merchant	merchant NYC, 16 Remsen (56)
Woodward	Jabez W		1857-61			184 Atlantic (56), 364 Henry (62)

Sammy Goldston

I'm going to talk about Aquila Giles and the relationship between the ideals of the American Revolution and slavery. Aquila Giles served as an original trustee of Saint Ann's church and enslaved three people. He also had a deep involvement with the Revolutionary War and the ideals of the American founding.

Giles was born in 1758 to an elite Maryland family, which included most notably his maternal grandfather, Governor William Paca. His extended family owned many people and acres. When Giles' half-brother Nathaniel died in 1775, the will instructed that all nine of his slaves be freed and that any heirs who attempted to retain them be disinherited completely. This contradiction between the high ideals of the Revolution and the economic gain to be extracted from enslaved labor would appear later in Giles' life, too.

After joining the Continental Army from his home colony at the outbreak of conflict, he eventually fought in Pennsylvania as an officer. In 1778, he was captured in Germantown by the British army and paroled in New York, where he and several other Patriot officers were put up with a Dutch family, and there are a lot of colorful descriptions of how they hated their time there, but I won't go into that now.

While in New York, Giles met the English-born Elizabeth Shipton, whom he married in 1780 just before his release. Shipton's uncle and surrogate father was a wealthy loyalist, and he and Giles had a very interesting dispute over property that was most likely motivated by their political differences, but again because of time I won't go into that now.

In 1787, Giles contributed a significant sum of money to founding Saint Ann's, and likely enslaved people at that time, because three years later in the 1790 census he is recorded as owning three people.

Now I'm going to use Giles to go into a bit about the connections between slavery and the ideals of the American founding. Giles' opinion on slavery and its philosophical issues is not obvious, but certain clues might approximate his thinking. On the relationship between slavery and the Revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality, the New York Manumission Society offers one such clue. John Jay, the founding president of the Society, still owned one slave when Giles joined in 1810, and had owned more previously. Slaveholding was common practice among the Society's prominent members, many of whom were also distinguished veterans of the Revolution and the framing of the United States. With the notable exception of Alexander Hamilton, who advocated that members should actually free their slaves, most members did not view the owning of slaves as a conflict with their stated values. Rather, the mission of the Society was conceived less as a narrow antislavery effort and more as a broad "guardianship" over both enslaved and free Black New Yorkers. So they basically used a condescending view of all Black people, free and enslaved, rather than take it upon themselves to stop enslaving people. It is likely that Giles adopted this contorted interpretation of his role.

Property rights were another component of the Revolutionary ideals, posing another philosophical dilemma for early Americans. Two competing forms of these rights were at issue:

the right to own property, which many early Americans defined to include humans, and the right to own oneself. The disagreement between American and British negotiators after the Revolution illustrates the dilemma, as each party asserted a different conception of property rights. The British argued that the enslaved people whom they had helped evacuate from the colonies were people and therefore had the right to self-ownership. The Americans, by contrast, argued that the evacuees were property and subject to return because of their *owners*' right to property. Here too, Giles likely took the latter view because of his background in the Revolution and his own slaveholding practices.

Giles served as Marshal of New York from 1792 until Thomas Jefferson fired him in the early years of his administration, calling him a "most violent party man" and accusing him of packing grand juries. After his expulsion from government, Giles entered the militia and rose to the rank of brigadier general. In 1813, he wrote to yet another Revolutionary War veteran, Secretary of State James Monroe, to request command of a regiment engaged in the defense of New York City. Finally, as his economic prospects worsened at the end of his life, Giles continued his relationship to the war in his work as a U.S. Army store keeper. He and Shipton both died in 1822.

Claire Sifton - Presentation on the Slavery Research Project

Before we show you more information we found on individual members and communicants of the church, I want to show you this document we found relating to the actual people who were enslaved in these households. This is an entry from the St. Ann's Registry cataloging the marriage of two people enslaved by members of the church. Their names were Phillis and Phillip and they were enslaved by two separate families. Enslaved people were not legally allowed to get married at this time so we immediately had a lot of questions regarding how their marriage was recognized and what their day to day lives looked like.

And unfortunately, we couldn't answer any of them. And the reason I bring this up is that in the age we are discussing, documentation was everything. The fact that we can't find anything about Phillis and Phillip's lives, or any enslaved person's lives, speaks volumes about who was deemed valuable and worthy of documentation and about the selective narrative that the North has created surrounding slavery in this region. This is a mode of oppression and dehumanization. And I want us to have that content as we enter the rest of the presentation.

--

At the beginning of our research process, Craig would assign names from the parish directory to our personalized spreadsheets. a last name or a full name. We would have to piece together the identity of this person from that name. So, their role in the church, their profession, when they joined, where they lived, and most importantly, their involvement in the institution of slavery. Were they enslaving people in their homes? Were they abolitionists? Did they have any outward stance on slavery?

The first name I was assigned to research was Joshua Sands. Because there was so much room for unanswered questions in this project, I was lucky to have such a well-documented and important person as my entryway into our research.

Joshua and his wife moved from Long Island to Brooklyn in the late 1770s. Joshua and his brother formed a business partnership in foreign trade and land development. Soon after, they began to prosper in the Caribbean trade.

The Caribbean is one of the earliest sites of colonialism in the Americas and became the primary site for the exploitation of sugarcane, petroleum, tobacco, fruit, alcohol, and gold (all highly profitable items in the US). And This system is a direct product of the transatlantic slave trade, enslaved labor, capitalism, and colonialism. As of the 1790 census, Joshua enslaved six people in his home. The profits from this business are what funded Sands's wealth, which eventually aided in the founding of this church. So immediately, I began to understand the broader connection to the institution of slavery in tandem with the census data.

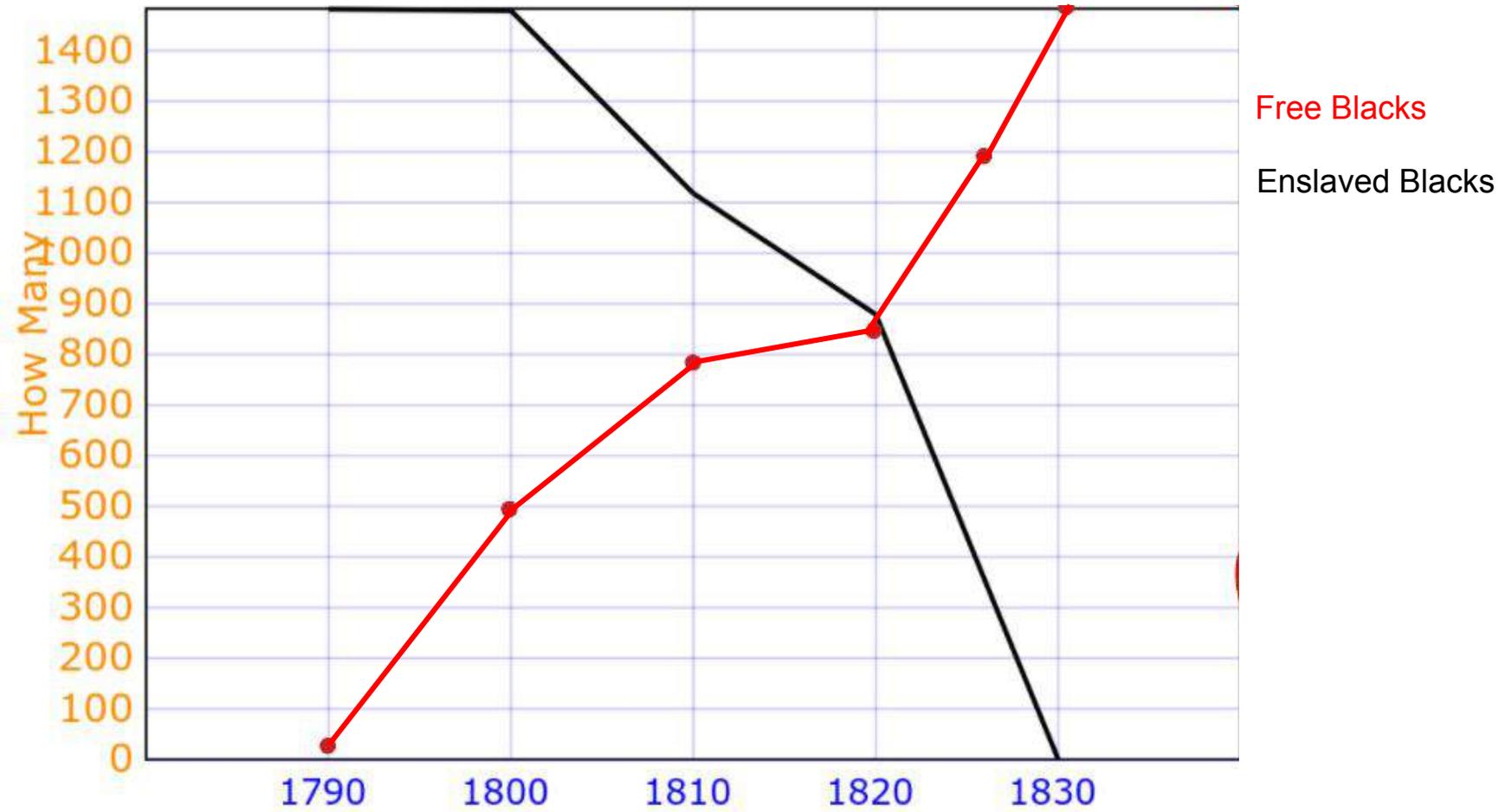
St Ann's Church was incorporated in 1787 as "The Episcopal Church of Brooklyn." Joshua and his wife Ann joined in 1788. Joshua was cited as a founding member of the vestry and board and a significant financial donor to the church's establishment. Ann hosted weekly church gatherings in their home, and the Sands family offered the plot of land on their farm for

the church to erect its first edifice. In 1795, the church was reorganized and reincorporated in the established location. The congregation also decided to rename the church. The community honored Ann Sands for her contribution to the Church's founding by naming it St. Ann's Church. Saint Anne, as the name is often spelled, was the mother of Mary and the maternal grandmother of Jesus. This church, and thus our school, were not named for the mother of Mary, but someone who was complicit in the institution of slavery, a benefactor of it, and enslaved humans in her home. And we have to do something about it.

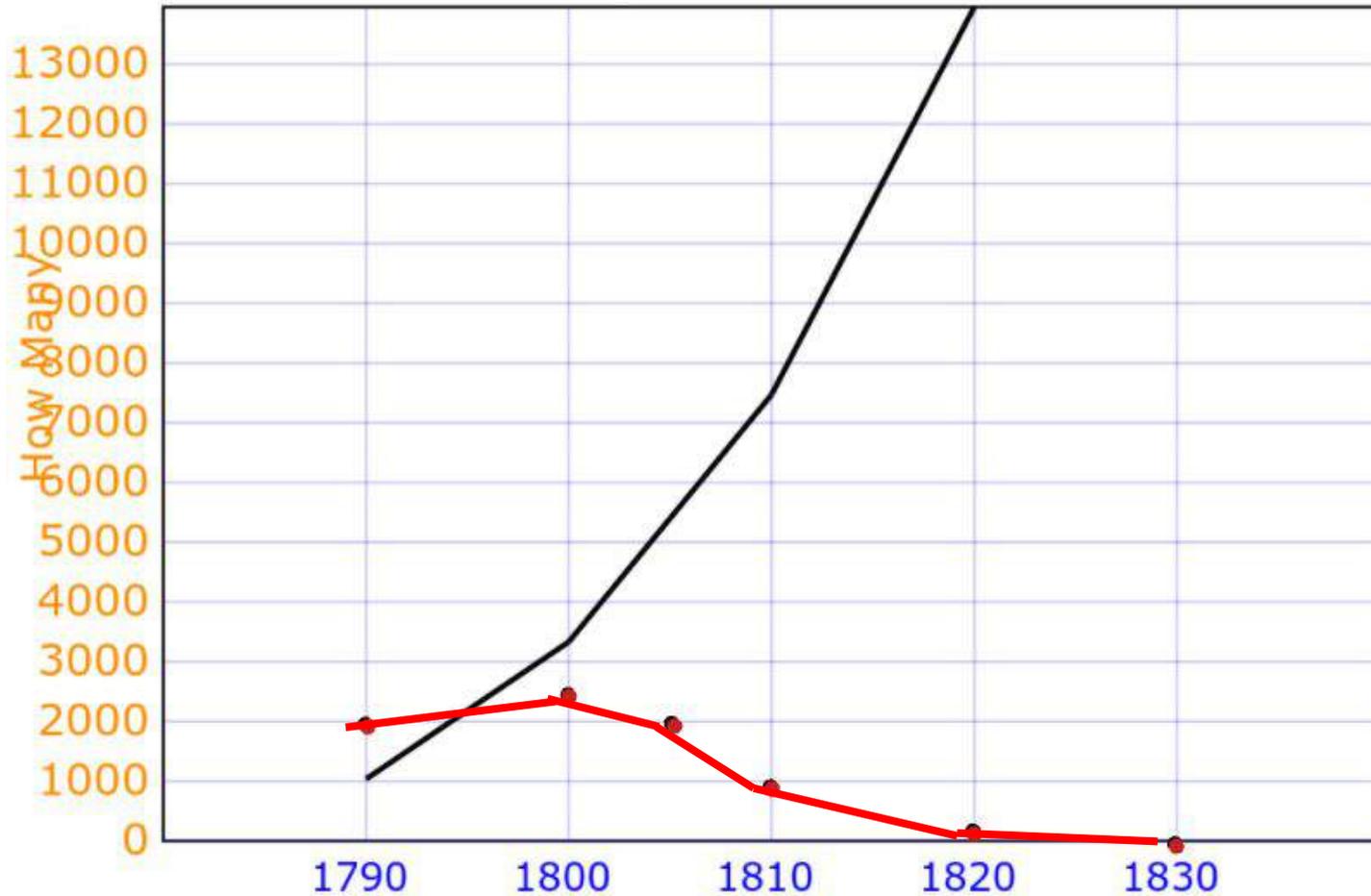
Luca Duchovny - The Schermerhorn Family and the Free and Enslaved Populations of Kings County and New York City (outline)

- The Schermerhorn family was one of the more prominent Anglo-Dutch families in New York history.
 - a. They have a major street named after them in Brooklyn Heights.
- Arnout Schermerhorn and his son John are both listed on the John Jay College database of New York State slaveholders and investors in the slave trade in 1725-1820.
- Peter Schermerhorn (1749-1826), like his father and grandfather, was a commander and owner of shipping vessels trading between New York City and the Carolinas.
- Peter brought 92 slaves to North and South Carolina over 9 different voyages between 1771 and 1774.
- Between 1725 and 1820 three generations of Schermerhorns made 123 voyages and brought 453 slaves to the Carolinas, with anywhere from one to 33 slaves were carried on each voyage.
- Peter's son Abraham and his wife Helen became members of St Ann's in 1820, just as the family were getting out of the slave trade - while previous generations owned slaves as well as traded in slavery, Abraham did neither
- Seeing the slave trade was about to end (1827), the family moved into land development in 1820. Abraham sold his father's plot of land in Gowanus for \$600/acre, becoming the land on which Green-Wood Cemetery was created
- The Schermerhorns serve as examples of the decline of slavery in New York State as the gradual emancipation law's effective date of 1827 was approaching.
- In NYC, in about 1795, for the first time the number of free Blacks was greater than the number of enslaved Blacks.
- However, in Kings County, this didn't happen until 1820, and there were more enslaved people than in NYC.
- The following graphs show the data for NYC and Kings County.
- Note the term "free Blacks" is problematic, because it includes former slaves working as indentured servants or with a contract to pay off their freedom; therefore, many of these people were bound to their former owner for many years.
- This demonstrates that the law was created to protect the property rights of slave owners as much as to stop holding people as property

KINGS COUNTY



nyc free blacks



NYC Enslaved Blacks

Bevan Howard - Report on the slavery research project

Two of the things I worked on were the Middagh family, and the morality of Christianity and slavery.

One of the early families of Brooklyn, John and Sarah Middagh, lived on Fulton and Henry Streets. In 1784, the Episcopal congregation that would become Saint Ann's Church moved from the living room of the Sands family to the Middaghs' barn. In the list of Saint Ann's communicants in the 1845 history, Sarah Middagh is listed as the first member after the parish was finally incorporated in 1788. This established the Middaghs as founding members of Saint Ann's. Yet even as late as 1810, they are listed as owning four slaves.

This presents a common question to reflect on regarding Christian churches at the time: How could Christians morally justify the enslavement of other people? Given Biblical stories like Exodus, where God, through Moses, guides the Israelites out of slavery, one would assume the Bible speaks against slavery. This is not the case, and instead the reality is that many of these Christian enslavers based their justification of slavery in the fact that the Bible never advocates against slavery. For example in Genesis, Abraham and other patriarchs of ancient Israel owned slaves, and it was a sign of wealth. In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul specifically commanded slaves to obey their masters (Eph. 6:5–8). Another common justification for Slavery was that it “brings heathens to a Christian land where they can hear the gospel, [and where] Christian masters provide religious instruction for their slaves.” (“Why Did So Many Christians Support Slavery?,” The Editors, Christianity Today, 1992.) This suggests that enslavers saw slavery as something that was charitable, and something necessary to better the world.

The late 18th century also had figures like John Jay, who established himself as a public anti-slavery proponent, and advocated for the freedom of enslaved people -- all while owning slaves himself. The grounds for his ideas, however, did not stem from theology, but in the Revolution. His public reasoning was based on the famous call for “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” but was disguised in a tangle of personal gain.

In the 1830s however, Christians across America's north began to entertain anti-slavery ideologies. Most notably, the American Anti-Slavery Society was formed, led by William Lloyd Garrison as well as the brothers Arthur and Lewis Tappan. This movement centered itself in churches due to the platform that it could get from the institution. But it also represented growing Evangelical Protestant beliefs that slavery was in fact a sin. This idea was predominantly based on three ideas, the first being an assumption that every human should be able to work towards their own salvation, and that anything in the way of that is a sin. The second idea was based on the need to be benevolent. This suggests that one should be concerned for another's wellness, and that any action that results in another's detriment is sinful as well. Finally, Evangelical Protestants sought an idea of “perfection” based in one's self. However, it states that someone cannot be perfect unless society is perfect. Slavery stands in opposition to all these ideas, and this is what led many Christians to begin to adopt anti-slavery ideals.

Despite this introduction of anti-slavery, many members of both Saint Ann's Church and the newer Holy Trinity Church profited from slavery past Emancipation, by working in industries that sold slave-produced products like cotton, tobacco, hemp and others. This goes to show that anti-slavery was a stronger social issue than it was a political issue.

Joline Fong

The Hicks Family & Slavery in the North vs. South

Hi! I'll be sharing some of my research into the Hicks family and talking about slavery in the North vs. in the South throughout the 18th and 19th century.

I'll start with a quick look into two brothers, Jacob Middagh and John Middagh Hicks, who were key focuses in my research. These brothers were most likely members of Saint Ann's Church, and the Saint Ann's registry confirms that their spouses definitely were. Sarah Middagh, a slave owner and founding member of the Church who Bevan previously mentioned, was a close relation. Apparently, even at age 89, Sarah Middagh still attended public worship at Saint Ann's. The Hicks family provides an interesting insight into the contention over slavery in the early 1800s -- while the Episcopal side were slave owners, the Quaker half had abolitionist leanings, which led to a family rift and their eventual division in 1827.

There were so many Hicks living at this time that they all had nicknames to differentiate themselves. Jacob Hicks, often called "Spitter Hicks" due to his frequent habit of spitting, owned 1 slave named Peter in 1777, 3 slaves in 1790, 7 in 1800, and 4 in 1810. John, known affectionately as "Milk Hicks" because he sold milk, owned 1 slave in 1790 and 1 in 1810 (although slavery in New York was legally emancipated in 1799, in practice it carried on well after this date, which is why many Saint Ann's members have slaves under their name as far as 1820). The brothers were descendents of the wealthy Dutch Middagh family, which is where they got their middle names, and inherited a large portion of the original Middagh estate. They owned waterfront and a very large portion of land in Brooklyn Heights. The brothers were not interested in selling at all, and are quoted as being "averse to change or improvement".

To give you a picture into their lives, I'll read a quote. As I do, recall that these comfortable lives were made possible by slave labour. Because of their substantial inheritance, the brothers were exempted from the necessity of hard labour, and passed their lives in "a quiet, leisurely manner, which gained for them, from their less fortunate neighbors, the appellation... of 'the Gentlemen Hicks'". Jacob "could often be seen sitting [on the wide front stoop of his mansion]... looking placidly upon the passing travel... From this elevated plateau, the eye rested upon a panoramic scene of unsurpassed beauty".

To put the lives of these brothers in context, I'm going to show you all an interactive map which we've been working on [show map]. This map highlights streets in Brooklyn named after slave owners. The Hicks estate was located in this area [right of Hicks street], right next to the Middagh estate which was a bit further from the water [further right of Hicks street], and Hicks street was named after them for this reason. To point out a few of the many others, we have Remsen, Joralemon, Wyckoff, Sands, Furman, Schermerhorn, Bergen, and Sackett. These streets all memorialize the names of slave owners.

Now, I have a painting to share, done by Francis Guy in 1816. It's fascinating because it depicts a street corner in Brooklyn Heights that we can locate on our map [show map], and it depicts people who many of us researched. Guy painted the scene outside his window, and "as he painted, would sometimes call out... to his subjects, as he caught sight of them on their customary ground, to stand still, while he put in the characteristic strokes".

- This is Jacob Hicks. As Guy was painting him, Jacob was apparently "brought to a halt, goose in hand; and, after he had been sketched, politely sent the goose as a present to the painter, that he might "sketch the fowl more deliberately, and eat him afterward".
- Yellow house: Sarah Middagh's house
- House behind Sarah Middagh's house: Saint Ann's Church
- Jacob Hicks's woodyard (distance, corner main street)
- Jacob Patchen, another slave owner

You can also see two slaves. (Abiel Titus servant "Jeff", chimney=Samuel Foster). You can see that they are both alone. For slaves living in NYC, being in public like this would likely have been their only chance to socialize. That's because slaves in the North, in contrast to slaves in the South who worked on large plantations, were often employed in small numbers, meaning lonely labor without any form of community. This was the case with the slaves of St. Ann's members, many of whom had between 1-7 slaves.

Slaves in the North were housed in unheated attics, basements, outbuildings, and barns, and were rarely allowed to congregate. The custom of separating families was common in the North just as it was in the South -- advertisements for runaway slaves in New York often mentioned that the slave in question may have gone to find wives sold to distant purchasers. In NYC, slaves directly influenced the wealth and power of leading residents, such as those who came up during our research of slave owners connected to St. Ann's Church.