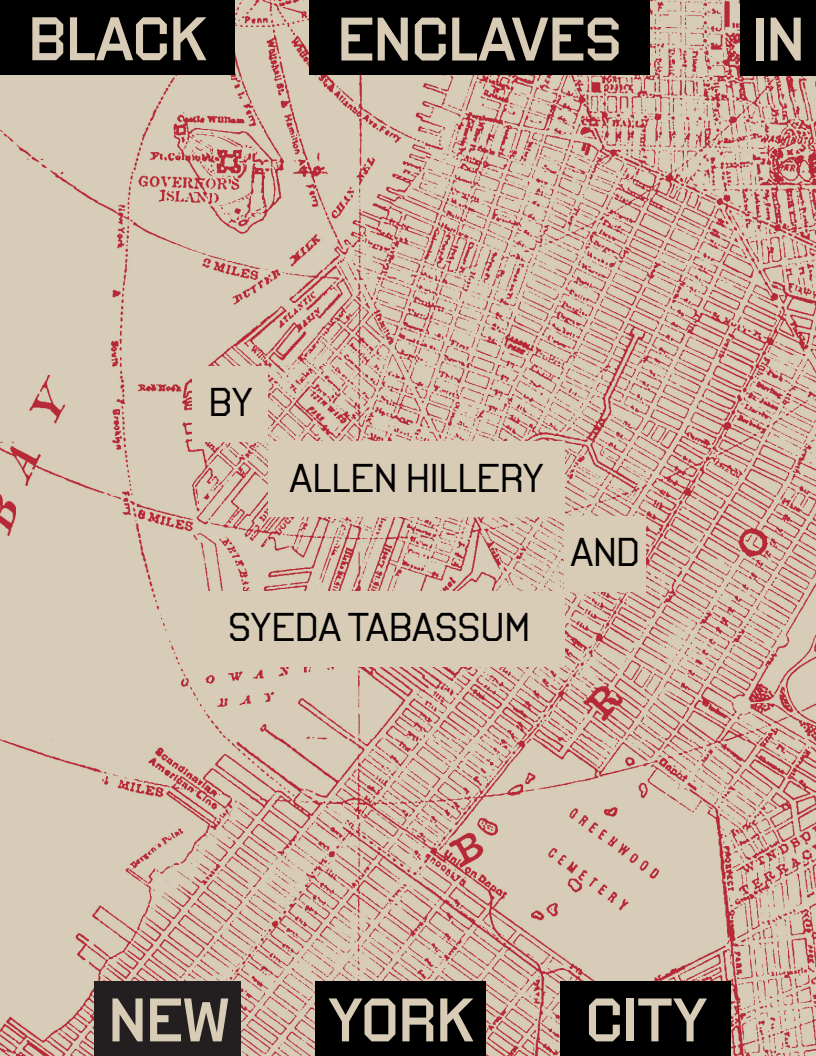


BLACK

ENCLAVES

IN



GOVERNOR'S ISLAND

BY

ALLEN HILLERY

AND

SYEDA TABASSUM

NEW

YORK

CITY





**MAPPING COMMUNITIES:
BLACK ENCLAVES IN
NEW YORK CITY FROM
1825 TO 1950**



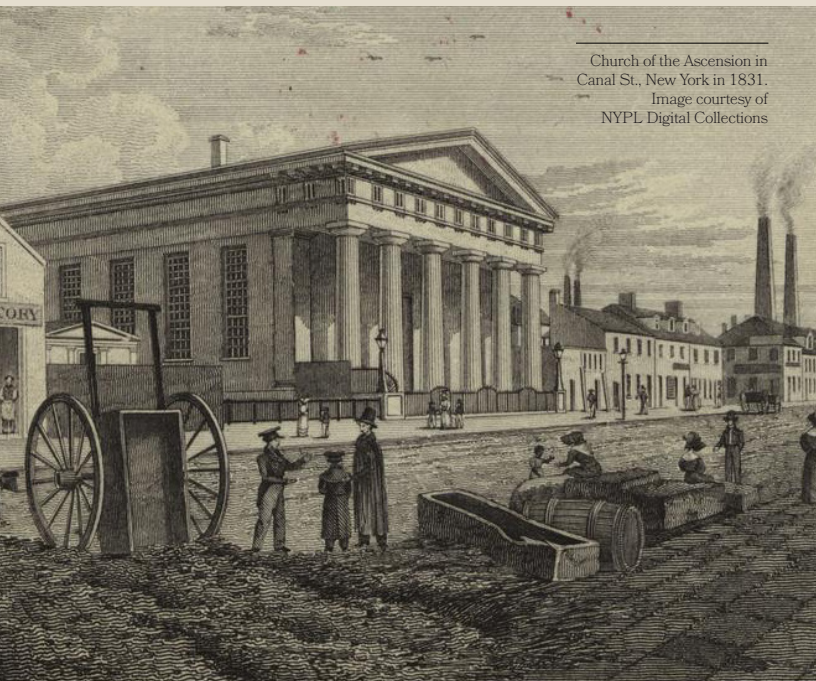
**BY ALLEN HILLERY &
SYDEDA TABASSUM**



INTRODUCTION:**LOOKING AT 19th
CENTURY NYC WITH A
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVE**

Church of the Ascension in
Canal St., New York in 1831.

Image courtesy of
NYPL Digital Collections



When we look at the story of 19th century New York City, do we really know the whole story?

Many of us have heard the stories of European immigrants. Across the backdrops of the Gilded Age and Industrial Revolution, European Immigrants have seen America as a safe harbor. The narrative tells a story of Western Europeans crossing the Atlantic Ocean fleeing wars, religious discrimination and financial downturn to seek a fresh start.

What about Black people? How does their story interweave the backdrops of the Gilded Age and Industrial Revolution? The story of the Black New York in itself is its own melting pot. In addition to Black people migrating from the US South, there were Black people from the Caribbean also looking for opportunities to build a better life. While free Black people lived throughout the United States prior to the Civil War, the majority of Black people were still enslaved. According to the 1860 U.S.

Census, there were 250,787 free Black people living in the South in contrast to 225,961 free Black people living in other parts of the county.

As we explore Black existence in nineteenth century New York, we will explore two communities experiencing the shifting landscapes and social order of this grown metropolis where every new community or space was the result of a previous one's decline or ultimate destruction. Specifically, we will be focusing on the following communities: Seneca Village and Weeksville.





SENECA VILLAGE ¹

- A predominantly African American enclave that existed from 1825 to 1857 in Upper Manhattan.
- It was located in what is now Central Park between W 82nd St and W 89th St.
- Allowed residents to live away from the more built-up sections of downtown Manhattan and escape the unhealthy conditions and racial discrimination they faced there.

WEEKSVILLE

- A predominantly African American enclave that existed from 1838 to 1883 in Brooklyn.
- The community welcomed Black New Yorkers who were escaping the racial violence during the Draft Riots in 1863.
- Prominent African American women resided there, including Ida B. Wells, Maritcha Remond Lyons and Susan Smith McKinney-Steward.
- Four historic houses from that era have been preserved and serve as a museum showcasing the time period of this once prosperous community.

INTRODUCTION



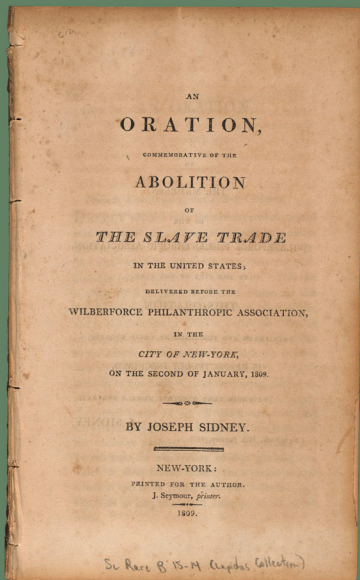
Seneca Village and Weeksville are two of twenty plus Black Enclaves that have been identified by various historians, sociologists and archaeologists to date. Individually, these enclaves possess a rich culture and history on their own. Collectively, these enclaves illustrate the

migration of Black people living in New York City. They were looking to build a way of life and community. Unfortunately, more often than not, their migration was marked by racial violence, racism, gentrification, eminent domain or a combination of all three.

¹ <https://www.centralparknyc.org/articles/seneca-village>

Bethesda terrace and fountain,
Central Park, New York, 19th century.
Image courtesy of NYPL Digital Collections

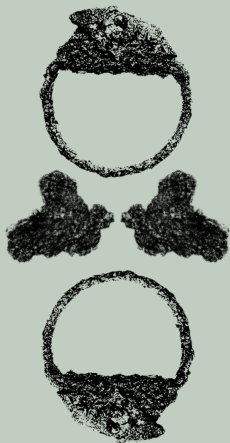
A WALK THROUGH TIME: THE ROAD TO EMANCIPATION



*An Oration, commemorative of the Abolition of
The Slave Trade in the United States* by Joseph Sidney.
Image courtesy of NYPL Digital Collections

1730**ROUGHLY 20% OF NYC WERE ENSLAVED PEOPLE.**

Black residents in New York City were under enslavement and scattered throughout Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn. Roughly 20% of NYC were enslaved people. This was second in the country to Charleston, SC.

17301799**BLACK NYC RESIDENTS WERE SLOWLY ABOLISHED FROM SLAVERY.**

- 1799: Law states slaves born after July 4, 1799 to be freed beginning in 1824.
- 1808: Slave Trade was made illegal.
- 1817: Law states slaves born before July 4, 1799 freed by 1827.
- 1821: New York State Constitution granted the vote to Black Men with at least \$200 in real estate holdings.
- 1825: Seneca Village formed in Upper Manhattan providing Black men the opportunity to own property and gain the right to vote.

1799

1825**SENECA VILLAGE:
REFUGE FROM RACIAL VIO-
LENCE AND DISCRIMINATION.**

Seneca Village was an integrated community where Irish and German immigrants co-existed with the Black villagers. This created a community that was a pioneering idea for other communities of integrated living. Villagers attended churches together. Their kids went to school together. This is evident in US Census and church records.

Beginning in 1825, a white farmer named John Whitehead began selling parcels of land to African Americans living downtown. He also sold land to a trustee of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Epiphany Davis. Davis bought twelve lots from Farmer Whitehead for \$578. They were members of one of the largest and most prosperous congregations of African Americans in 19th century America. They were members of the predominantly white John Street Methodist Church located downtown.

Davis, on behalf of the AME Zion church, was looking for a burial ground as John Street was prohibiting Black people from being buried with their congregation.

Seneca Village was one of the first significant communities of African American property owners in the city. The 1821 New York State Constitution granted the vote to Black men with at least 200 dollars in real estate holdings, even as white men faced ever-fewer property requirements. Some Black New Yorkers seeking political rights looked uptown—where land was cheaper—to gain access to the vote.

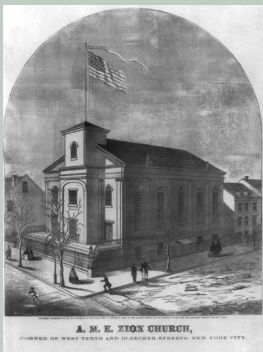
Seneca Village was a respite from some of the racism Black New Yorkers faced in Lower Manhattan. This enclave gave Black people an opportunity to own land and secure their freedom. Several residents owned land and were allowed to vote. Land ownership gave them the right to vote, allowing the right to vote and thus a role in democracy.

By 1855, Seneca Village had three churches, two schools and three

1825

cemeteries. Approximately two-thirds of Seneca Village's residents were regular church goers. The three churches were AME Zion church, The African Union Church and All Angels' Church.

AME ZION CHURCH



As Black New Yorkers were slowly gaining their freedom, the AME Zion Church played a big part in the activism of that time. It was a stop on the Underground Railroad and many who worshiped there, such as Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, became leaders and abolitionists. In 1825, a

trustee of the church, Epiphany Davis bought twelve lots from Farmer Whitehead for \$578. Although the church was located downtown, they had been looking for a burial ground as it was becoming prohibited for Black people to be buried there. In 1853, the church established a congregation and built a church building in Seneca Village. By 1855, Seneca Village had three churches, two schools and three cemeteries. Approximately two-thirds of the congregation were regular church goers. When Seneca Village was displaced, AME Zion Church moved uptown to Harlem where they remain today at 140-7 W 137th st.

THE AFRICAN UNION CHURCH

The African Union Church was of the Methodist denomination. They purchased their lots in Seneca Village in 1837 about 100 feet from Mother Zion AME and had 50 congregants.

ALL ANGELS CHURCH

All Angels' Church was founded in 1846 as an affiliate of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, a wealthy white church whose main campus was located at Amsterdam Avenue and 99th street in what would be the neighborhood of Manhattan Valley today. The congregation at the Seneca Village location was racially diverse serving Black and German parishioners. When the community was razed, the church physically relocated a few blocks west and was incorporated at the corner of 81st street and West End Avenue. It stood until it was replaced by another building in 1890.

1827

EMANCIPATION OF SLAVERY IN NEW YORK.

- 1827: Emancipation of slavery in New York State continues
- 1830: Black Enclaves were forming in Brooklyn

An interesting dynamic was beginning to form. As Black New Yorkers were becoming emancipated from slavery, their fate became more divisive. The industrial revolution was beginning to bloom. At the same time, German, Italian and Irish immigrants were coming to America for a better way of life.



1827

1834**ANTI-ABOLITIONIST RIOTS.**

On July 7, 1834 rioters attacked the homes and businesses and churches of abolitionist leaders and ransacked Black neighborhoods. The riots were a result of a growing fear and resentment of Black residents among the growing underclass of Irish immigrants in New York. Another factor that stirred tension were Arthur and Lewis Tappan. They were brothers and prominent abolitionists.

They were noted for underwriting a female anti-slavery society in New York.

The tipping point was a misunderstanding that took place on July 7th at Chatham Street Chapel. The New York Sacred Music Society had leased the chapel to an integrated group that had planned to celebrate the emancipation of slavery in New York. Other members of the music society, not realizing the owners had granted the space to another party, arrived and demanded to use the space. This caused a huge brawl and rumors began to fly that “gangs of Blacks” were going to retaliate. Rumors were also

flying that abolitionists, including Arthur Tappan, had been encouraging women to marry Black men and supporting interracial marriage.

Mobs targeted homes, businesses, churches and other buildings associated with the abolitionist movement as well as those of African Americans. More than seven churches and a dozen homes were damaged. These homes included Lewis Tappan’s and Reverend Peter Williams, Jr. Rev. Williams was an African American Episcopalian priest.

Rioting was hardest in the Five Points neighborhood. Five Points was bordered by Centre Street to the west, Bowery to the east, Canal Street to the North and Park Row to the south. It was located near today’s Manhattan Chinatown. These riots lasted for about 7 days until quelled by military force.

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/05/nyregion/haven-for-blacks-in-civil-war-riots-now-safeguards-history.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.mcny.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/SarahGarnet.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.tvhs.org/post/maritcha-remond-lyons-mentor-to-a-cause-ally-to-a-movement>

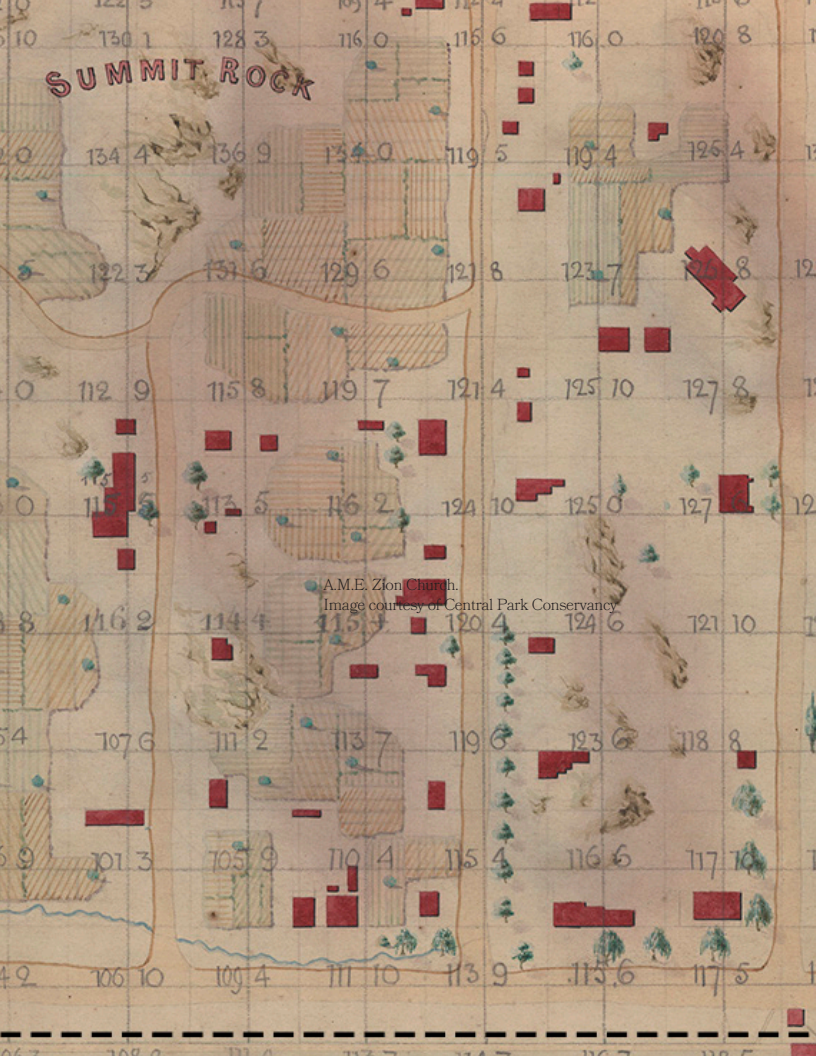
⁶ <https://www.proquest.com/docview/219939955>

⁷ <https://www.nyp.org/blog/2015/06/29/slave-market>

⁸ <http://www.nycago.org/Organs/NYC/html/AllAngelsEpis.html>

1834

SUMMIT ROCK



A.M.E. Zion Church.

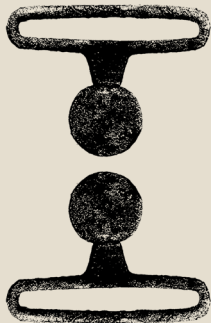
Image courtesy of Central Park Conservancy

SENECA VILLAGE LEGACY

Archaeologists, sociologists, historians, anthropologists and genealogists are still uncovering new information about the residents of Seneca Village, but our current knowledge of the residents is very limited. While the men, women, and children of Seneca Village lived full and meaningful lives, many of their stories were not preserved for us to learn from today. What we do find, however, is evidence of middle class men and women forging ahead to create a life for themselves in the turn of the 20th century.

One disparaging thing that has happened to Black enclaves over time is them being labeled as slums and shantytowns. Seneca Village was not immune to these attacks. Prior to the years leading up to Seneca Village's displacement to create Central Park, park advocates and the media began to describe it as a shantytown. 9 Residents were called squatters, vagabonds

and scoundrels. One of the village's detractors included Egbert Ludovicus Viele, the park's first engineer. He wrote a report about the "refuge of the five thousand squatters" living on the future site of Central Park. He criticized the residents as people with very little knowledge of the English language and with very little respect for the law." 10 While a minority of Seneca Village's residents were landowners, most had formal agreements with landlords. This is why it's important to continue discovering more about Seneca Village and its rich history.



(Left) 1855 Viele Topographic Survey with the added outline of Seneca Village. Image courtesy of the NYC Municipal Archives.

WILLIAMS FAMILY LEGACY 1825–1857

On Sept 27, 1825, Andrew Williams purchased three lots from John Whitehead for \$125 (\$3,811 in 2023). He was African American and an early settler to Seneca Village and stayed there near the end of the community's existence. Not formally educated, he was a shoe shiner and a cart man by trade. However he had an entrepreneurial spirit and was committed to seeing his family and community thrive. When the city was paying families to leave Seneca Village, Williams protested his offer. He ultimately did not win and accepted the \$2,335 (\$71,191 in 2023) offer made on his property. He had valued his property at around

\$4,000 (\$121,954 in 2023). After the displacement of Seneca Village, Andrew Williams took his family to the Newton neighborhood of Queens. The Williams family eventually migrated to California. Historians Celedonia "Cal" Jones and Cynthia Copeland were able to trace Ariel Williams, the great great great great granddaughter of Andrew Williams. They discuss the history of Seneca Village and the legacy of Andrew Williams.



ELIZA WEBSTER



Eliza Webster was born in New York around 1819, but not much is known about her family and childhood. In 1850, census records show that Eliza lived downtown in the city's Fifth Ward. The ward was integrated and had a Black community sometimes referred to as "Little Africa." Many African-Americans in the early 19th century lived in working-class wards. Other records like the 1850–51 Doggett's directory show Eliza listed as the widow of John A. and doing "washing" at 11 Anthony Street.

Another notable resident in her building was her soon-to-be-husband George, whose employment was listed as selling oysters at 161 Church St. The area nearby had a coal

yard and sugar refinery, which may have not provided the best physical environment. What quality of life could one have with smoke coming out of factory chimneys? In addition to the smog, how would it feel to constantly have to wipe off a coating of coal residue? While sugar is sweet, it doesn't smell well as it's being refined. Living in an industrialized area is something that should be avoided if you can. Over time, these conditions take their tolls on residents' respiratory health.

In 1855, Eliza lived in Seneca Village with her second husband George, and four children and is not listed as employed. They occupied one of the larger houses in the area, a two-story house valued at \$3,000 (\$104,081 in 2023). If they were AME Zion members, they may have been motivated to move uptown with their church. The AME Zion church expanded into Seneca Village in 1853, and both George and Eliza were not listed as members of other churches in Seneca Village.

After the razing of Seneca Village, Eliza and her family returned to the Fifth ward where records show a baby was born in 1858. The 1860 census shows

George and Eliza living with two of their children, Edward and George, and Harriet Woodruff who is listed as a servant. Her husband passed away in May 1861, at age 42. The subsequent years after showing Eliza moving around the city, in 1870 she lived near 80th street not far from her old residence in Seneca Village, this move may have been motivated by escaping the Draft Riots of 1863, where a mob attacked and burned town tenements on their block. Later on, she lived in the 20th ward, perhaps with her son George Jr. who was 19 at the time, and her personal estate was worth \$400.

In 1879, Eliza Webster died at age 56. Her story of moving and taking on jobs for financial security prior to and post living in Seneca Village may allude to how that community provided her with a sense of stability that was not found elsewhere at the time.



⁹ Williams, Keith (February 7, 2018). "Uncovering the Ruins of an Early Black Settlement in New York". *The New York Times*.

¹⁰ Rosenzweig, Roy & Blackmar, Elizabeth (1992). *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Cornell University Press. ISBN 0-8014-9751-5

(Right) Map of Bedford Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, and Weeksville. Image courtesy of NYPL Digital Archives.

NEXT STOP: BROOKLYN

Brooklyn is located at the westernmost part of Long Island and shares a border with Queens. It was originally the “Land of the Lenape” or the “Lenapehoking” an offspring of the Algonquin civilization. This land includes present day New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and parts of Connecticut. Forced displacement started with European discovery of the land and continued well into the 19th century. The history of European settlement in Brooklyn spans more than 350 years. The settlement began in the 17th century as the small Dutch founded town of “Breuckelen”.

The Breuckelen settlement was named after a city in the Netherlands. This would be one part of what became New Netherlands. The colony would change hands in 1664 when the British captured the colony. The British would evacuate NYC in 1783 after the Treaty of Paris was signed marking the end of the revolutionary war. Brooklyn would remain a rural village for some time until the appearance of steam ferries. Between 1815 and 1835, regular steam ferry service to Manhattan transformed Brooklyn into a middle class community. ever-fewer property requirements.



1839**BROOKLYN WAS BOOMING.
THE GROWING POPULATION
HAD REACHED ABOUT
40,000 RESIDENTS.**

- This included freed Black men and women as slavery had been abolished statewide in 1827.
- The Lefferts family, one of Kings County's biggest landowners, began selling off farmland in the Bedford section of the city.



A year prior, In 1838, an African-American named Henry C. Thompson purchased 32 lots. A year later, he sold two lots at Dean Street and Troy Avenue to James Weeks, a Virginia-born dock worker thought to have been a freed slave. Weeksville became a community of African Americans with its own school, churches, businesses, baseball team (Weeksville Unknowns) and newspaper Freedman's Torchlight.

- **1838:** The enclave of Weeksville had formed in Brooklyn. An African American named Henry C. Thompson purchased 32 lots of land
- **1841:** Last year slaves could be brought to NY by an out of state owner

1855**WEEKSVILLE WAS THRIVING WITH 531 RESIDENTS OCCUPYING TIDY, WOOD-FRAME HOUSES.**

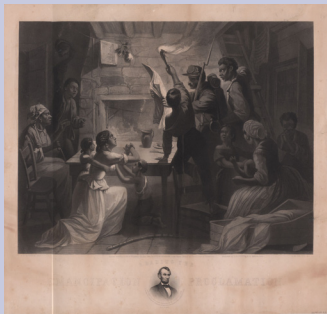
The community Welcomed Black New Yorkers fleeing racially motivated terror during the Draft Riots in 1863.

- The community quickly grew as a financially self-sufficient urban enclave of African Americans.
- The community is unique for having had reportedly the highest number of Black owned businesses and properties.



1862**EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION**

- **1862:** United States President Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. It would be finalized January 1, 1863.
 - Officially known as Proclamation 95.
 - It was a Presidential proclamation and an executive order issued by United States President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863.
 - The Proclamation changed the legal status of more than 3.5 million enslaved African Americans in the secessionist Confederate states from enslaved to free.
- **1863:** Conscription Law of 1863
 - All male citizens aged 20–35 and all unmarried men aged 35–45 were subjected to military duty.
 - Black men were exempt from the draft since they were not considered citizens.



(Above) Reading the Emancipation Proclamation.
Image courtesy of NYPL Digital Collections.

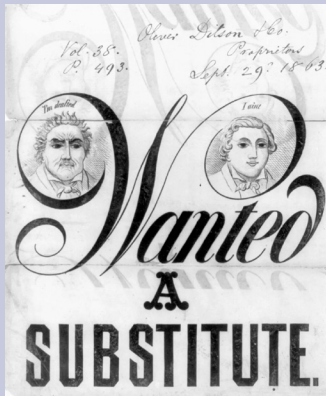
1863**NEW YORK DRAFT RIOTS**

- Five days of some of the bloodiest and most destructive rioting in the U.S.

History

- Result of the Emancipation Proclamation
- Hundreds of people killed
- Black New Yorkers were the target

Monday morning, July 13, 1863, thousands of White workers, mainly Irish and Irish American, started attacking military and government buildings. They became violent to those who stood in their way including police officers and military personnel. By the afternoon, the angry mob targeted Black citizens. In total there were 119 reported deaths, however, estimates count the death toll around 1200. The aftermath of Draft Riots resulted in millions of dollars of property damage and 3,000 of NYC's Black residents homeless.



(Left) Cover of sheet music for "Wanted, a Substitute," a song commenting on the practice of hiring substitutes to fulfill one's service obligation in the American Civil War, 1863. Image courtesy of Britannica.

1863

1866**HOWARD COLORED
ORPHAN ASYLUM**

- Formerly known as Home for Freed Children and Others
 - One of the few orphanages to be led by and for African Americans
 - Founded in 1866 by Black Presbyterian Minister Henry M. Wilson, Sarah A Tillman, and General Oliver Otis Howard.
 - Originally used by freed women new to the Northern United States as a place for their children while they searched for work.
- **1868:** The institution's finances were in disarray due to Wilson's mismanagement.
 - **1888:** The place was renamed the Howard Colored Orphan Asylum and moved to Brooklyn with Rev. William Francis Johnson.
 - **1918:** The asylum gradually deteriorated due to lack of funding and closed.

1866

1840–1880**HUNTERFLY ROAD HOUSES**

Four historic houses (now known as the Hunterfly Road Houses) were discovered off Bergen Street between Buffalo and Rochester Avenues, facing an old lane—a remnant of Hunterfly Road, which was at the eastern edge of the 19th century village.

- Discovered by Pratt Institute professor James Hurley and pilot Joseph Haynes while conducting an aerial survey of Bedford Stuyvesant for a workshop in 1968.
 - 1702–04 Bergen Street is the oldest home. It dates back to the 1840's. It's a one-story duplex with a central chimney

- 1698 Bergen Street is the second home. It is a two-story hall and parlor planned house with a wooden shingle exterior, and dates from the 1850s
- 1700 Bergen Street is the third home. This home was built in 1883 according to records from the Brooklyn Buildings Department, and is a two-story house with a hall and parlor floor plan
- 1706–8 Bergen Street is the fourth home. This home dates back from 1865 but was demolished by a fire in the early 1990's. A new structure was built in its place in 1993



In 1969, Joan Maynard created the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford Stuyvesant History in order to catalog the rich history of Weeksville's past, restore the Hunterfly Road Houses, and convert them into an African American history museum. In 1970, the four houses were individually listed as New York City Landmarks, further protecting the houses from urban renewal. In 2005, the houses opened as an interactive museum, showcasing the many significant periods of the once prosperous, independent African American community.

¹¹ Margino, Megan, (May 10, 2016), <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2016/05/10/history-nyc-commuter>

(Left, Above) Hunterfly Road Houses. Image courtesy of Brooklyn Historical Society.



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PRICE 25 CENTS.

A RED RECORD.

Fabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of

Lynchings in the United States,

1892 - 1893 - 1894.

Respectfully submitted to the Nineteenth Century
civilization in "the Land of the Free and
the Home of the Brave."

BY
MISS IDA B. WELLS,
128 Clark Street,
CHICAGO.

DONOHUE & HENNEBERRY, PRINTERS, BINDERS AND ENGRAVERS, CHICAGO

IDA B. WELLS AND THE RED RECORD



MISS IDA B. WELLS.

Ida B. Wells was an African-American journalist, activist, and feminist who led the anti-lynching crusade. She was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi on July 16th, 1862 into slavery during the Civil War period. After the war, her parents were politically active during the Reconstruction Era and emphasized the importance of education. Unfortunately, in 1878 both of her parents died of yellow fever during the epidemic that hit her hometown, she was just 16 years old at the time.

She eventually moved to Memphis, Tennessee where she was a teacher and co-owned and wrote for the Memphis Free Speech and Headlight newspaper; her topics were centered around racial segregation and inequality.

In the 1890s, she began her work documenting lynchings around America and advocating for anti-lynching. Many sources recall a horrific incident in her hometown of Memphis where an argument between a white grocery store owner named W. H. Barrett and the black youth of the town, the deputies arrested

(Left) Cover of *The Red Record* by Ida B. Wells. Image courtesy of NYPL Digital Collections.

(Above) Portrait of Ida B. Wells. Image courtesy of NYPL Digital Collections.

many African American men, many of whom were not involved in the initial argument. In the middle of the night, a white mob infiltrated the jail, and shot and killed Calvin McDowell, Thomas Moss, and Will Stewart. While Ida was in New York at the time, she was a close friend of Thomas Moss, and the news of this lynching infuriated her. She wrote in an editorial in the Free Press, "This is what opened my eyes to what lynching really was: an excuse to get rid

of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized." This confronted the white mob directly, thus making her a target of their hateful acts where they destroyed the officer of her newspaper. She fled to New York City and started working more closely on her campaign to bring about awareness of these horrors of lynching through pamphlets like *Southern Horrors: Lynch Laws in all its Phases* and *The Red*



Record cataloging 241 lynching with data and charts.

On October 5, 1892, Ida B. Wells spoke about lynching and what she had learned after the lynching of her friends, to a packed room at New York's Lyric Hall. During this period, which was known as the Gilded Age, black Americans were learning to read and write and going to school in record numbers. This allowed for a growing number of lyceums, lectures, discussions, and formal debates. It was at one of these lyceums at Brooklyn Literary Union of the Siloam Presbyterian Church, that Ida debated Maritcha Remond Lyons and through her, she met a group of women who were journalists, educators, and activists all with the goal to improve life for Black Americans and women in particular.

(Left) Mary McLeod Bethune, Ida B. Wells, Nannie Burroughs and other women at Baptist Women's gathering, Chicago. Image courtesy of New York Public Library Digital Collections.





THE WOMEN OF WEEKSVILLE

When we look at the lives and experiences of Black women of this time, it is often limited to small pieces of information from historical records. What we learn about their lives is usually in relation to their husbands, focusing on obstacles, and told in the context of the majority white society

at the time. There is not enough about their accomplishments and the institutions and groups they built. The women we read about in this section were entrepreneurs, principals, activists and doctors. They were innovators who left a legacy in their communities.

(Left) Group portrait of women's group at Abyssinian Baptist Church, Harlem, New York City, circa 1940s. Image courtesy of NYPL Digital Collections.

ELIZABETH A. GLOUCESTER 1817–1883

One of the wealthiest Black
Women in America

Elizabeth A. Gloucester was born 1817 in Richmond, Virginia. When she was young, her mother died and she went to live with Rev. John Gloucester, Sr. She married his youngest son James Gloucester in 1838. Gloucester ran 15 boarding homes in New York and they lived in Brooklyn from 1855. Her husband founded the Siloam Presbyterian Church and she helped pay for the building of the church. They helped abolitionist John Brown and contributed to his causes. One of her major purchases was the Hamilton club. She turned this gentlemen's club into an upscale boarding house called Remsen Houses. Here she boarded Frederick Douglas, John Brown and many others.

Through the church, the Gloucesters showed their abolitionist support by hosting John Brown as well as serving as a stop on the Underground Railroad. They also maintained an Underground Railroad fund. Mrs. Gloucester led the efforts to raise money for the Colored Orphans Asylum in Weeksville, Brooklyn which was founded in 1866.

Gloucester died August 9th, 1883 of pneumonia. Rewemsen House was run by her daughters for a few more years. They eventually sold it back to the Hamilton Club. It was later demolished in 1936.



SARAH GARNET
1831–1911

Educator and Activist



Sarah Garnet was born in Brooklyn in 1831, she was an educator and activist for the suffragette movement. Her father Sylvanus Smith was a free Black farmer and one of the earliest land investors in Weeksville, a free Black community in Brooklyn established in the 1830s.

After graduating high school, she worked as an educator for almost 50 years, and continuously fought for ending racial discrimination against Black teachers, and improving wages. In 1863, she was the first Black woman to become a principal in the NYC school system. In late 1880, she co-founded the Equal Suffrage League of Brooklyn, an organization that advocated for voting rights and racial equality for Black Americans. The group included her sister, Dr. Susan McKinney Steward, the first Black woman in New York state to earn a medical degree, and Maritcha Remond Lyons. Garnet passed away in Brooklyn in 1911. W.E.B. DuBois spoke at her memorial service, and Maritcha Lyons contributed a profile of Garnet to the book *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*.

**SUSAN SMITH
MCKINNEY-STEWARD
1847–1918**

First African American
Woman Doctor



Dr. Susan Smith McKinney-Steward, M.D., graduated valedictorian from the New York Medical College for Women in 1870. She was the first African American woman to hold a medical degree in New York state, and the third in the United States. She practiced medicine in Brooklyn and Manhattan, specializing in prenatal care and childhood diseases.

Her family had ties to Weeksville as they were some of the early settlers. Her parents were pork farmers, and their farm is located on what is now Fulton Street and Buffalo Avenue in Brooklyn. She lived at 189 Pearl Street, in Weeksville, now Crown Heights, Brooklyn for ten years until her family moved to a house next door at 213 Pearl Street. They later moved again to 243 Pearl Street. Her siblings were all well-educated, her sisters were educators, teachers, activists, and piano teachers including her oldest.

(Above, Left) Portrait of Susan Smith McKinney-Steward.
Image Courtesy of Black Gotham Archive.

MARITCHA REMOND LYONS 1848-1929

Leader and Inspiration

Marticha Ramond Lyons was a leader and inspiration for many in her activism and teaching career. She was born in New York City on June 23rd, 1848. Her family's home was a stop on the Underground Railroad. But their home was often attacked during the Draft Riots in July of 1863, which pushed the Lyons family to flee to Salem, Massachusetts before returning to Brooklyn. Her parents sent her to Providence, Rhode Island where segregation was rampant and there were no high schools for black students and she was denied access to an all-white high school. Maritcha did not let this get in the way of her education and successfully sued the state and became the first black student to graduate from Providence High School.

After graduation, Lyons accepted a teaching position in Brooklyn's Fort Greene neighborhood. She spent the next 5 decades teaching and became assistant principal of Public School No. 83, the first fully integrated school in Brooklyn. She also played a key role in activism and planning Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching testimonial. This work continued on with the help of Victoria

Earle Matthews when they founded the Women's Loyal Union of New York and Brooklyn in February 1892, a club dedicated to social service and civil rights. She also fought for voting rights and was a member of many suffragette organizations. Her unpublished memoir *Memories of Yesterdays: All of Which I Saw and Part of Which I Was* (1928), has accounts of the violent destruction of the Draft Riots of 1863 on her home and her family's involvement in the Underground Railroad. Lyons continued to live in Brooklyn, with her brother and his family, until she died in 1929 according to Census Records.

CREDITS

MUSEUM HUE

Sierra Van Ryck deGroot,
Deputy Director
Stephanie Johnson-Cunningham,
Executive Director

Amanda Thomas
Membership & Communications
Manager

INSPIRED BY

Erica Buddington and her work on
New York City's forgotten enclaves

SPECIAL THANKS

Ola Baldych,
Director of Design and Exhibits,
Poster House

PUBLICATION DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION

Yeji Kim

WEB DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

Segacy Roberts and *Maria Mergal,*
Proof.

TYPEFACE

DuBois by Vocal Type Co.

Bookmania by
Mark Simonson Studio

*The funding for this project was made possible
by Humanities NY and the Ford Foundation.*

(Right) Image courtesy of NYU Press.





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