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## The Real Life of James Mars

DAVID O. WHITE

Tolland, Connecticut

In 1856 Dr. Joseph Eldridge, the minister of the Congregational Church in Norfolk, Connecticut, announced his intention to write a detailed history of the town. His Thanksgiving sermons for 1856 and 1857 were devoted to various aspects of Norfolk's past. Eldridge asked people who had recollections about early inhabitants of the community to put these onto paper and send copies to him.<sup>1</sup> One of those who responded to this request was James Mars, who had not lived in Norfolk for over twenty-five years. Yet, Mars provided information about some of the town's businesses and buildings, and the people who worked or lived in them.<sup>2</sup>

James Mars was living in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1857 when he began to write his recollections for Eldridge. During one of his visits to Norfolk in the early years of the United States Civil War Mars was approached by some people in town to write about his personal experiences, which they knew were rather unique. These experiences involved his enslavement there from 1790 to 1811. Mars had already been asked by his sister, Elizabeth Thomson, as well as others in his family, to provide them with an account of his slavery experiences. Unwilling to write that many manuscript histories, he decided to have his story published and then sell the pamphlets in order to cover the printing costs. Still, Mars noted that another reason why he wanted to publish his story was that "many of the people now on the stage of life do not know that slavery ever lived in Connecticut."<sup>3</sup>

A study of James Mars that goes beyond what he wrote in his pamphlet helps us to understand that free blacks of his era could achieve a certain degree of recognition in a society controlled by whites. Mars owned property and sold property. But he never could afford to hold property for more than a few years. He found employment and respect among both blacks and whites. Yet, he ended his life a poor man selling his pamphlet from house to house. In a way, however, Mars was a bridge between the black and white communities. This might be because he had a personality that allowed him to be accepted by both races. More likely, however, this was possible because of his close association with whites in Norfolk for much of his early life. He lived with whites, worked with whites, went to church with whites, and socialized with whites. When he moved to Hartford Mars easily fit into the black community there, but he also related well to many whites. Another example of this concept is seen in Lemuel Haynes, who was born in Connecticut 37 years before Mars. Haynes was able, to a degree, to bridge the gap between the white and black

racess. He, like Mars, grew up among whites and had a personality that appealed to nearly everyone he met. While there is a biography about Haynes that offers insight to his activities, little is known about James Mars beyond the small pamphlet he wrote. Other resources, however, offer some idea of his experiences as a free black in New England.<sup>4</sup>

*The Life of James Mars* was first published in the year 1864 by the Hartford firm of Case, Lockwood and Company. It is mostly a narrative of the years that Mars was enslaved followed by a brief account of his years of freedom in Norfolk. It ends with Mars assisting his former owner who was then near death. Over the thirteen-year period after 1864, Mars' pamphlet went through thirteen editions using the same title and providing the same information about his life as a slave. All of the editions of the pamphlet after 1864 carried an opening statement by the Reverend John Todd of Pittsfield, and an appendix of three pages offering a brief description about his life in Hartford, and a briefer account of his wife and children. Yet, with the exception of one incident that took place in Hartford, Mars failed to provide any depth to his recollections about the fifteen years that he lived there or the twenty years that he was at Pittsfield. And he never went so far as to provide readers with the first names of the members of his family.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, the only information that changed in each new edition was the age of the writer. For example, in 1867 Mars wrote that he was in his seventy-eighth year, and in 1876, his last edition, he wrote that he was in his eighty-seventh year of life.

Without information on the number of copies that were printed it is impossible to determine how well *The Life of James Mars* sold. That thirteen editions were published in thirteen years suggests that one edition was printed each year and that each edition was popular enough to sell out during the course of any given year. Each printing, however, might have been limited in number. It appears that the outlet Mars used to distribute his pamphlet was to sell them door-to-door, town-to-town, and most likely in neighboring states. How he accomplished this is not clear since it is unknown where he lived during these years or how he was able to travel great distances. "My joints are stiff with old age and hard work," he wrote in the 1866 edition, "finding so ready a sale for my pamphlet, I am induced to take this method to get a living, as I can walk about from house to house." Mars wrote in the 1867 edition that the only money he had saved over the previous three years was through the sale of his book.<sup>6</sup>

There were two individuals who lived near Norfolk who offered witness to Mars' method of selling his pamphlet. Jane Williams Smith was a girl living in Colebrook during the 1870s and she later recalled, "Dea. James Mars, an old colored man. . . used to travel around selling a little pamphlet. . . telling of his life as a slave." Although she regarded Mars as "eccentric" she was also "entranced" by his stories about slavery. Bela Satterllee wrote in 1882 that some twelve to fifteen years earlier Mars came to Plymouth, Connecticut "disposing of a pamphlet or small book that contained an account of his life and family history."<sup>7</sup> Colebrook is about five miles from Norfolk while Plymouth is some twenty-five miles away. Mars wrote in later

editions that in 1866 he had an accident in New York that injured his knee. It is likely that he was in that state selling his pamphlet when this injury occurred.<sup>8</sup>

With the limited resources that Mars had available to him to distribute his publication, it is understandable why it never reached a large audience during his lifetime. Yet, this would not account for it not being more widely accepted later as an historical resource. His pamphlet is rarely compared with or included among the many anthologies of slave narratives that have been published since the Civil War. Certainly, the purpose of *The Life of James Mars* was different. Most slave narratives were written for those who wanted to see slavery in the United State destroyed. Their readers were well aware of the existence of slavery. In contrast to this, Mars wrote his work after slavery had been abolished, and his purpose was to convince his readers that slavery once flourished in Connecticut. Most slave narratives written in the United States were by men and women who were part of the Southern slavery system that caused them hardship and degradation, and left them longing for family and friends who were left behind.<sup>9</sup> For the most part, their recollections were written while the brutal conditions they endured were fresh in their minds. Mars, on the other hand, wrote his account fifty years after his enslavement was over, and either he had mellowed during that time, or he faced few problems during his tenure as an indentured slave. He really mentions only three complaints regarding his enslavement. One was that his servitude had left him little opportunity to obtain an education. Yet, his brother, John, who was born free in 1804, had no more of an education than he did. Had James Mars been freed in 1798 along with his parents it is unlikely that he would have had any more schooling living with them than he did being enslaved.<sup>10</sup> A second concern that Mars addressed in his pamphlet was the use of a whip by his owner, Elizur Munger. Mars does not actually describe being hit by Munger, but it is implied that he was. Once Mars reached his teenage years, however, he backed Munger down on this issue and it was not a problem after that. Finally, Mars clearly expected to be freed at the age of twenty-one, which is when most indentured youth were released from their obligations. By law, Mars was required to remain with Munger until the age of twenty-five, and the disagreement that arose over this issue had to be settled by an independent panel and a payment by Mars for his early freedom.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, James Mars' description of his life as a slave lacked the drama and passion that many slave narratives had that were available to the public. It might be argued that the story Mars was telling was not one of enslavement at all, but that of an indentured servant. Even though he was sold by one owner to another, this was done with the agreement of his parents, and it was to last only for a predetermined number of years.<sup>12</sup>

Although the *Life of James Mars* is ignored by most studies involving slave narratives, it was included in 1971 in *Five Black Lives*. However, this work only featured narratives of slaves who were associated with Connecticut, and three of the five had experienced slavery in the South. Mars was the only one of the five covered in this volume who spent his entire life in the North.<sup>13</sup> There are a few recent

anthologies that do include the Mars' pamphlet. One of these is *From African to Yankee* (1998) that specifically concentrates on narratives by New England African Americans. Mars is offered as an account "describing the perilous circumstances of the northern slave freed by gradual-emancipation statutes."<sup>14</sup> Another, *I Was Born A Slave* (1999), readily notes that Mars' publication "has almost nothing in common with previous narratives," but that it also represents "a coming of- age-story on which maturity arrives with the act of resistance."<sup>15</sup> One of the more bizarre usages of James Mars' narrative is in the book, *African-American Frontiers* (2000) where only the first few pages of his pamphlet are included. Researchers for this study misread Mars' work because even though ". . . *Born and Sold In Connecticut*," is printed in their book as part of the title, the events are placed in Norfolk, Virginia rather than Norfolk, Connecticut.<sup>16</sup>

There are studies about African Americans in which it would seem logical to include Mars' narrative, yet they fail to do so. One example is *To Tell A Free Story* (1986) that is dedicated to African American autobiographies from 1760 to 1865. Mars' study qualifies by time period for this work, but apparently it did not offer sufficient relevant information for it to be included. There is no mention of Mars in the text of this work, although Mars' narrative is included in a bibliography of works that the author consulted, but did not use.<sup>17</sup> A similar example of how James Mars' work appears to be of little value to historians is seen in *Disowning Slavery* (1998), which considers gradual emancipation in New England for the years of 1780 to 1860. Mars is mentioned only once in this work when noting that the children of some slaves "born after passage of the gradual emancipation statutes considered themselves slaves." Mars is cited as an example of one who considered himself "A Slave Born and Sold in Connecticut" even though he was aware that at the age of twenty-five he would be set free.<sup>18</sup>

What, if anything, would have made the *Life of James Mars* of greater interest and value to readers of African American autobiography? The major drawback to the pamphlet is that Mars failed to describe in more depth what he did after he was freed from his obligations. It seems certain that had he devoted more details about his later activities, interest in his autobiography would be greater than it has been to date. Although he does offer background regarding his role in the Nancy Jackson case in Hartford, he was so much a part of that city's African American community that one feels cheated by the lack of information that he could have provided about this community and those who were involved in its struggles. An examination of his life in freedom offers a good sense of just how limited his narrative is, and how much more we would have discovered about black reformers in New England prior to the Civil War had Mars expanded his study. Although he offered readers what they had requested, and he wrote about what was important to him, it is unfortunate that he did not see his later activities to be just as important as was his life of enslavement.

According to his pamphlet, Mars was indentured to Elizur Munger until the year 1815, but he actually secured his freedom in 1811. Despite the rancor displayed by Mars over the difficulty that he had in forcing Munger to relinquish legal jurisdiction

over him, the thirteen years that he spent under Munger's care did afford him a certain amount of autonomy in his work and prepared him for becoming a farmer much the way it would have had he been an apprentice to Munger. Once freed from his legal obligation, Mars stayed in the Norfolk area. At times he was employed by his former owner. Mars' attachment to the Mungers can be seen in his return to the family in 1820 when Munger's daughter died and then again in 1828 when Munger was near death.<sup>19</sup>

Mars became a member of the Norfolk's Congregational Church in 1816, as part of a general evangelistic surge over a two-year period when more than 120 new members were added to this congregation. His father, Jupiter, died in 1818 and left land to his mother, Fanny. While she is listed as the head of a household in the 1820 United States Census, it does not appear that James Mars lived with her at that time. Two years later she sold her property in Norfolk, including its house and blacksmith shop.<sup>20</sup> In 1825 James Mars purchased a twenty-three acre farm from Samuel Pettibone for six hundred dollars. It included a house and a barn, and was located two miles from the center of Norfolk. It is possible that Fanny lived with him on this farm since there is a woman in her age bracket listed in his household on the 1830 United States Census. Mars was married in 1828, and in December of the following year his wife, Clarissa, gave birth to a son.<sup>21</sup>

From what little evidence is available about James Mars in Norfolk, it would appear that he had moderate success as a farmer, but that he also had financial problems. In 1827 the town granted an earmark to him to brand any cattle that he owned. On a tax list for these years he paid town, state, and highway taxes similar in amounts to what others in Norfolk paid.<sup>22</sup> A record book kept by Thomas Cowles for 1828 through 1831 includes an account for Mars that notes Mars hired Cowles' horse to do plowing and to travel, including going to Hartford. Mars also purchased cider and butter from Cowles, and appears to have paid for these items with goods that he gave to Cowles, or by doing work for Cowles, such as mowing and butchering beef.<sup>23</sup> From 1827 to 1829, however, Mars also used his property as collateral for at least ten loans from people in Norfolk. Most of these loans were for less than \$50 each, and they appear to have had a time limit of several months before payment came due. Nevertheless, that the total of these loans was \$445 suggests that Mars was not as financially stable during these years as he needed to be. On May 8, 1830, with less than five years of ownership, Mars sold his farm to Thomas Cowles for \$575. It seems certain that Mars remained on this property, or on one nearby, because he continued to be listed in Cowles' account book until a final payment was made on September 23, 1831 that closed his debt. Further, Mars' second child was born in Norfolk in 1831, and she was baptized at the Congregational Church on September 18, 1831.<sup>24</sup>

After 1831 Mars moved to Hartford where he made his most significant contributions to the African American community through his leadership and reform activities. Why he chose to move to Hartford is unknown, although his financial situation in Norfolk could have been a factor. Yet people rarely make major decisions for one

reason alone. Hartford featured an emerging black community that by 1831 included an all-black church and a district school available to black students. As an active churchman who was sensitive to his own lack of education, and with two young children of his own, the existence of this church and school might have been reason enough for him to leave Norfolk. Further, Mars' sister, Elizabeth, lived in Hartford until 1828 and briefly taught at the school associated with the black community there. Even if she did not tell him about these activities in Hartford, his own trips to the city would have offered him the opportunity to meet those who were involved with them.<sup>25</sup>

Knowledge of James Mars' life in Hartford appears to be concentrated in three areas. One was his involvement with the Talcott Street Congregational Church and the district school for black students that met there. Second was his role as one of the leaders of the city's African American community that included work in several reform movements. The third was his family. Mars wrote in his pamphlet that he was employed for "the then known firm of E. & R Terry" in Hartford, but he offered no information regarding his duties or his relationship with this company. The business of Eliphalet and Roderick Terry was well known in Hartford and attracted customers from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and even Vermont. It was located at the corner of what is now Albany Avenue and North Main Street. It had two floors in its main building along with several storehouses, and sold iron, steel, nails, tobacco, food, salt, plaster, rum, brandy and numerous miscellaneous articles. Farmers from Litchfield County, including those in Norfolk, drove their wagons to Hartford to buy or trade with E. & R. Terry.<sup>26</sup> The store underwent changes in the middle 1830s when Eliphalet Terry became the president of the Hartford Fire Insurance Company and Roderick Terry moved the business to Main Street closer to the center of the city. Mars mentions being in the store when he talked with others about the 1837 Nancy Jackson case.<sup>27</sup>

An interesting connection to Mars' employment with the Terry store is that the older brother of Eliphalet and Roderick was Seth Terry, a lawyer in Hartford who took an active interest in the formation of Hartford's African church. In 1828 Seth Terry created an account for the African Religious Society (later the Talcott Street Congregational Church) that accepted funds from several sources and dispersed these funds to the church's leaders as they were needed. Payments from this account were made from November 1828 through June 1830, and then they suddenly stopped.<sup>28</sup> Over the next three years no payments were made from the account and this coincides with the period of time when the African Religious Society was trying to determine what direction its congregation should follow. The church used eight ministers during its first six years, and its membership was divided over employing ministers who were educated or those raised from among their own church people. There were also disagreements over the use of music in the church, over too much emotion during worship, and over a desire by some to provide educational opportunities for their people.<sup>29</sup> This educational question might have been influenced by a May 1830 petition to the State Legislature noting that there were at least 97 black children between the ages of four and sixteen who were not attending any of Hartford's dis-

trict schools because of the way that whites embarrassed them and made education difficult for them to achieve. This petition stated that blacks in the city paid for a separate school for their children, but this had become too expensive for them to continue without state assistance. The state agreed with the petition and set aside funds to create an all-black district school in Hartford.<sup>30</sup> Some members of the African Religious Society supported the use of their church building for this district school while others did not. With Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists of the society in disagreement, James and Clarissa Mars, along with six others of the congregation, led the society in 1833 into an official association with the Congregational Church. As Mars noted, "I took a very prominent part in the organization of the Talcott Street Church."<sup>31</sup> He became a deacon of the church and a member of the school's board, and both of these institutions remained an important part of Hartford's African American community.

In the absence of official records for the Talcott Street Congregational Church and the school that was associated with it, there are several resources that show how important a role Mars played in the life of these institutions. One is in the account that Seth Terry kept for the church. The first payment Terry made after the three-year hiatus was to James Mars in July of 1833. Mars used the funds he received from Terry to pay the school's teacher. From July of 1833 through October 1845 Terry made 63 payments to church leaders, and 35 of these were made to Mars. During the first six years of this period Mars received 21 of 26 payments, while from 1839 through October of 1845 he received 14 of 37 payments.<sup>32</sup> The majority of these funds were used to cover costs associated with the operation of the school, although some funds were used for the church or mission work. The account received its funds from donations by individuals, from several Congregational churches in Hartford, from the Missionary Society of the Congregational Church, and from the School Society operated by the state.<sup>33</sup>

Another indication that Mars was one of the primary leaders of the Talcott Street Church is shown by his role as an official representative for the congregation. Amos Beman taught at the African district school in Hartford for most of 1833 to 1837. When Beman sought recommendations about his good character as he prepared to begin a career as a Congregational minister, Mars and Henry Foster signed a letter of support on his behalf for the school's board. When James Pennington was installed in 1840 as the new minister of the Talcott Street Church, several leading white ministers and deacons, along with T. S. Wright, minister of the First Colored Presbyterian Church in New York City, participated in the program. James Mars was the only representative of the Talcott Street church to be a part of this installation service.<sup>34</sup> When Pennington was in London in 1843, his church wrote a letter supporting his role as a delegate for the Connecticut Antislavery Society. Mars chaired the meeting that produced this letter and signed it along with Isaac Cross. Once back in Hartford, Pennington wrote to a church in London to confirm the mistreatment that he and members of his congregation faced in a United States society that was dominated by whites. Pennington noted in his letter that blacks could not vote, that the policies of businesses and colleges worked against blacks, and that churches "press us down far



more heavily.” He added that while white ministers will preach at his church, very few of these ministers ever asked him to speak to their congregations. The five deacons of the church signed this letter (along with many others) and the name of James Mars was listed first among the five.<sup>35</sup>

One other example of Mars’ importance to the Talcott Street Church is seen in how he represented the congregation at meetings of the Hartford North Consociation. For many years Congregational ministers and deacons in the Hartford area met once a year to discuss reports on conditions within their churches, on missions, about publications, and on activities such as the Seaman’s Fund. No one from the Talcott Street Church attended these meetings until 1838 when Mars traveled to Enfield to be part of that year’s program. Over the next seven years Mars represented the laity of his church at these meetings six times. Three times he went alone and three times he went with Pennington. When Mars attended a session in Bloomfield in 1843, he presented a report on the condition of his congregation.<sup>36</sup> After 1844 this organization disbanded in favor of one where only ministers met. Mars’ central role within his congregation is seen not only by his regular attendance at these annual Hartford area meetings, but that he was the only deacon of his church to be there.

A second area where James Mars played an important part in the life of Hartford’s African American community involved several reform movements in which he and other blacks in the city were active. Some of these reforms were connected to his church. The only one that Mars mentions in his pamphlet is the 1837 Nancy Jackson case, and based on his own recollections, it appears that he acted alone in this without support from the African American churches in the city. Mars wrote that his wife did wash for the family of James Bulloch of Georgia who, in the 1830s, also maintained a home in Hartford. Bulloch brought his slave, Nancy Jackson, to Hartford and left her there when he traveled back to his Southern home. Jackson sought help when Bulloch planned to take her back to Georgia again. Mars was approached by “a gentleman” while he was working at the Terry Store and was told that “we want to make a strike for her liberty.” It might be assumed, without actual proof, that this “gentleman” was white and that the “we” were antislavery men anxious to challenge slavery in the Connecticut courts. That Mars was approached while he was at work suggests that his employer supported this effort as well. It is not clear why these individuals did not sign the necessary papers themselves to challenge Bulloch’s right to own a slave in Connecticut. They may have feared that their reputations would be tarnished, or that the fledgling antislavery movement in the state would be hurt should the courts rule against Jackson’s right to be free. Yet, Mars would likely have been one of the few individuals in the Hartford area who had been freed under the 1784 Connecticut Act establishing that all enslaved people would be free at the age of twenty-five. This law was one of the crucial points used by the court in setting Nancy Jackson free. To have her writ signed by someone who had actually been freed under this law certainly would have been reason enough why Mars heard this man say to him, “they tell me that you are the man to sign the petition.” Mars went to the law office of William Wolcott Ellsworth, who had repre-

sented Prudence Crandall in 1833 and who in 1838 would be elected governor of Connecticut, signed the writ, and then returned to work.<sup>37</sup>

While Mars waited for the Jackson case to be heard before the court he wrote that “I was frowned upon; I was blamed; I was told that I had done wrong; the house where I lived would be pulled down; I should be mobbed; and all kinds of scarecrows were talked about, and this by men of wealth and standing.” The threats made to Mars were real. On June 9, 1835 a riot took place between whites and blacks in Hartford that saw several homes of African Americans destroyed. When the court made its decision in favor of Jackson, Mars wrote, “This made a change in the feelings of the people. I could pass along the streets in quiet.”<sup>38</sup>

Mars certainly saw the Nancy Jackson case as an important part of his life. He devoted more space in his pamphlet to this one event than he did in describing his own family. A few studies on slavery in Connecticut conclude that the Jackson trial was an important court case that defined what the limits of slavery would be in the state. However, in general it is rarely mentioned in the various histories of Connecticut, and its impact on the antislavery movement is not clear. It is interesting to note that in 1838, shortly after Nancy Jackson’s victory in Connecticut’s highest court, the Connecticut Antislavery Society was formed.<sup>39</sup>

Another antislavery activity that involved James Mars was the Mendi Africans of the ship *Amistad*. Even here his role seems to be limited, but it should be realized that much of what black abolitionists and reformers were doing at this time was largely overlooked or not recorded by either blacks or whites. At a meeting held at the Talcott Street Church on May 5, 1841 under the direction of James Pennington, consideration was given on how best to establish a Christian mission in Africa when the Mendis returned to that continent. Mars spoke at this meeting citing “the providential arrival, defence, and deliverance of the Mendi people of the *Amistad*.” He urged that young men be located “to accompany these strangers on their return” to Africa. Several proposals were developed at this meeting. One was to call a second meeting for August to create the framework for a missionary agency. Another proposal was that Mars, Pennington, and others form a committee to notify ministers in other states of their plan for missionary work. Forty-three delegates from six states met in Hartford on August 18, 1841 and the Union Missionary Society was formed. When the Mendi people returned to Africa, five missionaries went along with them.<sup>40</sup>

The major source of information that details James Mars’ other reform activities in Hartford is found in contemporary newspapers. His participation and leadership, along with that of other blacks in the city, are mostly covered in the *Christian Freeman* (*Charter Oak*) of Hartford, the *Liberator* of Boston, and the *Colored American* of New York City. These publications describe various organizations and meetings of local African Americans, and one of the groups often featured in their issues was the Connecticut State Temperance and Moral Reform Society. This society was formed in 1836 when the Home Temperance Society of Middletown hosted a meeting of similar groups to plan a state temperance organization. James Mars was one of seven Hartford men who participated in this meeting. Amos Beman and Henry

Foster were two of the others. Six men came from New Haven, including James Pennington, and eight were from Middletown, including J. C. Beman. By November the state society was in place.<sup>41</sup> The society originally opposed the use of alcohol “as a common beverage,” but it soon added issues such as education, mechanical skills, securing the right vote, and property ownership as goals to achieve.<sup>42</sup>

While Mars was involved in the annual meetings of the state temperance society, it seems that for the most part he only attended sessions that were held in Hartford. His name is rarely found as a delegate or a presiding officer for meetings that were held elsewhere in Connecticut. Even when he was elected vice president of the society at Norwich in 1844, he was not personally there.<sup>43</sup> Mars was active locally in obtaining signatures from people who pledged abstinence from the use of alcohol. An example of this is when he went to the United States Hotel in Hartford and approached several black employees who had gathered in the kitchen there. One young man named Thomas, who recalled this event more than twenty years later, confessed, “I used to drink hard.” He apparently knew Mars and taunted him with, “Well old Deacon, what you got now?” Mars replied, “Boys, I come on a good errand. . . I have come here with a pledge, and I want you all to sign it.” Mars must have been persistent for Thomas signed the pledge, but told Mars that he would continue to drink if he chose to do so. Later that night Thomas thought about what he had done and decided to honor his pledge.<sup>44</sup> On September 3, 1845 the ninth annual meeting of the Temperance Society met at the Talcott Street Church in Hartford. Mars, as vice president, chaired the opening session in the absence of the president, Amos Beman, and later “gave an address on temperance to the delegates” and offered prayer at the evening session. The following day reports were made by the various town committees on the success each had during the previous year. Representatives from New Milford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Lyme, New London, and Norwich spoke. There were two reports made for Hartford, one for each of the black churches in the city. Mars told the gathering that the society associated with the Talcott Street Church held seven meetings during the year, “whenever they could obtain a lecturer to interest the people.” Seventy new names “had been added by pledge,” Mars reported, bringing the total membership to 173 for the local society.<sup>45</sup>

While the temperance activities commanded local interest, there were efforts by Mars and others in Hartford to promote reforms over a larger geographic interest. At a meeting held at the Talcott Street Church on Monday evening, November 5, 1839, Mars chaired a session where Alexander Crummell spoke on the topic of oppression in society and urged that people support the *Colored American* newspaper as an “advocate for our social, political and religious privileges.”<sup>46</sup> Less than a year later, on June 18-19, 1840, a convention of African Americans met at the church where, with Mars as its chairman, David Ruggles of New York sought support for the newspaper, *Mirror of Liberty*. The main topic of this two-day gathering, however, was to explore the possibility of holding a national convention of blacks “at some central place.” James Pennington, Amos Beman, and Isaac Cross were appointed to a committee to contact leaders in cities in the free states about this proposed convention. In light of the recent split by white abolitionists where some members of the American

Antislavery Society left to form the American and Foreign Antislavery Society, Henry Foster argued, “. . . we have come to a crises when we must act for ourselves, or suffer. To talk about waiting till our friends get right is nonsense.”<sup>47</sup> In July a call was made for a National Reform Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of the United States of America to be held in New Haven in September of 1840. Ninety-nine names appeared in this published call representing six states. It was the only time that a publication involving black abolitionists included the names of James Mars and his brother, the Reverend John N. Mars, together. James supported this push for a national convention as a Hartford representative and John did the same as a representative from Poughkeepsie, New York.<sup>48</sup>

The proposed 1840 national convention at New Haven never took place. The next such meeting did not occur until 1843, and then it was held in Buffalo, New York. Yet, in September of 1840 the Connecticut Temperance and Moral Reform Society did meet, and it invited Theodore Wright and Chares B. Ray of New York to join their sessions. While temperance was a dominant theme at this gathering, discussions continued on the need to hold conventions “whenever circumstances require.” The location of this meeting is not clear, although it probably was held in Hartford. For some reason James Mars was not a delegate to this conference, but he was admitted to it as an honorary member. He used this meeting to promote a cause that had become important to him. This was a petition movement to have the Connecticut General Assembly grant blacks the right to vote. Mars introduced a resolution asking the society to support this issue, and after discussion, it was approved and a committee was appointed to see that the petitions were presented to the State Legislature.<sup>49</sup>

The interest that Mars showed in petitioning the state to obtain the vote began as early as 1840 and continued over the next several years. Connecticut disenfranchised its black citizens in 1818 when its new constitution restricted voting to white males. When the Connecticut Antislavery Society was created in 1838, one of its first measures was to publish in its newspaper examples of petitions that people could forward to the State Legislature. One of these samples called for equal treatment for blacks, and another requested the elective franchise for men “irrespective of color.” In 1839 actual copies of these petitions were sent to the Connecticut General Assembly by several towns, all of which were signed by whites.<sup>50</sup> From 1840 through 1843 Mars was involved with the petition effort by Hartford’s blacks. His name appeared along with seventy-two other blacks in the city who sent a petition to the Connecticut Legislature in the spring of 1840.

After the September 1840 meeting of the Connecticut State Temperance Society, a similar petition was submitted in 1841 by Hartford’s blacks with his name at the top, suggesting that Mars was overseeing the completion of that document. Both the 1840 and 1841 petition movements failed to move the state government to submit to the voting public the question of allowing black men in Connecticut the right to vote.<sup>51</sup> The following year Mars again headed a list of Hartford’s blacks requesting a bill be considered that would allow them to vote. This petition was not rejected

outright by the Legislature. *The Hartford Times* reported that it was “referred to a select committee of one” in the House of Representatives. *The Charter Oak* printed a minority report in support of the petition stressing that blacks in Hartford “are not treated equally and cannot vote, are taxed without representation, and cannot speak at town, church, and school district meetings on how their money is being spent.” The report noted that foreigners were able to vote once they became citizens of the United States, and that other states permitted the franchise to blacks.<sup>52</sup> Although this effort received a closer examination of the voting issue by the Connecticut Legislature, it too failed to move the state to take any favorable action. In 1843 Mars once more led a petition effort, but this time slightly different wording was used that requested the repeal of “all laws making distinction among our colored citizens on account of color.” This petition was not granted either. When Hartford’s blacks sent a petition to the General Assembly in 1844, they did not use a printed form as had been done in the previous four years. Instead, a hand written statement was sent with the names of eighty blacks attached who were “aggrieved by the existence of the word ‘white’” in the state’s constitution. It asked that the state “take the necessary measures to propose to the good people of this State such an amendment” to admit black men the vote.<sup>53</sup> While the Legislature rejected this request as well, the significance of the 1844 petition so far as James Mars is concerned is that he did not sign it as he had done with the previous four, and no petition by Hartford was submitted in 1845.

By January of 1846 James Mars left Hartford and moved to Massachusetts, a state that did permit its African American citizens the right to vote. It would be easy to conclude from his involvement with the unsuccessful petition movement that Mars had become discouraged with Connecticut and went across the border to Massachusetts so that he could finally participate in the elective process. One only needs to read his pamphlet to understand how much he linked voting with manhood.<sup>54</sup> It is questionable, however, that Mars would willingly uproot eight of his family members, including his seven children who knew only Hartford as their home, so that he could be in a state where he could vote. This may have been a factor in his decision, but other reasons were involved as to why he left Hartford when he did, and one of these was concern for his family.

By 1845 Mars had a family of nine people, with children ranging between the ages of four to sixteen.<sup>55</sup> In 1839 he purchased a home on Franklin Street for four hundred dollars, which he mortgaged two years later for one thousand dollars through Samuel Deming. Deming participated in local antislavery activities, and was instrumental in having the Amistad Africans live in Farmington.<sup>56</sup> This house was not large considering the size of the Mars family. In 1840 several men sought to help his mother, Fanny, apply for a pension for widows of veterans of the Revolutionary War. They described the dwelling as “a brick one story building, painted white, in this you will find [the] Deacon Mars family.”<sup>57</sup> In 1845 his sister, Elizabeth Thomson, stayed with Mars during a visit to the United States while she waited for another missionary assignment to Liberia. She found it necessary in July to request funds from her account held in New York City because, as she noted, her brother had a large family.<sup>58</sup> She likely needed this money to find housing for herself and her own

children. Yet, Mars was already planning to leave Hartford so that Elizabeth would have needed temporary housing anyway until she was ready to return to Africa. James Pennington wrote to Gerrit Smith of New York in March of 1845 regarding Smith's offer of land to New York blacks if they wished to relocate and farm on it. Pennington used this letter to introduce Mars to Smith because, as Pennington noted, Mars had a large family and wanted to leave Hartford and return to farming at which he was quite good. Pennington added that Mars did not want to relocate to an area that was so rural that his children would not find educational facilities nearby.<sup>59</sup>

For Mars, as head of a large family living in a small house with a large debt, leaving Hartford was as much a necessity as it was a desire to live in a state where he could vote. His plan to return to farming would seem logical since he had children who were old enough to help with the work that farm life required. He did not have this when he owned a farm in Norfolk in the 1820s. His demand for a location that was able to offer schools for his children not only showed a concern for his children, but also meant that he was not interested in living in a small town. In January of 1846 Mars sold his house to Samuel Deming and removed his debt, but it seems that he left the city with very little money of his own.<sup>60</sup> He moved to Pittsfield, Massachusetts where there was plenty of farmland, numerous district schools, and a newly formed African American Congregational church.

The African American members of the First Church of Christ in Pittsfield formed a separate congregation, known as the Second Congregational Church of Pittsfield, because of the lack of equality and dignity afforded to them by their church. This included the practice of being served Communion separately from whites. The new church was developed in early 1846 through the efforts of seven black members and John Todd, the minister of the First Church.<sup>61</sup> It was dedicated in February with Reverend Todd, Reverend Henry Highland Garnet of Troy, New York, and Reverend Amos Beman of New Haven participating in the ceremonies. Two months later the church was organized under the Congregational system when deacons and officers were elected. Beman was in charge of this program, but he had the assistance of James Mars in performing the required duties. "The deacons were then presented, and earnestly and faithfully addressed by Deacon James Mars," a newspaper wrote, "who then offered an appropriate prayer." What is interesting about this news item is that Beman is noted to be from New Haven, but there is a deliberate blank space after the name of Mars as to his place of residence.<sup>62</sup> This blank space indicates that Mars was no longer associated with Hartford, but suggests that he was not yet settled in Pittsfield. The early records of the Second Congregational Church are missing, and the few contemporary newspaper articles on the activities of the church do not mention any additional activity by Mars beyond his role in assisting Beman. However, the 1864 introduction that John Todd wrote for Mars's pamphlet (dated 1868 beginning with the 1869 edition) notes that "Dea. James Mars, has been known to me and to the citizens of this town for a long period of years, as an honest, upright, truthful man, - a good citizen, an officer in his church, . . ." Furthermore, the records of the Norfolk, Connecticut Congregational Church show that in 1866 Mars transferred his membership to that church from Pittsfield's Second Congregational Church.<sup>63</sup>

Because Mars did not include information in his pamphlet about the years that he spent in Pittsfield, what is known about his life there is limited. For example, how well his children were educated is unknown. There were fifteen school districts in Pittsfield when Mars moved to the town in 1846. Consideration had been given in 1827 towards creating a separate school for black students, but this proposal was not adopted. Samuel Harrison, the long time minister of the Second Congregational Church, wrote for these years, "there were a few school houses, enough for the demands of that day." Had blacks been excluded from the educational system it would seem likely that Harrison would have mentioned this in his recollections.<sup>64</sup>

Mars attended his first and only national convention of African American leaders in October of 1847 when he went to Troy, New York as a Massachusetts delegate. During discussion regarding a national newspaper for blacks, he supported a resolution to create such a publication, and along with Amos Beman, James Pennington, and four others, he served on a committee to bring this about. The committee made its report in January of 1848, but the implementation of its recommendations apparently faltered since the same issue regarding a national newspaper was considered at later conventions of African American leaders.<sup>65</sup>

By his own admission, Mars voted in five Presidential elections beginning in 1848. What little else can be learned about his life in Pittsfield is mostly found in the United States Census records, deeds, and vital records. These sources reveal that his family gradually dissipated, which left him practically alone by the time he published his brief autobiography in 1864. He was a farmer in 1850, but he did not own property. His oldest son, George, "enlisted in the United States Navy" around 1848, and another son, Flavel, was living with Dr. Benjamin Welch, Jr. in Salisbury, Connecticut. Flavel later returned to Pittsfield where he died from lung fever in 1851. A third son, DeWitt, "went to sea [and] I have not heard from for eight years" Mars wrote in 1866. His oldest daughter, Georgianna, went to Cape Palmas in Africa in 1860, where her aunt, Elizabeth, was a missionary. Clarissa, Mars' wife, died in 1850 and was buried in Hartford.<sup>66</sup>

In 1860 James Mars worked as a gardener. His daughter, Myra, lived with him, but she was married to George Tucker and had an infant daughter. Mars purchased property in cooperation with Tucker in 1858, but they sold this land in 1860. Mars' youngest son, Geraldo, was a farm laborer in nearby Lenox. When the Civil War began Geraldo enlisted in the all-black Fourteenth Regiment, Rhode Island Heavy Artillery under the name of DeMars. He was one of some 300 men in this regiment who died from disease in Louisiana. He and Flavel are buried next to their mother in North Hartford. Minor, a son who served in the United State Navy during the war, was a representative for Hartford to the 1864 national convention of African Americans.<sup>67</sup>

On July 9, 1876 a sermon was preached at the Congregational Church in Norfolk, Connecticut on the early history of the community. The work by James Mars was included among the historical resources that were available for people to read on this topic.<sup>68</sup> However, after 1876 Mars did not publish his pamphlet, and the reason

for this possibly was that he was too feeble to personally sell his copies as he had done before. On May 27, 1880, he died in Ashley Falls, Massachusetts, a small town not far from Norfolk, Connecticut. It is not known why Mars was in Ashley Falls, but a good assumption is that he was living with his nephew, John S. Mars, the son of his brother the Reverend John N. Mars. An item appeared in a Berkshire newspaper at the time of his death that observed, "His death takes away another of 'our oldest inhabitants.'" This suggests that Mars had either lived in Ashley Falls for several years, or that his association with the Berkshires area was well remembered.<sup>69</sup> His body was taken to Norfolk where it was buried next to the remains of his father, Jupiter. It would seem likely that a close family member, such as a nephew, would see that his uncle would be buried beside his grandfather. James Mars lived long enough to see slavery end in the United States, and to see African American men secure the vote in Connecticut.

In 1995 the grave of James Mars was honored by the Connecticut Historical Commission when it was included on the state's African American Freedom Trail. The Norfolk Historical Society installed an informational sign next to this grave that highlights his career. At the Legislative Office Building in Hartford a photograph of Mars is displayed four times in the exhibit, "An Orderly and Decent Government," which offers visitors an overview of Connecticut's political development. These efforts recognize a man who two hundred years earlier had been born and sold as a slave in Connecticut, and who spent his years in freedom as a church leader, farmer, reformer, family man, local historian, and book salesman. His was an important and meaningful life, and perhaps what he did not tell us about himself is more valuable than what he did.



#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Theron Wilmont Crissey, Comp., *History of Norfolk, Litchfield County, Connecticut, 1744-1900*. Everett: Massachusetts Publishing Co., 1900), 1, 2, 11, and 504. Dr. Eldridge died before he could publish a history of Norfolk, but Theron Crissey complete the work in 1900 using some of Eldridge's collected notes.

<sup>2</sup> Crissey, *Norfolk*, 229, 231, 504, and 512.

<sup>3</sup> James Mars, *Life of James Mars, A Slave Born and Sold in Connecticut* in Arna Bontemps, ed., *Five Black Lives* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 37. While some libraries own copies of *Life of James Mars*, *Five Black Lives* is more readily available and will be used for most of the quotes from his pamphlet.

<sup>4</sup> For Lemuel Haynes see Timothy Mather Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes, A. M.* (New York, 1837); and Richard D. Brown, "Not Only Extreme Poverty, but the Worst Kind of Orphanage:" Lemuel Haynes and the Boundaries of Racial Tolerance on the Yankee Frontier, 1770-1820 in *The New England Quarterly: A Historical Review of New England Life and Letters*. Vol. LXI, Number 4, December 1988, pp.502-18.

<sup>5</sup> The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center and the Connecticut Historical Society, both in Hartford, Connecticut, have various editions of Mars' pamphlet. Other editions are in reprinted versions or at other libraries. One of the best reprints for its insights on *The Life of James Mars* can be found in Yural



Taylor, ed., *I was Born A Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives*, Vol. Two (Chicago: Lawrence Hill books, 1999). The author cites on page 722 that the thirteenth edition was published in 1876.

<sup>6</sup> *Life of James Mars* (1866), 36; and *Life of James Mars* (1867), 36.

<sup>7</sup> Irving F. Manchester, *The History of Colebrook* (Winsted: 1935), 170; and Bela Blakeslee Satterlee letter, March 30, 1882 in Plymouth, Connecticut Papers Relating to Revolutionary War Pension Applications, State Archives, Connecticut State Library, (Hereafter CSL Archives).

<sup>8</sup> Mars was familiar with New York State. Elizur Munger, his owner, sent him Oneida Country on a three-week trip (*Five Black Lives*, 49-50) and Mars wrote that once free he went "west" several times (*Lives*, 53, 54). "West" to Mars likely meant New York (Crissey, *Norfolk*, 512).

<sup>9</sup> Russell C. Brignano, *Black Americans in Autobiography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1974), 7-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Five Black Lives*, 47-48; and Lilley B. Caswell, *Athol, Massachusetts past and Present* (Athol, 1899), 72.

<sup>11</sup> *Lives*, 49-52.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

<sup>13</sup> *The Autobiography of Aunt Hagar Merriman of New Haven, Conn.* (New Haven, 1861) might be the only slave narrative other than the one by James Mars, where the writer spent her entire life in the North. This little known pamphlet is difficult to find. A copy is at the Connecticut State Library, (Hereafter CSL).

<sup>14</sup> Robert J. Cottrol, *From African to Yankee: Narratives of Slavery and Freedom in antebellum New England* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharp, 1998), xvii, 49-71.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, ed., *I Was Born A Slave*, 722-739.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Govenar, *African American Frontiers: Slave Narratives and Oral Histories* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2000), 67-70.

<sup>17</sup> William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 89.

<sup>19</sup> *Lives*, 50-54. Naomi Munger died on June 19, 1820 and Elizur Munger died on January 31, 1828. Both are buried in the Center Cemetery in Norfolk.

<sup>20</sup> Church of Christ Records, 1760-1948, Norfolk, Connecticut, 98 in CSL Archives; 1820 Norfolk, Connecticut Federal Census, Vol. 6, 402; and Norfolk, Connecticut Land Records, Vol. 11, 408, microfilm, CSL.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 12, 132. The 1830 United States Federal Census lists Mars, his wife, a woman in his mother's age bracket, and a female under the age of ten. This last listing is likely an error since Mars' child was a boy.

<sup>22</sup> Norfolk Connecticut Miscellaneous Records, 1789-1863, 2. This is a photocopy made in 1936 from the town clerk's office of Norfolk, Connecticut and part of the shelf collection at the Connecticut State Library; and Rate Bills, 1829, Norfolk Connecticut Miscellaneous papers, 1781-1855, Rate List Folder, CSL Archives.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Trumbull Cowles Account Book, 25-26, Norfolk Historical Society Museum, Norfolk, Connecticut.

<sup>24</sup> Norfolk, Connecticut Land Records, Vol. 12, 376-80, 530 and Vol. 13, 412, 422. microfilm, CSL; and Church of Christ Records, 1760-1948, 108, CSL Archives. Research by Richard Byran and Cay

Fields of the Norfolk Historical Society indicates that this property remained in the hands of the Cowles family until 1903.

<sup>25</sup> For background on Elizabeth Mars, see Randall K. Burkett, "Elizabeth Mars Johnson Thomson (1807-1864): A Research Note" in *History Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (March 1986), 21-30.

<sup>26</sup> *Lives*, 55; Gurdon W. Russell, *Up Neck in 1825* (Hartford, 1890), 69-70; J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *Memorial History of Hartford County, 1633-1884*, Vol. I (Boston, 1886), 662; and *Connecticut Courant*, July 9, 1827.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Terry, *Notes on Terry Families* (Hartford, 1887), 38; *Hartford City Directory for 1828* (Hartford, n.d.), 53; *Gardner's Hartford City Directory for 1838* (Hartford, 1838), 42, 65; and *Lives*, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Seth Terry Account Book, 1825-1857, Hartford, Connecticut, 42, 68, 189, Connecticut Historical Society (hereafter CHS).

<sup>29</sup> Faith Congregational Church, "Historical Sketch" in *Our 150th Anniversary, 1826-1976*. Although the church cannot locate its early records, portions of them have been published in various sources.

<sup>30</sup> Petition of Joseph Cook and Others. . .for a Portion of the School Fund for Colored Children in Hartford, May 1830, African American and Indians, Box 1, Folder 8, CSL Archives. For references to the mistreatment of black students in district schools see Russell, *Up Neck*, 99; Trumbull, *Memorial History*, Vol. I, 633; and James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 153.

<sup>31</sup> *The Hartford Daily Courant*, March 28, 1906; and *Lives*, 56. For a view by a Baptist over the change to Congregationalism at the Talcott Street Church see Jeremiah Asher, *An Autobiography, With Details of a Visit to England* (Philadelphia, 1862), 24-25.

<sup>32</sup> Seth Terry Account Book, 42, 68, 189, CHS.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Amos Beman Scrapbook, Vol. III, 5, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven (hereafter BL); and *Colored American*, August 8, 1840.

<sup>35</sup> C Peter Ripley, ed, *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, Vol. I, *The British Isles, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill, 1985), 115-16; and "The Colored Christians of America" in *Patriot* (London, England), October 2, 1843 in George Carter and C. Peter Ripley, eds., *Microfilm Edition of the Black Abolitionist Papers, 1830-1865* (1981) Vol. 4, 674. The other four deacons of the church were Henry Foster, Henry Plato, Isaac Cross, and Harriet C. Pennington.

<sup>36</sup> Records of the Hartford North Consociation, 1802-1844, 232, 236, 240, 254, 258, and 261, Congregational House, Hartford.

<sup>37</sup> *Lives*, 55. An account of the Nancy Jackson hearing is in Thomas Day, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Errors of the State of Connecticut*, Vol. XII (Hartford: Brown and Parsons, 1839), 38-69.

<sup>38</sup> *Lives*, 56. For the 1835 riot in Hartford see *Connecticut Courant*, 6/15/1835. See Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 163-65 for examples of the mistreatment of blacks in the North.

<sup>39</sup> Ralph Foster Weld, *Slavery in Connecticut* (Yale University Press, 1935), 25-26; Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, Ed., *Judicial Cases Concerning Slavery and the Negro*, Vol. IV (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1936), 433-36; and Paul Finkelman, *An Imperfect Union: Slavery, Federalism, and Comity* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 103-113, 127-129. While James Mars was not among those who participated in the creation of the Connecticut Antislavery Society, his brother, John Mars, was. The Reverend John N. Mars lived in Massachusetts. He might have been in Hartford in

1838 to visit his brother, or to help the struggling black Methodist church in the city. However, he was an active abolitionist in his own right.

<sup>40</sup> *Colored American*, May 15, 1841, and September 4, 1841. In 1846 the Union Missionary Society merged with two similar organizations to form the American Missionary Association. For an account of the Amistad story see Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad: The Saga of a Slave Revolt and its Impact on American Abolition, Law, and Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>41</sup> *Liberator*, March 26, 1836, July 20, 1836, and December 3, 1836.

<sup>42</sup> *Colored American*, August 21, 1841.

<sup>43</sup> Amos Beman Scrapbook, Vol. I, 59, BL.

<sup>44</sup> Diary of Reese B. Gwillim, date of February 22, 1863, CHS. This recollection took place in Virginia during the Civil War while several Connecticut soldiers were talking in the tent of the chaplain of their unit. Thomas was the chaplain's servant.

<sup>45</sup> *Christian Freeman*, September 11, 1845.

<sup>46</sup> *Colored American*, November 9, 1839.

<sup>47</sup> *Emancipator*, June 12, 1840; and *Colored American*, June 13, 1840.

<sup>48</sup> *Colored American*, July 25, 1840.

<sup>49</sup> *Colored American*, September 19, 1840. There could be several reasons why Mars was not a delegate to this conference. His mother, who lived with him, died in August of 1840. He also had two children added to his family around this time.

<sup>50</sup> Petitions of this nature are located in Photocopies of Record Group 2, African American and Native American, Rejected Bills, 1808-1870, CSL Archives.

<sup>51</sup> RG 2, African American and Native American, Rejected Bills, 1808-1870, Box 18, folder 14; and box 19, Folder 14 CSL Archives.

<sup>52</sup> RG 2, African American and Native American, General Assembly, Box 1, Folder 16, CSL Archives; *The Hartford Times*, May 13, 1842; and the *Charter Oak*, September 1842.

<sup>53</sup> RG 2, African American and Native American, Rejected Bills, Box 21, Folder 2 and Folder 17, CSL Archives. In 1847 the Connecticut Legislature did submit an amendment to the state's voters to remove the word "white" from the Connecticut Constitution, but the electorate voted against this by a wide margin.

<sup>54</sup> *Lives*, 57.

<sup>55</sup> A record of the Hartford births of the children of James and Clarissa Mars apparently does not exist. Based on United States Census information it would appear that two children were born around 1836, two around 1840, and one around 1841.

<sup>56</sup> *Hartford Deeds*, Vol. 61, 155-56, June 1, 1839, and Vol. 65, 89, June 24, 1841, microfilm copies, CSL. This house was situated where the Hartford Civic Center is located. For Samuel Deming see Christopher P. Bickford, *Farmington in Connecticut* (Canaan, N. H.: Phoenix Publishing, 1982), 212, 295, 296.

<sup>57</sup> Jesse Charlton to Hon. Calvin Butler, February 15, 1840, Plymouth, Connecticut Papers Relating to Revolutionary War Pension Applications, CSL Archives. Fanny Mars' claim to a pension was hindered because her minister-owner never recorded her marriage to Jupiter in the Canaan town records. She died in August of 1840.

<sup>58</sup> Mrs. E. M. Thomson, Hartford to Rev. Prior P. Irving, July 29, 1845, in Liberia Records, RG 72-19, The Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas.

<sup>59</sup> J. W. C. Pennington to Gerrit Smith, March 25, 1845, in Gerrit Smith Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. See the *North Star*, March 2, 1849 for Smith's low opinion of the land that he offered to blacks.

<sup>60</sup> Hartford Deeds, Vol. 72, 133, January 29, 1846, microfilm, CSL. Mars did not purchase property in Pittsfield until 1858. The school in Hartford for black students was not funded as well as those for whites and led Pennington to complain to the city in 1846. See C. G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (New York, 1915), 317-18.

<sup>61</sup> *The 126th Anniversary Journal of the Second Congregational Church* (1974), 3; and First Church of Christ in Pittsfield Congregational, *Bicentennial Celebration* (1964), 11.

<sup>62</sup> "Notice" in *The Pittsfield Sun*, February 12 and 19, 1846; and Amos Beman Scrapbook, II, 55 in BL.

<sup>63</sup> *Lives*, 36; and Norfolk, Connecticut, Church of Christ, 1760-1875, Vol. IV, 271, Church Microfilm #315, CSL.

<sup>64</sup> J. E. A. Smith, *The History of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, From the Year 1800 to the Year 1876* (Springfield: C. W. Bryant Co., 1876), 669, 670; and *Pittsfield Twenty-Five Years Ago: A Sermon Delivered in the Second Congregational Church, Pittsfield, Mass.* (Pittsfield: Chickering & Attall, 1874), 26.

<sup>65</sup> *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People, and Their Friends Held in Troy, New York* (1847), 6-9, in Howard Holeman Bell, Editor, *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864* (New York: Arno Press, 1969); *The North Star*, January 14, 1848; and Martin E. Dann, ed., *The Black Press, 1827-1890: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1971), 50-52.

<sup>66</sup> *Lives*, 56; 1850 United States Census, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, 262-263 and Salisbury, Connecticut, 12; Massachusetts Vital Records, Deaths, Vol. 57, 42; and *The African Repository*, Vol. XXXVI, #5 (Washington, May 1860), 143. The identification for DeWitt Mars is determined here by a process of elimination based on information on the other children of James Mars.

<sup>67</sup> 1860 United State Census, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, 93 and Lenox, Massachusetts, 41; Massachusetts Vital Records, Marriages, Vol. 126, 52 and Births, Vol. 2, 96; Pittsfield Land Records, Vol. 157, 84 and Vol. 167, 211; *Lives*, 56; Elisha Dyer, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations for the Year 1865* (Providence, 1895), 587-91, 619; and *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored Men, Held in the City of Syracuse, N. Y. October 4, 5, 6, and 7, 1864*, 4 in Bell, *Minutes of the Proceedings*.

<sup>68</sup> *Historical Discourse Preached in the Congregational Church, Norfolk, Connecticut, July 9, 1876*, 72.

<sup>69</sup> Massachusetts Vital Records, Deaths, Vol. 319, 66; 1880 United States Census for Sheffield, Massachusetts, 16; and *The Berkshire Courier*, June 9, 1880, 4, 5. The 1880 U. S. Census for Ashley Falls might have indicated where James Mars lived, but it was conducted a few days after he died.