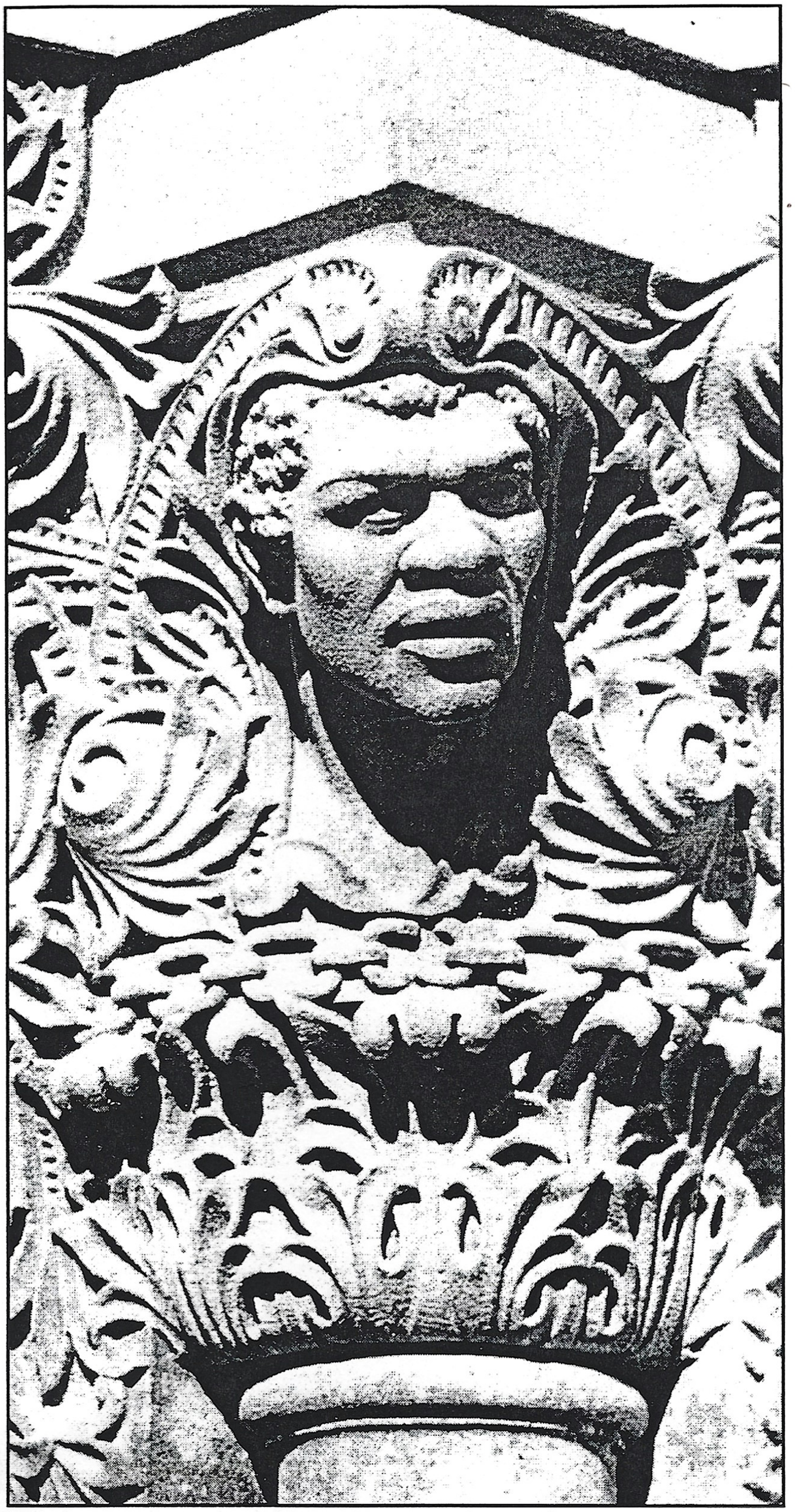


*Carved portrait of an unidentified African-American on the north elevation of the New York State Capitol, Albany.*

# Guide to the Survey of Historic Resources Associated with African-Americans in New York State

*Not to know is bad.*
*Not to wish to know is worse.*
**– African proverb**

*Knowledge of history gives hope. Too many, especially the youth, have lost hope, an essential ingredient for sustaining life, because they do not know who they are and about their powerful heritage of struggle and survival against the odds .... We cannot secure our communities if we do not first "save the memories of self."*
**– Joan Maynard**


*George E. Pataki*, Governor
State of New York
New York State Capitol
Albany, New York

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
*Bernadette Castro*, Commissioner
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York

# PART I: HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEYS AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE

## INTRODUCTION

The Guide to the Survey of Historic Resources Associated with African-Americans represents an attempt to bridge some of the gaps between disciplines and cultures that have contributed to the under-representation of African-American history in the New York statewide inventory of historic resources. It is intended to stimulate discussion, provoke thought, and encourage reexamination of traditional methods and hierarchies. The guide is designed to supplement the standards for historic resources surveys established by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and should be used in conjunction with <u>National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys</u>, which provides detailed information on conducting surveys.

This guide was prepared by a task force consisting of staff of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and four academic consultants with expertise in African-American history. Primary authors were SHPO staff members Kathleen LaFrank, Lucy Breyer and Vic DiSanto in collaboration with academic consultants Ena Farley, Monroe Fordham, Ralph Watkins and A.J. Williams-Myers. Additional copies of this guide and <u>Bulletin 24</u> are available upon request from the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, Peebles Island, Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189, 518-237-8643.

## BACKGROUND

The New York State Historic Preservation Office is charged by state and federal law with the identification, evaluation and protection of historic and cultural resources. The statewide historic resources survey program helps to identify those properties worthy of protection and forms the basis for comprehensive preservation planning. Although the historic preservation program was conceived to include resources representative of a broad spectrum of historic, cultural, architectural and archeological themes, properties associated with the history of African-Americans in New York State have been inadequately represented in the statewide historic resources inventory to date. Exclusion of these resources at the identification stage makes it far less likely that they will be considered in national, state and local preservation planning efforts. As many of these resources are, by their nature, anonymous, rare, fragile and threatened, devising strategies to identify and protect them is a critical issue in contemporary historic preservation.

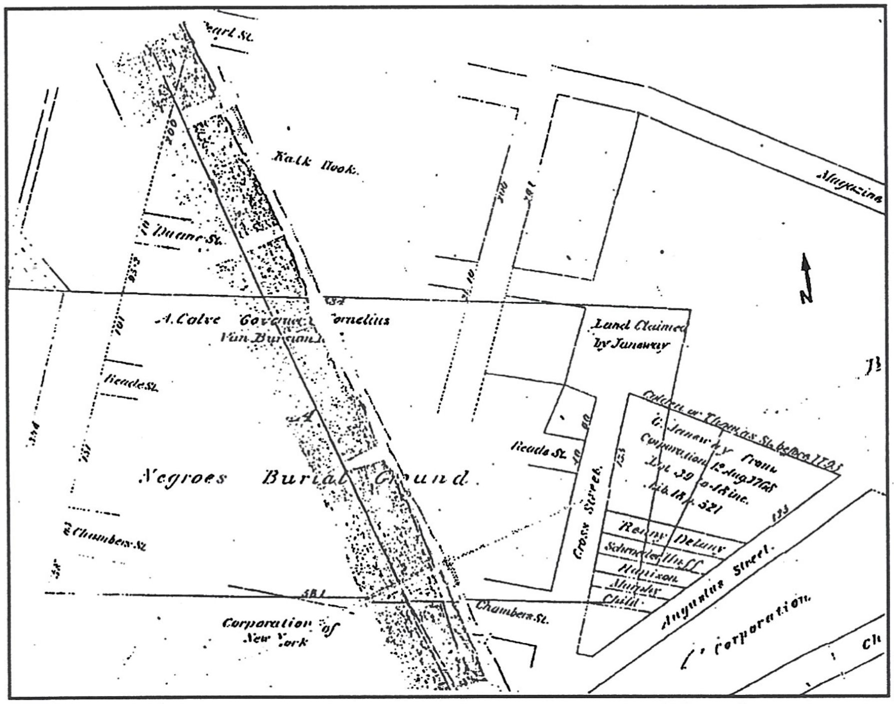
There are many reasons why historic resources related to African-American history have been overlooked in traditional preservation activity. Beginning with the creation of the National Historic Landmarks program in the 1930s, the contemporary historic preservation movement grew out of efforts to recognize and protect monuments to a collective history that was written by the majority cultural group. National Historic Landmarks are defined by their importance in the history of the nation, and those designated in the early years generally represented the great themes of the European-American experience. In the 1960s, in the wake of the Urban Renewal programs of that era, the preservation movement gained great momentum through efforts to preserve easily recognizable architectural landmarks, threatened urban centers and declining residential neighborhoods. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980, which codified the federal and state governments' preservation policies and extended recognition to properties significant in state and local history (through the National and State Registers of Historic Places) represented institutionalized responses to the wholesale disregard for the visible record of America's past. Since then, much preservation activity has revolved around properties significant for their visual and architectural qualities.

Although society's definition of history has expanded considerably in recent years, the lingering effects of outdated hierarchies and limited world views have made the recognition of historic resources associated with a wide range of cultural groups and the everyday lives of their members difficult for some. Many preservation initiatives continue to focus on preserving a record of the past that is expressed primarily through its architectural components. Architectural resources themselves are often evaluated solely in terms of their design quality, measured against the standards of European-American architectural history.

Constraints of time and money often limit the kind of research and investigation needed to establish new contexts and analyze new property types. Preservationists who rely on broad, general contexts risk overlooking properties whose significance may only be revealed within the specific themes of local history.

And while many scholars have developed knowledge and expertise about the history of traditionally under-represented peoples and cultures, efforts within academic communities to identify and protect specific properties that represent that history have lagged. Finally, some are uncomfortable with identifying resources for protection that represent less than noble aspects of the past. For example, some question the value of preserving resources that recall the oppression of one race by another.

## HERITAGE




*Survey map of lower Manhattan showing the location of the African Burial Ground. Map: Murray Hoffman, A Treatise upon the Estate & Rights of the Corporation of the City of New York, as Proprietors, 1862.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

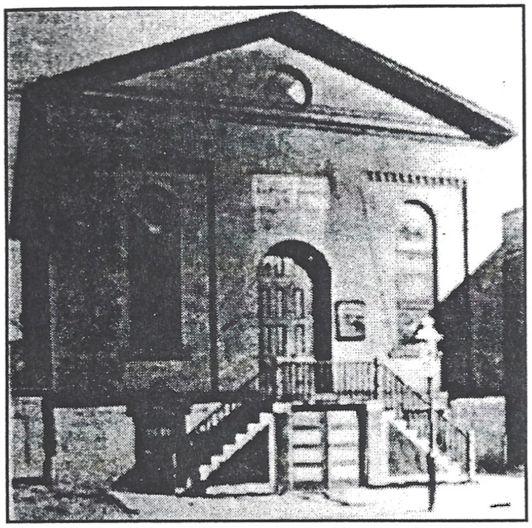
The heritage of New York's African-American citizens is deeply entwined with the history of the state itself, and the roots of black New Yorkers extend from the earliest period of settlement through the twentieth century.

- People of African descent were among the earliest settlers of New York State, having been brought as slaves to the colony of New Netherlands in 1626, only two years after the colony was founded. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, New York's slave population continued to grow and, by 1790, New York had the largest black population of any state north of Maryland. The African Burial Ground, perhaps the only surviving urban eighteenth-century African burial ground in the country, was only recently rediscovered underneath decades of development in lower Manhattan.

- The use of African slave labor was a crucial component of New York's colonial economy. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, African slaves provided a substantial portion of the skilled labor force in New York City and the Hudson Valley and held responsible positions in agriculture, manufacturing, mining and shipping. Although many resources associated with these themes survive - such as mills, industrial sites and farm complexes - their potential to provide significant information about African-American life in the Hudson Valley has not yet been explored.

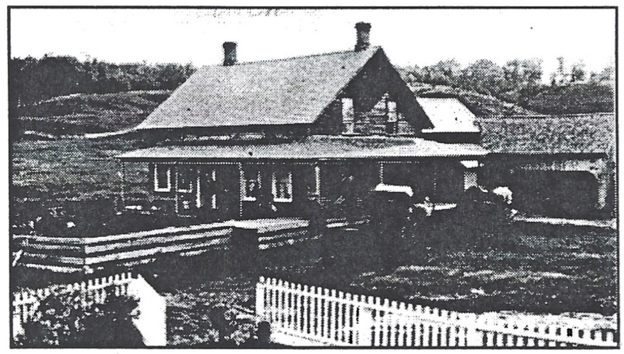
- At the same time, blacks in New York were establishing unique and separate communities and cultural institutions. Under the Dutch, a distinctively African

*The African-American community at Sandy Ground, Staten Island in 1915. Photo: Davis Collection, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP



*Historic view of the Michigan Street Baptist Church, the center of Buffalo's nineteenth-century African-American community.* Courtesy Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society

expression of the feast of Pentecost developed into the annual spring Pinksterfest. Across the state, free Africans gathered to form small communities, such as Success in Manhasset on Long Island, Sandy Ground on Staten Island, and Freemanville in Dutchess County. Separate schooling for African-Americans was provided by both white and black charities and, by the mid-nineteenth century, by many public school systems. Black Protestants, disgruntled by the segregation and discrimination they encountered in white churches, founded their own religious organizations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination, which originated in New York City in 1796 and expanded in the next half century to include numerous congregations. By the late nineteenth century, countless black institutions - labor organizations, lodges and fraternal/sororal groups, community service clubs, cultural and literary associations, benevolent societies, even baseball leagues - were serving the welfare of black citizens. While a few of these, such as A.M.E. Zion churches in Buffalo, Ithaca, and Tarrytown, have been documented, for the most part these groups and the buildings and structures associated with them are little known.



*Historic view of John Brown's Farm in North Elba.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

- Many New York State residents - both black and white - played pivotal roles in the struggle for liberation from slavery, and numerous cities and towns across the state boast significant associations with the abolition movement. Buffalo's importance as a pass-through location for fugitive slaves is commemorated at Broderick Park, once the embarkation point of a ferry which carried fugitives to Canada. Harriet Tubman, an escaped slave who led hundreds of slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad, resided in Auburn for over fifty years. Frederick Douglass, also an escaped slave and one of the seminal figures in the abolition movement, lived and worked in Rochester for more than twenty-five years and was buried there in 1895. Gerrit Smith, a wealthy white philanthropist and land holder in Peterboro, distributed thousands of acres of rural land that he inherited in upstate New York to blacks so that they could meet the property requirements for voting. John Brown, one of those who relocated to this region, became a martyr to the cause of abolition after his failed attempt to capture the U.S. Arsenal at Harper's Ferry and provide arms for a slave insurrection. Brown, hanged for treason, is buried on his North Elba farm. And a group of properties in the town of Mexico - including the homes of abolitionists and at least one stop on the Underground Railroad - recall the commitment of numerous citizens of that northern New York community to the goals of abolition. Despite New York's strong involvement in the abolition movement, very few sites have been formally recognized for their association with this important theme.

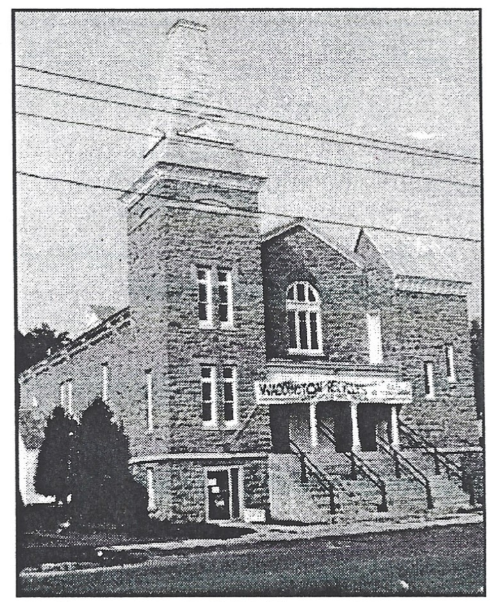

*Apollo Theater, Harlem. Photo: Carl Forester, 1981.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

- Although New York State has always sheltered African-American artists, from slave Jupiter Hammon, of Huntington, who became, in 1760, the first African-American poet to be published in America, to the pre-Civil War novelist William Wells Brown, who resided in Buffalo, it was in the twentieth century that New York achieved worldwide fame as a center of African-American cultural activity. Beginning in 1914, Harlem provided a mecca for some of America's greatest artists and writers. The residences of Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, Will Marion Cook, Duke Ellington, Florence Mills and Paul Robeson are associated with some of the major figures in the Harlem Renaissance. Meanwhile, Minton's Playhouse, a small club in Harlem, played a pivotal role in the history of American jazz in the 1940s by serving as the principal site for the formal and informal experimentation that led to the development of "bebop." These events marked a turning point in the recognition of jazz as a sophisticated art form. Finally, the Apollo Theater, also in Harlem, showcased nearly every important African-American performing artist for more than four decades. Although many sites associated with this theme have been identified, in some cases, efforts to preserve them have lagged.

As these few examples suggest, throughout New York's history, African-Americans were involved in activities that were at the very center of American experience. Yet, at the same time, the African-American experience was both marginalized and undervalued within the mainstream cultural community. Shunted to the margins, the history of black Americans has been obscured, and many African-American landmarks have been lost. Today, the identification, interpretation and protection of historic resources associated with African-Americans is essential if we are to enhance our understanding of American history, appreciate the present and prepare for the future. We can draw strength and gain understanding by learning about the obstacles past generations faced and the successes they achieved as they struggled to accomplish the nation's egalitarian dreams.

## SURVEY

The identification of historic properties through an historic resources survey is the first step in the process of evaluating and protecting historic resources under the federal and state historic preservation programs. Properties as diverse as the archeological remains of a free black community on Staten Island, the hotel owned by a prominent African-American businessman in Albany, the stone buildings constructed by an Ogdensburg mason and former slave, or the ferry landing that was the last station for fugitive slaves escaping to Canada have been identified and recorded through historic resources surveys.

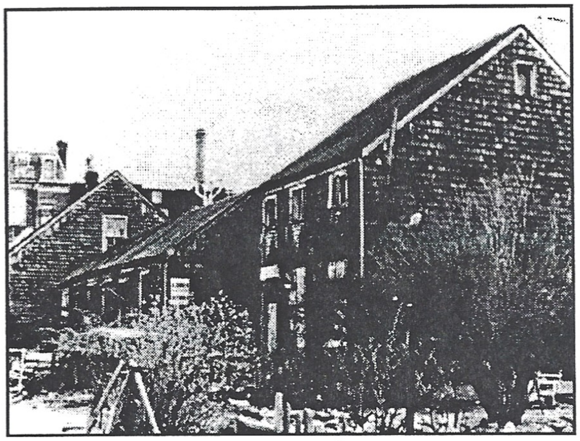


*Waddington Town Hall, Waddington. This is one of a group of buildings in northern New York and Canada that have been identified as the work of Isaac Johnson, an African-American who learned masonry while in slavery.* Photo: Jane Layo, 1991. Courtesy NYSOPRHP

Survey information becomes part of the SHPO's data base of information about history or prehistory and is available for use by researchers all across the state. This information is also used to support the nomination of properties to the State and National Registers of Historic Places, the official lists of properties worthy of preservation. Perhaps most important, historic resources surveys assist local planners by providing them with a basis for making decisions about what properties should be protected and where development should occur.

Properties that are listed on or determined eligible for listing on the National and State Registers receive special consideration in the federal and state planning process. Federal, state and/or local agencies often undertake a survey in advance of any development project that will result in demolition of buildings and/or disturbance of the land. Once all of the historic properties that may be affected are identified, they can be considered in planning and, if possible, preserved. However, there is not always time for a full-fledged survey, and many resources have been lost. For example, a late-eighteenth century black community known as "the Hills," near Harrison in Westchester County, was identified by amateur archeologists but never documented with planning agencies. Subsequently, it was eradicated by development without being properly recorded and/or protected.

The identification of historic resources can be used to stimulate public interest in a community's history and cultural resources and to develop programs devoted to education and interpretation. An historic marker program can facilitate public outreach and education. Such a marker stands outside the Israel A.M.E. Church on Hamilton Street in Albany. Upstate New York's oldest African-American church, this was also a station on the Underground Railroad. In Troy, a plaque erected on State Street celebrates the dramatic rescue of fugitive slave Charles Nalle by a group of African-Americans led by Harriet Tubman.



*View of the houses on Hunterfly Road prior to restoration.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

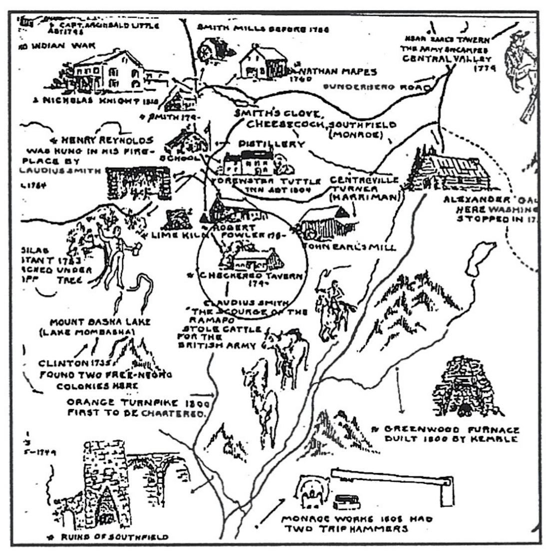
Proper stewardship of our historic and cultural resources can also generate tourism and spur economic development.

In some locations, groups have traced the route of the Underground Railroad, a powerful, vivid, educational and emotional experience. A project that has combined historic preservation with education and economic development is the Weeksville African-American Museum in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. In 1968, a group interested in studying Brooklyn's neighborhoods decided to search for the extant remains of old Weeksville, a nineteenth-century free African-American community. Little was known about this settlement at the time. Secondary sources and maps eventually led researchers to Hunterfly Road, where they found a few wood-frame farmhouses still in existence. These buildings, which date from 1840 to 1883, proved to be the oldest known remnants of Weeksville. Rescued from obscurity and neglect, these historic houses are now the home of the Weeksville African-American Museum. The museum's sponsorship of historical research and archeological study has made a significant contribution to our knowledge of African-American culture, and thousands of tourists annually visit the Hunterfly Road houses. Similar sites, forgotten over time, exist in communities across the state. Their identification and recognition can serve as sources of civic pride and provide legacies for future generations.

## Community Participation

The survey effort should involve people representing both the local and academic communities. A wide range of involvement will expand the quantity and quality of available expertise and knowledge. Where the survey addresses an area or group of people that has not previously been the focus of historical research, it may be particularly important to involve leaders in that community, who can assist in building support and assistance for the survey.

It is important that the survey involve qualified professionals in fields such as history and archeology in order to ensure that the project meets established standards. Often, community groups can call on academic institutions, such as museums and colleges, to provide such professional oversight. The best guidance comes from scholars who have an understanding of survey standards and who have already undertaken research in African-American history. They will be familiar with available resources and able to build on rather than duplicate previous projects. The SHPO can provide suggestions and referrals in locating such experts.




*This 1930 schematic map of Orange County appears to have been compiled based on local tradition and observation. The notation "found two free-Negro colonies here" (left of center) suggests that there was tangible evidence of African-American settlement in this location in the early twentieth century. Map: Anne Olmstead Peet, Orange County Before 1810.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

While the survey will require at least one person familiar with conventional academic standards and research methods, both academic and lay surveyors will probably find themselves dependent on community resources. Conventional documentary research is usually insufficient in researching groups that have been excluded from mainstream journalistic and historical reporting. Because some populations (especially disenfranchised groups, such as impoverished former slaves) and events (including illegal activities, such as participation in the Underground Railroad) are generally invisible in the historical literature, oral information and private papers will be of particular importance. Both formal institutions and informal networks of knowledgeable citizens will be fruitful channels of research. In the African-American community, social, political and recreational activity often focused on churches and lodge halls, whose records are a rich source of historical data. Participants in recent historical events are an obvious source of information. Interviews with drummer Kenny Clarke and other musicians were used to document the importance of Minton's Playhouse in the history of jazz. Particularly significant events and people are likely to be remembered in local traditions, long after eye-witnesses are gone. Scrapbooks, letters and diaries may preserve family and community history.

Those involved in the survey should inform the community so that people become familiar with the project and its purposes. They should take advantage of local communication networks and be sensitive to community values. Frequently, residents question the purpose of a survey because they feel that there is nothing of historical importance in their community. Outreach and education efforts will be needed to expand the historical perspective, showing how previously unrecognized resources reflect lives and events interwoven in the tapestry of history.

Sometimes, community residents will feel a lack of connection with the resources being surveyed. For example, today's black New Yorker may not know that long before Harlem, African-American life in Manhattan centered on the Five Points (where City Hall now stands), later moved to "Little Africa" (now an upscale corner of Greenwich Village), and still later to San Juan Hill (which no longer has a distinctive neighborhood character). On the other hand, a child in the South End, one of Albany's largest contemporary black neighborhoods, may find little historic relevance in his or her surroundings—the Georgian Mansion built by General Philip Schuyler, the nineteenth-century houses and religious institutions constructed for or by German, Jewish and Irish immigrants, and the alterations to the neighborhood made by Italians in the early twentieth century. The historic resources survey can help forge new bonds that will help today's South End child to understand both Schuyler Mansion next door and the San Juan Hill tenement where his or her great-great-grandparents may have once lived. By linking people with their heritage, exploring the commonalities of experience between new residents and old, and analyzing the forces that guide populations to one or another location, a survey can help all members of the community to take root where they are planted.

*Interpretive activities at Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site aim to connect current residents of the neighborhood with events that may relate to their own history. The Schuyler family kept a number of slaves on their Albany property.* Courtesy NYSOPHRP

Those embarking on a survey must make sure to be clear and honest about their intentions and goals. Some communities may be reluctant to open their records to an outside surveyor for fear that the data will be used in inappropriate ways, such as commercial exploitation or the dissemination of embarrassing information. Some people resist cooperation because they fear losing control of records and memories that are precious to them. A responsible historian should recognize an obligation to contribute to the community being studied and to leave local groups in control of the data, its interpretation, and the resources themselves. It is better for the surveyor to be frank about motivations, even if they are controversial, than to be seen as harboring a hidden agenda. Community members may oppose a survey because they feel its results might be used to inhibit progress or limit property rights. Some surveys are specifically intended to impede development that might damage historic properties, and such a survey will often receive strong community backing. If the proposed development has community support, however, and the survey is seen as an anti-development tool, opposition can be expected. Similarly, a survey may be intended as a first step toward establishing local laws that regulate changes to historic properties. Those who feel that such laws are an infringement on personal property rights may oppose the survey.

It is important to understand that the survey in and of itself does not trigger any change in property rights or in the status of the properties themselves; it simply recognizes what exists. The survey's primary purpose is to establish baseline data about what historic properties exist in the survey area. Armed with this knowledge about historic resources, the community can make informed decisions about where development should be focused or whether a local preservation law should be enacted. The more the community is involved in the survey, the more power it gains for future action. Broad participation in the survey will allow broader-based decisions on how it will be used.

# PART II: APPLYING SURVEY METHODOLOGY TO AFRICAN-AMERICAN RESOURCES

The following section outlines the standard methodology for conducting an historic resources survey. These steps have been derived from National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys, Chapter 2, "Conducting the Survey." The standard methodology has been annotated to assist the surveyor in developing themes, establishing contexts, and identifying and evaluating property types related to African-American history. Under each step in the process, this guide suggests conscious actions that can be taken to find evidence of the African-American presence within the survey area. In some cases, these suggestions direct the surveyor to certain research methods, sources, or experts in the field. Following the methodology are seven case studies that illustrate some of the specific issues involved in identifying, recording and evaluating properties that represent African-American history. Appendices include a bibliography and an outline of the major themes and time periods that relate to African-American history in New York State. Together, these materials are intended to provide general guidance to the researcher; however, individual projects differ and will demand different combinations of investigative strategies. Those interested in undertaking an historic resources survey are urged to work closely with staff of the State Historic Preservation Office in planning and executing the project.

## PROJECT DESIGN

Each survey project should begin with an organizational phase that defines the scope of the project, the geographical area to be included, the time period to be studied, the level of information to be gathered and the way in which information will be recorded. There are two different levels of survey: reconnaissance and intensive. These terms refer to the amount of information gathered, the detail in which properties are recorded, and the degree to which resources are analyzed. A reconnaissance level survey can be described as an introduction to an area, an overview of its resource types, and a guide for further research, while an intensive level survey includes detailed research into local history, specific information about individual resources, and an evaluation of their significance. Reconnaissance and intensive level surveys use the same methodology and include some of the same information. Different levels of survey can be undertaken independently, concurrently or sequentially. The differences between survey levels and some of the options for project design are explained further in Bulletin 24. Whether they are done to the reconnaissance or intensive level, all historic resources surveys include two main components, archival research and field study. Intensive level surveys usually include a third component, the evaluation of resources for their potential for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. However, this is not the only goal of historic resources surveys, and this end should not be used to structure the survey project itself, which is essentially a data-gathering activity.

Planning a survey project also involves an assessment of the specific research strategies and expertise that will be needed to complete the project. Identifying resources associated with African-American history sometimes presents certain research challenges, such as a lack of written documentation, or requires a specialized understanding of subjects, such as vernacular architecture, historic archeology or the interpretation of the recent past. Those undertaking survey activity should be prepared to seek expertise in a variety of different disciplines.

## PHASE I. ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of Phase I is to gather existing information about the cultural history of the survey area from archival sources. The product of this phase is a preliminary overview based on archival research that summarizes the history of the area, analyzes the results of previous survey work and reaches conclusions about its quality, and seeks to make general predictions about which portions of the survey area are likely to contain different types of historic resources. The preliminary overview establishes the major historic themes and contexts relevant to the survey area, identifies important events and individuals, suggests property types that might illustrate the significant themes, and provides basic direction to the field survey. Its recommendations are tested and refined in Phase II, the field survey (see next section), in which specific resources are identified and investigated. At the conclusion of the field survey, the overview should be revised to incorporate information learned through field investigation. The revised overview is a required component of the final survey report. As a rule, archival research should be organized into the following steps.

## Step 1: Assemble Existing Information

Identifying sources and finding the relevant information in each is the first general step in the archival research process. Begin by assembling existing information about the survey area, including both information about previous surveys and historic resources that have already been identified, and more general primary and secondary data, including published and unpublished manuscripts, graphic materials and historic documents and records. The archival researcher will need to draw upon the disciplines of ethnography, sociology, history, literature and ethnomusicology, among others. The specific sources will vary according to the project location and type; however, it is important to keep the archival research effort clearly focused on the data relevant to the survey goals. As archival information is collected, the surveyor should begin to assemble it into an organized whole.

In order to identify historic persons, sites and events that represent the African-American presence in the survey area, use the following suggestions as a guide:

- Search the literature that is suggested in the attached bibliography. Pay particular attention to the primary and secondary sources having content that pertains to your region of the state; check their accompanying bibliographies for additional leads. By reading about African-American history, you will be able to identify the role that African-Americans played in the region or survey area. In these sources, try to identify the names of African-Americans who were residents of your region (i.e., delegates from your region to the nineteenth-century Colored Conventions, etc.).

- Search through city directories for names and other information pertaining to local African-American history. Consult federal and state census records for your region in order to record the presence and identity of African-Americans in the survey area. Other local records that may provide evidence of the African-American presence include deeds, wills, estate inventories, tax rolls, church records, school records, military records, union records, records of fraternal organizations, etc. For example, town school board records may contain information that might shed light on the presence of African-American students, official policies regarding blacks or the treatment accorded to them.

| | |
|---|---|
| 'irst - | I Will & Order that my true and loving wife, Judica, shall Remain in the peaceable and quiet possession of my House, Farm & chattels in the same manner I now hold them, during her natural life, excepting such parts as are hereinafter bequeathed. |
| ;econdly - | I give and bequeath unto my oldest son, Coenradt Ten Eyck, his heirs and assigns forever, my negro Tom, my negro Harr, my negro Robin. |
| Thirdly - | I give and bequeath unto my son John Ten Eyck, his heirs and assigns forever, my negro Jack, my negro Prins, and my negro wench Dien. |
| Fourthly - | I give and bequeath unto my daughter Itie, wife of James Waldron Junior, her heirs and assigns forever, my negro Cato and my negro wench Saar. |

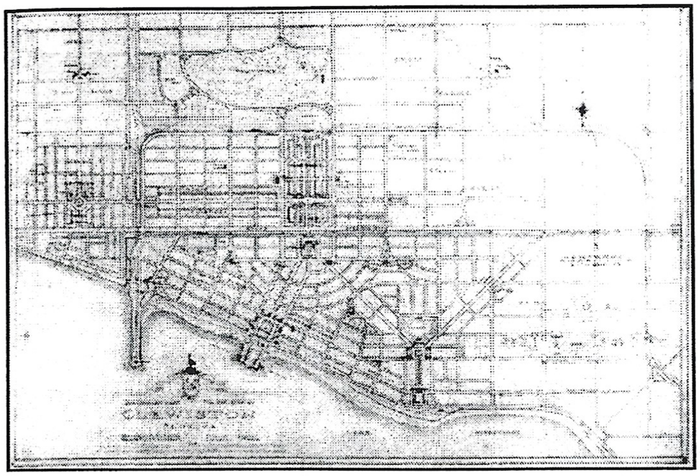
*Tobias Ten Eyck's will, dividing his slaves (identified by name) among his children provides valuable information about the identities and dwelling places of Coeymans's eighteenth-century African-American population.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

- Contact local and regional historical societies, genealogical societies and other groups or institutions that might have an interest in the history of your region. Family histories and collections are good potential sources, as are local history interviews and unpublished papers.

- Local libraries and historical societies may have subject files, news clippings files and/or photo files on local history. Look for stories relevant to African-American history in such materials.

- Contact archeologists who are familiar with your area to obtain information about known African-American sites or the potential for sites based on research that may have already been conducted. Share what information you have so that they will be aware of possible site locations in any future archeological surveys that they may undertake.

- Search through back issues of local newspapers for clues and stories about the historic African-American presence in your community.



*On this early twentieth century plan for a Florida city, an area near the periphery (top left corner of illustration) is specifically labeled "Negro Section."* Courtesy Cornell University Archives.

- Historic maps will help to determine areas of settlement in which African-Americans may have lived. If you have identified some of the roles that African-Americans played in local history (such as in farming, industry, mining or maritime activity), maps will help you locate potential settlement areas in relation to these broad themes. Try to connect the specific mention of race in census records to maps through names; this will help you begin to identify specific locations of African-American settlement. Analyze historic maps to determine peripheral areas of settlement around urban areas, where African-Americans are likely to have lived. Bird's-eye views often identify "Negro Sections" or provide other evidence that can be used to establish the specific local pattern of African-American settlement.

- Interview long-time local residents about the historic African-American presence in your community. Individuals may have important information not available from other sources. Consider publishing notes of inquiry in community publications or post queries in local libraries or with historical associations.

## Step 2: Assess the Reliability of the Information, Identifying Possible Biases and Major Gaps in Data

Although this step is relevant in any survey effort, it is particularly important when researching African-American history because of the exclusionary context in which this information has been defined. You must be conscious of two potential biases, historical bias and your own. In this context, it is important neither to dismiss nor to over-estimate the importance of any information too early in the survey project and to suspend traditional hierarchies in assessing importance. At the same time, you must be attuned to clues about African-American history in standard sources that might suggest further investigation.

References to African-Americans in the historical literature and in accounts by contemporaries should alert you that such a person (or place) was more important than a casual reference might have indicated if that person were white. Given the overwhelming negative treatment of race, the mere mention of an African-American in past accounts should lead to the assumption that more needs to be learned from this historical "slip of the tongue." For example, William H. Johnson of Albany was mentioned quite often in the white press, although in tiny accounts. Upon further investigation, it was determined that Johnson held an unusual but important position in nineteenth-century Albany politics. Likewise, you may be tempted to conclude that a church mentioned only once in local newspapers was not important in local history. To the contrary, its mention at all might be a clue that this was the most important church in the African-American community.

Finally, it is important to be aware of possible biases against certain types of documentation. Oral history, folklore, family histories and other types of non-traditional research have sometimes been dismissed as sources of reliable information; however, materials such as these sometimes constitute the only record of African-American history in local communities.

## Step 3: Synthesize the Information in Usable Form with Reference to the Issues Important to the Historic Context

The historic context, an organizational framework based on theme, geographical area and period of time, is recommended as the basis for organizing the research information about the survey area. Historic contexts link specific properties to important historic themes or patterns and provide the framework for evaluating the significance of individual historic resources. A survey can focus on a single or several historic contexts and may identify properties relating to a single, several or many property types, depending on the goals of the survey. Historic contexts may be based on the physical development and character, historic patterns and major events, or important individuals and groups that defined the history of the survey area during specific periods of time.

Once you have established a baseline of information, begin to identify broad themes and contexts that relate to the survey area. For most communities, these might include settlement, community development, agriculture, industry, social history, recreation, etc. Try to connect these general themes to the specific content of local history by identifying significant events within the survey area. For example, in a riverfront village, transportation, fishing, industry or recreation might emerge as more important themes.

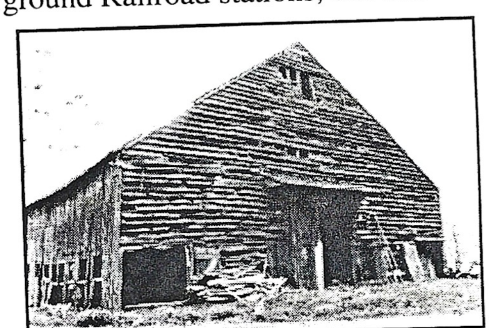
In order to guide your research to the African-American presence in the survey area, review the major themes related to African-American history that are listed in the appendix of this document to determine if your information can be further developed around any of those topics. Drawing from the kinds of sources mentioned in Step 1, identify local events or historic phenomena that have a relationship to the broader aspects of African-American history, such as the abolition movement. In this step, you will also be able to draw more specifically from the sources and information that pertain to the history of your town or community. For example, perhaps census data indicates that the African-American population of one town increased substantially in a certain period. This period may correspond with the year in which the Erie Canal reached that town, suggesting a connection between the broad themes of transportation and community development and the specific local history of African-American labor and settlement patterns.

In a larger sense, some historians have suggested that there are three major themes within which all of African-American history can be understood. These are the commitment to liberty, the commitment to equality of treatment, and the commitment to the notion of cultural survival. These contexts can be used to inform your overall understanding of African-American history; however, they may also help to illuminate the significance of individual resources that may at first seem ordinary, isolated or under-represented within the survey area.

## Step 4: Identify the Types of Historic Properties That May Be Associated with the Historic Contexts

In this step, begin to identify specific property types that illustrate the broad themes and contexts identified in Step 3. For example, if industry played a major role in the history and development of Town X, property types that may potentially illustrate this theme might include factories, industrial buildings and sites, dams, worker housing, mill-owner housing, company-sponsored recreational or social facilities, etc.

Similarly, review the specific themes that you have identified as important in African-American history within the survey area and identify the types of properties that may convey their significance. For example, what properties might illustrate the theme of abolition in central New York? Certainly Underground Railroad stations, but also churches, other public gathering places and the homes of abolitionists should also be considered.



*Although many historians would recognize this Ulster County building as a "Dutch Barn," few may realize that those who labored in it were probably African-Americans.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

Consider how the involvement of African-Americans in the general themes of regional history can be illustrated. Slave labor was a major factor in the eighteenth-century economy of the Hudson Valley. Property types that might recall that history would include all eighteenth-century farms that meet the requirements of class and wealth necessary to support slavery. These farms have the potential to reveal important information about the African-American contribution to the agricultural economy of the region and should be investigated further to determine if this theme can be further documented. Likewise, if your research suggests that African-Americans were in the majority among the skilled labor force that operated mills in the eighteenth century, any eighteenth-century mill in the survey area should be considered for its potential to provide information about the African-American presence.

Remember that examples of these property types may not be extant, due to their less substantial construction (such as worker housing) or routine deterioration or abandonment (barns, mills, etc). Although some may have visible remains, the archeological evidence of more modest buildings may only be located through careful archeological testing.

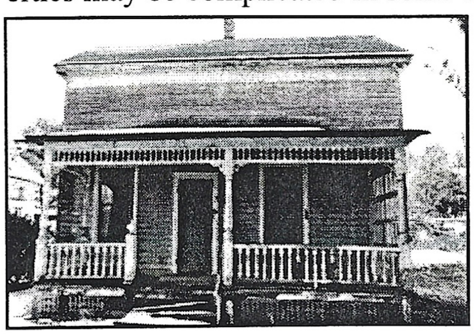
Identifying properties associated with African-Americans will bring into play conventional historical methodology, but it will also challenge you to transcend your own skepticism that a particular resource could have been associated with African-Americans. It could also mean more painstaking, yet creative use of traditional historical methodologies.

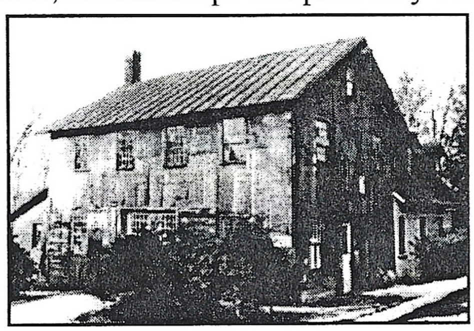
Even within broad areas, special expertise may be needed. A particular social or ethnic group important in the community's history may have organized its buildings and neighborhoods in particular ways; a particular cultural group in history or prehistory may have had certain kinds of villages, farms or campsites that are now represented by different kinds of archeological sites. The skills of a traditional architectural historian or archeologist may not be useful in determining the significance of a particular resource that may have been built by or for African-Americans. Collections such as Howard University's African American Architectural Archive may provide you with information about the way architectural resources reflect the African-American cultural heritage. The latter institution is also a repository for information about African-American architects and designers of the first decades of this century.

Again, it is important not to exclude anything at this stage, even if it appears to be outside the scope of your research for a particular survey project. Keep in mind that the SHPO is interested in building a data base of properties and property types that have the potential to document the African-American presence in New York State. The more information that can be compiled about these resources, the easier it will be to evaluate them in the future. Therefore, even those references that cannot be further documented should be included in the survey report.

## STEP 5: DETERMINE HOW EACH TYPE OF PROPERTY IS LIKELY TO BE DISTRIBUTED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

In this step, begin to identify the specific locations where historic resources may be found. Here you can use many of the sources discussed in Step 1 to establish locational information. Determining the distribution of properties may be complicated in some cases; historic maps and plats may assist in ascertaining the likely distribution of historic properties, particularly where subsequent growth has altered the terrain, plan, or layout of a community or area.





*Sylvan Street is an isolated, secondary street behind one of Richfield Springs's more prominent avenues. Some of its residents were African-Americans who worked in the village's important resort industry. The Teabouts, who owned the residence pictured above, were long-time community residents. Some of their six children served as nannies, housekeepers and seamstresses to the residents of adjacent Church Street. Two of the Teabout sons sold cars and ran a catering business out of this machine shop.*
Courtesy NYSOPRHP

To identify broad patterns of settlement and occupation, consider what kind of work African-Americans did within the survey area and how this relates to where they lived. Agricultural workers probably lived on farms, while mill workers most likely lived in industrial neighborhoods near the mills. In urban neighborhoods, blacks often occupied peripheral locations or lived on the alleys. This information will help you to pinpoint specific places where you might look for extant resources.

Using the information developed in the previous steps, try to locate the homes of significant individuals. Is it possible to establish addresses for any of those persons? If so, what is located at those addresses today? Is it possible to identify existing properties in the town or local community that have special historic significance in relation to the African-American presence, such as churches, cemeteries, recreational sites or social organizations?

Areas in which particular kinds of historic resources are likely to exist should be clearly identified and mapped, so that the expectations can be tested in the field.

## Step 6: Establish the Likely Current Condition of Property Types

Assessing the likely current condition of the various property types before you begin the field survey will assist you in identifying extant examples and serve as a first step toward determining integrity requirements for State and National Register eligibility. For certain categories of resources, factors such as income level and ownership status may have affected their chances of preservation. Many residences associated with African-Americans were of modest scale and design or of less substantial construction. Surviving examples are often obscured by their plainness or by later changes and improvements. For example, cottages for mill workers were likely to have been of inexpensive construction. Because they were usually not occupied by their owners and their occupants were often transient, they may not have been well cared for or maintained. Because they were not seen as cultural icons, they may have been repeatedly altered by subsequent occupants or owners. Likewise, inner city neighborhoods were often likely targets for Urban Renewal activity, and fringe areas where African-Americans typically lived were often repeatedly redeveloped. An understanding of these factors helps to determine the character of the property type itself and to establish integrity requirements for representative examples. At this stage of the survey, judgments about the quality of design or the level of alteration should not be used to exclude resources from consideration, especially when few examples may survive at all. Issues of representative quality and relative rarity will be important considerations later on in the evaluation process.

*These residences are located in Eastville, Sag Harbor's nineteenth-century African-American community. A field surveyor relying on her/his eyes alone may have not have recorded these buildings; yet, the members of the Eastville community played important roles in Sag Harbor's whaling industry.*
Courtesy NYSOPRHP

Some important property types may not survive at all. Often, the only record of the African-American presence in the survey area might be an archeological one. For this reason, it is important to record the full range of expected resource types and their physical and locational characteristics. In many cases, it will be important to consult with a professional archeologist about identifying and recording archeological sites.

## Step 7: Identify Information That Needs to Be Obtained Through Field Work

In this step, identify information about each historic context and its related resources that can be discovered through field survey. Because African-American history has been traditionally under-represented in standard historical literature, field survey is especially important in documenting the African-American presence and needs careful planning and execution. Information about resources that can only be determined in the field includes their presence or absence, their condition, and their level of integrity. Again, the record of change may be an important aspect of the historic theme or context within which the property is significant.

# Phase II. Field Survey

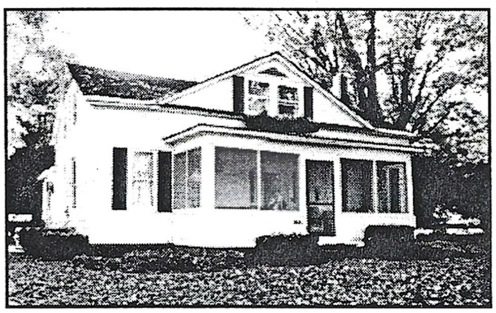
In Phase II, the field survey, the surveyor verifies what the initial historical research of Phase I suggests, looks for additional information, and finds new questions to answer. The field survey should be approached in as thorough, as disciplined and as systematic a manner as the archival research. The areas to be surveyed are selected on the basis of the data gathered during the archival phase. Systematic on-site inspections are undertaken to identify and document properties associated with the themes identified as significant in local history. Specific resources identified through archival research are located and placed within their physical and geographical contexts.

Through careful field work, resources not addressed in literature will also be discovered, thus providing a more complete understanding of the historic context. Using the clues provided by literature, you can gain a more detailed understanding of historic resources in the field. Although the archival research will provide suggestions about what to look for, it is critical not to approach field survey with preconceived ideas of what you are going to find. Rather, information generated through the field survey may contradict that gathered through research, sending you back to do additional research or to revise the historic overview.

Field survey should begin with a general area study. You should undertake a systematic investigation of the landscape to give you a sense of the whole, to identify patterns of social and occupational interaction, and to make note of the location and distribution of historic resources. Patterns of settlement, work, movement and social organization can all be read in the landscape itself.

Once you have become familiar with the overall geographical and cultural layout of the survey area, begin to focus on individual resource types. Investigate and record both general characteristics and subtle differences among groups of resources and individual examples. Verify the locations and conditions of specific resources identified in Phase I. Field methods will vary somewhat according to the scope of the project. In the reconnaissance level survey, the goal is to provide a general description of the range, number and distribution of potentially significant historic resources within the survey area. In the intensive level survey, individual resources are investigated and recorded in greater detail, with specific locational, descriptive and historic information.

Much can be learned about resources from inspecting them. For example, the location, siting, size, materials, floor plans, organization of spaces and decoration of residences in free black communities have the potential to reveal significant information about the themes of freedom, economics, labor, class, culture and architecture. Close examination will likely reveal subtleties of social organization and expression that are not otherwise recorded. However, because so much of field survey is dependent upon what the eye can see, it is important to recognize and compensate for your own possible visual limitations and biases. Sometimes, those resources with significant information to reveal do not attract the eye of the surveyor because they lack ornamental vocabulary, have been altered, or are modest in appearance. You should also keep in mind that alterations sometimes represent a significant layering of history rather than a loss of meaning.



*The significance of the Orson Ames House in the village of Mexico is derived from its role in the "Jerry Rescue," one of the most well-known rescues of an escaped slave. After a mob of abolitionists freed him from a Syracuse jail, William Jerry McHenry spent his first night of freedom hidden in this residence. The alterations to its architectural design may not be the most relevant considerations in considering its ability to convey its historic importance.*
Courtesy NYSOPRHP

Many resources have significant historical associations that are not encoded in their designs. For example, if the basement of a mid-nineteenth century residence was used to shelter escaping slaves, its relationship to the significant theme of abolition may not be reflected in the architectural design of the building. Although integrity has a role to play in assessing a resource's ability to convey its significant associations, you should take care that the visual issues of architectural connoisseurship do not prejudice the field investigation and recording phase of the project.

Likewise, you should be aware of the great variety of resources that you may find. These may include individual buildings and structures, outbuildings, ruins, archeological sites, engineering features, industrial features, community plans, neighborhoods, rural landscapes, farmscapes, cemeteries and/or groups of interrelated features that constitute historic districts.

# Phase III. Review and Organization of Survey Data

## Survey Reports

The review and organization of survey data is a crucial component of the survey project because it is important to ensure that the material will be accessible. Various techniques for the organization of survey data are discussed in Chapter 3 of Bulletin 24. The results of survey activity are usually summarized in a comprehensive report prepared at the completion of the project. The content of the report will vary according to the scope and level of the survey project. For surveys undertaken with the support or assistance of the SHPO, reports must include certain specific components. In such cases, SHPO staff will advise you about meeting these requirements.

## Evaluation

For many surveys, especially those done with the assistance of the SHPO, the final step is to review the data and identify those properties that appear to meet the State and National Register criteria for evaluation. Whether or not you decide to bring the completed survey to the evaluation stage, you should be aware that historic resources surveys can be important in many contexts outside of registers eligibility. Particularly in the case of cultural groups that have been under-represented in traditional literature, surveys can play a vital role in creating a tangible record of local history. Among the many potential products that can be derived from historic resources surveys are publications, exhibits and educational curricula.

Generally, National Register evaluations are not made until intensive level surveys have been completed. It is important not to make evaluations too early in the survey process because every example has something to reveal that will inform your understanding of the whole. Establishing National Register eligibility is a complicated process and many factors are used. If you wish to pursue this phase, you will find National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria of Evaluation a useful reference. However, you will need to work closely with SHPO staff in applying the National Register criteria to the properties identified.

The evaluation of resources associated with a marginalized people raises interesting questions about an evaluative process that is often approached in terms of reference to the mainstream culture. A simple response to the question, "Was it important in American history?" might be enough to begin to explore the value of a site. However, African-Americans were placed in special strata in American society, in American politics, and in the American capitalist structure. Because of this, if we assign greater or lesser worth to a resource based on its recognition by the larger contemporary society, we will be collaborating in turning African-Americans into an invisible people. If we want to change this, we must first recognize the fact that for three hundred years African-Americans were acting out their lives and coping in ways germane to their survival. Therefore, those deciding on the value of historic resources may have to respond to the more restrictive question, "were these sites significant in the lives of these people?"

For example, a whaleboat dockyard where African-American people seem to have had rather ordinary involvement in the economic system becomes extraordinary when we realize that custom (and sometimes law) regulated blacks out of many occupations. Therefore, the fact that African-Americans participated at all in the whaling industry (or the milling industry or the ironworks) might qualify those sites as being worthy of recognition and historic preservation. The site becomes distinctive because of the weight of the societal prejudice and the institutional barriers within which African-Americans had to contend.

# PART III: CASE STUDIES

The following case studies are provided in order to illustrate some of the ways in which the information presented in this survey guide can be used, some of the knowledge that can be uncovered, and some of the problems that may be encountered and the solutions that can be found.

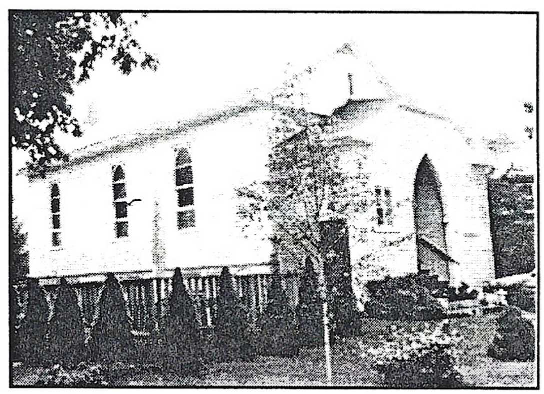
Each case study is intended to address a specific issue involved in identifying, recording and/or evaluating historic resources associated with African-American history. Each contributor was asked to summarize her/his experience, describe the methodology used, and make suggestions for further research or other action. This group is in no way comprehensive but merely represents a selection of currently available information about specific projects.

## SEARCHING FOR KINDERHOOK'S NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

by Ruth Piwonka

The Kinderhook Village Historic District in Columbia County was listed on the National Register in 1974 for its architectural significance. The district included the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, constructed c1858; however, no discussion of this church or the history of its congregation was provided in the nomination. Little is known about the history of this church and local historians have been unable to locate the church records, which would presumably illuminate its place in the community. In addition, the church is no longer used for religious purposes but has been converted into a residence, thus further obscuring its connection to African-American history.

Although local histories note the presence of this church in the small rural nineteenth-century village of Kinderhook, they fail to mention anything about the African-American population that it served. We can assume that a church building of this size and scale would have been the centerpiece of a substantial congregation; however, blacks are only occasionally mentioned in local histories and those citations are generally casual references to individuals. One memoir from the 1840s refers to an African-American community near the village as "Guinea Hill"; however, no other references to this community have been located.


*Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church*
Courtesy NYSOPRHP

The next step in uncovering the African-American presence in Kinderhook would be to work with nineteenth-century census records, beginning in 1850 and 1855. These should provide the names and locations of residences of Kinderhook's black residents, information that could be keyed to a map, providing information about community patterns and demographics. Extant resources from this period could be studied to provide information about living conditions and economic status. Census records should also indicate the occupations of those listed, furnishing information about labor history and social organization. Finally, an investigation could be undertaken of the cemetery that is believed to be associated with this church, located several blocks away, outside the district boundaries. Only a few headstones survive; however, these could potentially help to fill in genealogical and other types of historical information. By using these various documentary sources, combined with a study of the built environment, the story of Kinderhook's African-American community would be brought to life.

# Discovering Freemanville

by A.J Williams-Myers

Oral tradition and one written source, Philip K. Smith, General History of Dutchess County from 1609 to 1876, suggested that an African community referred to as Guinea existed in the vicinity of Poughquag, Dutchess County as early as the late eighteenth century. This community was said to have been founded by the free mulatto Charles Freeman.

Local maps were searched for any evidence of such an African presence in southern Dutchess County. A clue was provided on a 1948 U.S. Geological Survey map, which noted a mountain in the vicinity of Poughquag named "Nigger Hill." This was the first contemporary indication of such a presence.

A field trip to the area was undertaken to determine if any material evidence of the eighteenth-century community was present. The surveyor initially discovered scattered residences from later periods; however, upon closer investigation, foundations and other evidence of previous occupation were discovered. Proceeding further up the hill, several root cellars were located. Based on this preliminary investigation, it appeared that the larger and more substantial foundations were located at the higher elevations, suggesting a possible pattern of community organization and social stratification.

In the context of an interview, a current resident of this area disclosed that a group of local residents had been successful in changing the name of the hill from "Nigger Hill" to Depot Hill. The latter name is indicated on a current county map.

The surveyor then made a trip to the Dutchess County Office Building in Poughkeepsie to search for deed references to this area. From deeds it was learned that Charles Freeman owned land that stretched to West Pawling, some of which remained in his family after his death in the early 1830s. Upon casual observation of a mid-nineteenth century map hanging in the hall of the county offices, the surveyor noted the location of a community referred to as Freemanville in the area of southern Dutchess County that is now known as Depot Hill.

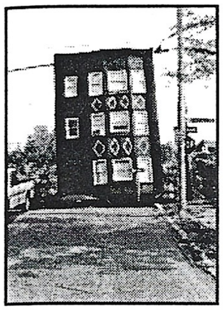
Finally, the surveyor located Charles Freeman's death certificate in the Dutchess County Court House. This provided additional information about the Freeman family, including the names of Freeman's wife, his offspring and their spouses. This certificate also indicated Freeman's land holdings and to whom they were bequeathed.

The next step in documenting Freemanville would probably be a more careful physical investigation of the site, mapping the overall discernable pattern of the community and recording specific locations and descriptions of visible remains. It would be productive to engage the services of a professional archeologist to assist in recording and interpreting evidence of the community's early history and in testing research questions about the community's design and social organization. Additional research in census records might provide more definitive information about the residents of the community and their occupations.

# Locating historic resources associated with Henry Johnson

by Vic DiSanto

Henry Johnson (1897-1929) was a native of either North Carolina or Virginia who migrated north as a young child. Settling in Albany, Johnson eventually found work as a baggage handler for the New York Central Railroad. Johnson volunteered for active duty in the United States Army in 1917.



*Building at 101 Orange Street. This is one of several Albany buildings that could have been the home of Henry Johnson.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

Johnson was one of the nation's most widely acclaimed military heroes of World War I. Along with another African-American soldier, Johnson held a large party of Germans at bay in an encounter known as "The Battle of Henry Johnson." He was wounded many times and was the first American to be awarded France's highest military honor, the Croix de Guerre.

Johnson's war record is well documented in literature and his important contributions to military history were widely recognized by contemporary leaders. Among those praising Johnson's efforts were General John J. Pershing and Theodore Roosevelt, who referred to Johnson as "one of the nine bravest men in World War I." Upon Johnson's return from France he was widely hailed in the press and was honored with a parade up Fifth Avenue in New York. Subsequently, Johnson's war record was recalled in military histories and used in recruiting posters. Sadly, Johnson's fame was short lived. Despite the fact that his many wounds left him crippled and unable to work, he never received either the Medal of Honor or the Purple Heart. Returning to Albany, Johnson was denied government assistance and died in poverty at the age of 32. His burial place is unknown, however, he may rest in a potter's field near the Albany County Airport.

Although Henry Johnson is widely recognized and easily documented as a person of significance in our past, the circumstances of his life make it difficult to locate tangible resources associated with his life. As a first step, the surveyor checked city directories and other sources for clues as to where Johnson resided in Albany. No record could be found of Johnson's residences before World War I. Newspapers from 1918 placed him at two different addresses simultaneously (100 Orange Street and 23 Monroe Street). The city directory of the same year located him at a third address, 23 Sheridan Avenue. Subsequent directories listed Johnson at 112 Orange Street, 123 Sheridan Avenue and 38-40 Franklin Street. Information received from a local historian indicated that Johnson's son, who lives in Washington D.C., believed that Johnson lived on Orange Street. Finally, the 369th Veteran's Association identified 101 Orange Street as the home of Henry Johnson. The latter address could not be verified anywhere else.

Next the surveyor studied historic Sanborn maps and undertook preliminary field work to determine the locations and conditions of the buildings possibly associated with Johnson. Of those addresses listed above, only 101 Orange Street is the location of an extant nineteenth-century building. Sanborn maps were used to verify that the contemporary address was aligned with the historic address.

As a result of a thorough literature and field search, the surveyor concluded that the only extant building that could potentially be recognized for its association with Henry Johnson was 101 Orange Street. Yet, there is no firm documentation that Johnson ever resided in this building and evidence suggests that if he did, his residence there may have been of short duration. The next step is to solicit a copy of Johnson's military records from the National Archives in Washington. It is possible that they will verify Johnson's residence at 101 Orange Street or another location.

This case raises a number of interesting issues. Perhaps most compelling is the fact that a citizen of such great renown faded into such obscurity because of the circumstances of his race and class. Here the wish to designate a property for its association with an obviously significant person may be thwarted by the inability to find an appropriate resource. A second issue concerns the possibility of designating the building at 101 Orange Street without being able to document its significant associations more definitively. This is an important consideration because of the under-representation of African-Americans in traditional historical sources. Although evaluations of significance must be supported by appropriate documentation, a strict application of traditional guidelines may contribute to the continuing exclusion of African-Americans from the record of American history.

# Getting Access to Eagle's Nest

by A.J Williams-Myers

Eagle's Nest is located in the mountains west of Hurley, Ulster County. This was an early nineteenth century mixed community of freed African slaves, Native Americans and Europeans. Today the Native American and African strains are more prevalent than the European. At the base and lower slopes of the mountain are scattered residences of whites. The top third of the mountain appears to remain in the hands of a few families, descendants of the original inhabitants. Family names such as Broadhead, Cantine and Hasbrouck date back to the colonial period.

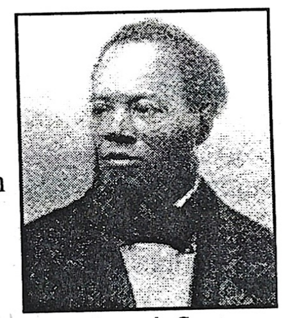
It is not easy to get into Eagle's Nest to interview residents or to record the community. Outsiders are held at bay and are suspect. A contemporary resident of the lower slope who was doing genealogical research sought permission to visit a cemetery located further up the mountain. This request was initially denied.

In such a situation it is better to proceed slowly and determine what is the appropriate protocol. Upon further investigation, a second researcher learned that the patriarch of the community lived along the road that leads to the community. Several more visits were made in which the researcher took care to approach the patriarch as a listener rather than as an intruder. As the patriarch became more comfortable in his presence, the researcher was granted permission to proceed into the community to talk with others and to record preliminary data about its size and layout. In addition, the initial visits with the patriarch increased the researcher's understanding and appreciation of the community. This case illustrates the importance of identifying and working with important figures in the community. Often, working with a "guide" will significantly increase the researcher's access to information.

# Looking for Evidence of Austin Steward in Rochester

by Ena Farley, based on research by Ellen Schwartz

Austin Steward was a former slave who founded and operated one of Rochester's first African-American owned businesses. He was also a prominent member of the local African-American community in Rochester and a leading abolitionist in western New York.



*Austin Steward.* Courtesy City of Rochester

The researcher first read about Austin Steward in Before the Mayflower (Lerone Bennett) and learned that Steward was from Rochester. Starting with this, she went to the local history section of the library to find out more about Steward. In his autobiography, Steward noted that his first business site was on West Main Street and that he also bought property on the east side of the Genesee River. However, the autobiography did not note the specific location of either property.

The next step was to visit the Monroe County Court House to consult the deed records. Since the researcher knew that Steward had come to Rochester in 1817 and began to work in a meat market, she knew that she had to look for his property in the 1818 record of deeds. Entered there was the record of his purchase of a lot eighteen feet by fifty feet on Main and Mechanic Streets for five hundred dollars.

Armed with this information, the researcher went back to the local history room and examined all the old maps; however, she was unable to verify the location of Steward's store. Finally, she found one map that identified specific property owners by location.

Now that the specific location of the shop was known, the researcher could investigate the site in the field. Unfortunately, the building did not survive and its location was now the site of a large hotel. This case chronicles a disappointing scenario, one in which substantive research fails to turn up any properties worthy of preservation. Depending on the exact location of Steward's shop (had it been under the parking lot rather than under the hotel), a professional archeological investigation might have turned up significant evidence of Steward's occupation. However, the local community chose another way to recall Steward's presence in Rochester: an historic marker, installed in the parking lot, explains the significance of the neighboring site in local history.

# Documenting the Burial Ground of the Slaves of Tobias C. Ten Eyck

by John A. Bonafide

For many years oral tradition maintained the existence of a "slave cemetery" in the vicinity of the c1750 Tobias Ten Eyck house in Coeymans, Albany County. In 1992, in response to a proposal to locate a landfill nearby, this property was surveyed to determine whether or not it was eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. It was subsequently listed on the registers in 1995.

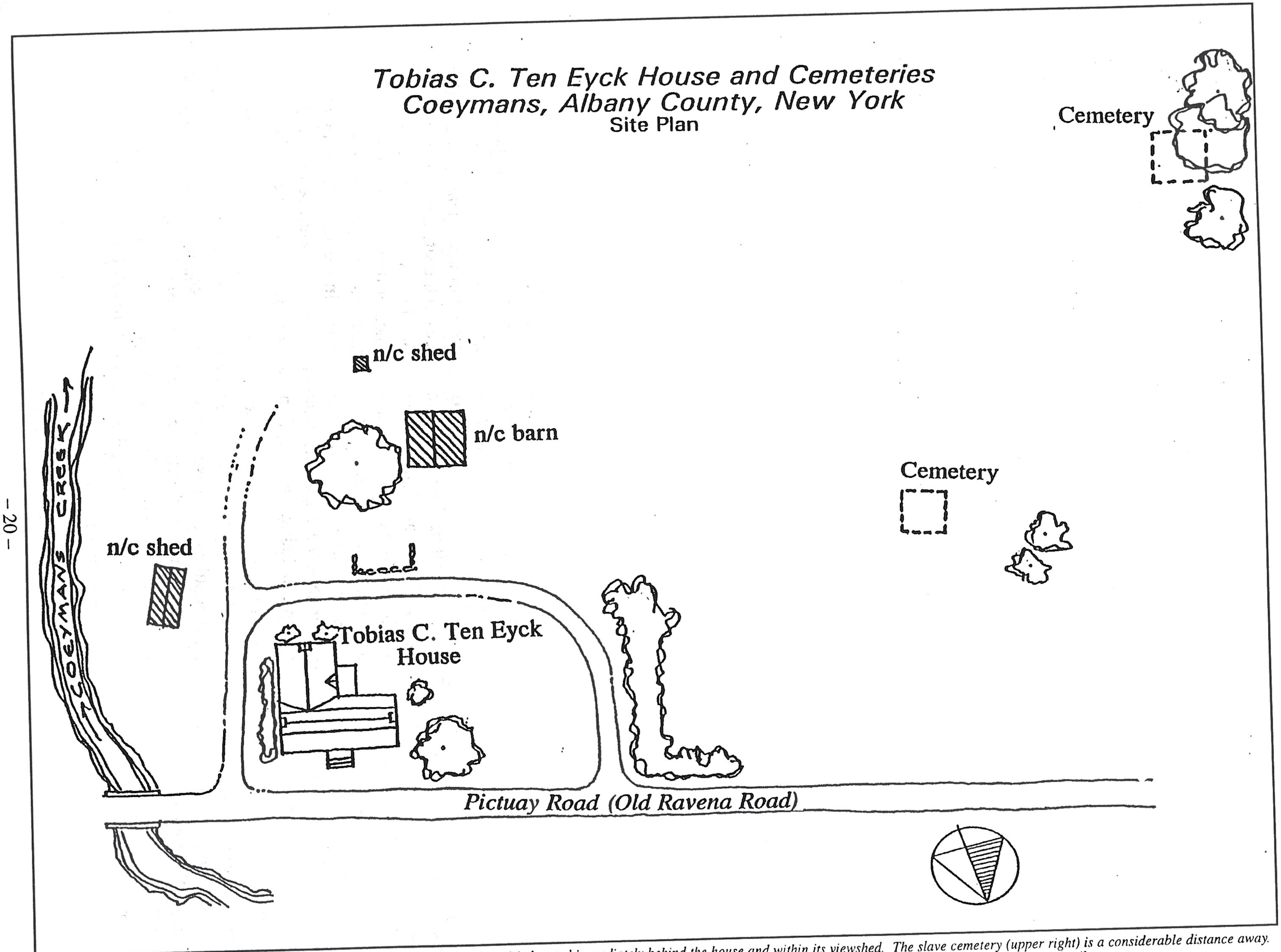
During the first site visit, the area of the cemetery was heavily entangled in briers and brambles. Low scrub growth and vines covered the area, making visual assessment and/or documentation impossible. On the initial site inspection, only two funerary markers were identifiable. The first was a single, uninscribed bluestone slab approximately ten inches in width, fourteen inches in height and two inches in depth. The second stone was a 1868 marble marker engraved with the name of Mary Titus Holland.

After the site inspection, the surveyor researched Ten Eyck family papers, in the possession of the property owner, and established that at the time of his death in 1792, Tobias Ten Eyck was in possession of eight African slaves. His will divided his slaves (by name) amongst his children. A search of the 1790 federal census indicated that Ten Eyck possessed a total of ten slaves. At the same time, the surveyor searched later census records for information on Mary Titus Holland. The 1865 New York State Census records that she was 45 years of age, a "native" and "Colored not taxed." The record further shows that she lived with her husband, Joseph, and three children in a frame house assessed for three hundred dollars.

In 1995 the surveyor (with the assistance of local Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts) returned to the cemetery site and carefully cleared the area. When fully cleared of undergrowth, the full extent of the cemetery was exposed. Seven sets of head and foot stones in three rows and several individual head stones survived. As with the first stone found in 1992, all of the newly uncovered stones were roughly hewn bluestone pieces, small in scale, and lacking any form of inscription or discernable markings. Distances between head and foot stones were measured and range from ninety- five inches to forty-two inches. This would suggest the burial of adults as well as children at the site.

At this time, several research areas concerning this site should be pursued. First, additional Ten Eyck family records, including those housed in the New York State Archives, the Albany Institute of History and Art and in the possession of Ten Eyck family descendants, should be reviewed to find any references to this area being set aside for the burial of the family slaves. Manumission records, family papers, court documents (the Ten Eyck family was an extremely litigious group) should all be searched for references to the site and to the known slaves of Tobias Ten Eyck. Second, the question of the burial of Mary Titus Holland in this simple burial ground at such a relatively late date should be investigated further. Was she a descendant of those buried in the earlier graves? Is there a familial link or cultural reason for her interment here rather than in another local cemetery? At the present time a number of African- Americans with the name Holland remain in the area. A survey of these families should be conducted and their potential genealogical association to this site should be explored. Lastly, research on African-American burial customs, including the use of uninscribed stones as grave markers should be undertaken.

Although the town of Coeymans claims a rich history that spans more than three centuries, there is no written history concerning the town's early African population. Census records show a total of 118 slaves in Coeymans in 1800, yet there are no known records as to history of the African population from the town's settlement in 1673 to the end of slavery in New York in the 1820s. Such gaps in the history of the community need to be filled. The research being done on the Tobias Ten Eyck slave cemetery is the first step in this process.




*Site plan, Tobias Ten Eyck property. The Ten Eyck family cemetery (center of map) is located immediately behind the house and within its viewshed. The slave cemetery (upper right) is a considerable distance away. Not evident on this plan is the change in topography. The two cemeteries are separated by a large ravine, with the slave cemetery at the bottom, not visible from the house or the family cemetery.*
Courtesy NYSOPRHP

# IDENTIFYING FREE BLACK ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES THROUGH ROUTINE SURVEYS

by Cynthia Blakemore, based on Cultural Resource Survey Reports prepared by SUNY Stony Brook and the New York State Museum Anthropological Survey for the NYS Department of Transportation

The Department of Transportation routinely conducts cultural resource surveys before it undertakes projects that have the potential to impact historic and archeological resources. Historic research is conducted in part to identify where buildings may have been located previously and to provide information on where potential sites may be expected. In some cases a single building can be traced through time by its location on sequential maps. Testing at the location of these *map documented structures* (MDS) can verify the accuracy of historic maps as well as elicit information about the activities of the former residents.

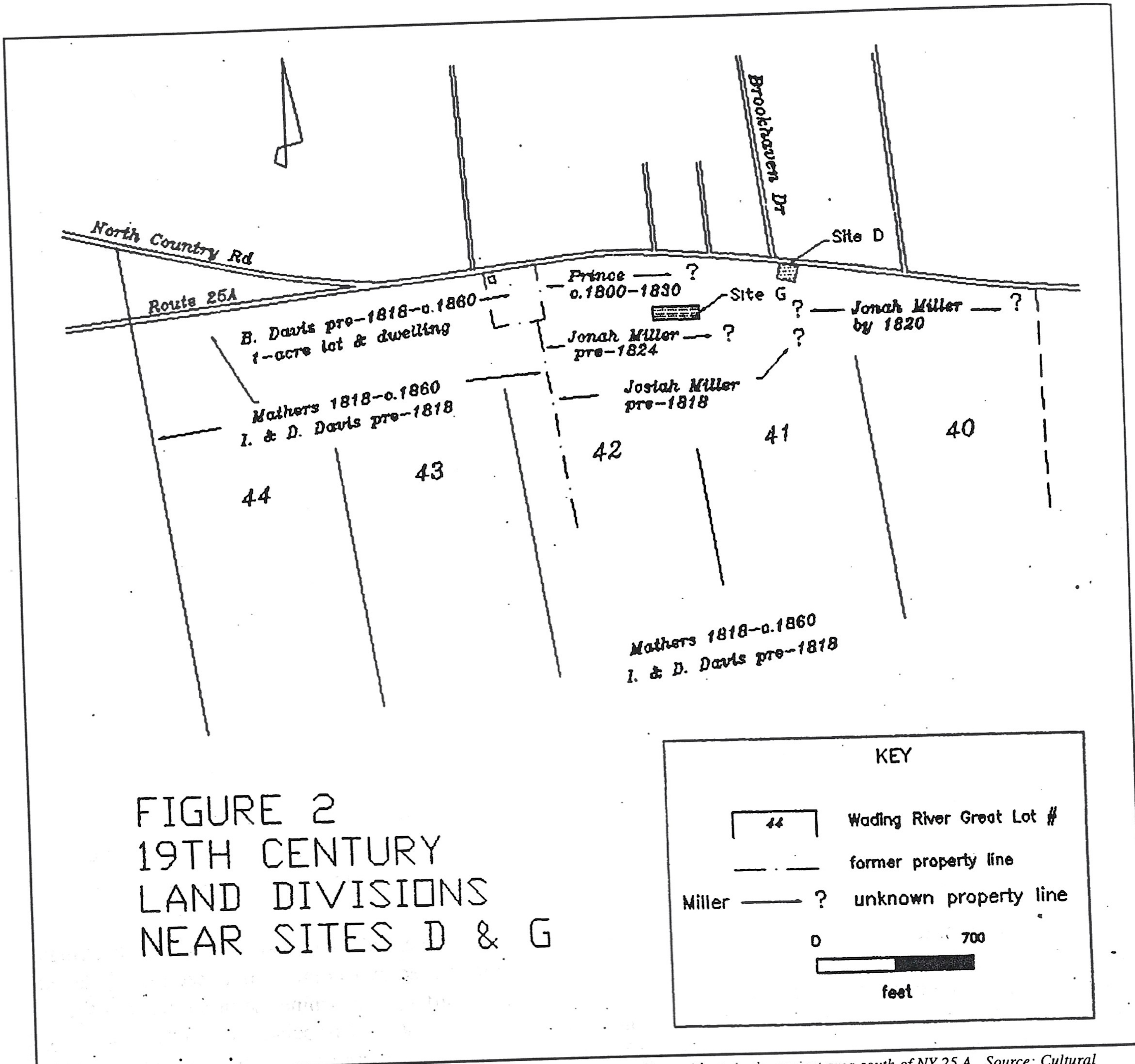
In 1989, an archeological survey was undertaken prior to the proposed reconstruction of NY 25A, in the town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County. During the reconnaissance survey, a location identified as Site D was defined by stone rubble and a shallow depression twenty-five feet from the edge of the highway. Testing revealed unmortared fieldstone and rubble of an "H" shaped feature. Architectural materials normally indicative of a structure were poorly represented. Moderate amounts of ceramics recovered at the site suggested that the structure was not the one noted on the 1873 map, but dated to c1775-80, the earliest settlement period in this part of the town of Brookhaven. The site seemed to represent a modest dwelling from this early period.

As a result of the research conducted for the data retrieval of Site D, earlier maps and property deeds were consulted to ascertain a date for the building. Its absence on the pre-1838 maps may not be accurate, as these maps show only prominent structures. The modest structure at Site D was not shown on any highway maps. Property deeds for land exchanges near Site D consistently described only one structure along the south side of the road, shown to be approximately eleven hundred feet west of Site D. This was the dwelling of a freed slave, who was given one-acre by his former owner. However, two property owners to the east were also identified as free blacks, one of those a land-wealthy free black.

Additional testing resulted in the identification of a similar site west of Site D. The second site, Site G, also contained a slight depression and unmortared stones, very limited ceramics and glass as well as some brick fragments. The research for Site D had already revealed that there were no buildings shown on the maps but did suggest that this may also have been the dwelling of a free black. The federal census listed a series of "Negro" heads-of-households for this location.

The lack of recognition by cartographers for modest dwellings like these could mean that this class of dwellings was not being recorded. As a result, this property type cannot be identified by routine map inspection. Detailed research of census records and deeds would need to be conducted in order to determine the properties of other free blacks. Additionally, it is important for archeologists to recognize that sites associated with free blacks may not contain extensive deposits. Limited deposits often predispose a site to be considered insignificant, especially if compared with other Euro-American sites.

This project identified two sites associated with free blacks as a result of routine archeological survey. Both sites were determined to be eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Information from the data retrieval conducted at these sites will aid archeologists in identifying and interpreting similar sites in other communities.




*Map based on deed and census research identifying African-American property owners and/or residents in the project area south of NY 25 A. Source: Cultural Resource Report prepared by SUNY Stony Brook and the NYS Museum for the NYS DOT.* Courtesy NYSOPRHP

Copies of this guide have been produced in cooperation with
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## APPENDIX I

African-Americans in New York State History: Themes & Time Periods

A. **Slavery & Free People of Color in New York. 1626-1827**
- -1626-1664: Under Dutch Rule
- -1664-1827: British Colonial in Early National Period
    - (a) Slavery in New York State
    - (b) Free African-Americans in New York State
    - (c) African-Americans in New York State
    - (d) White Racial Attitudes and Practices
- -1777-1827: Efforts to Abolish Slavery

B. **African-Americans in Ante-Bellun New York, 1827-1864**
- -Abolitionism and the Reform Movement
- -Colonization and Emigration
- -Convention Movement
- -The African-American Church
- -Educational Opportunities
- -Common Interest and Voluntary Associations
- -The African-American Press
- -Economic Options
- -The Struggle for Political Rights
- -Housing Patterns
- -White Racial Attitudes and Practices
- -African-American Communities

C. **Post Civil War to 1900**
- -The Struggle for Political Rights and Individual Freedom
- -Double-Consciousness and Invisibility
- -The African-American Press
- -The African-American Church
- -Economic Options
- -Self-Help Activities
- -Educational Opportunities
- -White Racial Attitudes and Practices

D. **1990-World War II**
- -Pre-"Great Migration" African-American Communities
- -African-Americans and the First World War
- -The "Great Migration:" Impact on New York
- -The Struggle for Political Rights and Individual Freedom
- -Social, Political and Cultural Movements ("New Negro," "Harlem Renaissance," "Garvey Movement," etc.)
- -The Struggle for Economic Opportunities
- -White Racial Attitudes and Practices
- -African-Americans and the Great Depression
- -The African-American Press

## APPENDIX III

Properties in New York State listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places that are documented for their association with African-American history:

**Albany County**

Tobias Ten Eyck House and Cemeteries, Coeymans

**Cayuga County**

Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, Auburn
William Seward House, Auburn

**Chemung County**

Park Church, Elmira

**Dutchess County**

Mount Zion AME Church, Poughkeepsie

**Erie County**

Durham Memorial AME Zion Church, Buffalo
Macedonia Baptist Church, Buffalo

**Essex County**

John Brown Farm, Lake Placid

**Kings County**

Houses on Hunterfly Road Historic District, Brooklyn
John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson House, Brooklyn

**Madison County**

Peterboro Land Office (Gerrit Smith), Peterboro
Smithfield Presbyterian Church (Gerrit Smith), Peterboro

**Nassau County**

Valley Road Historic District, Manhasset Vicinity

**New York County**

African Buryial Ground, New York
Apollo Theater, New York
Will Marion Cook House, New York
Dunbar Apartments, New York
Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington House
Harlem River Houses, New York
Matthew Henson Residence, New York
Langston Hughes House, New York
James Weldon Johnson House, New York
Claude McKay Residence, New York
Florence Mills House, New York
Minton's Playhouse, New York
New York Amsterdam News Building, New York
Paul Robeson Home, New York
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York
St. George's Episcopal Church, New York
St. Nicholas Historic District, New York
369th Regiment Armory, New York
Charlie Parker Residence, New York

**Onondaga County**

Oakwood Cemetery (Edmonia Highgate Burial Site; Jermain Loguen Burial Site), Syracuse

**Orange County**

African-American Cemetery, Montgomery

**Otsego County**

Church Street Historic District, Richfield Springs

**Queens County**

Louis Armstrong House, Queens
Ralph Bunche House, Queens

**Richmond County**

Sandy Ground Historic Archeological District, Staten Island

**Rockland County**

Mount Moore Cemetery, West Nyack

**St. Lawrence County**

Waddington Historic District, Waddington

**Suffolk County**

Bethel AME Zion Church and Manse, Huntington
Sag Harbor Historic District Boundary Expansion
Joseph Lloyd Manor House (Jupiter Hammon Residence), Lloyd Harbor
Henry Lloyd Manor House (Jupiter Hammon Residence), Lloyd Harbor

**Tompkins County**

St James AME Zion Church, Ithaca

**Washington County**

Lemuel Haynes House, South Granville

**Westchester County**

Foster Memorial AME Zion Church, Tarrytown
Villa Lewaro, Irvington