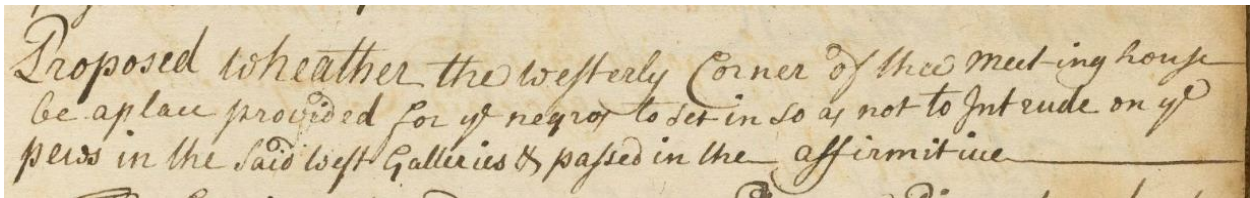
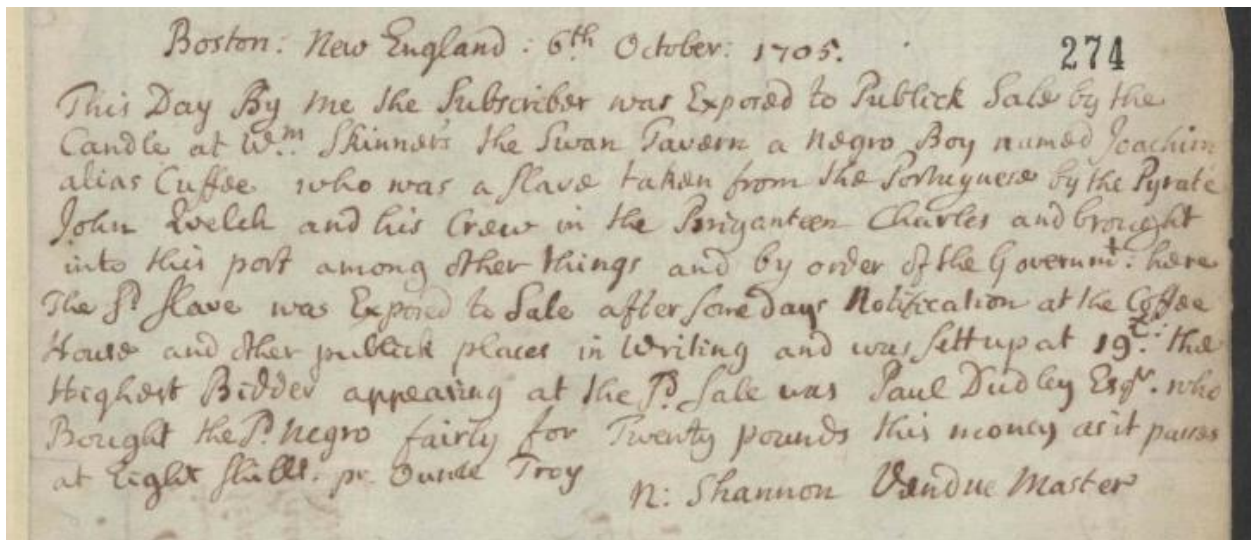


RACE & SLAVERY AT THE FIRST CHURCH IN ROXBURY THE COLONIAL PERIOD (1631–1775)



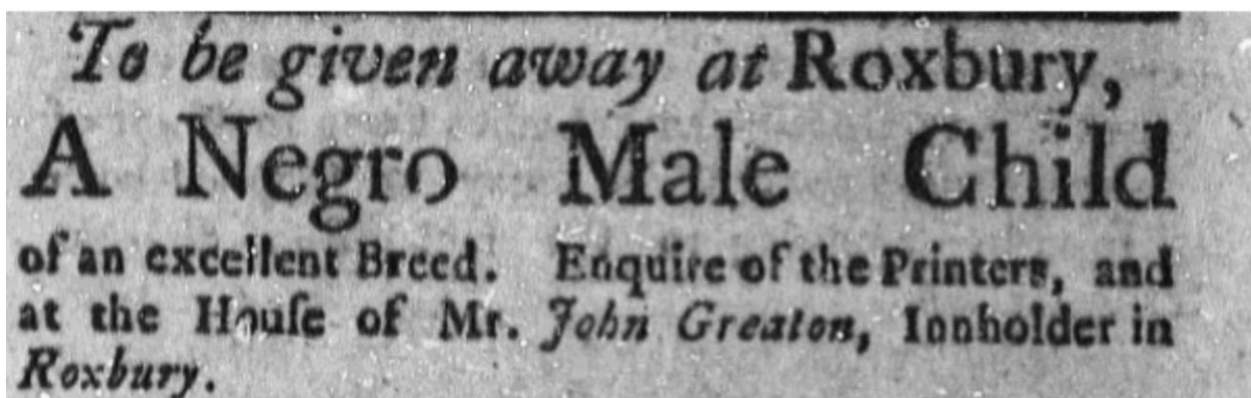
Proposed wheather the westerly Corner of the meeting house be a place provided for y negro to set in so as not to Intende on y pews in the said west Galleries & passed in the affirmitiue

First Church in Roxbury voting in favor of racially segregated seating. FCR-AR, 31 (seq. 41) (Aug. 31, 1741).



Boston: New England: 6th October: 1705. 274
This Day By me the Subscriber was Exposed to Publick Sale by the Candle at Wm Skinner's the Swan Tavern a Negro Boy named Joachim alias Cuffee who was a Slave taken from the Portuguese by the Pyrate John Quelch and his Crew in the Brigantien Charles and brought into this port among other things and by order of the Governr. here the s Slave was Exposed to Sale after some days Notification at the Coffee House and other publick places in Writing and was sett up at 19s the Highest Bidder appearing at the s Sale was Paul Dudley Esqr. who Bought the s Negro fairly for Twenty pounds this money as it passes at Eight shill. pr Ounce Troy N: Shannon Vendue Master

"This Day By me the Subscriber was Exposed to Publick Sale by the Candle at Wm. Skinner's the Swan Tavern, a Negro Boy named Joachim alias Cuffee who was a Slave taken from the Portuguese by the Pyrate John Quelch and his Crew... the Highest Bidder appearing at the S[a]ld Sale was Paul Dudley Esqr. who Bought the S[a]ld Negro fairly for Twenty pounds..." (Boston, Oct. 6, 1705). CO 5/864, p. 274, UK National Archives.



To be given away at Roxbury,
A Negro Male Child
of an excellent Breed. Enquire of the Printers, and
at the House of Mr. John Greateon, Innholder in
Roxbury.

Advertisement of First Church in Roxbury member John Greateon. *Boston News-Letter* (Mar. 29, 1764).

Aabid Allibhai, JD
Dorothy Porter & Charles Harris Wesley Fellow (2022–23)
W. E. B. Du Bois Research Institute, Hutchins Center
PhD Candidate, African & African American Studies
Harvard University

why people be mad at me sometimes

they ask me to remember
but they want me to remember
their memories
and i keep on remembering
mine.

—Lucille Clifton, response when asked to write a poem “celebrating our colonial heritage” for Maryland’s 350th anniversary.*

* Kevin Young & Michael S. Glaser (eds.), *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton, 1965–2010* (Rochester: BOA Editions-2012), 262; Charles H. Rowell, “An Interview with Lucille Clifton,” *Callaloo*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Winter 1999), 57; Elizabeth Alexander, *The Trayvon Generation* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2022), 17–19.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
<i>Table: People of Color at the First Church in Roxbury, 1631–1775.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Table Notes.....</i>	<i>5</i>
A Brief Overview of Slavery in New England.....	8
People of Color in the First Church in Roxbury Records.....	10
Racial Discrimination.....	18
Resistance.....	25
Family Separation.....	30
People of Color Joining the First Church in Roxbury.....	34
Native War Captives.....	36
The First Bible Printed in North America.....	40
Acknowledgements.....	42
Endnotes.....	43
Bibliography.....	50

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1631 by English settlers on Massachuset land, the First Church in Roxbury was among the earliest churches established in New England. For three hundred and fifty years, through five meeting houses, people worshipped here. Currently, the premises is home to the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry, an organization working to advance racial justice. UUUM, in partnership with the Roxbury Historical Society, have commissioned the following report on slavery at the First Church in Roxbury.¹

At least fifty-eight human beings—Black and Indigenous men, women, and children—were enslaved by First Church’s white parishioners. That number, of course, is a significant undercount: the records do not tell us about everyone. A few like Maria, burned to death for setting aflame her enslaver’s house, have stories we can tell in some detail. But little is known of most. All faced the grueling horrors of chattel slavery. We might begin with their names.

People of Color at the First Church in Roxbury, 1631–1775

NAME	Race	Status	Enslaver	Notes
EZBON	Indigenous	Enslaved	Unnamed member of First Church	“an Indian, hopefully Godly, haveing lived 10 yeare among the English, could read, desired to serve God &c”; died, Aug. 6, 1646. ¹ Enslaved in the Pequot War. ²
NAN	Indigenous	Enslaved	Pastor Thomas Weld	“Mr Weld’s captive Indian dyed, who also was hopefull”; died Aug. 7, 1646. ³ Enslaved in the Pequot War. ⁴
JOHN WAMPUS	Indigenous	Servant; Free		Wampus’s father sent his son to live with First Church elder Isaac Heath (1640s & 50s) so he could be educated in the Christian religion at Eliot’s grammar school in Roxbury. ⁵
SYLVANUS WARRO	Black	Enslaved	Deacon William Parks / Daniel Gookin	Re-enslaved in 1672 by court order following the birth of his child with Elizabeth Parker, a white woman. ⁶
“AN INDIAN BOY OF HOLBROOK’S”	Indigenous	Enslaved	John Holbrook	“An Indian boy of Holbrook’s dyed of the pox,” Jan. 5, 1679. ⁷ Enslaved in King Philip’s War. ⁸
“AN INDIAN GIRL OF MR DUDLY”	Indigenous	Enslaved	Joseph Dudley	“An Indian girl of Mr Dudly, neer well of o pox, fell a bleeding & bled to death,” Apr. 18, 1679. ⁹ Enslaved in King Philip’s War. ¹⁰
MARIA	Black	Enslaved	Joshua Lambe	Convicted for setting two houses on fire, including her enslaver’s; sentenced to be burned to death in 1681. ¹¹
PETE / PETER	Indigenous	Enslaved	Joseph Dudley	Died, Aug. 14, 1687. ¹²
THOMAS BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Married a white First Church in Roxbury member named Lydia Craft in 1703. ¹³ Father of Elizabeth, Benjamin, Joseph, Abigail, Lydia, Ebenezer, and Moses. ¹⁴

ELIZABETH BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Thomas & Lydia Bedunah's daughter; sister of Benjamin, Joseph, Abigail, Lydia, Ebenezer, and Moses. ¹⁵
BENJAMIN BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Thomas & Lydia Bedunah's son; brother of Elizabeth, Joseph, Abigail, Lydia, Ebenezer, and Moses. ¹⁶ Rests in Eliot Burial Ground. ¹⁷
JOSEPH BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Thomas & Lydia Bedunah's son; brother of Elizabeth, Benjamin, Abigail, Lydia, Ebenezer, and Moses. ¹⁸ Baptized, Nov. 11, 1748. ¹⁹
ABIGAIL BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Thomas & Lydia Bedunah's daughter; sister of Elizabeth, Benjamin, Joseph, Lydia, Ebenezer, and Moses. ²⁰
LYDIA BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Thomas & Lydia Bedunah's daughter; sister of Elizabeth, Benjamin, Joseph, Abigail, Ebenezer, and Moses. ²¹
EBENEZER BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Thomas & Lydia Bedunah's son; brother of Elizabeth, Benjamin, Joseph, Abigail, Lydia, and Moses. ²² Baptized, Jul. 28, 1745. ²³
MOSES BEDUNAH	Black	Free		Thomas & Lydia Bedunah's son; brother of Elizabeth, Benjamin, Joseph, Abigail, Lydia, and Ebenezer. ²⁴ Baptized, Sep. 1750. ²⁵
JOACHIM / CUFFEE	Black	Enslaved	Paul Dudley	"a Boy of fourteen years of Age (for the Negroe was no more)," Oct. 6, 1705. ²⁶
AMOS HILL	Black	Likely free		Owned the covenant & baptized, Jun. 1706. ²⁷
SIMON GOSSAN	Black	Likely free		Owned the covenant & baptized, Jun. 1706. ²⁸
JAMES TRUSTY	Black	Likely free		Owned the covenant, Oct. 1709. ²⁹
DAN	Black	Enslaved	Joseph Ruggles Sr.	Owned the covenant & baptized, Dec. 1712. ³⁰
ANTHONY	Black	Enslaved	John Gore	"Anthony a negro man being present Sayes yt he bought his Freedom of his master John Gore of Roxbury, and that Since yt he came into this Town & hath dwelt here a year & Eleven moneths. The Sel[ect] men do warn him to return to his Late master." May 4, 1714. ³¹
BRILL	Black	Enslaved	Joseph Dudley Sr., Rebecca Dudley, Joseph Dudley Jr.	Rebecca Dudley's will, 1722: "My Will is yt Brill my Negro Servant within a year after my Decease Shall have his Freedome, in the mean time to Continue in ye Service of my Eldest Son [Joseph Dudley]; And after his Freedome that He be ready To wait on my Children, So that they may Have ye Refusall of his Service." ³²
JEMMY	Black	Enslaved	Joseph Dudley Sr., Rebecca Dudley, Joseph	Rebecca Dudley's will, 1722: "I give Jemmy Negro to my Eldest Son [Joseph Dudley]." ³³

			Dudley Jr.	
“A LIKELY NEGRO WOMAN”	Black	Enslaved	Ebenezer Dorr	“To Be Sold by Ebenezer Dorr of Roxbury, a Likely Negro Woman: Any Person inclined to buy said Negro will know the true Cause why she is Sold,” Oct. 21, 1735. ³⁴
FLORA	Black	Enslaved	Ebenezer Dorr, Ebenezer Craft	Ebenezer Craft, about Jan. 1736, “paid £105 for a negro girl named Flora to Ebenezer Dorr.” Shortly thereafter, Craft wanted to return Flora to Dorr. ³⁵
SABEE	Black	Enslaved	Benjamin Eaton	Boston (Sr.’s) (enslaved by Edward Hutchinson of Boston) husband; marriage intention, Aug. 4, 1737. ³⁶ Boston (Jr.), Caesar, & Peter’s mother. ³⁷
BOSTON (JR.)	Black	Enslaved	Benjamin Eaton	Baptized (Second Church in Boston), Nov. 13, 1737. ³⁸ Sabee & Boston Sr.’s son; Caesar & Peter’s brother. ³⁹
CAESAR	Black	Enslaved	Benjamin Eaton	Baptized (Second Church in Boston), Nov. 13, 1737. ⁴⁰ Sabee & Boston Sr.’s child; Boston Jr. & Peter’s brother. ⁴¹
PETER	Black	Enslaved	Benjamin Eaton	Baptized (Second Church in Boston), Mar. 2, 1740. ⁴² Sabee & Boston’s child; Boston Jr. & Caesar’s brother. ⁴³
DINA	Black	Enslaved	Ebenezer Craft	Richard Champion, a schoolmaster from Boston, sold in 1739 for £100 “unto Ebenezer Craft, of Roxbury, a negro girl named Dina, about eleven years old, together with all her wearing apparell.” Dina passed away in 1803, at the age of 75. ⁴⁴
JEFFREY	Black	Unknown		Owned the covenant, Feb. 14, 1742. ⁴⁵
BRISTOL	Black	Unknown		Owned the covenant, Feb. 14, 1742. ⁴⁶
GUINEA	Black	Unknown		Owned the covenant, Feb. 14, 1742. ⁴⁷
PHILLIS	Black	Unknown		Owned the covenant, Jan. 23, 1743. ⁴⁸
GUINEA	Black	Enslaved	Paul Dudley	Admitted to church fellowship, May 1744. ⁴⁹
QUAM	Black	Enslaved	William Dudley	Dudley’s inventory, 1743: “A negro man named Quam ... £130.” ⁵⁰
PETER	Black	Enslaved	William Dudley	Dudley’s inventory, 1743: “A negro man named Peter ... £170.” ⁵¹
CAESAR	Black	Enslaved	William Dudley	Dudley’s inventory, 1743: “A negro boy named Caesar ... £160.” ⁵²
FLORA	Black	Enslaved	William Dudley	Dudley’s inventory, 1743: “An old negro woman, Flora ... £40.” ⁵³
PHILLIS	Black	Enslaved	Caleb Stedman	Owned the covenant & baptized, Mar. 20, 1748. ⁵⁴ Mother to a child unnamed in Stedman’s inventory. ⁵⁵
PHILLIS’S CHILD	Black	Enslaved	Caleb Stedman	Stedman’s inventory, Jan. 20, 1749): “A Negro Woman and Child ... £50.” ⁵⁶
“A NEGRO	Black	Enslaved	Caleb Stedman	Stedman’s inventory, Jan. 20, 1749: “A

MAN”				Negro Man ... £75.” ⁵⁷
SHARPER	Black	Enslaved	John Williams	Ran away from his enslaver, Aug. 29, 1749. ⁵⁸
FORTUNE	Black	Enslaved	Ebenezer Newell	Owled the covenant & baptized, Apr. 18, 1756. ⁵⁹ Guinea & Jonathan’s mother. ⁶⁰
GUINEA	Black	Enslaved	Ebenezer Newell	Baptized, Apr. 18, 1756. ⁶¹ Fortune’s daughter; Jonathan’s sister. ⁶²
JONATHAN	Black	Enslaved	Ebenezer Newell	Baptized, Sep. 5, 1756. ⁶³ Fortune’s son; Guinea’s brother. ⁶⁴
DINAH	Black	Enslaved	Ebenezer Craft	Owled the covenant & baptized, May 16, 1756. ⁶⁵
KETURAH	Black	Enslaved	Thomas Seaver	Owled the covenant & baptized, Sep. 12, 1756. ⁶⁶ Phebe & Susannah’s mother. ⁶⁷
PHEBE	Black	Enslaved	Thomas Seaver	Baptized, Sep. 12, 1756. ⁶⁸ Keturah’s daughter; Susannah’s sister. ⁶⁹ Seaver’s inventory: “Two Negro Garls @ £40 each.” ⁷⁰
SUSANNAH	Black	Enslaved	Thomas Seaver	Baptized, Sep. 12, 1756. ⁷¹ Keturah’s daughter; Phebe’s sister. ⁷² Seaver’s inventory: “Two Negro Garls @ £40 each.” ⁷³
PETER	Black	Unknown		Elizabeth’s husband; Simon’s father. ⁷⁴
ELIZABETH	Black	Unknown		Peter’s wife; Simon’s mother. ⁷⁵
SIMON	Black	Unknown		Baptized, Apr. 22, 1759; Peter & Elizabeth’s son. ⁷⁶
TOBIAS	Black	Enslaved	William Williams	Owled the covenant & baptized, Oct. 3, 1762. ⁷⁷
“A NEGRO MALE CHILD”	Black	Enslaved	John Greateon	“To be given away at Roxbury, A Negro Male Child of an excellent Breed,” Mar. 29, 1764. ⁷⁸
MOTHER OF “A NEGRO MALE CHILD”	Black	Enslaved	John Greateon	Greateon almost certainly enslaved the mother, and perhaps the father, if he owned her child.
ISHMAEL	Black	Enslaved	Joseph Ruggles	Owled the covenant, Oct. 7, 1764. ⁷⁹ Venus’s husband; Richard & Roxbury’s father. ⁸⁰
VENUS	Black	Enslaved	Joseph Ruggles	Owled the covenant & baptized, Oct. 7, 1764. ⁸¹ Ishmael’s wife; Richard & Roxbury’s mother. ⁸²
RICHARD	Black	Enslaved	Joseph Ruggles	Baptized, Oct. 7, 1764. ⁸³ Ishmael & Venus’s son; Roxbury’s brother. ⁸⁴
“A NEGRO GIRL ABOUT 17 YEARS OF AGE”	Black	Enslaved	Likely a First Church in Roxbury member	Advertised for sale Eleazer Williams of the First Church in Roxbury, “sold to settle an Estate to which she belongs, May 1, 1766.” ⁸⁵
ROXBURY	Black	Enslaved	Joseph Ruggles	Baptized, May 18, 1766. ⁸⁶ Ishmael & Venus’s son; Richard’s brother. ⁸⁷
PHILLIS / PHYLIS	Black	Enslaved	John Williams	Owled the covenant & baptized, Dec. 21, 1766. ⁸⁸

PHILLIS	Black	Unknown		Admitted to church fellowship, Apr. 3, 1768. ⁸⁹
BRISTOW	Black	Enslaved	Eleazor Williams & Thomas Williams	Williams's will, 1768: "I also Give to my Said Son Thomas my negro man Bristow and all my other Estate not herein before named." ⁹⁰
CATO	Black	Enslaved	Major Bayard	Baptized, Sep. 3, 1769. ⁹¹ London & Phillis's son. ⁹²
LONDON	Black	Enslaved	Major Bayard	Phillis's husband; Cato's father. ⁹³
PHILLIS	Black	Enslaved	Major Bayard	London's wife; Cato's mother. ⁹⁴
PRINCE	Black	Enslaved	William Bowdoin	Baptized, Dec. 10, 1769; Phillis's husband. ⁹⁵
PHILLIS	Black	Enslaved	William Bowdoin	Baptized, Dec. 10, 1769; Prince's wife. ⁹⁶
CUFFE	Black	Enslaved	Isaac Winslow	Sold by Winslow to an Edward Bardin, from whom Cuffe ran away in Dec. 1769. ⁹⁷
UNKNOWN		Enslaved	Joseph Richards	Roxbury Tax Valuation, 1771: "Servants for Life, between 14 and 45 Years of Age – 1." ⁹⁸
"A NEGRO MAN"		Enslaved	Joseph Williams	Williams's inventory, 1772: "A Negro Man ... £13-06-8." ⁹⁹
UNKNOWN		Enslaved	Robert Williams	Roxbury Tax Valuation, 1771: "Servants for Life, between 14 and 45 Years of Age – 1." ¹⁰⁰
JUBA	Black	Enslaved	William Bowdoin	Bowdoin's inventory, 1773: "An Old Negro Man Named Juba being a charge to the Estate was given to the Rev. Mr West." ¹⁰¹
CUFFE	Black	Enslaved	William Fulton	Baptized, Feb. 27, 1774. ¹⁰²
BOSTON	Black	Enslaved	Benjamin Williams	Sold by Benjamin Dolbeare, administrator of the estate of Nathaniel Loring, to Benjamin Williams, Jun. 1, 1774. ¹⁰³
BOSTON	Black	Enslaved	Nathaniel Ruggles	Ruggles's will, 1780: "And I give to my Negro Man Boston in Case he behaves well to the approbation of my Executors untill he is to be discharged by my agreement with him, a Cow to be delivered him when he is to be discharged." ¹⁰⁴

Note: "Owning the covenant" involved "attesting to a statement of faith" in God, and provided a path to church membership ("halfway" membership) without having "undergone a conversion and been admitted to the Lord's Supper" (full membership).¹⁰⁵

¹ FCR-RB (seq. 229); RLCR 168.

² Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 92.

³ FCR-RB (seq. 229); RLCR 168.

⁴ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 92.

⁵ Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 77–78; Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "Playing John White: John Wompas and Racial Identity in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World," in *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603–1832* (Joshua D. Bellin & Laura L. Mielke, eds.) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 197.

⁶ See the part of the section of this Report entitled "Family Separation" that discusses the case of Sylvanus Warro.

⁷ FCR-RB (seq. 250); RLCR 182.

⁸ See section of this Report entitled “Native War Captives” and corresponding endnotes.

⁹ FCR-RB (seq. 250); RLCR 184.

¹⁰ See section of this Report entitled “Native War Captives” and corresponding endnotes.

¹¹ See the part of the section of this Report entitled “Resistance” that discusses the case of Maria.

¹² FCR-RB (seq. 258); RLCR 201; Roxbury Records, Births, Marriages, Deaths, 1630–1785, p. 65 ([im. 34](#)), Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988, [Ancestry.com](#); *Vital Records of Roxbury, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849*, Volume 2: Marriages and Deaths (Salem: Essex Institute, 1926), 680.

¹³ Gloria McCahon Whiting, “Endearing Ties: Black Family Life in Early New England,” (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2016), ch. 2.

¹⁴ Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

¹⁵ Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

¹⁶ Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

¹⁷ Gravestone A62. Benjamin Bedunah passed away on August 25, 1771. Historic Burial Grounds Initiative, Boston, <https://www.cityofboston.gov/Parks/HBGI/search.asp> and <https://www.cityofboston.gov/Parks/HBGI/search.asp>.

¹⁸ Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

¹⁹ FCR-RB (Joseph Bedunah, Nov. 11, 1748) (seq. 263).

²⁰ Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

²¹ Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

²² Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

²³ FCR-RB (Ebenezer Bedunah, Jul. 28, 1745) (seq. 263).

²⁴ Whiting, “Endearing Ties,” 165–66.

²⁵ FCR-RB (Mary Bedunah, in or shortly before Sep. 1750) (seq. 264).

²⁶ “Letters from Josiah Addington and Paul Dudley to the Board, enclosing documents concerning privateers and illegal trade,” The National Archives, UK, CO 5/864, doc. 150–151, pp. 272–74.

²⁷ FCR-RB (seq. 260); RCCR 143.

²⁷ FCR-RB 88 (seq. 115), 107 (seq. 136); TCR 112, 159.

²⁸ FCR-RB (seq. 260); RLCR 143.

²⁹ FCR-RB (seq. 260); RLCR 143.

³⁰ FCR-RB (seq. 261); RLCR 144.

³¹ *Boston Record of the Commissioners*, Vol. 11: Records of Boston Selectmen, 1701–1715 (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, 1884), 204–205.

³² Will of Rebecca Dudley (1722), SCPR #4653 ([4643:4](#)), Massachusetts Archives.

³³ Will of Rebecca Dudley (1722), SCPR #4653 ([4653:4](#)), Massachusetts Archives.

³⁴ *New-England Weekly Journal* (Boston, MA) (Oct. 21, 1735), 2.

³⁵ Francis S. Drake, *The Town of Roxbury* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1905), 342–343. After Craft made it clear that he wanted to return Flora to Dorr, the latter wrote him the following on Jan. 6, 1736: “Sir, — I am sorry you did not Lett me see you yesterday. I perseve you still meet with troble with the negro which I am exceeding sorry to hear, as I told you at your house I intended you no harm but good. I did bye you as I would be done by, & I still intend to do by you as I would be done by if I were in your case but, however you must think as to the sale of the negro it is — by means of selling her to you for it is all over town that youre discurege and wold give ten pound to have me take her againe I apprehend I had better given you twenty pounds, than ever you had been consarned with her. I would not a thanked any body to have given me £100 for her that morning before you carried her away, but however, seeing it is as it is, we must do as well as we can. I wold have you consult with the Justes and consider my case allso and do by me allso as you wold be done by. If I had your money as the Justeses bond I should be under the same consarn that I am now. Pray Lett me see you if you please and if we can accommodate the matter to both our satisfaction I shall be very free in the matter that is if I hear no Reflecsions, for I do declare I was sincere in the whole matter.” Drake, *Town of Roxbury*, 323–343.

³⁶ *Boston Record of the Commissioners*, vol. 28, 227.

³⁷ Robert J. Dunkle & Ann S. Lainhart (eds.), *The Records of the Churches in Boston* (CD-ROM) (Boston: NEHGS, 2002), Second Church of Boston Records.

³⁸ Dunkle & Lainhart (eds.), *Records of the Churches in Boston*, Second Church in Boston Records. *Boston Record of the Commissioners*, vol. 28, 227.

-
- ³⁹ Dunkle & Lainhart (eds.), *Records of the Churches of Boston*, Second Church of Boston Records; *Boston Record of the Commissioners*, Vol. 28: Boston Marriages from 1700 to 1751 (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1898), 227.
- ⁴⁰ Dunkle & Lainhart (eds.), *Records of the Churches of Boston*, Second Church of Boston Records.
- ⁴¹ Dunkle & Lainhart (eds.), *Records of the Churches of Boston*, Second Church of Boston Records; *Boston Record of the Commissioners*, Vol. 28, 227.
- ⁴² Dunkle & Lainhart (eds.), *Records of the Churches of Boston*, Second Church of Boston Records.
- ⁴³ Dunkle & Lainhart (eds.), *Records of the Churches of Boston*, Second Church of Boston Records; *Boston Record of the Commissioners*, Vol. 28, 227.
- ⁴⁴ The quote is from a 1739 bill of sale. Drake writes of Dina, “Dina proved a good investment, and for sixty years rendered faithful service, dying in 1803 at the age of seventy-five.” Drake, *Town of Roxbury*, 342.
- ⁴⁵ FCR-RB (seq. 263); RLCR 146.
- ⁴⁶ FCR-RB (seq. 263); RLCR 146.
- ⁴⁷ FCR-RB (seq. 263); RLCR 146.
- ⁴⁸ FCR-RB (seq. 263); RLCR 146.
- ⁴⁹ FCR-RB (seq. 102); RLCR 108.
- ⁵⁰ Inventory of William Dudley (1743), reprinted in Dean Dudley, *History of the Dudley Family*, (Wakefield, MA: 1886), 537–540.
- ⁵¹ Inventory of William Dudley (1743), reprinted in *History of the Dudley Family*, 537–540.
- ⁵² Inventory of William Dudley (1743), reprinted in *History of the Dudley Family*, 537–540.
- ⁵³ Inventory of William Dudley (1743), reprinted in *History of the Dudley Family*, 537–540.
- ⁵⁴ FCR-RB (seq. 263); RLCR 146.
- ⁵⁵ Inventory of Caleb Stedman (Jan. 20, 1749), SCPR #9125 ([9125:14](#)), Massachusetts Archives.
- ⁵⁶ Inventory of Caleb Stedman (Jan. 20, 1749), SCPR #9125 ([9125:14](#)), Massachusetts Archives.
- ⁵⁷ Inventory of Caleb Stedman (Jan. 20, 1749), SCPR #9125 ([9125:15](#)), Massachusetts Archives.
- ⁵⁸ *Boston News-Letter* (Aug. 31, 1749), 2.
- ⁵⁹ [FCR-RB 87 \(seq. 114\)](#), 100 (seq. 129); RLCR 112, 150.
- ⁶⁰ FCR-RB 100 (seq. 129), 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 112, 150.
- ⁶¹ FCR-RB 100 (seq. 129); RLCR 150.
- ⁶² FCR-RB 100 (seq. 129), 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁶³ FCR-RB 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁶⁴ FCR-RB 100 (seq. 129), 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁶⁵ FCR-RB 87 (seq. 114), 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 112, 150.
- ⁶⁶ FCR-RB 87 (seq. 114), 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 112, 150.
- ⁶⁷ FCR-RB 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁶⁸ FCR-RB 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁶⁹ FCR-RB 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁷⁰ Inventory of Thomas Seaver, SCPR #13552 ([13552:12](#)), Massachusetts Archives.
- ⁷¹ FCR-RB 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁷² FCR-RB 101 (seq. 130); RLCR 150.
- ⁷³ Inventory of Thomas Seaver, SCPR #13552 ([13552:12](#)), Massachusetts Archives.
- ⁷⁴ FCR-RB 103 (seq. 132); RLCR 153.
- ⁷⁵ FCR-RB 103 (seq. 132); RLCR 153.
- ⁷⁶ FCR-RB 103 (seq. 132); RLCR 153.
- ⁷⁷ FCR-RB 88 (seq. 115), 90 (seq. 117), 106 (seq. 135); RLCR 112, 157.
- ⁷⁸ *Boston News-Letter* (Mar. 29, 1764), 3; see also *Boston Post-Boy* (Jun. 18, 1764), 3.
- ⁷⁹ FCR-RB 88 (seq. 115), 107 (seq. 136); RLCR 112, 159.
- ⁸⁰ FCR-RB 107 (seq. 136), 109 (seq. 138); RLCR 159, 160.
- ⁸¹ FCR-RB 88 (seq. 115), 107 (seq. 136); RLCR 112, 159.
- ⁸² FCR-RB 107 (seq. 136), 109 (seq. 138); RLCR 159, 160.
- ⁸³ FCR-RB 107 (seq. 136); RLCR 159.
- ⁸⁴ FCR-RB 107 (seq. 136), 109 (seq. 138); RLCR 159, 160.
- ⁸⁵ *Boston News-Letter* (May 1, 1766), 3.
- ⁸⁶ FCR-RB 109 (seq. 138); RLCR 160.
- ⁸⁷ FCR-RB 109 (seq. 138), 107 (seq. 136); RLCR 160, 159.
- ⁸⁸ FCR-RB 88 (seq. 115), 109 (seq. 138); RLCR 113, 161.
- ⁸⁹ FCR-RB (seq. 107); RLCR 108.

⁹⁰ Will of Eleazor Williams (1768), SCPR #14346 ([14346:5](#)), Massachusetts Archives.

⁹¹ FCR-RB 139 (seq. 158); RLCR 163.

⁹² FCR-RB 139 (seq. 158); RLCR 163.

⁹³ FCR-RB 139 (seq. 158); RLCR 163.

⁹⁴ FCR-RB 139 (seq. 158); RLCR 163.

⁹⁵ FCR-RB 140 (seq. 159); RLCR 164.

⁹⁶ FCR-RB 140 (seq. 159); RLCR 164.

⁹⁷ *Boston News-Letter* (Dec. 28, 1769), 1.

⁹⁸ Roxbury Tax Valuation, vol. 134, p. 41, Massachusetts Archives, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9Y5-3J4M?i=251&cat=1055547>.

⁹⁹ Inventory of Joseph Williams (1772), SCPR #1516 ([15156:6](#)), Massachusetts Archives.

¹⁰⁰ Roxbury Tax Valuation, vol. 134, p. 41, Massachusetts Archives, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9Y5-3J4M?i=252&cat=1055547>.

¹⁰¹ Inventory of William Bowdoin (1773), SCPR #15317 ([15317:27](#)), Massachusetts Archives.

¹⁰² FCR-RB 143 (seq. 162); RLCR 168.

¹⁰³ Bill of sale signed by Benjamin Dolbeare as administrator of the estate of Nathaniel Loring to Benjamin Williams regarding Boston (an enslaved person), 1 June 1774. Dolbeare Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=700. Thanks to Ena Fox and Byron Rushing for this reference.

¹⁰⁴ Will of Nathaniel Ruggles (Jan. 20, 1780), SCPR #17134, Massachusetts Archives.

¹⁰⁵ Richard J. Boles, *Dividing the Faith: The Rise of Segregated Churches in the Early American North* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 6, 25–26; Katherine Gerbner, “Beyond the ‘Halfway Covenant’: Church Membership, Extended Baptism, and Outreach in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1656–1667,” *New England Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 2 (Jun. 2012), 284–286.

This report joins several others on churches’ deep entanglement with slavery in and around Boston.² It should be emphasized that the report is merely an introduction to the history of slavery at the First Church in Roxbury. The timeframe of study is also limited, ending in 1775. There is still more work to be done, more stories to be told.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SLAVERY IN NEW ENGLAND

Most Americans think of slavery in the United States as an exclusively Southern phenomenon. The truth is that slavery also thrived in the North and was essential to the development of New England.³ Owning human beings—African-descended and Native people—was commonplace in the region. The slave economy was not only connected to the rich but also to middling settlers such as craftsmen, sailors, and farmwives. Nor was slavery limited to port cities or large towns: it seeped into the New England interior.⁴ Massachusetts was the first British North American colony to legalize slavery by statute; in the following years, other northern colonies would do the same.⁵

Many enslaved people worked on farms, raising vegetables, forage crops, fruits, horses, cattle, and sheep. Most farms were relatively small, save for those in southern Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut. But enslaved New Englanders could be found working in every occupation, trade, and industry. They engaged in forestry, shipbuilding, fishing, whaling, privateering, manufacturing, printing, construction, lumbering, candlemaking, iron forging, ropemaking, rum distilling, spinning, sailing (including on slave ships), sailmaking; they were

house servants, cooks, laundresses, maids, nurses, coachmen, attendants, butlers, valets, blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, bakers, tailors, sawyers, managers; they worked in homes, tanneries, cooperage plants, factories, ships, shipyards, and every other place of employment in the region. They were often skilled in several different trades at once, a fact enslavers' touted when selling their human property.⁶ When James Jarvis, "Innholder of Roxbury," resolved to sell a young Black woman—or as he put it, in the crude language of an enslaver hoping to receive top dollar for his human property—"A Very likely young Negro Wench," he boasted that she could "Knit, Card, Spin, make Butter and Cheese, and do any sort of Household Work."⁷

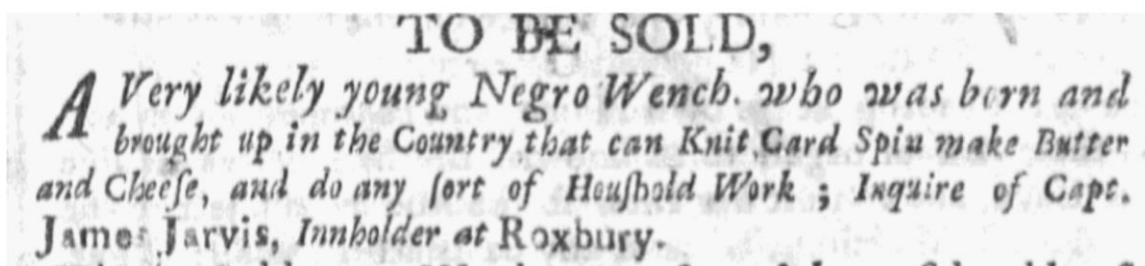


Fig. 1: *Boston News-Letter* (Mar. 1, 1739).

Trade with the slave societies of the West Indies formed the foundation of colonial New England's economy.⁸ Ships built in New England, crewed by New England men, carried a wide array of goods—enslaved people, fish, livestock, and timber, to name just a few—to provision sugar plantations in the West Indies. These human and non-human commodities were traded for slave-produced goods such as sugar, molasses, and rum, and then re-exported throughout the Atlantic world (some goods were consumed locally). New England distilleries turned molasses into rum, which, being a major currency of the transatlantic slave trade, was exchanged in West Africa for human beings. Most of these Africans would be sold in the West Indies (others were sold in New England and elsewhere in the Americas). Their forced labor would produce the molasses which New Englanders would turn to rum to then purchase more slaves from West Africa, in a constant exchange of human and other commodities between the mainland colonies, West Africa, and the West Indies.⁹ As Wendy Warren has put it, New England "in many ways depended on plantation slavery—those plantations were simply offshore."¹⁰

Massachusetts was the leading British North American slave-trading colony until approximately 1700, when another New England colony, Rhode Island, overtook them in slave-trading dominance.¹¹ As early as 1644, Massachusetts merchants began outfitting ships specifically to trade rum and other goods for enslaved people in West Africa and transporting them to the West Indies. New Englanders of all occupations, not only wealthy merchants, invested in the transatlantic trade in human flesh.¹² Nor was New Englanders'

slave-trading limited to Africans. Indeed, mass enslavement of Indians in the region began only a few years after the founding of Massachusetts Bay, during the Pequot War (1636–38), though the British began enslaving Natives in the region over three decades earlier. In the seventeenth-century, British colonists sold, at minimum, hundreds of Indians into slavery overseas—primarily to the Caribbean, and some to the Azores, Spain and Tangier in North Africa.¹³

PEOPLE OF COLOR IN THE FIRST CHURCH IN ROXBURY RECORDS

Unlike whites, people of color appeared in First Church in Roxbury records alongside a notation of their race. This practice, which reinforced the “otherness” of Black and Indigenous people—and their Christianity—was universal among churches in colonial New England.¹⁴ When Nan—enslaved by First Church’s inaugural pastor, Thomas Weld—passed away in 1646, the church simply noted that “Nan, Mr Weld’s captive Indian died, who also was hopefull.”¹⁵ The church failed to dignify another deceased Indian (d. 1678) with a name: he was only referred to as “an Indian boy of Holbrook’s.”¹⁶ Phillis’s baptism in 1744 was recorded as “Phillis, a negro baptized,” while the baptism records of white congregants Abraham Morgan (bp. 1648) and Abigail Williams (bp. 1755) included their first and last names without any racial marker.¹⁷

Often, people of color’s status (i.e., free or enslaved) was specified in First Church records, and if they were enslaved, so was their enslaver’s name. The word “slave,” however, does not appear in the church records: First Church congregants (and white New Englanders more generally) employed euphemisms such as “servant” to delineate a human being’s status as chattel. Guinea, for instance, was described as “a negro serv[an]t maid to Judge [Paul] Dudley”; Tobias, as “a negro man belonging to William Williams.”¹⁸ Sometimes, enslaved people’s family members were noted—though only if their enslaver owned them too. When First Church baptized a child named Richard, it noted that he was “the son of Ishmael & Venus[,] negro servants to Jos. Ruggles.”¹⁹ Keturah and her daughters Phebe and Susannah, all baptized on the same day, were similarly characterized: Keturah as “a negro woman belonging to Tho. Seaver”; Phebe and Susannah, listed directly below her, each as “the daughter to s[ai]d Keturah.”²⁰

More African-descended than Indigenous people affiliated with the First Church in Roxbury, a trend in most New England churches. In the eighteenth century, no Indians appear in the First Church records, though this does not mean that Indians did not attend First Church in these years.²¹

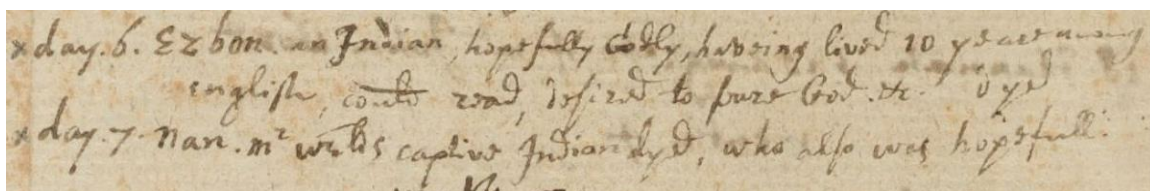


Fig. 2a: "Ezbon, an Indian, hopefully Godly, having lived 10 years among [the] English, could read, [and] desired to know God &c. dyed." "Nan, Mr Weld's captive Indian dyed, who also was hopefull." Register of Deaths. FCR-RB (seq. 229).

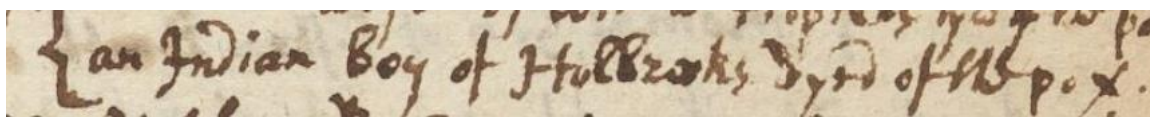


Fig. 2b: "an Indian Boy of Holbrooks dyed of the pox." Register of Deaths. FCR-RB (seq. 250).

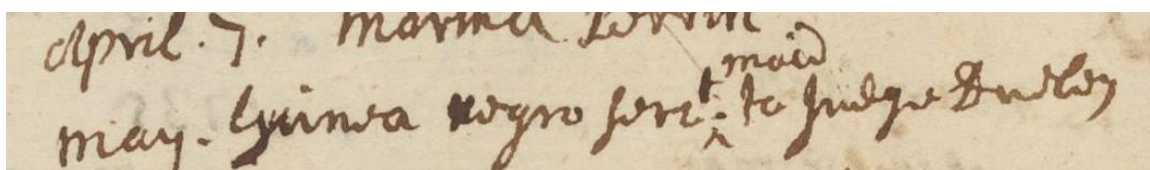


Fig. 2c: "Guinea negro serv[an]t maid to Judge Dudley." Register of Baptisms. FCR-RB (seq. 102).

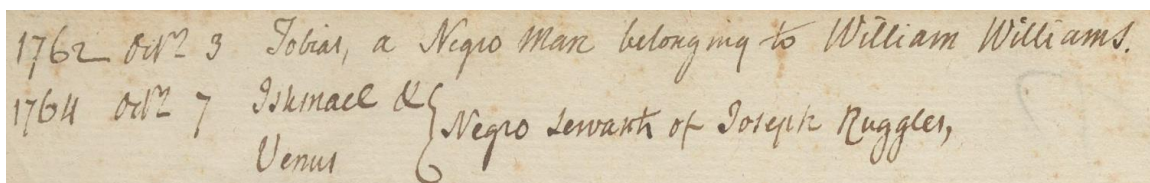


Fig. 2d: "Tobias, a Negro Man belonging to William Williams." "Ishmael, & Venus, Negro servants of Joseph Ruggles." Register of Baptisms. FCR-RB (seq. 115).

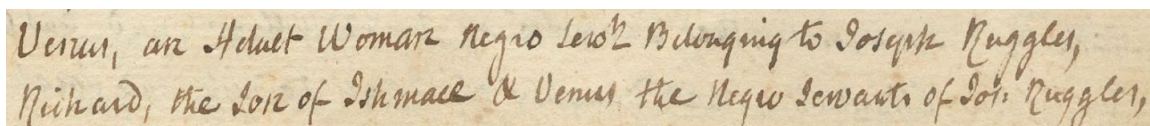


Fig. 2e: "Venus, an Adult Woman Negro serv[an]t Belonging to Joseph Ruggles." "Richard, the Son of Ishmael & Venus the Negro Servants of Jos. Ruggles." Register of Baptisms. FCR-RB (seq. 136).

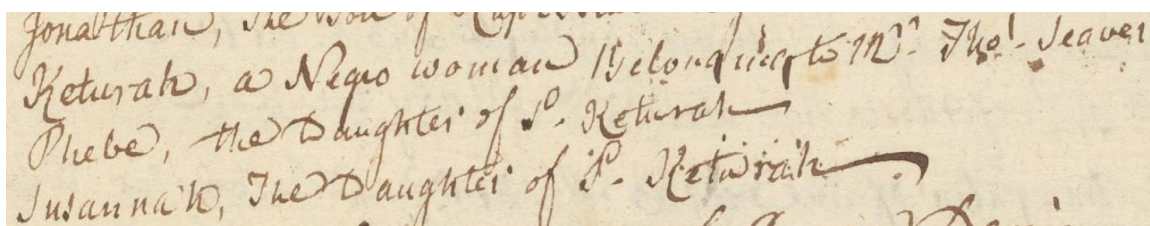


Fig. 2f: "Keturah, a Negro woman Belonging to Mr. Thos. Seaver." "Phebe, the Daughter of s[ai]d Keturah." "Susannah, The Daughter of s[ai]d Keturah." Register of Baptisms. FCR-RB (seq. 130).

At the First Church in Roxbury, there was one exception to the practice of recording the race of nonwhite people: the Bedunah family, whom the historian Gloria Whiting has written about at length.²² Thomas Bedunah was a free Black man who married and raised a family with a white woman named Lydia Craft in 1703. As marriages could be performed by

either pastors or Justices of the Peace, the couple had multiple options in their hometown of Roxbury: they could approach First Church Pastor Nehemiah Walter or one of the local Justices of the Peace, Paul Dudley or James Bailey. Instead, in what had been a cold, snowy October, they trudged to Boston, deciding to perform their nuptials at the residence of Justice of the Peace Samuel Sewall. In some ways, Sewall was unusual among his fellow white New Englanders: a few years prior, he had expressed antislavery sentiments. In others—like the anti-Black views he simultaneously expressed—he was much more conventional. Sewall had previously wed enslaved Black couples, and perhaps this was why Thomas and Lydia strategically chose to approach him instead of his Roxbury counterparts.²³

While Black and white people had long engaged in sexual and romantic relationships—including at First Church, as we will see with an enslaved Black man named Sylvanus Warro and a white woman named Elizabeth Parker—according to the available records, Thomas and Lydia appear to be the first interracial couple in Massachusetts to request a formal marriage.²⁴ In 1703 no legal prohibition existed against interracial marriage in Massachusetts, though two years after the Bedunahs' marriage—which occurred around the same time as an influx of enslaved Africans arrived in and around Boston—the colonial legislature passed “An Act for the Better Preventing of a Spurious and Mixt Issue” that, among other things, banned interracial marriages while securing the right of enslaved people to marry someone “of the same nation.”²⁵ (As we will see in the case of an enslaved Black woman at First Church named Keturah and her husband, enslavers did not necessarily respect this right.) The new law also added punishments for interracial fornication, with penalties differing depending on the race and gender of the offenders. In the case of a Black man and white woman, both would be “severely whip’d,” and the man would be “sold out of the province.” If the man was white and the woman was Black, the man would be “severely whip’d” and fined five pounds, and the woman would “be sold, and be sent out of the province.” As their marriage was the only recorded interracial marriage in the colony before the law was passed, it is quite probable that colonial authorities enacted the new law, at least in part, in response to Thomas and Lydia’s union.²⁶

Judge Sewall wed the couple, but in an unusual decision, chose not to record Thomas Bedunah’s race. Around the same time, someone, perhaps Sewall or a First Church member, noticed that Lydia became pregnant before she wed; the unknown person informed colonial authorities, who had criminalized sex before marriage. Unlike Sewall, the Suffolk County court that adjudicated the fornication charge in 1704 noted that Thomas was Black while Lydia was white. As the case was adjudicated before the passage of the 1705 “Act for the Better Preventing of a Spurious and Mixt Issue,” the court sentenced them to the same penalty they would give offenders of the same race.²⁷

Thomas Bedunah was likely born in West Africa, stolen from his home and family, and survived the treacherous passage to the Americas before somehow managing to regain his freedom. One can surmise his origins from his name: no white colonist in Massachusetts was named Bedunah, and Badu was an Akan name sometimes given to the tenth-born son of a family. As Whiting notes, “*Bedunah* has a strong phonetic progenitor in a common West African given name: Badu or Beduwa.”²⁸ The Akan are from present-day Ghana, what Europeans called the Gold Coast after its major export. By the turn of the eighteenth century, enslaved people overtook gold as the region’s major export (the neighboring region, present-day Togo, Benin, and Nigeria, or Bight of Benin, was already called the Slave Coast for *its* major export).²⁹

Thomas and Lydia Bedunah had seven children together.³⁰ While Thomas does not appear in First Church records, some of his multiracial children—or, as colonial authorities referred to them, his “Spurious and Mixt Issue”—do, as they were, like their mother, baptized at the Roxbury church.³¹ Like Sewall’s recording of their father’s marriage, First Church chose not to document the races of Thomas and Lydia’s nonwhite children who, like their father, would go on to marry white partners.³²

At least one of the Bedunah children, Benjamin, rests in Roxbury’s Eliot burial ground; his gravestone reads, “In Memory of Benjⁿ Bedunah who died y^e 25^d of August, AD 1771.”³³ The resting places of the other Bedunahs and those of most Black people who died in colonial New England remain unknown. The graves of most colonial-era Black people, especially those who were enslaved, are unmarked. Some that had gravestones that are now lost. However, historian Caitlin Galante-DeAngelis Hopkins notes that “Most of New England’s colonial-era graveyards hold the bones of slaves,” as “most New England municipalities maintained unified burying places that segregated black and white graves within a shared boundary.” Surely, then, many other people of African descent rest in Eliot Burial Ground.³⁴

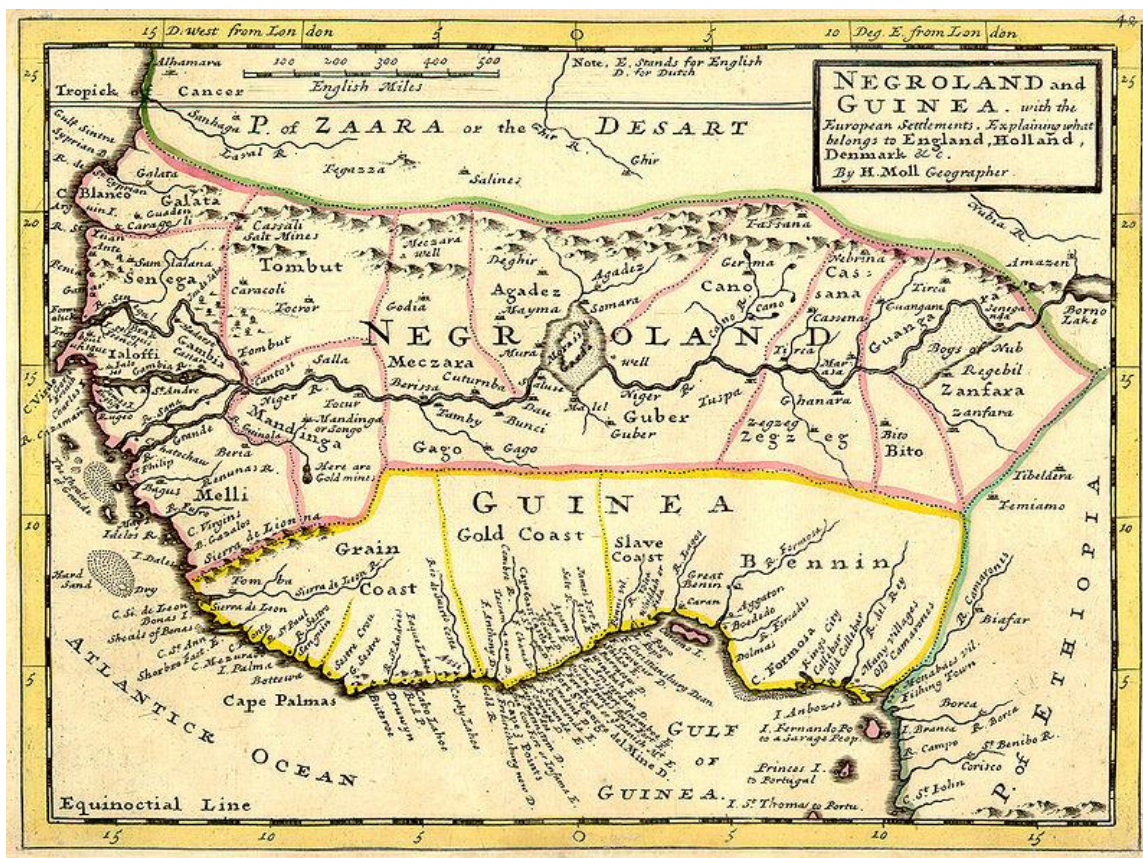


Fig. 3: The Gold Coast & Slave Coast. Negroland and Guinea with the European settlements, explaining what belongs to England, Holland, Denmark, &c. Herman Moll (1729). Wikimedia Commons. University of Florida, George A. Smathers Libraries.

July. 28. Ebenezar Bodoono
Ebenezar Goro

Fig. 4a: "Ebenezar Bodoono" (Ebenezer Bedunah). Register of Baptisms. FCR-RB (seq. 263).

Nov. 11. Joseph Bodoono

Fig. 4b: "Joseph Bodoono" (Joseph Bedunah). Register of Baptisms. FCR-RB (seq. 263).

*Mary Daughter of Beduna —
all baptized by ye Revd Mr. Walter
at his own House during his Confinement
before his Death*

Fig. 4c: “Mary, Daughter of Beduna [Thomas and Lydia Bedunah] — all baptized by ye Revd Mr. Walter at his own House during his Confinement before his Death.” FCR-RB (seq. 264).



Fig. 5a: Eliot Burial Ground, Roxbury, MA. Benjamin Bedunah (d. Aug. 25, 1771) rests under gravestone A62. Historic Burial Grounds Initiative, Boston.

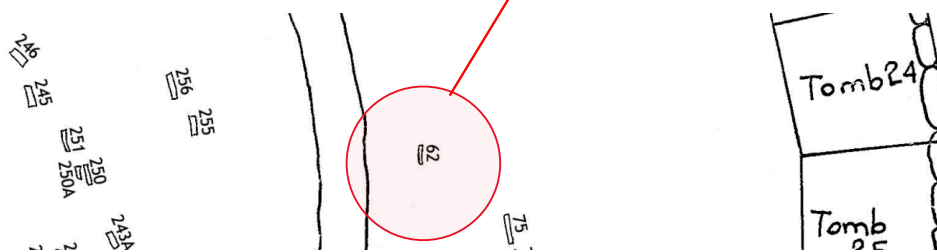


Fig. 5b: Resting place of Benjamin Bedunah, Eliot Burial Ground.



Fig. 5c: Benjamin Bedunah's gravestone (A62), Eliot Burial Ground, Roxbury, MA. "In Memory of Benjⁿ Bedunah who died y^e 25^d of August, AD 1771." Photo taken by Aabid Allibhai.

* * *

No enslaved person at First Church obtained their freedom through baptism. According to the Roxbury congregation, baptism did not free the enslaved—a fairly uniform view among white Christians in the colonial period.³⁵ As one reverend explained in a 1729 Rhode Island sermon, "Christianity maketh no alteration in civil rights."³⁶ What is more, First Church formally acknowledged and endorsed slavery by listing enslaved people by reference to their enslaver, as we have seen with Richard and his parents (Richard, "the son of Ishmael & Venus negro servants to Jos. Ruggles").³⁷ "Colonial churches," summarizes historian Richard Boles, "taught that slaves should obey masters just as children should obey parents and subjects should submit to the king."³⁸

At least one First Church pastor—Nan's enslaver, Thomas Weld—owned property in another's flesh.³⁹ Weld, however, was far from alone. New England clergy commonly enslaved human beings. Cotton Mather enslaved a number of people, including an African named Onesimus who introduced the medical practice of inoculation to New England.⁴⁰ The famed Reverend Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, Massachusetts, himself ventured to Newport, Rhode Island in 1731 to purchase a fourteen-year-old Black girl named Venus, the first of several human beings the man would enslave.⁴¹ Reverend William Brattle of Cambridge enslaved multiple people, including Cicely, who rests in the Old Cambridge Burial Ground.⁴² Ebenezer Thayer, the inaugural pastor of Roxbury's second church founded in 1712 (First Church in West Roxbury), enslaved and sold at least one person, a

Black man named Caesar, who subsequently absconded from his future owner in Boston.⁴³

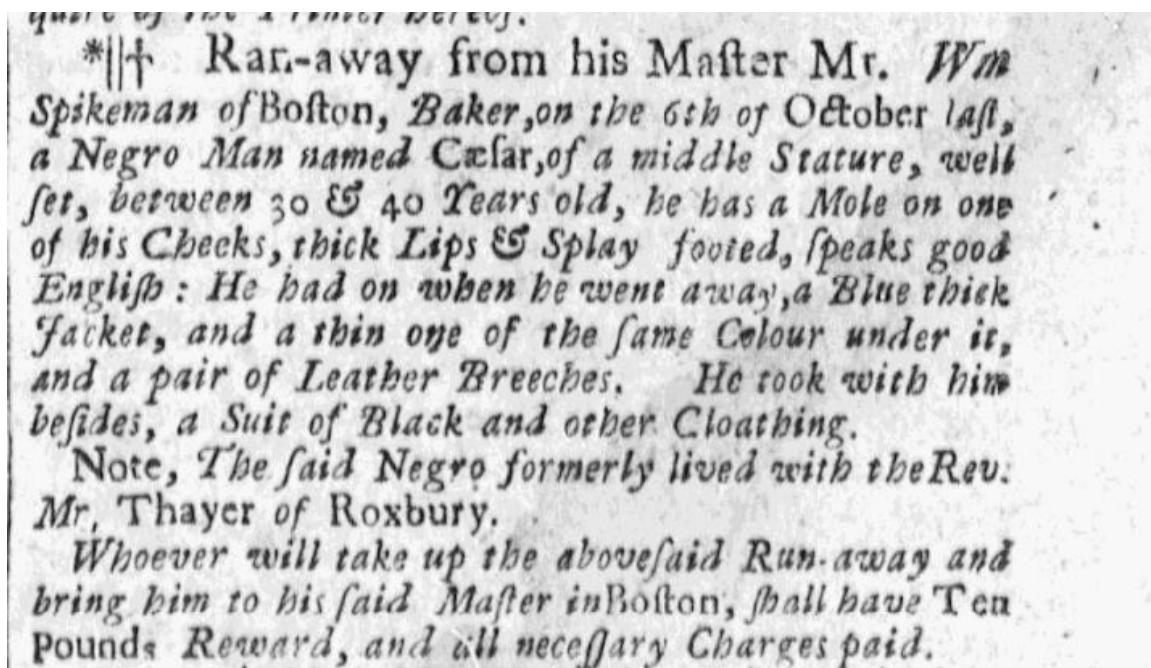


Fig. 6: *Boston News-Letter* (Dec. 13, 1733).

The most well-known enslavers at the First Church in Roxbury were the Dudleys, researched in depth by Wayne Tucker of the *Eleven Names Project*. William Dudley (son of Governor Joseph Dudley and Rebecca Tyng Dudley) enslaved at least four people, all of whom were Black: two men, Quam and Peter; a boy named Caesar, and “An old negro woman” named Flora. Quam, Peter, Caesar, and Flora do not appear in the First Church in Roxbury records, however, because while William was baptized at First Church, he spent much of his adult life at a neighboring church, the First Church in West Roxbury.⁴⁴

Not to be outdone by his younger brother, Paul enslaved at least four Africans. Paul purchased a Black boy named Joachim or Cuffee—whom he described as “a Boy of fourteen years of Age (for the Negroe was no more)” —at an auction in Boston in 1705 in which at least two Black people were sold as slaves.⁴⁵ In 1745 a Black woman named Guinea was admitted to First Church membership (this may be the same Guinea that was baptized in 1742).⁴⁶ Paul also enslaved Brill and Jimmy, both of whom he received from his mother Rebecca Tyng Dudley when she died. Brill was a coachman; we do not know much about Jimmy.⁴⁷

The governor of Massachusetts Bay, Joseph Dudley (William and Paul’s father), enslaved at least two African-descended people, Brill and Jimmy (presumably, Brill and Jimmy were part of the unnamed “servants” Joseph bequeathed to his wife Rebecca upon his death),⁴⁸ and two Indigenous people, Peter and “An Indian girl of Mr Dudly, neer well of o pox, fell a

bleeding & bled to death.”⁴⁹ Peter and the unnamed Native girl were taken captive in King Philip’s War and enslaved by Dudley.⁵⁰

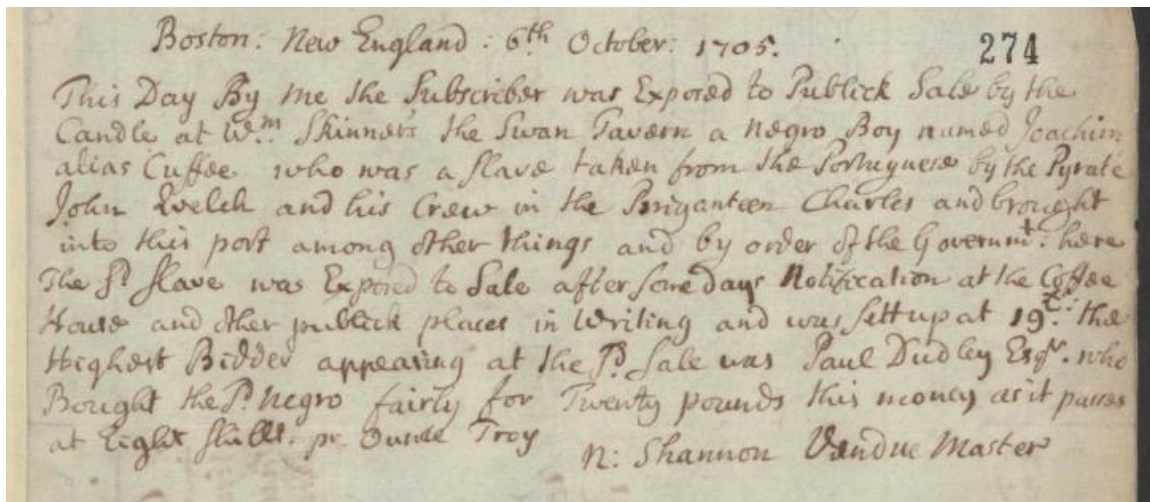


Fig. 7: Boston, New England 6th October 1705. “This Day By me the Subscriber was Exposed to Publick Sale by the Candle at Wm. Skinner’s the Swan Tavern, a Negro Boy named Joachim alias Cuffee who was a Slave taken from the Portuguese by the Pyrate John Quelch and his Crew and brought into this port among other things and by order of the Government. [H]ere The S[a]id Slave was Exposed to Sale after Some days Notification at the Coffee House and other publick places in Writing and was Sett up at 19th: the Highest Bidder appearing at the S[a]id Sale was Paul Dudley Esq. who Bought the S[a]id Negro fairly for Twenty pounds this money as it passes at Eight Shill[ings] p[e]r Ounce Troy.” CO 5/864, p. 274, UK National Archives.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

As was the case at all white-run churches in colonial New England, Black and Native parishioners at the First Church in Roxbury faced racial discrimination. There is no evidence in the First Church records of people of color voting in church affairs or holding leadership positions, and as a general rule, churches prohibited Black and Native congregants from such privileges. Nevertheless, people of color managed to become church members and could participate in most religious rituals. Most members of color were admitted as “halfway members” by “owning the covenant, attesting to a statement of faith”; few were admitted to full membership, which usually involved professing “their personal experience of God’s work of salvation in their life” to church members, who then decided on the parishioner’s admission.⁵¹ At First Church, only two Black people were admitted to full membership: Guinea (1744), enslaved by Paul Dudley, and Phillis (1768), whose status First Church records don’t specify.⁵² No Indians were welcomed as full members, nor were they admitted to the more limited “halfway” membership. Nor did First Church baptize any Indians.⁵³

However, many Natives must have attended First Church from time to time, especially in the seventeenth century. Some Natives were enslaved by the church’s parishioners.⁵⁴ Others

were sent to live with First Church members and be educated at Roxbury Grammar School.⁵⁵ First Church minister John Eliot's missionary efforts would bring still others, including several Christian Indians at the Natick "praying town" he founded in 1651. Eliot's primary goal for these "praying towns"—enclaves on which "Praying Indians" would live and adopt English culture and religion, isolated from other Indian and English communities—was to form Indian congregations, which could be achieved only if church elders approved aspiring Indian congregants' public confessions. Following several days of confession in 1652, Eliot failed to obtain approval to certify the Indian congregation at Natick, the first of fourteen praying towns the minister would help found. He finally reached an agreement with Massachusetts church elders seven long years later. "It was the inclination of the Spirit of the Saints, both Magistrates, Elders, and others, that (at le[a]st some of the principal of them [Indians at Natick]) should (for a season) be seasoned in Church-fellowship, in communion with our *English* Churches, before they should be Churches among them selves." When asked which church they should join, "All with one mouth said, that *Roxbury* Church was called of God to be first in that service of Christ to receive the praying *Indians*." Eliot and church elders persuaded the Roxbury congregation to agree to the arrangement, and First Church voted to receive the Indians. Another confession day was held, after which eight Indians were accepted to have fellowship with the Roxbury congregation.⁵⁶

Puritan missionaries believed that "civilization" was necessary for Indians to become Christians. As John Eliot himself stated, Indians must "have visible civility before they can rightly enjoy visible sanctities in ecclesiastical communion."⁵⁷ This was part of the rationale for establishing praying towns. But even after adopting the Christian religion and aspects of European culture, they would not be equals. "The praying Indians," notes one historian, "were relegated to a lower caste, yet expected to emulate white behavior." They would stand alone, seen as foreign and suspicious by both other Indians and colonists. Unlike whites, Indians had to "reject their ethnic and cultural identity before converting." Moreover, disease, warfare, and other harms brought upon by European settlers severely weakened most of the Indian polities that responded to Puritan missionaries; many, that is, were already under some political authority of the British. Historian Neal Salisbury concludes that "The Indians who responded to the missionaries, then, were not those who freely chose 'civilization' over traditional ways, for those ways were already disappearing under the impact of the English invasion."⁵⁸ Eliot's naïve insistence that Natives renounce their own culture and identity led him to believe that colonizing Indians was simply a step toward their "civilization." However, Eliot's "civilizing" mission furthered settlers' colonization efforts by undermining Indians' cultural and political autonomy.⁵⁹

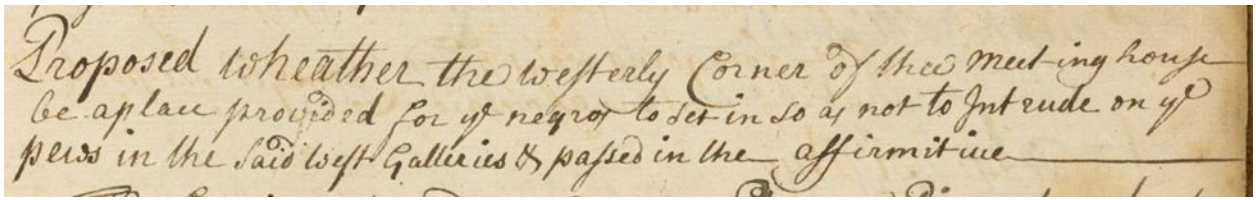


Fig. 8: "Proposed wheather the westerly corner of thee meeting house be a place provided for ye negros to sit in so as not to Intrude on ye pews in the said west Galleries & passed in the affirmative." FCR-AR, 31 (seq. 41) ([Aug. 31, 1741](#)).

The First Church in Roxbury (again, like all predominantly white churches in colonial New England) was interracial but segregated.⁶⁰ Whites relegated people of color to a particular section of the church—usually segregated seating in the balconies or the back of the main floor during church services. On August 31, 1741, First Church parishioners "Proposed wheather the westerly corner of the meeting house be a place provided for ye negros to set in so as not to Intrude on ye pews in the said west Galleries." The vote "passed in the affirmative."⁶¹ Six decades later, in its directions for building the Present (Fifth) Meeting House in 1804, the First Church in Roxbury specified that "There will be seats for the people of colour, above & back of the singers seats, so as to occupy part of the Tower."⁶² In December 1773 the Congregational church in Suffield, Massachusetts, "Voted, that the Hind flank seat in the upper Gallery on the North side ... and that seat and that only be for ye Negroes to sit in."⁶³ In his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Frederick Douglass recalled that when he arrived in New Bedford, Massachusetts in the 1830s and attended the town's Methodist church, "I was not allowed to sit in the body of the house, and I was proscribed on account of my color."⁶⁴ Even if racial segregation was not codified in writing, it was nevertheless custom in New England churches, as was the case at Nim's church in Litchfield, Connecticut.

305 ~~288~~

<i>n°91</i> Dolls 112.	<i>n°90</i> Dolls 100.	<i>n°89</i> Dolls 90	<i>n°88</i> Dolls 80.	<i>n°87</i> Dolls 80.	<i>n°86</i> Dolls 80.	<i>n°85</i> Dolls 80.	<i>n°84</i> Dolls 90	<i>n°83</i> Dolls 95	<i>n°82</i> Dolls 102
<i>n°92</i> 112									<i>n°81</i> 100.
<i>n°93</i> 122	<i>n°48</i> 90	100	<i>n°17</i>		<i>n°16</i> 100	90	<i>n°49</i>		<i>n°80</i> 112.
<i>n°94</i> 132	<i>n°47</i> 100	115	<i>n°18</i>		<i>n°15</i> 115	100	<i>n°50</i>		<i>n°79</i> 122.
<i>n°95</i> 152	<i>n°46</i> 120	140	<i>n°19</i>		<i>n°14</i> 140	120	<i>n°51</i>		<i>n°78</i> 142.
<i>n°96</i> 177	<i>n°45</i> 140	160	<i>n°20</i>		<i>n°13</i> 160	140	<i>n°52</i>		<i>n°77</i> 168.
<i>n°97</i> 202	<i>n°44</i> 160	180	<i>n°21</i>		<i>n°12</i> 180	160	<i>n°53</i>		<i>n°76</i> 192.
<i>n°98</i> 217	<i>n°43</i> 180	205	<i>n°22</i>		<i>n°11</i> 205	180	<i>n°54</i>		<i>n°75</i> 207.
<i>n°99</i> 232	<i>n°42</i> 200	230	<i>n°23</i>		<i>n°10</i> 230	200	<i>n°55</i>		<i>n°74</i> 222.
<i>n°100</i> 232	<i>n°41</i> 220	250	<i>n°24</i>		<i>n°9</i> 250	220	<i>n°56</i>		<i>n°73</i> 222.
<i>n°101</i> 232	<i>n°40</i> 230	270	<i>n°25</i>		<i>n°8</i> 270	230	<i>n°57</i>		<i>n°72</i> 222.
<i>n°102</i> 232	<i>n°39</i> 240	280	<i>n°26</i>		<i>n°7</i> 280	240	<i>n°58</i>		<i>n°71</i> 222.
<i>n°103</i> 232	<i>n°38</i> 240	280	<i>n°27</i>		<i>n°6</i> 280	240	<i>n°59</i>		<i>n°70</i> 222.
	<i>n°37</i> 240	280	<i>n°28</i>		<i>n°5</i> 280	240	<i>n°60</i>		
	<i>n°36</i> 240	280	<i>n°29</i>		<i>n°4</i> 280	240	<i>n°61</i>		
	<i>n°35</i> 240	280	<i>n°30</i>		<i>n°3</i> 280	240	<i>n°62</i>		
	<i>n°34</i> 220	270	<i>n°31</i>		<i>n°2</i> 270	220	<i>n°63</i>		
	<i>n°33</i> 200	260	<i>n°32</i>		<i>n°1</i> 200		<i>n°64</i>		
					Parsonage				
<i>n°104</i> 272	<i>n°105</i> 200	<i>n°106</i> 170	<i>n°107</i> 160	<i>n°108</i> 150	Deacons Seats Pulpit				
					<i>n°65</i> 150	<i>n°66</i> 160	<i>n°67</i> 170	<i>n°68</i> 200	<i>n°69</i> 272

Lower floor plan

Total Am^t of Pews below 19940
do do of Pews above 3060
Making the sum of 23000 (Dolls)

Figure 9a: Plan of the lower floor of the Present (Fifth) Meeting House (b. 1804). Only whites permitted to sit on this floor. FCR-AR, p. 305; FCR-AAM (seq. 10).

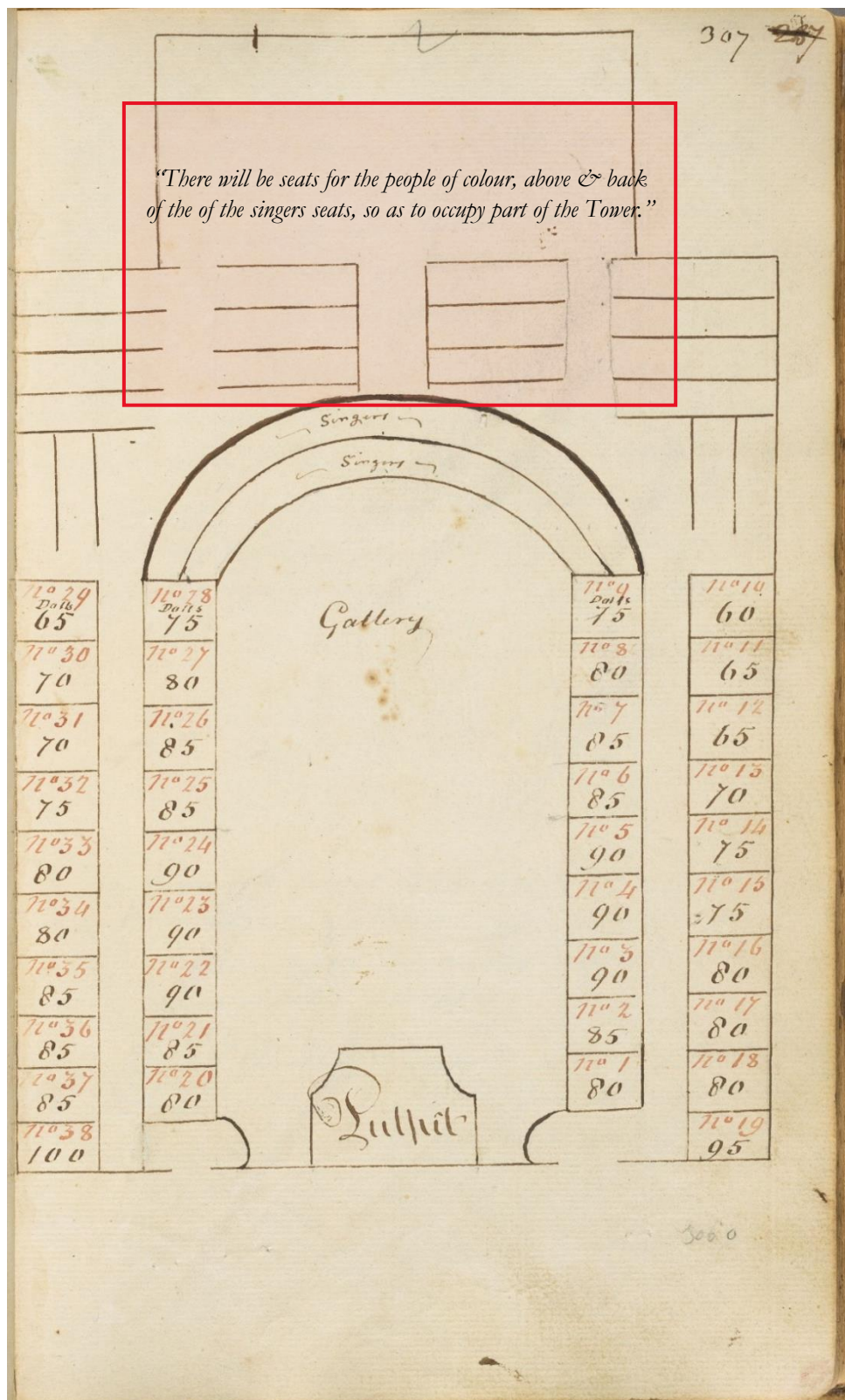


Figure 9b: Plan of the upper floor of the Present (Fifth) Meeting House (b. 1804). In its directions for building the Present (Fifth) Meeting House (b. 1804), the First Church in Roxbury specified: "There will be seats for the people of colour, above & back of the of the singers seats, so as to occupy part of the Tower." The red lines mark this area. FCR-AR, 307; FCR-AAM (seq. 10).

One Sunday morning in 1764, three white youths arrived early at the Litchfield church to find Nim—a Black man enslaved by one Colonel Ebenezer Marsh—sitting in a pew favored by one of the boys. Nim had been making a practice of sitting in this particular pew, “the first pew from the southwest corner of the end gallery,” to the great annoyance of white church members. The boy could have sat with Nim in the pew’s empty seats, but sharing a pew with a Black man was unacceptable to him and other white congregants. Unlike the First Church in Roxbury, the Litchfield church apparently never held a formal vote on racial segregation. However, according to several church members, Nim was violating a longstanding custom of racial segregation. The church, they attested, “had been seated and pewed in such Manner that the English and other white People and [white] Freemen of said Place by established Custom and Usage had been wont & used to set on Lord’s Day certain Places, Seats and Pews exclusive of the black people Servants and Slaves in said Town”; “Black People and Slaves by the aforesaid Custom and Usage had been wont according to the Appointment of said Town and proprietors of said Meeting House [i.e., the Litchfield church] to sit by themselves in certain other seats.” Accordingly, some white congregants found Nim’s conduct to be “indecent & unbecoming” and complained that it “tended greatly to the Disturbance of the People attending public Worship in said Meeting House as well as very insolent for any of said black people and Slaves to set on Lords Days in said Meeting House in any of the aforesaid Pews and Seats So by Custom & Usage appropriated to the use of said white people.” Several church members complained to Nim’s enslaver Colonel Marsh, who, in disapproval of Nim’s “such irregular and indecent Conduct,” “strictly charged and forbid the said Nim his said Servant any more sitting in said Pew.” Unsatisfied with the colonel’s reprimand, some church members installed “an Iron Instrument” on the pew’s door to lock it shut. Nim, however, tore off the device and declared “with horrid Oaths” that he would “stew the said Pew with the Gutts or Bowels of those who should dare to oppose his sitting in said Pew.”⁶⁵

Nim persisted in sitting where he wished, and a few Sundays later, the three youths arrived at the Litchfield church early to stop him. But Nim was already there, peacefully sitting in his pew. The boys entered the pew and forcefully threw him out. Some church members defended the boys’ violence, though others were appalled by such “Rude Prophane and unlawful Behavior ... greatly to the disturbance of many of his Majesties faithful and religious Subjects” in church on the Sabbath. Therefore, two months later, the youths were taken to court to account for their assault. Unsurprisingly, the case was resolved in the white youths’ favor.⁶⁶

Segregated seating would have impacted Nim even if he was free; the custom targeted him because of his race (though, as we have just seen, that Nim was enslaved affected how his particular situation played out). But enslaved people of color’s Christian practice could be

further undermined because of their enslaved status in particular. While records about the lives of the enslaved at First Church in Roxbury are exceedingly sparse, Keturah's experience shines some light on this obstruction.

In 1756, Keturah, a Black woman enslaved by First Church member Thomas Seaver, "desired to give up her self to God in Baptism."⁶⁷ Seaver did not object; more generally, while some Northern enslavers prevented their slaves from being baptized, they opposed the practice less than their counterparts in the US South or British Caribbean.⁶⁸ Still, Keturah faced difficulty because her husband's enslaver, in violation of Massachusetts law, forbade the marriage. Keturah and her husband—who, along with his enslaver, goes unnamed in the church records, indicating they attended a different church—lived together as if they were husband and wife for twelve years and birthed at least two children, Phebe and Susannah, both enslaved by Seaver. Because her husband's enslaver refused them permission to marry, they were technically living together in contravention of church principles. But Keturah argued her case well, providing First Church with a precedent for someone in her situation who was baptized at another church. She also recruited Seaver to "attest[] to her Good behaviour." The matter was then left to the church membership to decide. At their next meeting, the church deferred their decision to inquire whether "Due application was made to the master of the negro man for liberty to marry, before they lived together as Husband & wife."⁶⁹ The committee tasked with inquiring into the matter read their report at the following meeting, though neither the report itself nor a summary of its findings survive. Presumably the church found that Keturah requested permission to marry her partner before they began living together because the congregation voted to allow Keturah's baptism to proceed. On September 12, 1756, Keturah and her two daughters were baptized at the First Church in Roxbury.⁷⁰

A case from another Northern church provides further insight into how enslavers could restrict their slaves' Christian practice. On November 10, 1771 Methodist Joseph Pilmore of New York received a letter from "a poor Negro Slave." "Dear Sir," wrote the man, "These are to acquaint you, that my bondage is such I cannot possibly attend with the rest of the Class to receive my Ticket therefore beg you will send it. I wanted much to come to the Church at the Watch-night, but could not get leave; but, I bless God that night, I was greatly favoured with the spirit of prayer, and enjoyed much of his divine presence. I find the enemy of my soul continually striving to throw me off the foundation, but I have that within me which bids defiance that may be enabled to bear up under all my difficulties with patient resignation to the will of God." While the man's enslaver—or "the enemy of my soul"—prevented his slave from attending church services, he was unable to suppress his slave's resolve to practice his Methodist faith.⁷¹

Of course, racial discrimination was not limited to the chapel but was ubiquitous in colonial New England. In 1741, an “old Negro Fellow” in Roxbury, perhaps a First Church member, was whipped to death. The elderly man was “strongly suspected to have stollen some Money, or receiv’d it from the Thief,” and was therefore “tied to a Tree in a Pasture and whip’d, in order to make him confess, but to no Purpose; and in a short Time after he was brought Home, he died.”⁷² As there were only two churches in Roxbury at the time, with the First Church being the oldest and most established, and as there were several white people involved in murdering this Black man, and many more complicit in his murder, it is likely that some of the killers were First Church members. If the “old Negro Fellow” was enslaved, his enslaver may have participated in murdering him. Even if not, the elderly man’s enslaver likely wouldn’t have been too troubled that he lost his human property. Throughout his life, the enslaved man had made his enslavers wealthier, but in old age—too frail to work but in need of housing and food—his enslaver would consider him an inconvenient expense. One can see this crude economic calculation firsthand in the probate records of First Church parishioner William Bowdoin, who enslaved multiple people throughout his life. When Bowdoin died in 1773, appraisers took inventory of his property. One enslaved person, an elderly man named Juba, was valued at nothing. Instead, the appraisers noted that “An Old Negro Man Named Juba being a Charge to the Estate was given to the Revd. Mr West.”⁷³

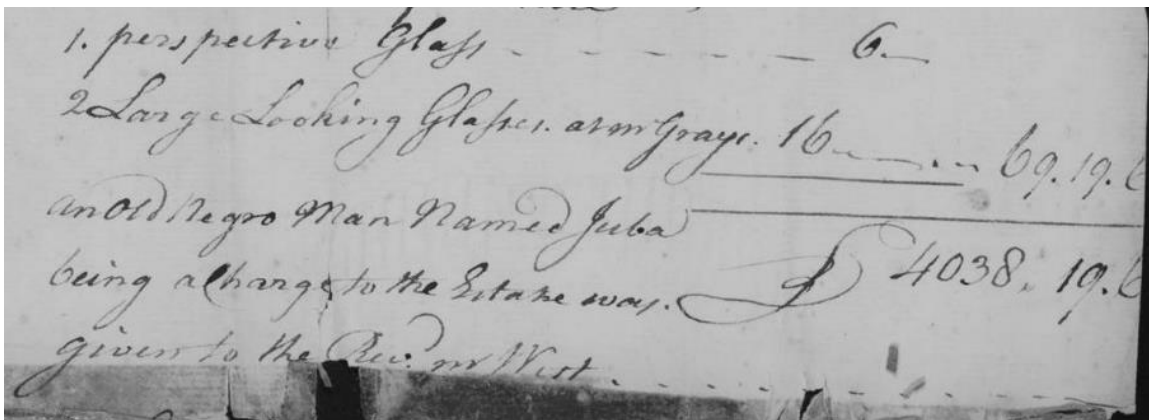


Fig. 10: William Bowdoin’s Inventory. “An Old Negro Man Named Juba being a charge to the Estate was given to the Rev. Mr West.” SCPR #15317, Inventory ([15317:27](#)).

RESISTANCE

People of color employed their Christian faith to resist their enslavement, combat racial discrimination, and protest church doctrine they deeply opposed. We have witnessed such resistance in the lives of Keturah of First Church and the enslaved man of Joseph Pilmore’s church in New York. But enslaved New Englanders resisted their bondage in a variety of ways, and therefore we would do well to explore a variety of cases.

One Boston evening in 1740, an enslaved man was ordered to entertain his enslaver’s white

dinner guests by impersonating the Reverend George Whitfield. The man thus launched into a prayer to a jesting crowd. He followed the prayer with a sermon. Jeering no longer, the crowd sat dumbstruck as he rebuked his master:

I am now come to my Exhortation; and to you my Master after the Flesh: But know I have a Master even Jesus Christ my Saviour, who has said that a Man cannot serve two Masters. Therefore I claim Jesus Christ to be my right Master; and all that come to him he will receive. You know, Master, you have been given to cursing and Swearing and blaspheming God's holy Name, you have been given to be Drunken, a Whoremonger, Covetous, a Liar, a Cheat, &c. But know that God has pronounced a Woe against all such, and has said that such shall never enter the Kingdom of God. And now to conclude (saith he) except you shall repent you shall likewise perish.⁷⁴

A decade after the man's powerful exhortation, the First Church in Brewster, Massachusetts, voted to send two deacons to inquire of "Negro woman Ann" why she had "So long absented" herself from the church. Ann testified before church members, asserting—as summarized by church leaders, who no longer referred to her as "Negro woman Ann," but "Sister Ann"—that her long absence was because, "to her understanding the Doctrine of Grace & of Assurance were not preached in ye Chh [church]." Church members attempted to convince her that she was mistaken and to return to church services, but she held fast in her beliefs and "declared her Purpose to continue at a distance."⁷⁵

A significant way Native peoples resisted racial oppression in the mid-eighteenth New England was to form their own churches. Indeed, despite constant conflict from warfare, land-stealing, and enslavement by the English, Indian communities persisted and maintained the land and other resources necessary to form their own, separate churches led by a network of incredibly capable Indian ministers. (African-descended people would obtain the resources necessary to form their own churches in the 1790s).⁷⁶ Most Natives were clustered in separate communities and reservations, but they made these separate enclaves, like their praying towns, into their own autonomous spaces.⁷⁷ The historian Linford Fisher observes that "The irony of the development of local Indian churches is that the very institutions that were supposed to help turn Indians into faithful English subjects in the end were used by Indians to create semi-autonomous space within which they could monitor their own spiritual lives, exercise a great deal of autonomy, and strengthen intertribal connections."⁷⁸

Enslaved people at the First Church in Roxbury sometimes took a more secular approach to resistance, such as running away—a risky undertaking in New England, where white settlers had no misgivings about racial chattel slavery and were legally prohibited from harboring runaway slaves. For instance, on August 29, 1749, Sharper, a twenty-five-year old Black man, absconded from First Church enslaver John Williams, who attempted to recapture the young

man: “RAN-away on the 29th of August, from his Master John Williams of Roxbury, a Negro Man Servant, named Sharper, a lusty Fellow about 25 Years of Age, speaks good English, and is something Battle-harmed: He had on when he went away, a check’d Woolen Shirt, a pair of white Trowsers, a pair of grey yarn Stocking, a pair of calf skin Shoes, with large pewter Buckles, a strip’d blue and white Jacket, a small beaver Hatt, and the Wool on the Top of his Head newly sheared; he also carried away with him a dark blue Jacket, worsted Stockings, and a pair of yarn Stockings, black and white, stock’d with grey a little above his Shoes. Whoever takes up said Servant, and conveys him to said Master at Roxbury, shall have Five Pounds old Tenor Reward, and all necessary Charges paid by me John Williams.”⁷⁹ Detailed descriptions like those of Sharper were a common feature of runaway advertisements as they increased the likelihood that someone could identify and re-enslave the fugitive.⁸⁰

RAN-away on the 29th of August, from his Master John Williams of Roxbury, a Negro Man Servant, named Sharper, a lusty Fellow about 25 Years of Age, speaks good English, and is something Battle-harmed: He had on when he went away, a check'd Woolen Shirt, a pair of white Trowsers, a pair of grey yarn Stocking, a pair of calf skin Shoes, with large pewter Buckles, a striped blue and white Jacket, a small beaver Hatt, and the Wool on the Top of his Head newly sheared; he also carried away with him a dark blue Jacket trimm'd with black, one fine shirt, a Jocky-cap, a pair of dark blue worsted Stockings, and a pair of yarn Stockings, black and white, stock'd with grey a little above his Shoes. Whoever takes up said Servant, and conveys him to said Master at Roxbury, shall have Five Pounds old Tenor Reward, and all necessary Charges paid by me John Williams.

Fig. 11: *Boston News-Letter* (Aug. 31, 1749).

After attending a nighttime revel, a Black woman named Maria used hot coal to set ablaze the homes of two First Church in Roxbury members: Dr. Thomas Swan and her enslaver Joshua Lambe. “One girl,” the church scribe recorded, “was burned, & all the rest had much ado to escape with their lives.” Maria pleaded guilty and was sentenced to death by the governor of Massachusetts, who ordered that “she should Goe from the barr to the prison whenc she Came & thence to the place of Execution & there be burnt.”⁸¹ On September 22, 1681, Maria was executed at the gallows in Boston Neck along with two men: “an Englishman for a rape [and] a negro man for burning a house at Northampton,” as Increase Mather, reverend and father of famed minister Cotton Mather, recorded in his diary. When the Englishman—who was for part of his youth “under the inspection of the [First] Church at Roxbury”—arrived at the gallows, Cotton Mather wrote that the condemned man saw “Death” and “a Picture of Hell, too, in a Negro then Burnt to Death at the Stake, for

Burning her Masters House, with some that were in it.” Unlike Maria, neither man was burned alive.⁸²

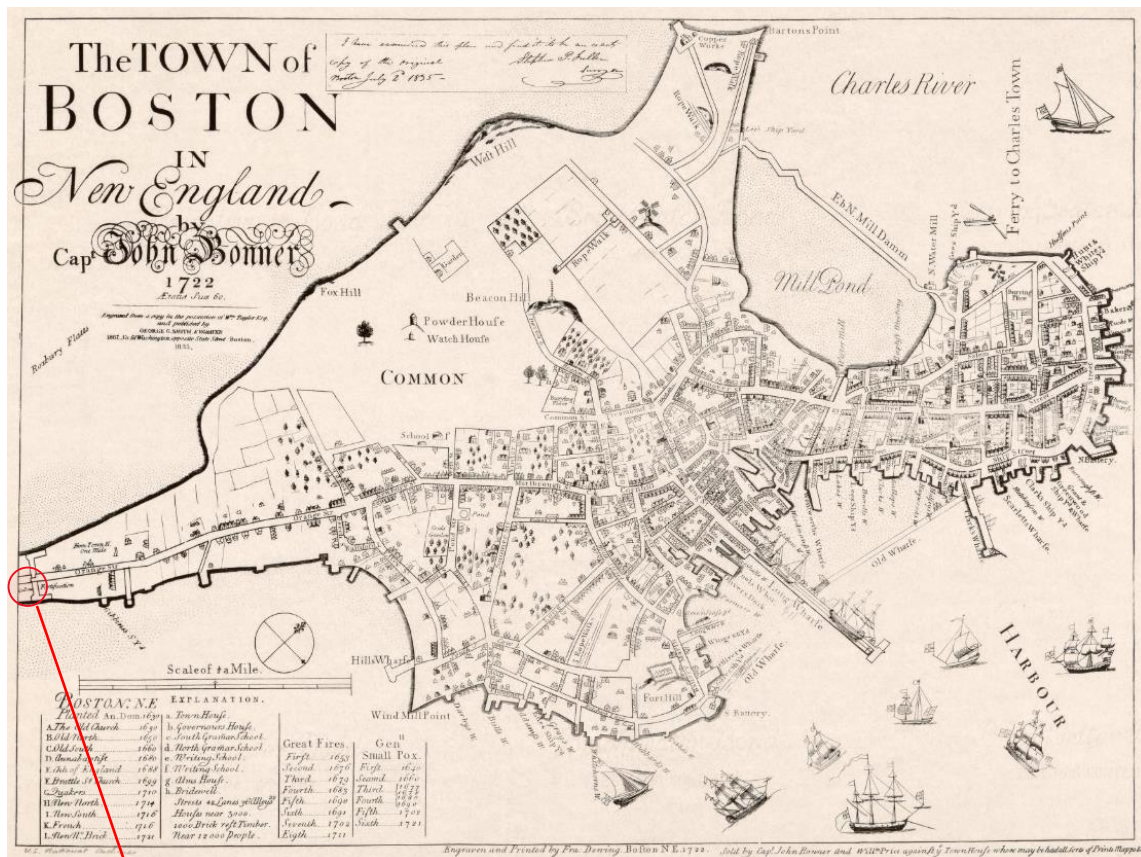


Fig. 11a: John Bonner, *The Town of Boston in New England* (1722), Library of Congress. The gallows, where Maria was burnt at the stake, are highlighted in red. While this map is from 1722, the gallows was in the same place in 1681. Michael J. Canavan, “Where Were the Quakers Hanged in Boston?” (Boston, 1911) 3–15. Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Bostonian Society (May 17, 1910).

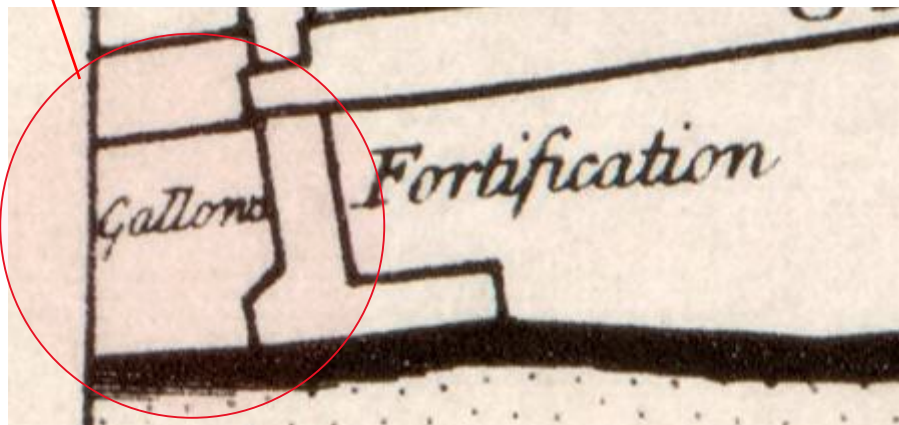


Fig. 12b: Detail of Bonner, *Town of Boston*, highlighting the gallows where Maria was burned at the stake.

Sarah Cleaves hosted the revel. Born in Roxbury around 1638, Cleaves (nee Chandler) took over for her husband William as First Church sexton shortly after he died fighting in King Philip's War. On July 31, 1670 Cleaves was "solemnly admonished," though for what is unknown. She was "forgiven by the church" six months later, and "solemnly owned the covenant" shortly thereafter. On April 18, 1675, she was "received to full com[m]union, penitently confessing." In 1683, a little more than two years after Cleaves was sanctioned for hosting the revel Maria attended, Cleaves "confessed her sin, was accepted & reconciled to the church & released of her censure."⁸³

Night parties were illegal but not uncommon in colonial Massachusetts. Sylvanus Warro (enslaved by First Church member William Parke and John Eliot's associate Daniel Gookin) and his brother Daniel (who Gookin also enslaved), for instance, were caught attending a night of drinking, dancing, and singing with Harvard College students in 1676.⁸⁴ Daniel was "convicted of being a common night walker, and refusing to submit to family order and government, and this being his 2d conviction, is sentenced to (ly in Bridwell be committed to Bridwell there to abide by his majesties Pleasure) or only whipt 15 stripes." His brother Sylvanus was similarly convicted and ordered to pay a fine of 3s 6d, while the hosts of the party, two white men named Ephraim and Thomas Frost, "convicted of entertheyning other mens children and servants unseasonably in the night time," were fined 40s along with court costs.⁸⁵ In 1739, the "principal slave-owners in Roxbury," as historian Francis Drake characterized them, protested: "Whereas it hath been too much the unhappy practise of the negro servants of this town to be abroad in the night at unseasonable hours to ye great prejudice of many persons or familys as well as their respective masters, the petitioners pray that it may be prevented or punished."⁸⁶

In her confession, Maria implicated two other enslaved people in the fires: Chefelia, a Black man enslaved by a Mr. Walker of Boston, and Coffee (Cuffe), a Black man enslaved by one James Pemberton. The grand jury, however, did not find sufficient evidence to indict them. Nevertheless, fearful of slave rebellion and with little regard for justice or Black lives, the court ordered that Chefelia and Coffee be sold out of New England.⁸⁷

Historian Kali Nicole Gross provides crucial context to Maria's story. While popular memory about women burned at the stake conjures images of seventeenth-century white women burned to death for witchcraft, in fact these women and girls were hanged. Women were indeed burned at the stake during this period; however, most of them were not white, but Black. Maria was the first woman to be burned at the stake in the thirteen mainland colonies, and one of two women in colonial Massachusetts—both of whom were enslaved Black women. Beginning with Maria's death and ending with the last known woman burned at the stake—a Black woman in North Carolina in 1805—the overwhelming majority (87

percent) were Black. Black women convicted of arson or murder faced harsher punishments than their white counterparts. And as Gross explains, “Maria’s case highlights other ominous legacies”[.] “Throughout much of the nation’s history, Black women constituted the lion’s share of female death penalty cases, especially during and after the civil war.”⁸⁸

Maria’s case is little-known, and there is so much about Maria that we do not know. Where was she from? Did she have a family? How old was she? Why did she set the houses on fire? In this way, Gross explains, Maria’s story “is an apt metaphor for the treatment of Black women in the historical record, illustrating a dynamic as tragic as it is timeless. Back then, White people didn’t bother to document the lives of Black women. Today, as evidenced by aggressive efforts to restrict the teaching of the United States’ racial history, many White people want even the limited remnants buried.” Gross continues: “If we are to effectively work toward equal justice in this country, we must know this history and understand its impact on Black women’s lives. In the present, we cannot allow racist tyranny to silence the past. The testimonies exist. We must hear them.”⁸⁹

FAMILY SEPARATION

“Enslavement,” the historian Tiya Miles has written, “was a state of constant familial loss.”

Mothers lost children and children lost mothers in a vicious cycle of sale and death even as African Americans suffered a violent break from their motherland of Africa. This is why the cultural theorist Saidiya Hartman titled her incisive travel memoir about the trans-Atlantic slave trade *Lose Your Mother*. This raw phrasing captures an essential aspect of the Black historical experience. But despite nightmarish circumstances that must have felt world-ending, Black mothers raised the children left to them with a brilliant practicality rooted in love, propelled by the belief that these descendants deserved a future.⁹⁰

The enslaved were separated from their families, often several times throughout their lives. One way this occurred at the First Church in Roxbury was through sale. First Church enslaver Ebenezer Dorr advertised the sale of “A Likely Negro Woman.” He informed readers that “Any Person inclined to buy said Negro shall know the true Cause why she is Sold.”⁹¹ We do not learn the woman’s name or anything more about her. First Church parishioner Isaac Winslow enslaved and sold a Black man named Cuffe, who ran away from his new owner. Perhaps Cuffe ran to freedom. Listing Cuffe’s prior owner and town suggests that Winslow had only recently sold Cuffe and that perhaps the new owner suspected Cuffe ran back to his former home in Roxbury—to family and friends from whom he was separated when Winslow sold him.⁹²

A D V E R T I S E M E N T S.
TO BE SOLD by *Ebenezer Dorr* of
Roxbury, A Likely Negro Woman : Any
 Person inclined to buy said Negro shall know the
 true Cause why she is Sold. Also to be Sold by
 said *Dorr* Ten Acres of Land within a quarter of a
 Mile of Judge *Dudley's* Seat in *Roxbury*.

Fig. 13: *New-England Weekly Journal* (Boston, MA) (Oct. 21, 1735).

When First Church enslavers died, the lives of their slaves were upended. Rather than obtaining freedom, the enslaved person would become the property of another colonist. Often, they were bequeathed to a member of the enslaver's family—generally a spouse or child. When First Church parishioner Eleazer Williams passed away in 1768, he willed “to my Said Son Thomas my negro man Bristow and all my other Estate not herein before named.”⁹³ They could also be sold to settle their enslaver's debt. Indeed, two years earlier, Williams himself, as an agent for the estate of a deceased man—perhaps a former First Church member—advertised for sale “A Negro Girl about 17 Years of Age ... sold to settle an Estate to which she belongs.”⁹⁴

In addition to buying and selling human beings, some First Church enslavers tore apart families by giving away Black babies and little children. First Church member John Greateon, for instance, advertised “A Negro Male Child of an excellent Breed” “To be given away.”⁹⁵ An announcement a short time later was presumably Greateon again marketing the same child: “To be given away, a likely Negro Male Child, born and still at Roxbury, Inquire of Green & Russell in Queen-Street.”⁹⁶

To be given away at Roxbury,
A Negro Male Child
 of an excellent Breed. Enquire of the Printers, and
 at the House of Mr. *John Greateon*, Innholder in
Roxbury.

Fig. 14: *Boston News-Letter* (Mar. 29, 1764).

Greaton's actions were not uncommon. Enslaved children in New England were given away regularly, like the following child advertised in a Boston newspaper: "A Very likely Female Negro Child to be given away."⁹⁷ Babies could be given away: "To be given away, A fine Negro Male Child, about two Months old, of an excellent Breed."⁹⁸ This child had literally just been born: "A Negro Child a few Days old, to be given away."⁹⁹ While in many regions in the Atlantic world, such as the US South, "breeding" was viewed positively from the standpoint of the slaveowner—because enslaved people were property and an enslaved child increased the wealth of the owner—some enslavers in New England considered children to be an inconvenience, diverting their mothers or other enslaved caretakers away from work more profitable to the enslaver. Black babies were often "given" as gifts: as one writer crudely recalled, "a 'nigger baby' in fact, among the well-to-do of those days, was a favorite and frequent gift." Venus Roe, for instance, was "given to Swithin Reed by a Boston merchant as a present for his wife, and being a baby, was brought home to her mistress in one of Mr. Reed's saddlebags." Massachusetts Historical Society founder Jeremy Belknap, too, stated that Black children "were given away like puppies."¹⁰⁰ Some enslaved women were sold away because they had children too often: "To be Sold ... A Negro Woman about Thirty Years of Age, for no Fault, but because she brings a Child every Twelve Months, and sometimes oftener."¹⁰¹ The woman's babies were likely taken from her, too. How must it have felt for mother and child to be forcefully ripped apart from each other?

It wasn't always this way, but that does not mean things were better for the enslaved in New England. When children were highly valued, slaveowners became human breeders. In 1638, in Noddles Island, a large tract of land in the middle of Boston Harbor, British traveler John Josselyn encountered an enslaved woman who had been raped by an enslaved man. Both slaves were the property of a merchant named Samuel Maverick, who, "desirous to have a breed of Negroes," commanded one of his slaves to rape another:

the Second of *October*, about 9 of the clock in the morning, Mr. *Mavericks* Negro woman came to my chamber window, and in her own Countrey language and tune sang very loud and shrill, going out to her, she used a great deal of respect toward me, and willingly would have expressed her grief in *English*; but I apprehended it by her countenance and deportment, whereupon I repaired to my host, to learn of him the cause, and resolved to intreat him in her behalf, for that I understood before, that she had been a Queen in her own Countrey, and observed a very humble and dutiful garb used towards her by another Negro who was her maid. Mr. *Maverick* was desirous to have a breed of Negroes, and therefore seeing she would not yield by perswasions to company with a Negro young man he had in his house; he commanded him will'd she nill'd she to go to bed to her, which was no sooner done but she kickt him out again, this she took in high disdain beyond her slavery, and this was the cause of her grief.¹⁰²

* * *

Sylvanus Warro was born to Jacob and Maria Warro in Maryland around 1645. The Warros were enslaved by Daniel Gookin, who lived in Virginia and Maryland before removing to Massachusetts, where, for three years, he lived in Roxbury. Sylvanus and his brother Daniel arrived in New England without their parents, one of whom, Jacob, was killed in an Indian raid on Gookin's Maryland plantation. Gookin helped John Eliot found the Roxbury Grammar School and manage his "praying towns," eventually becoming the superintendent of Indians in Massachusetts.¹⁰³ Sylvanus Warro was a rebellious person who found himself in court on multiple occasions throughout his life. Perhaps Warro's constant resistance is why, in 1667, Gookin hired him out to First Church member William Parke for eight years, with a promise of freedom after the term expired. The promise of freedom at some future date was a strategy enslavers occasionally employed to convince rebellious slaves to comply with their wishes.¹⁰⁴ In 1672 Warro was convicted of theft—forging a key to Parke's safe and stealing from it—for which Parke was awarded a twenty-pound judgment.¹⁰⁵

It was the following charge, however, that would have the greatest impact on Warro's life. Warro impregnated one of William Parke's white servants, First Church parishioner Elizabeth Parker, and was ordered to pay child support of two shillings six pence per week for the baby they conceived out of wedlock. Should he fail to do so, the court decreed, he would be sold.¹⁰⁶ But Parke no longer wanted Warro in his household, and Warro was not provided an opportunity to earn any money. Thus, the new father was to be sold back into slavery, his contract for future freedom negated. Gookin not only harbored no qualms about Warro's re-enslavement but also offered to sell Warro to Virginia, away from the life he had built in Massachusetts. Parke, however, found a local buyer, one Jonathan Wade of Medford. Gookin subsequently visited Warro in jail and provided him some advice: he should accept his fate and perhaps "he might fall in with Mr. Wade's Negro Wench and live well."¹⁰⁷

Gookin kept in touch with Warro and occasionally hired him from Wade when he and his family needed assistance. For example, Gookin requested Warro's services in 1680 after Gookin's daughter's marriage because Mrs. Gookin knew Warro "to be hande."¹⁰⁸ In 1682, however, Gookin went behind Wade's back, calling Warro to his residence without Wade's permission. Gookin drew up a contract, which Warro signed, declaring Warro and his offspring to be Gookin's slaves. While Warro would still be enslaved, the agreement would permit him to live among his family. A furious Wade sued Gookin for stealing his human property and won. Warro would stay enslaved in Wade's household.¹⁰⁹

Elizabeth Parker was removed from Parke's household after giving birth and sent to live with her father Edmund in Lancaster. Parker did not consider her relationship with Warro

shameful because he was Black. Indeed, she named her son Sylvanus Warro after his father, shining an even brighter light on her former partner's and son's racial identities. Edmund, for his part, welcomed his multiracial grandson into his home and even successfully fought William Parke and multiple county courts after they undertook to remove his grandchild from his home and bind him out to service.¹¹⁰

Sylvanus Sr. refused to fulfill Gookin's wish that he "fall with Mr. Wade's Negro Wench." In 1709 his son Sylvanus Jr. learned (perhaps from his mother Elizabeth Parker) that he had a half-sister enslaved by John Wade—the product of a sexual relationship his father had with another white woman—and was determined to "Git her free." Sylvanus Jr.'s half-sister, whose name remains unknown, should never have been enslaved, because by law she took the status of her mother, who was free. Still, in a place and time when nearly all whites had no misgivings about racial chattel slavery, Sylvanus Jr. was unable to free his half-sister.¹¹¹

PEOPLE OF COLOR JOINING THE FIRST CHURCH IN ROXBURY

It is important to clarify what converting to Christianity and joining First Church likely entailed for people of color. Too often, historians view conversion as a complete transformation from one belief system and set of practices to another, as if a gain in one results in a corresponding loss in the other. But there is no "pure" version of Christianity (though many historians implicitly or even explicitly take European Christian practices to be "pure" Christianity), and Christianity, like all religions, is not fixed but a set of practices in motion. What we often refer to as "conversion" was in fact a process of religious change, a blend of Indigenous and Anglo-Christian practices that was no less authentic a form of Christianity for not conforming to European practices (which themselves were constantly in motion and influenced by non-whites). Moreover, many Black and Native people incorporated aspects of Christianity into their previously-held religious beliefs, adding to their belief system rather than completely discarding one belief system for another. While some people of color surely adopted a Euroamerican version of Christianity, many incorporated and refashioned aspects of Christianity into a set of already existing beliefs in ways that suited their needs.¹¹²

People of color joined predominantly white churches like First Church for several reasons, both religious and secular. Some Black and Indigenous worshipers found solace in the "religion of the suffering Christ," and, like Christians of all races, found Christianity or church membership empowering. For enslaved people church membership was one of the few ways to gain social standing in a predominantly white community. A significant event such as a natural disaster, illness, or near-death experience drew people of all races to religion.¹¹³ The most important reason Black and Native people affiliated with predominantly

white churches, however, was the educational opportunities that accompanied it. As one reverend stated, Black parishioners joined his church because of “the great desire [they] have of learning” and the “care and attention to their spiritual concerns” that the church provided.¹¹⁴ Some Indians affiliated with churches in an attempt to protect their land from white colonists, though they quickly learned that white ministers were unwilling or unable to help them protect their land, and white Christians—their fellow parishioners—were the very people stealing their land. Massachuset Native John Speene, a leader of the Natick “praying town,” for instance, invoked land theft as an influential factor in his turn to Christianity: “I prayed because I saw the *English* took much ground, and I thought if I prayed, the *English* would not take away my ground.”¹¹⁵

The devastation to Native communities from European-imported diseases pushed some Indians to turn to Christianity. As Jean O’Brien notes, “Indian ideas about the connection between religion and healing provided a fertile ground for casting the theological seeds of English Calvinism. In emphasizing the anger and vengeance of an angry English God and the healing powers that would convey salvation and eternal life, [First Church in Roxbury missionary John] Eliot struck a responsive cord among Indians still reeling from the rippling effects of imported diseases.” Indeed, in addition to land theft, Speene invoked these factors as influences guiding his turn to Christianity: “I heard that Christ healed all manner of diseases, therefore I believed that Christ is the son of God, able to heal and pardon all.” Fear of punishment from the English God also persuaded Indians to turn to Christianity. Speene recalled, “I remembered that many of my children are dead; This is God’s punishment on me because of my sins.” At least half of the Nipmuc and Massachuset men who delivered public confessions stated the death of loved ones as a reason they decided to turn to the Christian God. This “dual-edged message of punishment and protection” was most forcefully preached by John Eliot himself.¹¹⁶

Some Indian parents sent their sons to live with English families. For instance, the Nipmuc Christian Wampus sent his son to live with First Church elder Isaac Heath so he could be educated in the Christian religion at Eliot’s grammar school in Roxbury.¹¹⁷ While Wampus’s son John does not appear in the First Church records, he most certainly attended the church during his time with elder Heath. Historian Lisa Brooks explains that “Although Eliot had his own missionary motivations for urging Native men to send their sons to English schools, it had long been a tradition in eastern Indigenous networks for neighboring nations to engage in an ‘exchange of sons’ to build and ‘seal’ the alliances among them.” This allowed them to bring knowledge about neighboring communities back home and mediate between communities. Native parents who sent their sons to live with the English were preparing them for this vital diplomatic role.¹¹⁸

Following epidemics that devastated Native communities, Massachusetts colonists took many Indian orphans from their villages and made them servants in English homes. Some Native parents on their deathbeds may have entrusted their children to the English—as did Wampus. As Brooks notes, “The dying men may have been earnest, but these published deathbed proclamations provided legal grounds for settlers to capture and retain custody of Native children.”¹¹⁹ And as Margaret Newell explains, “For Indians brought into households as young children, the pressure to convert and the consequences of not at least appearing to accept Christianity must have been grave.”¹²⁰

NATIVE WAR CAPTIVES

On July 30, 1640 in the Court of Assistants, “Two indian weomen were adjudged to be whiped for their insolent carryage (behavior), and abusing Mrs Weld,” the wife of First Church in Roxbury pastor Thomas Weld. One of these may have been Nan, “Mr. Weld’s captive Indian,” enslaved during the Pequot War (1636–38).¹²¹ Presumably, the other Indian woman was also taken captive in the war, and at the time of her “insolent carryage” was likely enslaved by Pastor Weld or another First Church congregant. While First Church recorded Nan’s death in its records, she was not a member. The Roxbury church neither baptized nor admitted into membership any Indian in the colonial period; Nan’s death on April 7, 1646 was almost certainly recorded because she was enslaved by the church’s minister.¹²² A day later, Ezbon—another Pequot War captive enslaved by an unspecified First Church parishioner—“having lived ten years among the English, could read, [and] desired to know God,” passed away.¹²³

Tensions had been brewing years before the fighting began. In the early-seventeenth century, the Pequot gained power in New England, in part through trade with Europeans. In the 1630s conflict intensified between the Pequot and the Dutch and English empires as the latter expanded their colonial reach. Massachusetts Bay authorities soon decided to remove the Pequot, using two murders for which they blamed the Native nation as pretext for prosecuting a ruthless war.¹²⁴

British colonists, however, began enslaving Indians long before the Pequot War. In fact, the English enslaved Indians from coastal settlements in the early-seventeenth century, well before they established any colonies in the region. The war did, however, intensify English slaving considerably. As Margaret Newell has written, “Although the Pequot War began for a variety of strategic and economic reasons, for the English and their Native American allies it quickly became a conflict whose purpose was securing captives. In the context of the war English colonists saw both an opportunity to acquire captives and a legal pretext for the enslavement of Indians. At a time when Indian and European war practices offered several

possible courses of action in dealing with prisoners, especially noncombatants, the English in New England made a conscious decision to enslave Pequots.”¹²⁵

No First Church member, and few English overall, protested the mass enslavement of the Pequot. The only New Englanders who protested Pequot enslavement were Indians themselves—the Pequot as well as English-allied Indians, who attempted to convince the English to spare noncombatants and Pequot soldiers who surrendered peacefully from execution or chattel slavery.¹²⁶ Despite these protests, the English enslaved hundreds of Pequot, many of whom they sold overseas. Several captives were sold into slavery in Bermuda in return for a number of goods, including other human beings—some of the first enslaved Africans in New England.¹²⁷

Nan may have been one of the Indigenous children referenced in *New England's First Fruits* (1643), likely co-authored by her enslaver, First Church pastor Weld and Hugh Peter.¹²⁸ *First Fruits* was the initial publication in a series of pieces known as the *Eliot Tracts*, after First Church missionary John Eliot, who authored several of the later tracts. The *Eliot Tracts* were published to raise funds for missionary work in New England and to counter criticism by British clergy, who in 1641 charged that British colonists were not working to convert Indians, as their royal charter instructed, but rather settling in New England “in hope to possesse the land of those Infidels, or of gaine by Commerce.”¹²⁹ *First Fruits* therefore highlighted Indian slaves as promising Christian converts. Weld and Peter declared that “divers of the Indians Children Boyes and Girles in our houses ... handy in their businesse, and can speak our language familiarly; divers whom can read English and begin to understand in their measure, the ground of Christian Religion.”¹³⁰ Nan, Ezbon, and other Indians who attended First Church may have been converted by the “Blackamore maid,” who, Pastor Weld and Peter boasted, undertook to convert multiple Indian captives: she “hath with teares exhorted some of the *Indians* that live among us to embrace Jesus Christ, saying how willing he would be to receive them, even as he had received her.”¹³¹ This “Blackamore maid” was almost certainly an enslaved woman named Dorcas, the first African-descended person to be admitted to church membership in New England when she became a member of the First Church of Dorchester in 1641.¹³²

* * *

“An Indian boy of Holbrook’s,” “An Indian girl of Mr Dudley,” and Peter—the other Natives enslaved by First Church in Roxbury members—were taken captive during King Philip’s War (1675–78).^{*} In response to persistent incursions on their political sovereignty,

^{*} Because Metacom (King Philip) and his death is privileged in the name and narratives of the war, it is commonly believed that the war ended in 1676, the year Metacom was killed. Lisa Brooks and others have

land, and cultural autonomy, the Wampanoag sachem Metacom (King Philip) and his Native allies attacked dozens of New England towns, effectively annihilating twenty-five of them. English colonists razed Indian villages, killing or enslaving any Indian they could find—including women, children, and the elderly. The thousands of Christian Indians (who John Eliot led the effort in converting) allied with the English were, notes one historian, “perhaps ... the worst casualties.”¹³³ In the fall and winter of 1675–76, hundreds of praying Indians were forced—by their own English allies—from their towns onto barren islands that provided little protection from the harsh winter. That December, Eliot and Gookin ventured to Deer Island, in Eliot’s words, “to visit and comfort the poor Christian Indians.” They arrived to find five hundred starving men, women, and children. Eliot described the scene thus: “the Island was bleak and cold, their wigwams poor and mean, their clothes few and thin.” Many died of cold and hunger. After one of their visits to the Island, Eliot remarked (perhaps referring to both the Indians and the English): “some thanked God & some wished we had bene drowned.”¹³⁴ And some were sold into slavery in the Caribbean.¹³⁵

Fig. 15: “Some captives women & children w[ere] sent downe shipped to be sold for slaves” (Jun. 11, 1676) (FCR-RB, 194).

The fighting began shortly after colonial authorities hanged three chief counselors of Wampanoag sachem Metacom in 1675. Mattashunannamo, Tabias, and Tabias’s son Wampapaquan were charged and convicted for killing John Sassamon on flimsy evidence. By the war’s end, approximately 5,000 Indians and 2,500 colonists had been killed; New Englanders enslaved many Indians, hundreds of whom they sold to the Caribbean. Having just put down a slave conspiracy themselves and terrified of New England Indians at war with British colonists, the Barbados legislature banned the importation of New England Indians as slaves in 1676 and required enslavers who already purchased them to sell them out of the Island.¹³⁶ Per capita, King Philip’s War is the deadliest in American history.¹³⁷

Prior to King Philip’s War, First Church missionary John Eliot raised few objections to slavery. But colonists’ selling Indians who had already surrendered into slavery overseas moved the missionary in August 1675 to petition the Massachusetts General Court to stop the practice. While Eliot’s was not condemning slavery in general or even the enslavement of all Indians, he nevertheless took a position few colonists were willing to endorse.¹³⁸ Eliot

noted that “In truth, on the same day that [Benjamin] Church pursued Metacom to his death at Montaup, a new series of raids erupted on the northern front. ... In the North, the war had just begun. For an insightful analysis of the war and its “end,” see Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip’s War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), esp. 327–346 (quotes on 329, 330).

warned “That the terror of selling away such Indians, unto the Islands for perpetual slaves, who shall yield up themselves to your mercy, is like to be an effectual prolongation of the warre & such an exasperation of them as may produce we know not what evil consequences, upon all the land. ... To sell soules for money seemeth to me a dangerous merchandize.” The zealous missionary focused, however, less on practical reasons than on religious ones. Selling Indians into Caribbean slavery, Eliot objected, prevented their conversion to Christianity. He accused colonists of undertaking to “extirpate” Indians rather than “gospelize” them; he reminded his fellow colonists that “when we came, we declared to all the world, & it is recorded, yea we are ingaged by ye letters patent to the kings majesty, that the indeavour of the Indians conversion, not their extirpation, was our great end of our enterprize in coming to these ends of the earth.” He then likened his fellow British colonists’ treatment of Indians with that of the Spanish. “All men (of reading) condemne the Spaniard for cruelty upon this point in destroying men, & depopulating the land.”¹³⁹ The dig would have stung, for the Spaniards were notorious among the British for the enslavement and genocide of Indians, and the British, moreover, justified their colonial project in large part by defining it in opposition to such Spanish atrocities.¹⁴⁰

Indians themselves were the main objectors to selling King Philip-allied Indians who had already surrendered into slavery. As with the Pequot War, these resisters included not only Indians allied with King Philip, but also many English-allied Indians, who helped surrenderers stay out of English households and off slave ships. As Linford Fisher writes, this resistance “constituted one of the first sustained (even if largely ignored) anti-Indian-slavery protest in the English colonies. Every time Native men or women protested the injustice of being enslaved and/or sent out of the country, they were calling the English to task for actions that betrayed their own religious professions.” The few English critiques of Indian enslavement during King Philip’s War, Fisher continues, were influenced by Indians themselves. Indeed, John Eliot reflected Indians’ protests when he spoke of the psychological terror of being sold into slavery overseas and how the practice could backfire on the colonists.¹⁴¹

Daniel Gookin, like his associate John Eliot, issued a limited protest against enslaving Indians during King Philip’s War. Gookin was not against slavery in general. As we have seen, he enslaved several Black people including Sylvanus Warro and his family (and likely Indians, too, as enslaving Indians was a common practice among his Chesapeake neighbors), and, after a Suffolk County court ordered Warro to be sold as a slave, offered to sell him to Virginia.¹⁴² Rather, Gookin opposed the enslavement of New England Indians for practical and legal reasons. He argued that, in the midst of a contentious war, enslaving Indians would lead an even greater number of them to turn against the colonists. Native people, he protested, were also being enslaved without being deemed guilty of any crime. Gookin

desired to protect Christian Indians, which he believed was possible only if colonists stopped enslaving Indians in New England altogether. What is more, objected Gookin, enslaving Indians violated the King's imperative to the colonists to protect his Indian subjects.¹⁴³

Eliot and Gookin were exceptions. Most colonists raised no issues about confining Christian Indians to a barren island; many—who viewed Christian Indians with suspicion and believed them to be disloyal—even thought this cruel treatment too generous.¹⁴⁴ Even Eliot and Gookin's limited protest of the enslavement of peaceful surrenderers sat poorly with colonists, some of whom threatened the men's lives.¹⁴⁵ Unsurprisingly, in the summer of 1676 Massachusetts Bay Governor Leverett issued a certificate that declared the Indians enslavable.¹⁴⁶

THE FIRST BIBLE PRINTED IN NORTH AMERICA

In 1663 the first Bible was printed in North America. The Bible was not printed in English or any other European language, but in Algonquian. Many historians have previously claimed that First Church in Roxbury missionary John Eliot achieved this feat alone. But as Eliot himself noted, he was reliant upon Indian translators, interpreters, and teachers to produce the Algonquian Bible and the rest of his "Indian Library." Early in his translation efforts, Eliot wrote Edward Winslow of Plymouth, "I having yet but little skill in their language ... I must have some Indians, and it may be other help continually about me to try and examine Translations."¹⁴⁷

Cockenoe, a Montauket from Long Island, was central to Eliot's translations. He was about thirteen years old when taken captive during the Pequot War while visiting Pequot relatives; the English enslaved him even though neither he nor his tribe had done any harm to them.¹⁴⁸ Cockenoe, whose name signified "teacher" or "one with knowledge," swiftly obtained a strong grasp of English and local Wampanoag/Massachusetts dialects. Richard Callicott, a leader of the English forces, enslaved him for eleven years, and for some of that time, Cockenoe served as Eliot's teacher, translator, and interpreter. Eliot was impressed by Cockenoe: "This Indian is ingenious, can read, and I taught him to write, which he quickly learnt. ... He was the first that I made use of to teach me words, and to be my interpreter." Eliot hoped Cockenoe would become the first Indigenous member of his enslaver's church in Dorchester, the town neighboring Roxbury, and use his command of multiple languages to advance the Gospel. But Cockenoe had other plans, leaving Eliot utterly disappointed. The accomplished teacher chose to return to a leadership role in Indigenous communities. He enjoyed a forty-year career as an interpreter for Native and English clients in Long Island and Connecticut, and became a close advisor (and brother-in-law) of the Montauket sachem Wyandanch.¹⁴⁹

Eliot then looked to John Sassamon, an Indian servant and subsequent leader of one of Eliot's "praying towns," for assistance. During the Pequot War, Sassamon served as an interpreter and fought for the English. He was a servant in the household of Richard Callicot, who enslaved Cockenoe. Sassamon likely attended the Indian school in Dorchester. Eliot, who lived close by, often visited the town and taught at the school, which is how he became familiar with and impressed by Sassamon's ability. Indeed, it may have been Cockenoe and Sassamon that made John Eliot determined to convert Indians. Sassamon studied at Harvard for a few months in 1753, alongside students such as Increase Mather, and later, served as a scribe and interpreter for multiple sachems, including Philip (Metacom), until their relationship soured. In 1675, Sassamon was killed. The English accused three Philip's men of murder, and on flimsy evidence, had them tried, convicted, and hanged. Shortly thereafter began King Philip's War.¹⁵⁰

Other Indians vital to the project included Job Nesutan, who Eliot's associate Daniel Gookin described as "a very good linguist in the English tongue, and was Mr. Eliot's assistant and interpreter in his translations of the Bible, and other books of the Indian language"; and Wawaus, recruited by Eliot to be a printer (and thereafter known as James Printer). Printer was one of the only people in New England to be familiar with both the Algonquian language and its printing in English type. Eliot himself observed in 1683 that "we have but one man, viz. the Indian Printer, that is able to compose these sheets, and correct the press with understanding."¹⁵¹

To borrow Lisa Brooks's words, scholars like Cockenoe, John Sassamon, Job Nesutan, and Wawaus (James Printer) "were not merely students who received, or were subjected to, a colonial education, but significant contributors to the emergence of a multilingual American literary tradition, beginning with the Indigenous language publications of the Harvard Press, which was housed in the Indian College [at Harvard University]."¹⁵² Until their life histories are fully told and embedded into larger narratives of colonial New England, our understanding of the past and present will not only be incomplete, but crucially flawed.

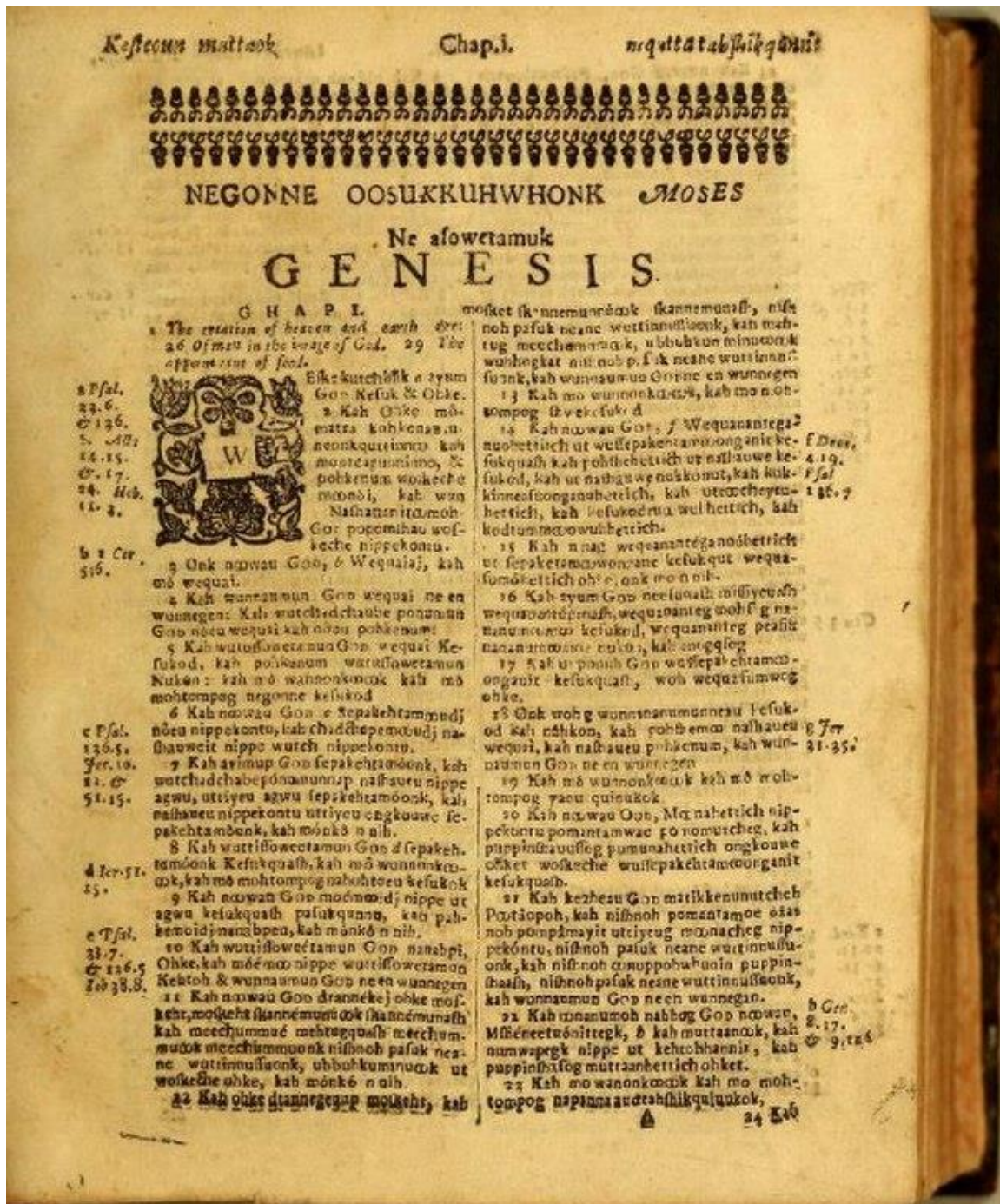


Fig. 16: Algonquian Bible (1663). Wikimedia Commons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who organized and attended the January 2023 workshop on Slavery at the First Church in Roxbury and provided feedback on this report. I would also like to thank the Reverend Mary Margaret Earl, Byron Rushing, Marcia Butman, Kyera Singleton, Maya Doig-Acuña, Ed Bell, and Jim Downs for their support.

¹ City of Boston Archaeology Program, “First Church in Roxbury Summary (Interim) Report: Intensive (Locational) Archaeological Survey” (Jun. 2019), 2; Walter E. Thwing, *History of the First Church in Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1630–1904* (Boston: W. A. Butterfield, 1908), 3–4; Francis S. Drake, *The Town of Roxbury* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1905), 47; Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry, <https://www.uuum.org/our-story>; Roxbury Historical Society, <http://roxburysocietysociety.org/about-roxbury/>.

² Examples include Faye Charpentier, “Slavery and King’s Chapel” (2019), <http://www.kings-chapel.org/memorialtoenslavedpersons.html> and David Kidder, “Owning our History: First Church and Race, 1636–1873” (2019), <https://www.firstchurchcambridge.org/owning-our-history/>.

³ James Oliver Horton, “Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue,” in James Oliver Horton & Loise E. Horton (eds.), *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: New Press, 2006), 37; Eric Kimball, “‘What have we to do with slavery?’: New Englanders and the Slave Economies of the West Indies,” in Beckert, Sven & Rockman, Seth (eds.), *Slavery’s Capitalism: A New History of Economic Development*, Sven Beckert & Seth Rockman eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 181–194; Joanne Pope Melish, “Northern Slavery and Its Legacies: Still a New (and Unwelcome?) Story,” in Bethan Jay & Cynthia Lynn Lyerly (eds.), *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016); Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright, 2016).

⁴ Melish, “Northern Slavery and Its Legacies: Still a New (and Unwelcome?) Story,” 118–119; Warren, *New England Bound*, 9–10, 74–76. Ed Bell provides a great history of slavery and its legacy in (Historical) Andover, MA. See Edward L. Bell, *Persistence of Memories of Slavery and Emancipation in Historical Andover* (Boston: Shawsheen Press, 2021).

⁵ Melish, “Northern Slavery and Its Legacies,” 119; Warren, *New England Bound*, 12, 34–35.

⁶ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620–1776* (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2017 [New York: Columbia University Press, 1942]), 100–123; Melish, “Northern Slavery and Its Legacies”; Felicia Y. Thomas, “‘Fit for Town or Country’: Black Women and Work in Colonial Massachusetts,” *Journal of African American History*, vol. 105, no. 2 (Spring 2020), 191–212; Jared Ross Hardesty, *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds: A History of Slavery in New England* (Amherst: Bright Leaf, 2019), 70–92.

⁷ *Boston News-Letter* (Mar. 1, 1739), 2.

⁸ Kimball, “‘What have we to do with slavery?’,” 181–194; Warren, *New England Bound*.

⁹ Kimball, “‘What have we to do with slavery?’,” 181–194; Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, & Jenifer Frank, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (New York: Random House, 2005), 48–55; Christy Clark-Pujara, “Slavery and the Northern Economy,” in Bethan Jay & Cynthia Lynn Lyerly (eds.), *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 96–115; Melish, “Northern Slavery and Its Legacies,” 115–132.

¹⁰ Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright, 2015), 12.

¹¹ Melish, “Northern Slavery and Its Legacies,” 116–117.

¹² Melish, “Northern Slavery and Its Legacies,” 117.

¹³ Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Linford D. Fisher, “‘Dangerous Designs’: The 1676 Barbados Act to Prohibit New England Slave Importation,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 3 (Jan. 2014), 99–124.

¹⁴ Richard J. Boles, *Dividing the Faith: The Rise of Segregated Churches in the Early American North* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 46, 26.

¹⁵ FCR-RB (seq. 229).

¹⁶ FCR-RB (seq. 250).

¹⁷ FCR-RB (seq. 263) (Phillis, Jan. 23, 1743), (seq. 231) (Abraham Morgan, Sep. 3, 1648), (seq. 126) (Abigail Williams, Jan. 5, 1755).

¹⁸ FCR-RB (seq. 102) (Guinea); FCR-RB (seq. 115) (Tobias, Oct. 3, 1762). The word “slave” does not appear as a descriptor of enslaved members of the First Church in Roxbury. The word “slave” can be found in the

church records, though infrequently; we shall come across one example later in this report, when John Eliot notes in the records that on June 11, 1676, during King Philip's War, "Some captives women & children w[ere] sent downe shipped to be sold for slaves." See FCR-RB, 194.

¹⁹ FCR-RB (seq. 136) (Richard, Oct. 7, 1764).

²⁰ FCR-RB (seq.130) (all, Sep. 12, 1756).

²¹ The records of the First Church in Roxbury note church members, and not everyone who attended the church.

²² Gloria McCahon Whiting, "'Endearing Ties': Black Family Life in Early New England," (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2016), 134–190 (ch. 3).

²³ Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" ch. 2.

²⁴ Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" ch. 2.

²⁵ "An Act for the Better Preventing of a Spurious and Mixt Issue" (Chapter 10) (Dec. 5, 1705), in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay*, vol. 1 (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1869), 578–79.

²⁶ "An Act for the Better Preventing of a Spurious and Mixt Issue" (Chapter 10) (Dec. 5, 1705), in *Acts and Resolves ... of the Massachusetts Bay*, vol. 1, 578–79; Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" 152–53.

²⁷ "Bedonah & His Wife's Sentence" (Apr. 4, 1704), Suffolk County Court of General Sessions of the Peace, Court Records 1702–1719, p. 32 (im. 61); Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" ch. 2.

²⁸ Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" ch. 2.

²⁹ Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 32.

³⁰ Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" ch. 2.

³¹ FCR-RB, (Ebenezer Bedunah, Jul. 28, 1745) (seq. 263), (Joseph Bedunah, Nov. 11, 1748) (seq. 263), (Mary Bedunah, in or shortly before Sep. 1750) (seq. 264).

³² Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" ch. 2.

³³ See Historic Burial Grounds Initiative, Boston, <https://www.cityofboston.gov/Parks/HBGI/search.asp> or <https://www.cityofboston.gov/Parks/HBGI/search.asp>. Benjamin Bedunah passed away on August 25, 1771, and rests in Eliot Burial Ground (Gravestone A62).

³⁴ Caitlin Galante-DeAngelis Hopkins, "The Shadow of Change: Politics and Memory in New England's Historic Burying Grounds, 1630–1776 (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2014), 110–112.

³⁵ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*; Whiting, "'Endearing Ties,'" 23. In seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century New England, there may have been some worry among enslavers that baptism could lead to emancipation. The historian Nicole Saffold Maskiell notes too that "Cotton Mather's 1706 slave catechism, included in his pamphlet *The Negro Christianized*, was intended to induce slave masters to baptize their slaves without the worry that Christianization caused emancipation." Nicole Saffold Maskiell, "'Here Lyes the Body of Cicely Negro': Enslaved Women in Colonial Cambridge and the Making of New England History," *New England Quarterly*, vol. 95, no. 2 (Jun. 2022), 126, 126 n.28; Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (ed. Paul Royster) (Boston: B. Green, 1706), 24–26, available at <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/28>.

³⁶ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 45.

³⁷ FCR-RB (seq. 136) (Richard); FCR-RB (seq. 130) (Keturah).

³⁸ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 81.

³⁹ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 92, 80–81.

⁴⁰ Jim Downs, *Maladies of Empire: How Colonialism, Slavery, and War Transformed Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 139.

⁴¹ Richard A. Bailey, "From Goddess of Love to Unloved Wife: Naming Slaves and Redeeming Masters in Eighteenth-Century New England," in *Slavery/Antislavery in New England* (Peter Benes, ed.) (Boston: Boston

University, 2005), 44–55; Kenneth P. Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 4 (Oct. 1997), 823–834; Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 21.

⁴² Maskiell, “‘Here Lyes the Body of Cicely Negro,’” 115–154; Caitlin Galante DeAngelis Hopkins, “The Shadow of Change: Politics and Memory in New England’s Historic Burying Grounds, 1630–1776,” (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2014), 110–112.

⁴³ *Boston News-Letter* (Dec. 13, 1733), 2.

⁴⁴ Wayne Tucker, “Dudleian Slavery in Roslindale,” <https://eleven-names.com/2021/08/19/dudleian-slavery-in-roslindale/>.

⁴⁵ Wayne Tucker, “Pirates, Grift, and a Baptism,” *Eleven Names Project*, <https://eleven-names.com/2021/08/18/judge-paul-dudley/>; “Letters from Josiah Addington and Paul Dudley to the Board, enclosing documents concerning privateers and illegal trade,” The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/864, doc. 150–151, pp. 272–74.

⁴⁶ FCR-RB seq. 102 (admitted). FCR-RB seq. 263 (baptized).

⁴⁷ Wayne Tucker, “Joseph Dudley, Brill the Enslaved Coachman, and Enslaved Indians,” *Eleven Names Project*, <https://eleven-names.com/2021/08/19/joseph-dudley-and-brill-his-enslaved-coachman>.

⁴⁸ Will of Joseph Dudley, reprinted in *History of the Dudley Family*, 333–335.

⁴⁹ FCR-RB (seq. 250); RLCR 182; FCR-RB (seq. 258); RLCR 201; Roxbury Records, Births, Marriages, Deaths, 1630–1785, p. 65 ([im. 34](#)), Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988, [Ancestry.com](#); *Vital Records of Roxbury, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849*, Volume 2: Marriages and Deaths (Salem: Essex Institute, 1926), 680.

⁵⁰ Wayne Tucker, “Joseph Dudley, Brill the Enslaved Coachman, and Enslaved Indians,” *Eleven Names Project*, <https://eleven-names.com/2021/08/19/joseph-dudley-and-brill-his-enslaved-coachman>.

⁵¹ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 6, 25–26.

⁵² FCR-RB, 76 (seq. 102) (Guinea), 80 (seq. 107) (Phillis).

⁵³ See FCR-RB.

⁵⁴ See the Table and the Section of this Report entitled “Native War Captives.”

⁵⁵ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 77–78.

⁵⁶ John Eliot, *A Further Account of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England* (London, 1660), in *Eliot Tracts*, 359–360; Neal Salisbury, “Red Puritans: The ‘Praying Indians’ of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Jan. 1974), 27–54; Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 39–40; Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening*, 24; Thwing, *History of the First Church in Roxbury*, 12.

⁵⁷ Salisbury, “Red Puritans.”

⁵⁸ Salisbury, “Red Puritans,” 50, 35; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton, 1976 [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975]), 248–249.

⁵⁹ Salisbury, “Red Puritans.”

⁶⁰ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 6, 14.

⁶¹ FCR-AR, 31 (seq. 41) ([Aug. 31, 1741](#)).

⁶² FCR-AR, 307; FCR-AAM (seq. 10).

⁶³ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 6, 25–26, 69–70.

⁶⁴ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton, & Mulligan, 1855), 350–354, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/menu.html>.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Scott, “‘Rude and Prophane Behaviour’ in the Litchfield Meeting House in 1764,” *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Jul. 1954), 93–95; see also Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 87.

⁶⁶ Scott, “‘Rude and Prophane Behaviour’”; Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 87.

⁶⁷ FCR-RB (seq. 144).

⁶⁸ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 7.

⁶⁹ FCR-RB (seq. 144).

⁷⁰ FCR-RB (seq. 144), 101 (seq. 130).

⁷¹ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 99.

⁷² *Boston Evening-Post* (Jul. 20, 1741), 2.

⁷³ SCPR #15317, Inventory ([15317:27](#)), Massachusetts Archives.

⁷⁴ Reprinted in Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 54.

⁷⁵ *Records of the Brewster Congregational Church (Brewster, Massachusetts), 1700–1792* (Privately printed, 1911), 95–99; Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 84.

⁷⁶ Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening*, 10, 108–112, 126–129; Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 5, 8, 55, 66–69.

⁷⁷ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 41. Though some Indians did live in English towns.

⁷⁸ Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening*, 113.

⁷⁹ *Boston News-Letter* (Aug. 31, 1749), 2.

⁸⁰ On reading runaway slave advertisements, see, among many other texts, David Waldstreicher, *Runaway American: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004), 3–26; Antonio T. Bly, “‘Indubitable Signs’: Reading Silence as *Text* in New England Runaway Slave Advertisements,” *Slavery & Abolition*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2021), 240–268.

⁸¹ Maria’s indictment “Att A Court of Assistants held at Boston 6th September 1681” is as follows:

“Marja Negro servant to Joshua Lambe of Roxbury in the County of Suffolke in New England being presented by the Grand Jury was Indicted by the name of marja Negro for not having the feare of God before hir eyes & being Instigated by the divil at or upon the eleventh day of July last in the night did wittingly willingly & feloniously set on fier the dwelling house of Thomas swann of sd Roxbury by taking a Coale from under a still & carrjed it into another Roome and lajd it on the floore neere the doore & presently went & crept into a hole at a back doore of thy master Lambs house & set it on fier and also taking a live Coale betweene two chips & Carried it into the chamber by which also it was Consumed as by yor Confession will appeare contrary to the peace of our Sovereigne Lord the king his Croune & dignity the lawes of this Jurisdiction in that Case made & provided title firing of houses = The prisoner at the barr pleaded & acknowledged himself to be Guilty of ye fact. And accordingly the next day being Again brought to the Barr had setenc of death pronnounc agt hir by the Honnoble Gounor yt she should Goe from the barr to the prison whenc she Came & thence to the place of Execution & there be burnt.”

John Noble (ed.), *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, 1630–1692*, vol. 1 (Boston: Suffolk County, 1901), 197–99.

⁸² Michael J. Canavan, “Where Were the Quakers Hanged in Boston?” (Boston, 1911) 3–15. Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Bostonian Society (May 17, 1910); Increase Mather diary entry (Sep. 22, 1681), reprinted in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 3 (1855–1858), 320; Cotton Mather, *Pillars of Salt: An History of Some Criminals Executed in this Land, for Capital Crimes* (Boston: B. Green & J. Allen, 1699), 70–71, available at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=evans;idno=N00729.0001.001>.

In his diary entry for 22 September 1681, Increase Mather, Cotton Mather’s son and the president of Harvard University, wrote:

There were three persons executed in Boston, — an Englishman for a rape; a negro man for burning a house at Northampton; and a negro woman who burnt two houses at Roxbury, July 12, in one of which a child was burnt to death. The negro woman was burned to death, — the first that has suffered such a death in New England.

This story is also briefly recounted in Warren, *New England Bound*, 202–204.

⁸³ Helen Schatvet Ullman, “Sarah (Chandler) (Cleaves) (Stevens) (Parker) Allen of Roxbury and Sandwich, Massachusetts: Documenting Her Several Husbands,” *American Genealogist*, vol. 80 (2005), 27–37. Kali Nicole

Gross, "[The Historical Truth](#) about Women Burned at the Stake in America? Most Were Black," *Washington Post* (Feb. 25, 2022).

Court records do not mention anyone suffered burns or died in the fires; the entry about Maria in the First Church in Roxbury records indicate that one girl was burned, though it is ambiguous as to whether she died from her injuries. FCR-RB, 64 (seq. 90).

⁸⁴ Sylvanus Warro is discussed at greater length in the section entitled "Family Separation."

⁸⁵ Harvard University, "Examination of College Students and Others for Disorderly Conduct, 1676," Harvard University Archives, [UAI 15.350](#); for a transcription, see *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, [vol. 49, 115–131](#). M. Michelle Jarret Morris, *Under Household Government: Sex and Family in Puritan Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 18–19. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 459–460.

⁸⁶ Francis S. Drake, *The Town of Roxbury* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1905), 60.

⁸⁷ Suffolk County Court File #26559, ff. 61–62 ([im. 334–341](#)); for a transcription, see John Noble, "The Case of Maria in the Court of Assistants in 1681" (Jan. 1900), *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, [Vol. 6: Transactions 1899, 1900](#) (1904), 323–37.

⁸⁸ Gross, "Historical Truth."

⁸⁹ Gross, "Historical Truth."

⁹⁰ Tiya Miles, "The Radical Hope of Black Motherhood," *Boston Globe* (May 7, 2021), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/05/07/opinion/radical-hope-black-motherhood/>.

⁹¹ *New-England Weekly Journal* (Boston, MA) (Oct. 21, 1735), 2.

⁹² *Boston News-Letter* (Dec. 28, 1769), 1.

⁹³ Will of Eleazer Williams, SCPR #14346, Will ([14346:5](#)).

⁹⁴ *Boston News-Letter* (May 1, 1766), 3.

⁹⁵ *Boston News-Letter* (Mar. 29, 1764), 3.

⁹⁶ *Boston Post-Boy* (Jun. 18, 1764), 3. Greateon owned Greyhound Tavern. Francis S. Drake, *The Town of Roxbury: Its Memorable Persons and Places, Its History and Antiquities, with Numerous Illustrations of Its Old Landmarks and Noted Personages* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1908), 162.

⁹⁷ *Boston Gazette* (Jan. 19, 1748), 4.

⁹⁸ *Boston News-Letter* (Apr. 7, 1774).

⁹⁹ *Boston Gazette* (Jun. 11, 1739), 3.

¹⁰⁰ Martha E. Sewall Curtis, *Ye Old Meeting House* (Boston: Anchor Linotype Printing Co., 1909), 61 (Venus Roe); Jeremy Belknap, "Queries Respecting the Slavery and Emancipation of Negroes in Massachusetts..." *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, ser. 1, vol. 4 (1795), 200; George H. Moore, *Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts* (New York, 1866), 57; Hardesty, *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds*, 99–100.

¹⁰¹ *Boston News-Letter* (May 4, 1758), 3. It is possible that the girl and woman are daughter and mother.

¹⁰² Wendy Warren, "The Cause of Her Grief: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England," *Journal of American History*, vol. 93, no. 4 (Mar. 2007), 1031–1049.

¹⁰³ Gookin almost certainly attended the First Church in Roxbury for some time. He was, however, a member of a neighboring church—the First Church of Dorchester.

¹⁰⁴ M. Michelle Jarrett Morris, "'Sold to Mayntence a Bastard': Sylvannus Warro's Story," in *Slavery/Antislavery in New England* (Peter Benes, ed.) (Boston: Boston University, 2005), 31–43.

¹⁰⁵ Case of Sylvanus Warro (Apr. 30, 1672), Suffolk County Court File #1109, Massachusetts Archives.

¹⁰⁶ Warro would be sold by his master, who the court designated as William Parke rather than the man who actually owned him, Daniel Gookin. Case of Sylvanus Warro (Apr. 30, 1672), Suffolk County Court File #1109, Massachusetts Archives; Morris, "'Sold to Mayntence a Bastard.'"

-
- ¹⁰⁷ Morris, “‘Sold to Mayntence a Bastard’; Morris, *Under Household Government*, ch. 1.
- ¹⁰⁸ Suffolk County Case File #2104, Massachusetts Archives.
- ¹⁰⁹ Morris, “‘Sold to Mayntence a Bastard’; Morris, *Under Household Government*, ch. 1.
- ¹¹⁰ Morris, “‘Sold to Mayntence a Bastard.’”
- ¹¹¹ Morris, “‘Sold to Mayntence a Bastard.’”
- ¹¹² Linford D. Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), introduction, 86–89, 113, 129; Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip’s War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 76, 84–85; Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 24; Linford D. Fisher, “Native Americans, Conversion, and Christian Practice in Colonial New England, 1640–1730,” *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 102, no. 1 (Jan. 2009), 101–124; Katharine Gerbner, “Theorizing Conversion: Christianity, Colonization, and Consciousness in the Early Modern Atlantic World,” *History Compass*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2015), 134–147.
- ¹¹³ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 26–27.
- ¹¹⁴ Boles, *Dividing the Faith*, 56.
- ¹¹⁵ Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening*, 104–105.
- ¹¹⁶ Jean O’Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650–1790* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 54–58; Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 76–77; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 28.
- ¹¹⁷ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 77–78.
- ¹¹⁸ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 78.
- ¹¹⁹ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 78–79; DeLucia, *Memory Lands*, 45.
- ¹²⁰ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 93.
- ¹²¹ John Noble (ed.), *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, 1630–1692*, vol. 2 (Boston: Suffolk County, 1904), 95.
- ¹²² FCR-RB (seq. 229).
- ¹²³ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 92, 80–81; FCR-RB (seq. 229).
- ¹²⁴ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, ch. 1.
- ¹²⁵ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, ch. 1.
- ¹²⁶ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, ch. 1.
- ¹²⁷ John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, Richard Dunn, James Savage, & Yeandle, Laetitia (eds.) (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1996), 246; Wendy Warren, “‘The Cause of Her Grief’”; Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, ch. 1.
- ¹²⁸ Margaret Newell states *First Fruits* was likely co-authored by Thomas Weld and Hugh Peter. Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 92.
- ¹²⁹ Michael P. Clark (ed.), *The Eliot Tracts* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 1.
- ¹³⁰ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 92; Anonymous [likely Thomas Weld & Hugh Peter], “New England’s First Fruits” (1643), in *The Eliot Tracts*, ed. Michael P. Clark (Westport, CT: Praeger 2003), 55–78, 59.
- ¹³¹ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 93; Anonymous [likely Thomas Weld & Hugh Peter], “New England’s First Fruits” (1643), in *Eliot Tracts*, 61.
- ¹³² Dorcas’s story is incredibly interesting; one can learn more about her life in Whiting, “‘Endearing Ties’”; Deborah McNally, “Dorcas the Blackamore,” <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/dorcas-blackmore-ca-1620/>.
- ¹³³ Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening*, 27–29.
- ¹³⁴ FCR-RB (seq. 188) (Apr. 7, 1676).

¹³⁵ Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening*, 27–29; Lepore, *Name of War*, xi, xiii, 136–141.

¹³⁶ Fisher, “Dangerous Designes,” 99–124.

¹³⁷ Lepore, *Name of War*.

¹³⁸ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 148–150; Linford D. Fisher, “The Bible and Indigenous Language Translations in the Americas,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in America* (Paul C. Gutjahr, ed.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 39–59.

¹³⁹ John Eliot, “Petition against Selling Indian Surrenders as Slaves to the West Indies” (Aug. 13, 1675), Massachusetts Archives Collection, Massachusetts State Archives, vol. 30, 173; Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 148–9.

¹⁴⁰ Lepore, *Name of War*.

¹⁴¹ Linford D. Fisher, “‘Why shall wee have peace to bee made slaves’: Indian Surrenderers during and after King Philip’s War,” *Ethnohistory*, vol. 64, no. 1 (Jan. 2017), 91–114, 101–103.

¹⁴² See section on Sylvanus Warro and accompanying endnotes.

¹⁴³ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 148–9.

¹⁴⁴ Fisher, *Indian Great Awakening*, 27–29; Lepore, *Name of War*, xi, xiii, 136–141.

¹⁴⁵ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 148–150; Lepore, *Name of War*, 140.

¹⁴⁶ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 148–150.

¹⁴⁷ Fisher, “The Bible and Indigenous Language Translations in the Americas”; Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 86.

¹⁴⁸ Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 234.

¹⁴⁹ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 94–95; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 234.

¹⁵⁰ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 94–95. On Sassamon, see Bremer, “John Sassamon”; Lepore, *Name of War*.

¹⁵¹ Fisher, “The Bible and Indigenous Language Translations in the Americas”; Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 86–87; Francis J. Bremer, “John Sassamon,” in *First Founders: American Puritanism and Puritans in an Atlantic World* (Hanover: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012), 200; Josiah Drake, *The Book of the Indians of North America* (Boston, 1833), 51; Lepore, *Name of War*, 34.

¹⁵² Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 73, 86.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

AAM – *Articles of agreement for building new meetinghouse; and insurance premium, 1802–1804.*

AR – *Church [Administrative] Record Book, 1733–1815.*

AR-2 *Church [Administrative] Record Book, 1815-1867.*

FCR – First Church in Roxbury (Roxbury, Boston, Mass.). Records, 1630-1956, bMS 626.

RB – *Record Book of First Religious Society in Roxbury, ca. 1630–1775.*

RCLR – Roxbury Land and Church Records.

SCPR – Suffolk County Probate Records, Boston, MA, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives, Massachusetts Archives.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Unpublished Primary Sources

First Church in Roxbury (Roxbury, Boston, Mass.). Records, 1630-1956, bMS 626. Harvard Divinity School Library, Harvard University. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/div00626/catalog>.

Record Book of First Religious Society in Roxbury, ca. 1630–1775,
https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/12/archival_objects/224910.

Church [Administrative] Record Book, 1733–1815,
https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/12/archival_objects/224902.

Articles of agreement for building new meetinghouse; and insurance premium, 1802–1804,
https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/12/archival_objects/224907.

Church [Administrative] record book, 1815-1867,
https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/12/archival_objects/224904.

Harvard University, “Examination of College Students and Others for Disorderly Conduct, 1676,” Harvard University Archives, [UAI 15.350](#).

Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA
Dolbeare Family Papers.

National Archives, Kew, UK.
CO 5/864.

Roxbury Tax Valuation, vol. 134, Massachusetts Archives.

Suffolk County Court Files, Suffolk Files Collection, Supreme Judicial Court Archives, Massachusetts Archives.

Suffolk County Probate Records, Boston, MA, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives, Massachusetts Archives.

Published Primary Sources

Belknap, Jeremy. "Queries Respecting the Slavery and Emancipation of Negroes in Massachusetts." *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*. Ser. 1, vol. 4. 1795.

Bonner, John. *The Town of Boston in New England*. 1722.

Boston Record of the Commissioners. Vol. 11: Records of Boston Selectmen, 1701–1715. Boston: Rockwell & Churchill. 1884.

Boston Record of the Commissioners, Vol. 28: Boston Marriages from 1700 to 1751 (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1898), 227.

Clark, Michael P. (ed). *The Eliot Tracts*. Westport, CT: Praeger. 2003.

Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton, & Mulligan, 1855. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/menu.html>).

Dunkle, Robert J. & Lainhart Ann S. (eds). *The Records of the Churches of Boston*. Boston: NEHGS. 2002. CD-ROM.

Cotton Mather, *Pillars of Salt: An History of Some Criminals Executed in this Land, for Capital Crimes* (Boston: B. Green & J. Allen, 1699), 70–71, available at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=evans;idno=N00729.0001.001>.

Mather, Increase. Diary Entry, Sep. 22, 1681. *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 3 (1855–1858).

Noble, John (ed). *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, 1630–1692*, vol. 2. Boston: Suffolk County. 1904.

Noble, John. "The Case of Maria in the Court of Assistants in 1681" (Jan. 1900). *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, [Vol. 6: Transactions 1899, 1900](#). 1904. pp. 323–37.

Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, vol. 49.

Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, vol. 3.

Records of the Brewster Congregational Church (Brewster, Massachusetts), 1700–1792. Privately printed. 1911.

Roxbury Land and Church Records. Boston: Rockwell & Churchill. 1884.

Winthrop, John (Dunn, Richard; Savage, James; & Yeandle, Laetitia [eds]). *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society. 1996.

Newspapers

Boston News-Letter

Boston Evening-Post

Boston Gazette

Boston Post-Boy

New-England Courant (Boston, MA)

New-England Weekly Journal (Boston, MA)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Bailey, Richard A. "From Goddess of Love to Unloved Wife: Naming Slaves and Redeeming Masters in Eighteenth-Century New England." *Slavery/Antislavery in New England*. Benes, Peter (ed). Boston: Boston University. 2005. pp. 44–55

Beckert, Sven & Rockman, Seth (eds). *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of Economic Development*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2016.

Bell, Edward L. *Persistence of Memories of Slavery and Emancipation in Historical Andover: The Massachusetts Woman Enumerated as a "Slave" in the 1830 U.S. Census and the Family of Rosanna Coburn from Enslavement to Contingent Freedom*. Boston: Shawsheen Press. 2021.

Bellin, Joshua D. & Mielke, Laura L. eds. *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603–1832*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2011.

Benes, Peter (ed). *Slavery/Antislavery in New England*. Boston: Boston University. 2005.

Bly, Antonio T. "'Indubitable Signs': Reading Silence as Text in New England Runaway Slave Advertisements." *Slavery & Abolition*. Vol. 42, No. 2. 2021. pp. 240–268.

Boles, Richard J. *Dividing the Faith: The Rise of Segregated Churches in the Early American North*. New York: New York University Press. 2020.

Bremer, Francis J. "John Sassamon." *First Founders: American Puritanism and Puritans in an Atlantic World*. Hanover: University of New Hampshire Press. 2012.

Brooks, Lisa. *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2018.

Charpentier, Faye. "Slavery and King's Chapel." 2019. <http://www.kings-chapel.org/memorialtoenslavedpersons.html>.

Clark, Michael P (ed). *The Eliot Tracts*. Westport, CT: Praeger. 2003.

Clark-Pujara, Christy. "Slavery and the Northern Economy." Jay, Bethan & Lyerly, Cynthia Lynn (eds). *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2016. pp. 96–115.

Curtis, Martha E. *Sewall Ye Old Meeting House*. Boston: Anchor Linotype Printing Co. 1909.

- DeLucia, Christine M. *Memory Lands: King Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2018.
- Downs, Jim. *Maladies of Empire: How Colonialism, Slavery, and War Transformed Medicine*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2021.
- Drake, Francis S. *The Town of Roxbury: Its Memorable Persons and Places, Its History and Antiquities, with Numerous Illustrations of Its Old Landmarks and Noted Personages*. Boston: Municipal Printing Office. 1908.
- Drake, Josiah. *The Book of the Indians of North America*. Boston. 1833.
- Dudley, Dean. *History of the Dudley Family*. Wakefield, MA. 1886.
- Farrow, Anne, Lang, Joel, & Frank, Jenifer. *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery*. New York: Random House. 2005.
- Fisher, Linford D. "Native Americans, Conversion, and Christian Practice in Colonial New England, 1640–1730." *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 102, no. 1. Jan. 2009). pp. 101–124.
- Fisher, Linford D. *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2014.
- Fisher, Linford D. "'Dangerous Designs': The 1676 Barbados Act to Prohibit New England Slave Importation," *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 3 (Jan. 2014), 99–124.
- Fisher, Linford D. "'Why shall wee have peace to bee made slaves': Indian Surrenderers during and after King Philip's War." *Ethnohistory*, vol. 64, no. 1. Jan. 2017.
- Fisher, Linford D. "The Bible and Indigenous Language Translations in the Americas." *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in America*. Gutjahr. Paul C (ed). New York: Oxford University Press. 2018.
- Gerbner, Katharine. "Beyond the 'Halfway Covenant': Church Membership, Extended Baptism, and Outreach in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1656–1667," *New England Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 2. Jun. 2012. pp. 281–301.
- Gerbner, Katharine. "Theorizing Conversion: Christianity, Colonization, and Consciousness in the Early Modern Atlantic World." *History Compass*, vol. 13, no. 3. 2015. pp. 134–147.
- Greene, Lorenzo Johnston. *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620–1776*. Eastford, CT: Marino Fine Books, 2017 [New York: Columbia University Press, 1942].
- Gross, Kali Nicole. "[The Historical Truth](#) about Women Burned at the Stake in America? Most Were Black." *Washington Post*. Feb. 25, 2022.
- Hardesty, Jared Ross. *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds: A History of Slavery in New England*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

- Harvard University, *Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Report*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. 2022.
- Horton, James Oliver. "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue." *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. Horton, James Oliver & Horton, Loise E. (eds). New York: New Press. 2006.
- Horton, James Oliver & Horton, Loise E. (eds). *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. New York: New Press. 2006.
- Jay, Bethany & Lyster, Cynthia Lynn (eds). *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2016.
- Kidder, David. "Owning our History: First Church and Race, 1636–1873." 2019. <https://www.firstchurchcambridge.org/owning-our-history/>.
- Kimball, Eric "What have we to do with slavery?": New Englanders and the Slave Economies of the West Indies." Beckert, Sven & Rockman, Seth (eds). *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of Economic Development*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2016. pp. 181–194.
- Lepore, Jill. *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*. New York: Vintage. 1998).
- McNally, Deborah. "Dorcas the Blackamore." <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/dorcas-blackmore-ca-1620/>.
- Melish, Joanne Pope. "Northern Slavery and Its Legacies: Still a New (and Unwelcome?) Story." Jay, Bethan & Lyster, Cynthia Lynn (eds). *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2016.
- Miles, Tiya. "The Radical Hope of Black Motherhood," *Boston Globe*. May 7, 2021. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/05/07/opinion/radical-hope-black-motherhood/>.
- Minkema, Kenneth P. "Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade." *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 4. Oct. 1997. pp. 823–834
- Morison, Samuel E. *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*. Vol. 2. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1936.
- Morris, Michelle J. M. "Sold to Mayntence a Bastard": Sylvannus Warro's Story." *Slavery/Antislavery in New England*. Peter Benes, ed. Boston: Boston University. 2005. pp. 31–43.
- Morris, Michelle J. M. *Under Household Government: Sex and Family in Puritan Massachusetts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2013.
- Newell, Margaret E. *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2015.
- Noble, John. "The Case of Maria in the Court of Assistants in 1681" (Jan. 1900). *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*. [Vol. 6: Transactions 1899, 1900](#). 1904. pp. 323–37.

- O'Brien, Jean. *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650–1790*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1997.
- Peterson, Mark. *The City State of Boston: The Rise and Fall of an Atlantic Power, 1630–1865*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2019.
- Pulsipher, Jenny Hale. "Playing John White: John Wompas and Racial Identity in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World." In Bellin, Joshua D. & Mielke, Laura L. eds. *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603–1832*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2011. pp. 195–220.
- Scott, Kenneth. "'Rude and Prophan Behaviour' in the Litchfield Meeting House in 1764." *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin*. Vol. 19, No. 3. Jul. 1954. pp. 93–95.
- Sublette, Ned & Sublette, Constance. *The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books. 2016.
- Thomas, Felicia Y. "'Fit for Town or Country': Black Women and Work in Colonial Massachusetts." *Journal of African American History*. Vol. 105, No. 2. Spring 2020. pp. 191–212.
- Thwing, Walter E. *History of the First Church in Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1630–1904*. Boston: W. A. Butterfield. 1908.
- Tucker, Wayne. "Joseph Dudley, Brill the Enslaved Coachman, and Enslaved Indians." *Eleven Names Project*. <https://eleven-names.com/2021/08/19/joseph-dudley-and-brill-his-enslaved-coachman>.
- Tucker, Wayne. "Pirates, Grift, and a Baptism." *Eleven Names Project*. <https://eleven-names.com/2021/08/18/judge-paul-dudley/>.
- Ullman, Helen Schatvet. "Sarah (Chandler) (Cleaves) (Stevens) (Parker) Allen of Roxbury and Sandwich, Massachusetts: Documenting Her Several Husbands." *American Genealogist*, vol. 80. 2005. pp. 27–37.
- Waldstreicher, David. *Runaway American: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution*. New York: Hill & Wang. 2004.
- Warren, Wendy. *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America*. New York: Liveright. 2016.
- Warren, Wendy. "The Cause of Her Grief: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England." *Journal of American History*. Vol. 93, no. 4. Mar. 2007. pp. 1031–1049.
- Whiting, Gloria McCahon. "'Endearing Ties': Black Family Life in Early New England." PhD Dissertation, Harvard University. 2016.