**SLAVERY, ANTISLAVERY and the UNDERGROUND RAILROAD:**

**A DUTCHESS COUNTY INTRODUCTION**

**By Peter A. Bunten**

**POUGHKEEPSIE AAUW**

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| **SLIDE 1: SLAVERY, ANTISLAVERY AND THE UGRR:**  **AN INTRODUCTION** |

Good evening, everyone. Thank you, Celia, and the leadership of the Pok AAUW for this opportunity. It is great to be here. A few words about MHAHP. We began in 2006, as a group of local historians, educators, and other interested colleagues. We’ve done research on this topic, published a guidebook for Dutchess County and we run several programs, which I can discuss at the end of my remarks.

Tonight, I’ve been asked to give you an overview of the slavery and antislavery history of Dutchess County.

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| **SLIDE 2: FROM AFRICA TO THE AMERICAS:**  **THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND OF ENSLAVEMENT** |

Slavery in America was not a historical curiosity. It was part of a worldwide system that was embedded in the founding of our county. This global system resulted in the deportation and slaughter of millions of Africans and the establishment of chattel slavery. European powers looked to Africa for trade – in cloth, rice, metals, etc. – **and people**. European colonists could not supply the labor needed to build new colonial societies in the Americas. The purchased or captured Africans who were traded or sold marked the start of a new economic era, one based on market growth, brutal oppression, and racism.

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| **SLIDE 3: FROM AFRICA TO THE AMERICAS:**  **MAP OF SLAVE DESTINATIONS** |

In this 2-minute video, dots marks each ship that moved captives from Africa, across the Atlantic to places in South and North America. 12.5 million people were moved – a massive shift of population. This occurred over a period of roughly 300 years, beginning in the late 15th – early 16th century and carried on through the early decades of the 19th century.

[ play the video ]

The total number of Africans shipped directly to North America was relatively small compared to, say Brazil – less than 400,000 into the Gulf Coast and up the eastern seaboard. But many others were brought to North America after first spending time in the West Indies. For those having to make the Atlantic voyage, the “Middle Passage” – the trip on the slave ships – was horrorable. The men were stored below deck – naked, chained, lying tightly packed. Vomit and excrement surrounding them. The women were kept on deck, where, in addition to being chained, were at the mercy of the sexual appetites of the sailors. Many captives jumped overboard to their deaths. Trips could take as long as 3 months and the mortality rate was 12-15%. Estimates are that at least 1.5 million Africans died during the Middle Passage.

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| **SLIDE 4: INTO NEW YORK: PHILIPSBURG MANOR** |

One of those slave ships came very close to home. In 1685, the *Charles*, a ship owned by Frederick Philips – one of the wealthiest men in the colony - was sent to Africa to purchase men and women and bring them back to sell. The captain of the *Charles* purchased 146 people, and the return trip – first to Barbados - took 12 weeks. Only 105 survived this part of the trip. After selling 82 at Barbados, the *Charles*, with 23 remaining Africans, headed toward New York. During this part of the trip, 14 more Africans perished. . . That’s about a 38% loss of life. The Africans who finally arrived at Rye were marched across to the Tarrytown area, where they formed the nucleus of the first of several dozen enslaved men, women and children who would build the manor house, barn, grist mill, and church. The original Church and Manor House – along with a replica grist mill and a period-true Dutch Barn - can be seen there today.

As a point of comparison, let me note that the FIRST enslaved Africans arrived in New Netherland in 1627. This was only eight years after the very first Africans arrived at Jamestown. In 1693 - just eight years after the *Charles* arrived, Dutchess would be designated one of the original 10 counties in New York colony.

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| **SLIDE 5: [ MAP ] DUTCHESS COUNTY IN THE 1700s** |

From Westchester all the way to Albany, the land had been granted in huge chunks, owned and run by barons (a la Frederick Philips) or their appointees – familiar names such as the Beekmans, the Livingstons, and more.

However, from its birth in 1693 until 1713, the population of Dutchess was so low that it was attached to Ulster County for purposes of administration. The first census taken, in 1702, recorded a mere 70 people, approximately 10-12 families.

But the situation rapidly changed. By 1737 a census recorded 3,162 white people and 262 enslaved people (about 8%) living in the county. This growth reflected similar gains in the other counties north of New York City. The fur trade up north was dying, demand for market goods was growing steadily --- with New York City on its way to becoming a world center for British trade; and the Hudson Valley was being counted on to supply more and more goods.

In the half-century from 1723 to 1771, the Dutchess population grew twenty-fold, to more than 22,000 residents. It jumped from least to second-most populous county in the province. Though the settler population was growing rapidly, there was a labor shortage. Farmers in Dutchess, Ulster and elsewhere needed more people to meet market demands. The larger farmers - bunched close to the river – and even some smaller ones looked to enslaved people to fill that shortage.

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| **SLIDE 6: ENSLAVED POPULATION – HUDSON VALLEY** |

As demand increased and the white population grew, so too did the enslaved population. By 1750, enslaved people comprised as many as one-third of all newcomers to the colony. New York’s enslaved population tripled between 1723 and 1790 --- from just over 7,200 to 26,000.

***One-half*** of New York’s enslaved population lived in the Hudson Valley, whose number of enslaved peaked in 1790. The decline that we see in the table for the year 1800 largely reflects the reaction to the anticipated impact of the 1799 New York law setting a date for the legal abolition of slavery (1827).

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| **SLIDE 7: THE VALUE OF ENSLAVED WORKERS** |

You’re hearing me use the term “enslaved people” more so that the common term “slave”. That is because we need to recognize the full humanity of these men and women who – against their will – were taken from homes and families and cast into a cruel system of labor and oppression. The word “slave” too often takes us to a misreading of these people as a mostly undifferentiated mass of interchangeable workers. “Enslaved” forces us to recognize the *agency* of these people and lets us see that many of their actions were self-generated, not always imposed on by their owners.

Who were these enslaved people? What kinds of work were they doing in Dutchess? If we look at diaries, record books, notices of slave sales, “Runaway Slave” advertisements, etc., we learn a lot about their skills and expertise: Blacksmith, Tailor, Boat pilot, Master miller, carpenter, wheelwright, and others.

Some trades were highly skilled. It might take eight years to become a “master miller.” Likewise for blacksmithing. A boat pilot required knowledge of engineering, ability to read maps, writing and arithmetic fluency (for bills of lading, etc.). Enslaved people were regularly engaged in skilled work - the skills with which either they began enslavement or learned as they performed a wide variety of tasks on farms or in towns and cities.

Enslaved people also had to adapt to changing skill requirements. While grain production was the mainstay of the mid-Hudson economy during the 1700s, farmers increasingly diversified their production into, say, flax or hemp, and orchards. Enslaved people needed to learn carpentry, clear fields, build walls and construct barns, tend to livestock.

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| **SLIDE 8: RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY FROM THE BEGINNING** |

From the very beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, enslaved people fought for their freedom. Many perished in rebellions during the Middle Passage and later. And many ran away, not only from the South to the North but also from right here in the Hudson Valley. And their agency and bravery sparked a movement that led to abolitionism and the Underground Railroad.

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| **SLIDE 9: FREEDOM SEEKERS IN THE HUDSON VALLEY** |

***In Defiance***, a book by Susan Stessin-Cohn and Ashley Hurlburt-Biagini, is a collection of Runaway slave ads from the Hudson Valley. Those ads help us understand not only the extent of the resistance to slavery by Freedom Seekers but also provide a wealth of information about the occupations, appearance, names, and individual characteristics of people who too often have been left out of taught history. These freedom seekers, along with those from points south, sparked the development of a multiracial abolition movement that led to the end of slavery.

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| **SLIDE 10: QUAKERS AND THEIR LONG PATH TO ANTISLAVERY** |

While Quakers often have been described as “friend to the slave,” in fact they had a very complicated history with slavery. Many Quakers owned enslaved people. It wasn’t easy for them to get from ***accepting*** slavery to ***remonstrating against*** it. From the time they left England, to the building of sugar cane plantations in the West Indies, all the way through the settlement of their meetings in colonial Pennsylvania, New York and elsewhere, Quakers were intimately tied to slavery and the slave trade. Many, actually ADVOCATED FOR slavery. In the beginning, they profited from the slave trade and owning slaves. There was no talk of manumission. If anything, just the opposite.

However, by the third quarter of the 1600s, a few voices began to ask if it was appropriate for Friends to buy and sell slaves. These faint voices of questioning were enough for George Fox and other Quaker leadership to begin promoting what came to be known as “benevolent slave-holding” … an attempt to carefully maintain a path to continued slave ownership.

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| **SLIDE 11: BENEVOLENT SLAVEHOLDING** |

* + - **Read the slide ---**

***“BENEVOLENT SLAVE-HOLDING”*  
“BE SOBER AND FEAR GOD, AND LOVE YOUR MASTERS AND MISTRESSES, AND BE FAITHFUL AND DILIGENT IN YOUR MASTERS’ SERVICE AND BUSINESS”.   
GEORGE FOX, 1671**

Fox (the founder of American Quakerism) and others implored slave owners to treat their enslaved men and women nicely, and in return asked slaves – basically – to grin and bear it. It was an attempt to carefully maintain a path to continued slave ownership while trying to convince Quakers that theirs was a kindly and caring enslavement. But as the 1700s progressed, more questioning voices were heard … including here in Dutchess County.

By the 1720s, Quakers began moving from New England and elsewhere to settle in and around the Oblong, that thin stretch of land running north-south along the eastern edge of the county. In the 1730s they were given approval to start their own meeting, with a building constructed in 1742. A new meeting house was built in 1764. It still stands and you should visit it.

By the 1750s, settlers at the Oblong expressed growing doubts about the rightfulness of slavery. They were influenced by John Woolman, an itinerant preacher who mounted a powerful attack on slavery. In 1767, the Oblong Monthly Meeting took a momentous step which riled up the waters of Quaker custom.

The Oblong sent a query to the Purchase Quarterly Meeting – to whom they reported on questions of Quaker practice - asking Purchase to reply to its concerns about slaveholding.

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| **SLIDE 12: THE OBLONG QUERY** |

Their query was titled …

***“Inconsistency of Slave Keeping with our Religious Principles”***

In it, they asked Purchase to provide answers to five concerns:

**READ THESE.**

1. Isn’t slavery a harm to both slave and owner?
2. Doesn’t slavery deny the slave freedom to obey his/her Inner Light?
3. Should Quakers buy, sell or own slaves?
4. Should Quakers free their slaves?
5. How can we be diligent Quakers and maintain slavery?

With this momentous step, Dutchess Quakers put themselves at the forefront of antislavery efforts **… not only within the Society of Friends, but of the American colonies**. Why was this? Because at this time, Quakers were basically the only organized opposition, across colonial boundaries, who were addressing this issue.

Purchase wouldn’t handle it, and they opined that “the tendency of this Querie” was to stir up trouble! They sent it along to the New York Annual Meeting, where it sat for a couple of years. The New York Annual Meeting was also fearful of taking such a step, and they tabled it for fear that manumission would “turn out slaves at large indiscriminately”, thereby resulting in great “inconveniency”. ……. As indeed it would!

Behind the scenes, however, the Oblong Quakers - along with their neighboring Nine Partners Meeting - had already begun to take action against their slave-owing members. For example, they banished several members for buying slaves, and they disowned another for “being familiar in a carnal manner” with an enslaved woman.

Finally, in 1774 the New York Meeting forbade the holding of slaves by Quakers, and in 1780 it announced that no slaves were being held by Quakers in New York. But there is some evidence that it took until 1790 before Quakers in Eastern Dutchess completely gave up slave holding.

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| **SLIDE 13: QUAKERS AND THE DILEMMA OF WORLDLY ACTION** |

By the early 1800s, the politics of antislavery were morphing into a more radical and publicly political realm. Demand for slave-made products meant growing markets, which in turn spurred an ever-growing trade – internal and internationally – and Quaker businessmen were heavily engaged in this trade. This created a dilemma for QuakerS who might otherwise be disposed toward antislavery …. men such as Moses Brown of Rhode Island. Brown was a Quaker and antislavery advocate, but he was also rich with profits from his West Indies rum business. He and other Quaker businessmen were financial backers of both Eli Whitney (cotton gin), and Samuel Slater (textile mills), which were revolutionizing the manufacture of cloth from home-grown slave cotton.

How does one balance a personal antislavery position with a public involvement in profit-making from goods produced by slaves? This is an age-old question: how far do your principles go when they come up against your livelihood? Quakers, therefore – as well as other antislavery advocates - were faced with how to confront the growing antagonism of a more radical phase of abolition and the continually growing impact of slavery on the American economy. Specifically, they had to face the question: “What does it mean to be antislavery?”

Three famous Quakers – Lucretia Mott, David Irish, and Aaron Powell - all affiliated with eastern Dutchess County – faced this dilemma head-on, and chose to follow a public, more radical response to the slavery question. For them, the “inner light” drove them to the public sphere, where they found ways to respond to the dilemma of worldly action.

Let’s look at Lucretia Mott.

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| **SLIDE 14 : LUCRETIA MOTT** |

Lucretia wasborn in 1793, in Nantucket, to a devout Quaker family. “Devout” for Mott meant a strong adherence to what her own “inner light” told her. Individuals had the authority – the obligation – to find the correct way for them to live as Quakers, not beholden to anyone else. Her recent biographer described her as a ‘heretic’; not because she spurned the Quaker faith, but because she followed her inner light to wherever it took her – which often was at odds with other Quakers. In 1806, at age 13, she boarded at the Nine Partners School in Millbrook where she was immersed in a strong antislavery curriculum. The school was founded by James Mott, Sr., grandfather of Lucretia’s future husband, James.

Lucretia’s antislavery activity brought her in contact with William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionists, with whom she worked from time to time. This action put her at odds with the Quaker tenet of not joining other organizations, lest one be tempted to follow the leadership of the group rather than one’s own Inner Light. It also thrust her into the “public sphere” --- which in the 19th century was a place reserved for men. One public avenue that she could pursue without criticism was the ”Free Produce Movement.”

The Free Produce Movement got its start in the 1790s. Its operating principle was simple: curtail the use of products made through slave labor – such as sugar, cotton cloth, indigo dye, molasses, and the like. The hope was that a reduction in demand for these products would put slave owners out of business. The late 1700s and early 1800s saw a vast expansion in the use of sugar and cotton. Europe and America had developed a “sweet tooth” and demand seemed never-ending. Likewise with cotton, where in the mid-1790s vast new tracts of land in the southern United States were earmarked for cotton plants – made easier to harvest now with the use of the cotton gin.

The Free Produce Movement was strongest in the mid-west, Pennsylvania, and New York. Though Quakers often took the lead in this, there were efforts to broaden the movement to other religious and antislavery organizations – including free Black organizations.

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| **SLIDE 15: BLOOD IN THE SOUP - Poetry** |

The flyer shown here --- “Blood in the Soup” ---- is a particularly gruesome image used by Quakers and others to promote the horrors of slave-made products. In essence, the picture warns that the actual blood, sweat and tears of the enslaved found their way into the products made by the slaveowner. The movement also inspired poetry – in this case by a Quaker Margaret Chandler, who made abolition the major topic of her poetry ---

... read the poem.

Away! Tis loathesome! Bear me hence!

I cannot feed on human sighs,

Or feast with sweets my palate’s sense,

While blood is ‘neath the fair disguise.

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| **SLIDE 16: FREE PRODUCE MOVEMENT – Cotton Tag** |

And here’s an example of a tag that would be attached to a bale of cotton **not** produced from slave labor. It reads “Manufactured for the American Free Produce Association from Free Labor Cotton”. You might find this reminiscent of today’s “Fair trade” labels.

Substitutes for other slave-made products included:

* + - * Linen for cotton
      * blueberries/blackberries/purple cabbage for dye (to replace indigo)
      * Maple syrup for sugar

Lucretia and James Mott were early and avid supporters of the Free Produce Movement. Between 1817 and 1862, they supported the building of 53 stores in the east and mid-west. Free Blacks also took part, establishing both free-labor groups and stores run by and for Black people.

Lucretia also went on to help organize the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, responding to restrictions women faced in their participation in male -led Antislavery Societies. In 1840, as a representative of the Female Antislavery Society in the World Anti-slavery Convention in London, she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The two of them joined forces with other women abolitionists and women’s rights leaders to organize the first Women’s Rights Convention in 1848 at Seneca Falls, NY.

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| **SLIDE 17: FINDING THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD** |

The Underground Railroad has for two centuries been debated, researched, and mythologized. It is both an exciting story of slavery and freedom, and a romance. It was a secretive operation -- people helping freedom seekers were breaking the law. We know more about the people who worked as agents on the UGRR than about specific *buildings*. There is plenty of evidence of the workings of the UGRR, but factual data on specific people and buildings is more challenging.

In Dutchess County there were two major UGRR paths. One was known as the **“Quaker Trail to Freedom”** – the other, the **“River Trail to Freedom.”**

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| **SLIDE 18: QUAKER TRAIL TO FREEDOM** |

The three main Quaker meetings in eastern Dutchess - Oblong, Nine Partners, and Oswego - were part of a necklace of meetings that extended from New York City up to Vermont. Many runaways – or “Freedom Seekers” - began their journey north from New York City or Long Island, headed up to the Meeting in Purchase, and then into eastern Dutchess County. People could then travel on to Massachusetts and Vermont. It was said that Quakers could travel from New York to Burlington without ever sleeping in a non-Quaker house. So, too, could Freedom Seekers.

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| **SLIDE 19: THE RIVER TRAIL TO FREEDOM** |

Many Freedom Seekers passed through Poughkeepsie, both as self-emancipators and likely as part of a more organized Underground Railroad. Here is some of the evidence that we have.

* **Ward and Ruggles:** Samuel Ringgold Ward, a local minister, was in close contact with David Ruggles, who led the New York City Vigilance Committee. Ruggles visited Poughkeepsie on several occasions – perhaps even teaching at the Lancaster School - and it is possible that he would move runaways up from New York to meet with Ward.
* **Moses Roper --** made a successful escape from slavery in South Carolina. In a memoir he wrote later in life, he reported receiving medical assistance from a woman in Poughkeepsie.
* **George W. Sterling –** wasthe only Poughkeepsie resident identified in a local obituary as having been active in “managing the machinery of the underground railroad, by which escaping slaves, after the passage of the fugitive slave law were sent through to Canada.” [btw – his name is reflected today in the Sterling Optical business]
* **Boats to Albany** - There is ample evidence that Freedom Seekers would board cargo boats and steamboats making the trip from New York City to Albany, some of which stopped in or near Poughkeepsie. Often these served as safe vehicles for moving them to points north. We know that there were numerous sailors and boat captains who were either free Blacks, formerly enslaved Blacks, or enslaved people who moved up and down the Hudson. The association of freedom seekers with Black sailors has also been noted in several runaway slave advertisements.

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| **SLIDE 20: THE RISE OF FREE BLACK COMMUNITIES** |

The late 1700s – early 1800s saw the development of several free Black communities in our region. During the post-Revolution period, some owners had begun manumitting their enslaved people. Often, the newly manumitted people and others seeking freedom would move to areas with an already-existing Free Black Community.

These free-black communities included:

1. **FREEMANVILLE**, located near present-day Poughquag in the town of Beekman. Started in 1818 by Charles Freeman, a free Black man, who owned land that stretched between Beekman and West Pawling. By the time of his death in 1845 there were several hundred free Black people living in the immediate area.
2. **BAXTERTOWN**, near Fishkill, was a free Black settlement living among Wappingers Indians during the colonial period. Because of the heavy concentration of enslaved people in Fishkill and other anecdotal evidence, it is suspected that the area was part of a pathway on the Underground Railroad.
3. **NEW GUINEA COMMUNITY**, in Hyde Park, was home to several dozen free Black families, many of whom became congregants at the nearby St. James Episcopal Church. The church was founded in 1811 by Samuel Bard and continued over the years to be a home for A-A in the area. Several residents of the community were known to be freedom seekers.

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| **SLIDE 21: POUGHKEEPSIE AS A COMMUNITY OF RESISTANCE** |

In addition to Free Black Communities, several cities around New York State were home to vibrant Black populations engaged in resistance. While they cooperated with white allies in the antislavery movement, these communities often organized their own societies for self-help and protest. They worked not only ***against*** slavery, but also ***for*** such causes as public education, temperance, and the franchise for Black men. These communities built churches, schools, and newspapers. Leaders within these communities went on to be leaders in the anti-slavery movement and the early voting and civil rights movements in New York and nationally. Poughkeepsie was one of these Communities of resistance.

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| **SLIDE 22: THE ROLE OF BLACK CHURCHES** |

The churches established by Black communities around the county were powerful centers of support for African Americans. In addition to spiritual support, churches led education programs for Black children, and in the several decades prior to the Civil War worked to support the end of slavery. Churches often took the lead in this work of “moral influence”. The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Churches, such as in Fishkill and Poughkeepsie, were leading influences locally and statewide.

Smith Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church, in Poughkeepsie, was first founded in 1836, and from its beginning the church and its leaders were prominent in the antislavery movement. [ It’s original location was on Catherine Street ]

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| **SLIDE 23: IMPACT OF THE AME CHURCH** |

The Rev. J. N. Mars, a pastor of AME, and Uriah Boston, one of its original trustees, played a role in the movement for Black rights across New York. Both were listed as Poughkeepsie sales agents for *The Colored American* newspaper. Boston was a frequent *contributor* of articles and letters to both *The Colored American* and to Frederick Douglass’s paper, *The North Star*. [*The Colored American* was an Af-Am newspaper published in New York City from 1837 to 1842. Douglass’s *The North Star* was first published in 1847.]

Other prominent members of A.M.E. included the Rev. Nathan Blount, a co-founder of the church and the first teacher at the Lancaster School, the school for African American children in Poughkeepsie. Blount was also a founding member of the Poughkeepsie Anti-Slavery Society and later served on the executive committee of the Dutchess County Antislavery Society. Isaac Deyo was both a church member and another of the founding members of the Poughkeepsie A-S Society. And John A. Cole, a founding member of AME, was a member of both the Poughkeepsie and the Dutchess County Antislavery societies.

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| **SLIDE 24: THE LANCASTER SCHOOL** |

The Lancaster School – or African Free School, as it was originally called – occupied the second story of a building at 189 Church Street in Poughkeepsie (still standing).

Lancaster was formed in 1829 as a school for poor white children in the village, and in the mid-1830s the city allocated space for Black children. It became Poughkeepsie’s first known school of its kind and lasted into the 1840s, at which time the education of black children was moved to the responsibility of the AME Zion Church.

Lancaster was also a center for promotion of antislavery and Black rights. In 1840, the school hosted a meeting to promote Black voting rights. The meeting protested that ***“the long deprivation of this right [the elective franchise] has inflicted a wound in our soul … which is sinking deeper and deeper and cannot and will not be healed until the healing balm of a full and complete enfranchisement has been applied.”***

After 1834, African Americans gathered each summer to celebrate British Emancipation Day. On August 1st of that year, Britain outlawed slavery in its West Indian colonies, including Jamaica, Barbados, and other sugar islands. This was a major milestone in the march toward international abolition. AME Zion served as the leader for celebrating this anniversary, which at one time included a procession from the church to College Hill, where Frederick Douglass addressed the crowd.

**[ note the CAS program that commemorates the Douglass speech, held at College Hill where Douglass gave his original talk].**

A news article in *The Colored American* about one of these Emancipation Day celebrations was supplied by another key player in Dutchess County, Samuel Ringgold Ward.

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| **SLIDE 25: SAMUEL RINGGOLD WARD** |

Ward was perhaps the most prominent Black abolitionist who lived in Poughkeepsie. He taught at the Lancaster School in the late 1830s, and was ordained as a minister. In the 1840s, Ward went on to become a nationally prominent lecturer and organizer against slavery.

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Despite the strong and broad antislavery impulse in Dutchess County, the Hudson Valley was also known for its ***hostility*** toward abolitionists. Even at the height of antislavery activities in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, “Most places on the Hudson River,” lamented Samuel Ringgold Ward, “were thoroughly and hopelessly pro-slavery.” At one point during his lecture circuit, Ward had the wheels taken off his wagon as a threat and warning.

It was just such hostility toward abolitionists that led to the formation of another leading antislavery church in the County.

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| **SLIDE 26: FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH** |

First Congregational Church, at 269 Mill Street, near Market Street, formed after a February 1837 riot in which Samuel Gould, a lecturer for the American Antislavery Society, was prevented from speaking at the Second Presbyterian Church. A white mob attended the lecture, shouted down Gould and then surrounded and threatened him with violence. They followed Gould to the home where he was staying that night and reportedly broke all the windows in the house.

Members of local churches were disturbed that their leaders did not make a strong enough protest against the attack; several left and formed the First Congregational Church. The Church **required all members to oppose “the buying or selling of human beings or holding them in involuntary servitude.”** Of the first 73 men who joined First Congregational, at least 40 were documented members of local antislavery societies.

We’ve known for years about the founding of the FCC growing out of that riot. It is a seminal story for the Church and stands as a prime example of the barriers faced by antislavery activists. Here is the image of the flyer that was distributed to organize the attack on the abolitionist cause that day in February 1837.

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| **SLIDE 27: OUTRAGE FCC FLYER** |

**Read this**

OUTRAGE,

Fellow Citizens, an ABOLITIONIST of the most revolting character is among you, exciting the feelings of the North against the South. A seditious Lecture is to be delivered THIS EVENING, at 7 o’clock, at the Presbyterian Church in Cannon Street. You are requested to attend and unite in putting down and silencing by peaceable means this tool of evil

and fanaticism. Let the rights of the States guaranteed by the Constitution be protected. February 27, 1837. The Union Forever!

That abolitionist of “the most revolting character” was Gould.

The formation of both AME Zion and First Congregational came at a time of the highest ferment of antislavery activity in the county. In 1833, the creation of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Boston marked the rise of a new, radical antislavery presence in the United States. Unlike earlier groups, it called for the ***immediate emancipation*** of slaves. During the 1830s, hundreds of new antislavery societies were being formed, modeled on the AAS. Dutchess County boasted several of these and became known as an outpost of radical antislavery activity. In 1834, just one year after the birth of the national American Anti-Slavery Society, local abolitionists here created the *Poughkeepsie Antislavery Society* (PASS).

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| **SLIDE 28: CONSTITUTION OF THE POUGHKEEPSIE**  **ANYISLAVERY SOCIETY** |

***Read it aloud:***

121 citizens of Poughkeepsie signed the constitution. These were a mix of Blacks (including SR Ward) and whites, men and women. In 1838, Poughkeepsie abolitionists helped to organize a local antislavery society in LaGrange. A leading abolitionist there, Samuel Sleight, organized petition drives in the area. Local antislavery societies also formed in Pleasant Valley and Fishkill.

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| **SLIDE 29: LAGRANGE PETITION** |

Strong support among its members led to this petition being sent by the LaGrange Society to Congress, urging abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia. This is just one of several such petitions sent to Congress by Dutchess County abolitionists. Both Whig and Democratic leaders in the Congress viewed such petitions as inflammatory and dangerous; they were automatically tabled without discussion. **It is noteworthy that both men (on the left) and women (on the right) signed this petition.** Though women were not allowed to speak at meetings, they were active participants in petition drives.

The **Dutchess County** Anti-Slavery Society was created in late 1838, and held its first convention in 1839. It took up the question of how responsible abolitionist men were to vote in the upcoming New York State elections. Here is the flyer …

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| **SLIDE 30: 1ST ANNUAL “COUNTY CONVENTION” NOTICE** |

At this session, the directors of the DCASS adopted a resolution, taken from the New York State ASS: *“Resolved, That we will neither vote for, nor support the election of any man for President or Vice President of the United States, or for Governor or Lieutenant Governor, or for any legislative officer, who is not in favor of the immediate abolition of slavery …”* Reverend Philetus Roberts, a black minister of the First Christian Church in Stanford, served for a time as president of the Dutchess Anti-Slavery Society.

At their next convention, in 1840, the DCASS adopted a more radical stance.

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| **SLIDE 31: DCASS 1840 RESOLUTION** |

**READ IT:**  The DCASS called on its members …. “**to assist those brethren coming through the county, who may have thus far escaped the iron grasp of tyranny, by giving them meat, money, and** **clothes, to enable them to prosecute their journey to a land of liberty.”**

Here was a powerful, public stance taken on behalf of the enslaved fugitives – those Freedom Seekers trying to make their way to safety. Even though the words “Underground Railroad” are not used, the language is a clear admonition to local citizens that they should willingly break the law (that is, the Compromise of 1850) and unite in organized support for the runaways. And they undoubtedly carried this message to other regional and national antislavery gatherings. With this resolution, Dutchess County citizens placed themselves squarely within the growing movement to end slavery by resisting the Fugitive Slave Act.

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| **SLIDE 32: JOHN BOLDING – And the implications of the Fugitive**  **Slave Act** |

John Bolding was born into slavery on a plantation near Columbia, South Carolina. When Bolding’s owner, Townsend Dickinson, took ill, he sold Bolding to two other men, from whom Bolding escaped around 1840. He fled north, accompanied by his younger brother David and an enslaved woman named Susan. They came to Poughkeepsie, where Susan married an African American, Francis Moore. Bolding became a tailor with a shop located on Liberty Street, right off Main Street.

After passage of the harsh Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, a white visitor from South Carolina recognized Bolding in Poughkeepsie and alerted his former owner. In August 1851, Bolding was seized at his shop by U.S. Marshalls, taken to New York City, tried in a special federal court. *Habeus corpus* rights had been suspended for these types of cases, on the presumption that those captured were in fact slaves, and therefore had no such rights. So Bolding, having essentially no legal recourse, was sent back to slavery in South Carolina. His case became a national sensation – one of the more famous of those prosecuted under the Fugitive Slave Act.

Citizens of Poughkeepsie, local abolitionists, and others, immediately agreed to buy Bolding’s freedom. His owner agreed to accept $1,750 in payment, but then demanded an additional $250 for transportation expenses. Bolding returned to Poughkeepsie and lived there with his wife, Henrietta, until his death. In the post-Civil War years, they lived at 14 Pine Street. He died in 1876 and is buried in the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery.

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| **SLIDE 33: ANGELINA GRIMKE’** |

Angelina Grimke’, the well-known antislavery advocate, was born into a slaveholding family in South Carolina. She and her older sister, Sarah, grew to abhor slavery and, after leaving South Carolina, joined a Quaker community in Pennsylvania. While both sisters were strong in their antislavery sentiment, Angelina – through her writing and lecturing – became the better known. Her first major work was published in 1836 – *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* – in which she challenged southern women to stand up against slavery ... and by so doing they could overthrow the system. It caused a sensation, both for its outright challenge to the South and because she was a woman. Just one year later, speaking in Poughkeepsie at the Lancaster School, Angelina became the first white woman in the United States to speak on a political topic to an audience of both men and women. She gave her address at the Lancaster school. After her talk – and already sure of herself as a feminist - Angelina wrote to her sister: *“… for the first time in my life I spoke in a promiscuous assembly, but I found that the men were no more to me then, than the women.”*

It’s significant that a Black institution invited Grimke’ to speak. The conservative nature of most antislavery congregations and antislavery societies forbade women to address these mixed audiences. And this gender restriction was beginning to wreak havoc withing the antislavery communities.

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| **SLIDE 34: WOMEN, ABOLITION, AND A SPLIT IN THE MOVEMENT** |

Grimke’ was not the only woman abolitionist to experience criticism and suppression. The activism of women and their demand to be participants in antislavery activity eventually led to a split in the movement. At the 2nd Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, hosted by the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in May of 1838, an unofficial meeting of women and men, both Black and white, was held at the Pennsylvania Hall. That meeting - and the official one the following day – was disrupted by mobs protesting the “promiscuous” meeting, the abolitionist movement, and the mixture of Black and White women. The Hall was set on fire that very day and destroyed!! [reference [61] His[tory of Pennsylvania Hall Which was Destroyed by a Mob on the 17th of May 1838. Philadelphia, 1838, pp. 117.]

Between 1838 and 1840, the American Anti-Slavery Society split in three, in part over the issue of women's leadership. Radical abolitionists and women's rights supporters, known as "Garrisonian" abolitionists, remained in the American Anti-Slavery Society. The newly formed *American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society* restricted membership to males, with auxiliaries for females. The politically minded formed the Liberty Party, which limited women's participation to fundraising.

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| **SLIDE 35: ELIZABETH FREEMAN (‘MUM BETT’)** |

One of the other famous women in our area was Elizabeth Freeman, an early example of both Black and female agency. Known widely as Mum Bett, Freeman was born enslaved in Claverack, Columbia County, around the year 1744. She was sold into slavery in Massachusetts. After protecting her sister from a beating by her enslaver, and suffering a permanent wound, she and another enslaved man sued her owner. With the help of a Massachusetts lawyer, they brought a test case to determine if slavery was legal under the new 1780 Massachusetts law. They won the case and their freedom. Their case was the first of several which confirmed that the constitution of Massachusetts was incompatible with enslavement.

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| **SLIDE # 36: SOJOURNER TRUTH** |

In Ulster County, the life of the most famous enslaved person you all know – Isabella Baumfree / Sojourner Truth – provides us one of the best sources for insight to the slave’s harsh living condition. Born into slavery, at age 5 she was taken from her mother and sold to a new slaveholder - the first of several she would have. One beat her, leaving permanent scars on her body. Her last owner, John Dumont, was, she said, “kind” since he treated her “as well as he treated his other animals.”

Truth remembered her living area as a “dismal chamber, its only lights consisting of a few panes of glass, through which the sun never shone. The space between the loose boards of the floor and the uneven earth below was often filled with mud and water ....” While with the Dumonts, Truth was compelled to marry a fellow-slave, Thomas, who had been married twice before and had seen one of his wives sold away. Elizabeth eventually ran away, just a year before slavery was abolished in 1827.

**\* \* \***

For another almost 20 years – during the 1840s-1850s – the fight against slavery continued. As the threat of civil war grew closer, the antislavery community in Dutchess County continued its fight - right up to the end. The capstone to this movement was a remarkable sermon delivered at the First Congregational Church by its 26-year old pastor, Moses Coit Tyler.

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| **SLIDE # 37: MOSES COIT TYLER AND SERMON** |

On March 3, 1861 -- the eve of Abraham Lincoln’s inauguration, Tyler led a service and preached a remarkable sermon, titled ***Our Solace and Our Duty In This Crisis***.

In it, Tyler called for “no further concessions to slavery”. “Here and tonight,” he proclaimed, “let us refresh our memories, and reinvigorate our moral purposes, with a new recital of the truth ... that

... while civil dissension is a great evil;

... while sectional hostilities are a great evil;

... while disunion and war and devastation are a great evil;

... there is yet one evil, evermore and everywhere, infinitely greater

... slavery.

... If adhering to the right will not save the Union,” he concluded, **“then the Union is not worth saving.”**

**Thank you!!!**

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| **SLIDE 38: MHAHP CONTACT INFO** |

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