



## THE SOCIETY FOR THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY

### **The EDC Downtown Brooklyn Plan Underground Railroad Report**

City Council Landmarks Subcommittee Hearing, May 1, 2007

I am Christabel Gough speaking for the Society for the Architecture of the City, an all-volunteer historic preservation advocacy group.

I thank the Council for this opportunity to speak, and those are not empty words, because without the Council, there would have been no public review of the EDC report.

Ever since citizens came forward—at the hearing on the Downtown Brooklyn Plan DEIS—and said that Duffield Street was involved in the underground railroad, EDC has been at great pains to get Duffield Street certified as a history-free zone, ideal for a parking garage.

First the consultants found no association with the underground railroad, then they found the association “could not be documented,” then they made the same finding again, but said they had the endorsement of the Schomburg, which proved to be untrue. So EDC went back to the same consultants, despite the complaint from the Schomburg, and commissioned this blockbuster seven hundred page report which, they say, has been endorsed by a peer review panel of twelve experts.

Congresswoman Yvette Clarke cut through the red tape when she noted that a majority of those experts disagree with the report’s conclusion that the Duffield Street houses can be demolished. You will not find that in the Executive Summary.

We believe that AKRF was wrong to bury the numerous critical comments from the peer review panel in two obscure appendices. They were wrong to bungle the collection of oral history interviews and then fail to print transcripts—or name names. Instead AKRF published anonymous summaries and contemptuous rebuttals, as if the oral tradition of the African American community had no value. AKRF did not tell the whole truth when it said there was “no oral tradition of underground railroad involvement” in the Truesdell family—no *oral* tradition, but there was a family document, Thomas Truesdell’s handwritten account ledger from the 1840s. According to their “contact log”, AKRF determined via long distance telephone to Japan that this ledger was of no importance. They did not consult the peer review panel about that decision, or make the document available.

We are submitting additional comments, and hope the Council will intervene with the EDC to preserve these historic houses.



**Few people actually read these bulky environmental impact statements cover to cover. The general public is hardly aware that a consultant paid to produce one could be acting less as an fact finder than as an ongoing public relations consultant to a development arm of government, a public authority like the Economic Development Corporation or the Empire State Development Corporation, that gives consultants huge amounts of business.**

**No one wants to believe that while the development agencies are apparently complying with environmental law, they may be effectively circumventing it. But today, 30 years after the law first required it, producing environmental impact statements is an industry, and some of them may strike us as emanating from corporate cheerleaders.**

**The AKRF Report begins:**

**The Downtown Brooklyn Development project is a long-range planning strategy to create a vibrant, multi-use environment that serves the residents, businesses, and academic institutions of Downtown Brooklyn...(Executive Summary, page 1.)**

**In fact, the Downtown Brooklyn Development Plan is an amendment of the Zoning Resolution and the City Map to permit real estate development on a scale previously impossible. It also incorporates and extends urban renewal plans that facilitate the condemnation of private property through eminent domain and the total demolition of the existing city.**

**Perhaps the outcome will indeed be perceived as “vibrant” by those who can afford to live or do business in the brand new mega-Brooklyn. It will be less thrilling to those who lost their livelihoods, their homes, and buildings that commemorate their history.**

#### **I. Findings of the peer review panel.**

**All these experts praised AKRF for its extensive research and endorsed the report. However, as Congresswoman Yvette Clarke has noted, a majority added significant warnings to the city, expressing some misgivings. They warned that AKRF had set the standard of proof very high, that conclusive evidence of underground railroad activity was hard to find, that more might emerge at any time, and that some avenues of research remained unexplored:**

- 1. Leslie Alexander: Unfortunately, it appears that despite our best efforts such documentation has not yet emerged. Given the nature of the Underground Railroad, which by necessity required secrecy, we were presented with a unique challenge...**
- 2. Raymond Dobard: After reading the comments of my fellow peer reviewers and the responses by AKRF, I feel that the standards for accepting evidence in support of recognizing the Duffield houses, especially 227 Duffield, is set too high....**
- 3. James Driscoll: [No comment on these points.]**
- 4. Leslie Harris: ...the current lack of evidence linking these properties to the Underground Railroad does not mean that in the future, such evidence may not appear.**
- 5. Richard Hourahan: Not all fugitive slaves were captured. If you were looking for Underground Railroad activity, again a focus on the fugitive slave and not the abolitionist, is a far superior course—look at the records of where they lived, and work backwards to how they got there: Ontario archives, I have suggested and continue to recommend, is an excellent place to look. On several occasions Jennifer Morris verbally told me that the Truesdells had no known connection with Canada and such an effort was unjustified (even if this were true—it is not, the son-in-law and**

**business partner was a Canadian—it is beside the point, the fugitive slaves helped via New York were in Canada.)**

6. Andrew Jackson: While I want to see verifiable evidence to warrant identification of these properties and a connection to URR activities, **we are still left with a possibility of involvement in abolitionist or URR activities of some of the originally identified properties.**
7. Cheryl LaRoche: **...compelling and convincing evidence of Underground Railroad connections emerged...time constraints associated with the Downtown Brooklyn Development Project and the research time required to document this previously unverified potential Underground Railroad site are in fundamental opposition.**
8. Marilyn Pettit: [No comment on these points. “The anti-slavery cause and its cultural manifestations in business and residential communities in Brooklyn are worthy of further exploration and celebration...”]
9. Milton Sernett: [Enthusiastically supports the AKRF position.]
10. Judith Wellman: The Truesdell family (and possibly also the Hawes family) may have been involved in the Underground Railroad. **Although documented at only a “3” on our rating scale, the Truesdell house may well have been an Underground Railroad site...**
11. Craig Wilder: **.....clandestine and extralegal social actions and movements like the Underground Railroad, that incorporate mechanisms for hiding their own existence, are often only apprehended through oral and non-traditional sources. These oral traditions have existed for decades, the predate the current controversies about redevelopment....I do caution readers to remember that the final report establishes what has been documented and confirmed but does not negate the possibility that additional research could considerably alter these findings.**
12. J. Williams-Myers: **The clandestine nature of the system meant and means that in the wake of the movement of Freedom Seekers there would be no “paper trail.”**

**Further, a majority, seven of the twelve experts, strongly urged preservation of the historic houses. One was strongly opposed to preservation, and four took no position.**

1. Leslie Alexander: **I would urge the city to seriously consider reconfiguring their development project to take the historical significance of Duffield Street and the surrounding neighborhood seriously. This process has revealed a wealth of documentary evidence indicating that this region was actively involved in abolitionist and underground Railroad activities, and it would be a monumental injustice to destroy such evidence without making a concerted effort to acknowledge the incredibly important role that Brooklyn played in the liberation movement against slavery.**
2. Raymond Dobard: **Instead of analyzing evidence to the Nth degree, is it possible for AKRF to do something bold, powerful and innovative. Why not reach out to the Brooklyn community and to New York City as a whole by incorporating 227 Duffield and the street as a pedestrian zone dedicate to learning about the Underground Railroad...New York City embodies many stories of struggle, pain, survival and transcendence. The Duffield properties should be a part of this heritage. What I propose is the development of a section of Brooklyn that could be a magnet for tourists...My recommendation is not to destroy what could be a very important part of our American Liberty Story.**

3. James Driscoll: **I particularly like Professor Wellman's comment about the possibility of one or more of the houses serving as a memorial to the abolitionist activities in the downtown area.**
4. Leslie Harris: [Takes no position on preservation.]
5. Richard Hourahan: [Takes no explicit position, except to say that "one should be careful when interpreting an artifact without any corroborating documentary cultural/social historical evidence." He is critical of the research methodology.]
6. Andrew Jackson: As a student of history, member of the New York State Freedom Trail Commission, an activist librarian and educator, I am in favor the City preserving these sites for further research and answers to the possibility of connecting our present to our past. This past is too valuable to be lost for purely economic development reasons....**these properties should be preserved and not destroyed.**
7. Cheryl LaRoche: **We cannot lose this important historical site to development.**
8. Marilyn Pettit: [No comment on preservation. Wants "further exploration and celebration" of an undefined nature.]
9. Milton Sernett: [Considered the properties definitely not worth preserving.]
10. Judith Wellman: **...the City would do well to consider creating a Freedom Center on Duffield Street, celebrating not only abolitionism and the Underground Railroad, but also the more recent history of this neighborhood.** One of the unexpected benefits of this study has been the recovery of the twentieth century history of this block, with the committee of Black Heroes and Sheroes, Sonny Carson, Ali and Jackie Lamont, and others.
11. Craig Wilder: [No comment on building preservation, per se, but says "...this part of Brooklyn deserves a far more prominent place in the public history of the city, the state, and the Underground Railroad."]
12. A. J. Williams-Myers: **I shudder at the thought of the eventual demolition of the buildings**, especially given their location in the heart of downtown Brooklyn which was once a community caught up in the throes of the clandestine operations of the Underground Railroad....I concur with the comments of Peer Reviewers Alexander, LaRoche and Wellman...**Dr. Wellman's idea of a "Freedom Center" is an idea whose time has come.** What better way to begin to unlock and disseminate to the community, and the wider New York community as well, knowledge of the area's involvement in the ongoing struggle to guarantee to all the American Dream of personal freedom!

**How "Appendix B Response to Peer Review Comments" was (artfully) constructed**

**Appendix B gives us comments that members of the review panel made about certain draft documents which we are not allowed to see. Some or all of the comments appear to be paraphrased, since some are attributed to more than one panelist; some are abbreviated.**

**The Appendix is in five sections, which are not enumerated anywhere. Each section has its own pagination and its own series of numbered comments. Because each series of numbered comments starts at 1, there are, for instance, five "comment 1"s in Appendix B.**

**This creates difficulty in identifying comments.**

**Many of the reviewers' comments refer to other comments by number, but without stating which of the five possible series of numbered comments they are referencing. This is**

**especially puzzling since the (unlisted) sections of the appendix are not reproduced in date order, and some of the (unlisted) subsections have the same names.**

We have created our own table of contents for Appendix B, as there is no other:

First section: (Dated September 30, 2004) Comments 1 to 53, paginated 1 to 25.

“Peer Review: Comments on Draft Research Report and Historic Construction Review Report”.

Subtitles:

“COMMENTS ON DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT” at page 1

“COMMENTS ON HISTORIC CONSTRUCTION REVIEW REPORT” at page 23

Second section: (Dated November 16, 2004) Comments 1 to 10, pages 1 to 5.

“Peer Review: Follow-Up Comments on Draft Research Report and Historic Construction Review Report”. Subtitles:

“COMMENTS ON DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT” at page 1

“COMMENTS ON HISTORIC CONSTRUCTION REVIEW REPORT” at page 5

Third section: (Dated September 3, 2004) Comments 1 to 43, pages 1 to 10.

Title: “Peer Review: Comments on Scope of Research”.

Fourth section: (Dated August 4, 2005) Comments 1 to

Title: “Peer Review: Comments on Draft Final Research Report”

“GENERAL COMMENTS” at page 1. (Begins “The report looks very good...”

“FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS” at page 4.

“ORAL TRADITION OUTREACH EFFORT” at page 11.

“INFORMATION SUBMITTED AND COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM PROFESSOR A. J. WILLIAMS-MYERS” at page 20

Fifth section: (Dated May 26, 2006) Comments 1 to 61, pages 1 to 27.

“Peer Review: Comments on Second Draft Final Research Report”.

“GENERAL COMMENTS” at page 1. Begins “AKRF is to be commended...”

“FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS” at page 3. Begins “I am glad...”

“TUNNELS/PHYSICAL EVIDENCE” at page 17

“ASSESSMENTS OF CONCLUSIONS/RATINGS” at page 19.

**IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR THE INFORMATION HEADLINED BY THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS AS “STUNNING REVERSAL”, HERE IS HOW TO FIND IT:**

**It is at Comment 15, on page 22 of the fourth unlisted subsection of Appendix B, dated August 4, 2005. Appendix B, which is not through-paginated or consecutively numbered, contains three “Comment 15”s. This particular page 22 (one of three in Appendix B) stands approximately 600 pages into the 760 page report, which is also not through-paginated. There is no index, and the table of contents does not detail the contents of any of the ten appendices or the Addendum, although this is where dissent and inconvenient history appear.**

**So from this obscure location, Professor Williams-Myers states that his prior comments, which were based solely on materials submitted by AKRF, were wrong; that information available to some peer reviewers was not available to all; that the oral history information “we have waited for” was not on the record because “the interviews were never done”; and that images of the buildings were not available to peer review sessions.**

After a visit, he said: "I left the Duffield Street buildings having been touched by what I saw...what indeed may have been the very secreted, below-ground facilities used by those in search of freedom..." He praised "the brave souls of the building owners who put their own lives in jeopardy in order to ensure the life and freedom of fellow human beings. I truly stood on ground where humanity joined together against inhumanity."

The AKRF response to this comment begins: "As requested, your addendum will be added to your earlier comments on the draft of the final research report." Note that wording, "comments on the draft of the final research report." That is just where they landed, in the comments on the draft. The only mention of Professor Williams-Myers in the Executive Summary is the listing of his participation in the Peer Review Panel.

Peer reviewer Dr. Craig Steven Wilder of Columbia and Dartmouth also remonstrated that

The problem is the very real culture of mistrust and suspicion that surrounds many of the interactions between African American communities defending their own histories and experiences and government agencies and their arms with a long history of disrespecting and ignoring the historical, cultural, and emotional meaning of physical places and spatial relations in communities of color. To be blunt, the very fact that the decision to explore the historical claims of these communities generally comes only when they stand in the path of a greater urban plan does and will continue to breed suspicion and reservation. I therefore respond with the caveat that there is a significant body of material that has not been collected....(Appendix B, Response to Reviewers Comments.)

## II. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? AKRF and the oral tradition.

The whole truth, that is what we swear to tell as witnesses in court. There could be no better example of the good sense of that formulation than this AKRF report. Again and again, AKRF equivocates with statements that may be true as far as they go, but are not the whole truth.

### 1. Thomas and Harriet Truesdell of 227 Duffield Street and Juliana Tappan.

In 1832, William Lloyd Garrison, the father of the abolition movement in America, wrote an appeal, saying in his newspaper, *The Liberator*, that the destiny of slaves was in the hands of the women of America. Six months later, Garrison was able to announce the formation of the first female anti-slavery society in New England, (and the second in America): the Providence Female Anti Slavery Society. Harriet Truesdell, later the owner of 227 Duffield Street in Brooklyn, was one of a small number of women who founded that path-breaking group, at a time when it was considered improper for a woman to speak in public to a mixed (or "promiscuous") audience, and when any kind of female political activism was considered at best "indelicate." So let us remember that in 1832 she was in the forefront of the entire nation in her brave advocacy for justice for enslaved Africans.

Her husband, Thomas, was a member of the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade, one of the oldest anti slavery societies in America, and a personal friend of William Lloyd Garrison. He was an agent for Garrison's first newspaper, the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. He was a merchant who engaged in coastal trade with the south, and owned an interest in several shipping companies. He was a founding member of the Rhode Island Anti Slavery Society, more radical than the earlier Providence Society, and of the New England Anti Slavery Society. William Lloyd Garrison wrote in a letter (August 24, 1838) "In New York I enjoyed the hospitality (not for the first or second time) of my esteemed friend Thomas Truesdell, formerly of Providence."

These people were not just casually involved in the abolition movement. Rather they were not caught in the illegal activity of helping fugitive slaves. We should take seriously the oral tradition that their house was an underground railroad station.

Some of the more embarrassing mistakes made by AKRF were a result of their excessive eagerness to discredit oral traditions. Oral history interviews were not printed in the report because, according to AKRF, the subjects refused to approve the AKRF transcripts—though some of the subjects deny this. Apparently AKRF felt it did not need permission to quote from these unauthorized transcripts provided they did not use the speaker's name. The language they adopt, to tell us what they say the suppressed transcripts said, is perhaps unfortunate in a racially charged context, as is AKRF's serious lack of knowledge about the lives of very famous Brooklyn abolitionists. AKRF disputes oral history that links Harriet Truesdell to Juliana Tappan:

Albert Chatel also reportedly said that Harriet Lee Truesdell had attended meetings with Lewis and Julia (correct spelling Juliana) Tappan. ("Final Report", page 59.)

Twice, AKRF repeats this reproachful "correct spelling Juliana." Plymouth Church records refer to Juliana, her baptismal name. But AKRF did not tell us that Juliana's own father called her Julia in his letters, as is confirmed in the standard biography, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery*, by Bertram Wyatt-Brown (Case Western Reserve University). No need to search the archives for the letter where Angelina Grimké writes that after her sensational lecture to the women of Brooklyn in 1836, "We went home with Julia Tappan to tea, and Brother Weld was all anxiety to know about it..." It is quoted in *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, by Larry Ceplair, Columbia University Press, 1989.

Julia Tappan was a daughter who never married or left home, but lived with her father, Lewis, serving as his personal secretary for abolition matters, according to his biographer, Wyatt-Brown. The family moved away from Rose Street, Manhattan when their home was sacked by a pro-slavery mob in 1834. They were living on Pierrepont Street in Brooklyn Heights when Angelina and Julia went home to tea, and found the famous orator, Theodore Weld waiting for them.

Only out of a profound ignorance of abolition history could AKRF feel free to pretend that: "Juliana Tappan is not known to have been involved with the Underground Railroad" (Report, Executive Summary, S-22). AKRF itself acknowledges Juliana's father Lewis Tappan's involvement because he "assisted in the freedom journey of Ann Maria Weems" (Report, Final Report, page 3). How could Juliana possibly not be involved, his daughter, living in his house, acting as his secretary?

Perhaps we should also note that the Peer Review panel had to tell AKRF the "correct spelling" of Lewis Tappan's name, an embarrassment which they buried in an appendix. Lewis not Louis.

Did Juliana know Harriet Lee Truesdell, as oral tradition maintains? AKRF concedes that Juliana Tappan and Harriet Truesdell served together on the small organizing committee of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in Philadelphia in 1838—a harrowing experience as their meeting place was stoned and subsequently burned down by a mob of protesters. But AKRF, as usual using the passive voice, sees no evidence that they ever met again:

...no further connection between these women could be identified, and Juliana Tappan is not known to have been involved with the Underground Railroad. In addition Harriet Truesdell's participation in this event dates from her residency in Providence, Rhode Island, rather than on Duffield Street. (Report, "Final Report" page 59)

Leaving aside that the whole purpose of the Convention was to form links between various independent local women's anti slavery societies, AKRF did not tell us that Harriet and Julia



were near neighbors in Brooklyn around the time of the Philadelphia Convention. At that Convention, Harriet officially represented the Providence Ladies' Anti Slavery Society, of which she was a founding member and officer. However, by AKRF's own account (in a different section of their report), the 1855 New York census notes that the Truesdell family had lived in Brooklyn for 17 years (Report, "Final Report", page 21.) We (Society for the Architecture of the City) found a directory reference to Thomas Truesdell living on Hicks Street in Brooklyn Heights in 1839, (AKRF started their enormous and supposedly exhaustive directory search in 1848, see "Final Report" page 17, and Appendix F.) So at some point around 1839 the Truesdells moved to their first Brooklyn residence on Hicks Street where they were near neighbors of the Lewis Tappans on Pierrepont Street.

**It is hard to understand how a researcher could know that the Truesdells were from Providence, but fail to follow the Providence directory entries until they ended. At that point, how could anyone fail to look at the New York directories to see when Truesdell entries started, especially in view of the census description of their 17 year residency? This is not rocket science. Whether it was incompetence or something worse, taxpayer dollars have been spent on the misrepresentation of history. Even if she was living in Providence at the time of the Convention, which is actually not established, Harriet was a close neighbor of the Tappans within a year of it. Is it safe categorically to assert that the ladies never visited? Or that subsequently, the slightly greater distance from Pierrepont to Harriet's new house on Duffield, a fifteen minute walk, presented an insurmountable obstacle, when they had so much in common?**

This is just one instance where a competent and impartial review would lead us to accept the oral tradition.

## **2. Thomas Truesdell's ledger.**

AKRF states in its executive summary (Report, page S-13) that

Another potential source of oral tradition was identified and contacted: Paul E. Truesdell, Jr.—the great grandson of Thomas Truesdell and his second wife, Janet Margery Gunn—who is active in researching his family's genealogy. To Mr. Truesdell's knowledge, there are no family oral traditions regarding the Truesdell family's potential involvement in the Underground Railroad.

They said Paul Truesdell knew of no family oral traditions. "No family *oral* traditions"? But they did not tell us that he had offered to send them a ledger in Thomas Truesdell's own hand, which is an expense journal for the years 1843-1848 with additional notes from 1863-1865. According to an interview Truesdell recently gave to *The Brooklyn Eagle*, when he offered to provide these papers to AKRF, AKRF never got back to him.

To be exact, this very important ledger *is* mentioned in the Report, in the following way. In Appendix I, the ninth appendix of the report, which is a 36 page chart described as a contact log, scaled to fit the page so that the type size is less than 8 point, on page I-8, in a tiny rectangle on the far right side, AKRF alludes to the ledger with the notation, quoted here in full: "Confirmed no records of involvement in UGRR in Truesdell business ledger." This is the record of a telephone conversation dated 2004, so there was plenty of opportunity to mention it to others before the report was made public in 2007. Without the use of a sophisticated desktop search program after seeing the *Eagle* article, we might never have found the reference in the published report.

Even if it is true that Mr. Truesdell said he had not seen any underground railroad references in the ledger—and this is a "he said/she said" situation—it does seem likely that the 12 peer review panel members might have been better placed to judge and research the implications of Thomas Truesdell's New York expenses than a non-specialist living (as Mr. Truesdell does) in Japan.

Several members of the peer review panel stated to the Brooklyn Eagle that they were unaware of the existence of the ledger. This raises questions as to whether they had an opportunity to review the entire report (since the ledger is mentioned in Appendix I). If they did see the finished report, again, we have to ask, did they give it their full critical attention?

Under federal Network to Freedom standards, a financial contribution to an underground railroad related entity constitutes evidence of underground railroad involvement. Questions about Thomas Truesdell's import/export and shipping activities were frequently mentioned by peer reviewers as being possibly underground railroad related (Appendix B, *passim*) but still AKRF did not see fit to discuss or review the ledger.

A subsequent story in the *Eagle* emphasized that the ledger had no entries for the years the Truesdells lived on Duffield Street. Contributions to an underground railroad related cause prior to those years would still qualify the Truesdells as having an underground railroad connection. Not keeping a compromising ledger at the time of the Fugitive Slave Act would be normal: Siebert notes that written records are extremely rare after 1850, due to the "consternation" caused by the penalties in the law. The break in the records could be called coincidental; it could equally well be interpreted as evidence of clandestine activity.

### 3. Underground passages.

In the field of underground railroad scholarship it is generally agreed that hiding places and hidden exits were more often adapted than purpose-built. Although fugitives did not necessarily walk up the front stoop, come in the front door, and remain in the parlor, most agree that the mere presence of secondary entrances, potential hiding places, tunnels and trapdoors absolutely does not prove underground railroad involvement. We concur with that view, and certainly would never suggest that architectural features *alone* can establish a history of underground railroad use.

Given such consensus, it is curious that AKRF and its architectural sub-consultant have gone to extraordinary lengths to claim that architectural features which could have been used by fugitives never existed in these houses. In our opinion, this is not factual.

**The Perris Map.** Most egregious is their omission of the key to the 1855 Perris map. They neither reproduce nor discuss this vital key, which explains what the related map shows: a connection between the subject houses in the exact location where the property owners say they saw what they described as a tunnel (which we would prefer to describe as interconnected cellar-level vaults under the stoops and areaways of these houses.)

AKRF reproduces nine maps of Duffield Street from six different companies dated between 1855 and 1938.<sup>1</sup> All these maps were produced for specialist use by real estate or fire insurance companies. All provide keys for interpretation; the keys are not uniform, and the maps cannot be fully understood without the keys. However, in their report, AKRF reproduces none of these necessary keys. Nor, apparently, did they examine all the maps they cite for evidence of the vault connection.

AKRF claims (Report, Section "Final Report", page 8) property owners said that an underground passage between the houses (which they had seen, but which was later closed off by alterations) was shown on the 1898 Sanborn map by "a dotted line." AKRF then proceeds to argue that an 1886 Sanborn map shows "dashed lines" that must be interpreted as wooden porches, according to an (undocumented) conversation with an (unidentified) person at the present Sanborn Map company

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<sup>1</sup> The 1855 Perris Map, the 1869 Dripps Map, the 1880 Bromley Map, the 1886 Robinson Map, the 1886 Sanborn Map, the 1898 Hyde Map, and the 1886, 1906, 1915 and 1938 Sanborn Maps.

...according to a representative of the Sanborn Map Company, dashed lines on Sanborn maps indicate open porches, which are typically wooden but can also be other materials. Two parallel dashed lines can also indicate a tunnel, but in such cases there is an arc at each end of the lines and the notation "tunnel." Dashed lines such as those shown at the front of 223-227 Duffield Street are also shown at the front of 213-219 Duffield Street, 195 Prince Street, 376 Gold Street, and 404 Gold Street on the 1886 Sanborn map (see Figure 4 of the report). Therefore, the dashed lines on the 1898 Sanborn map would appear to indicate porches at 223-227 Duffield Street, rather than a tunnel. ("Final Report," page 17.)

*If* the property owners cited the 1898 map at the hearings on the EIS, perhaps technically it is only necessary for the consultant to demonstrate that the vaults do not appear on that particular map. If the purpose of the report were scholarship rather than advocacy, to determine the truth, rather than to discredit the property owners, then one might examine the only fire Atlas surviving from the period of significance, that is, the 1855 Brooklyn Perris.

Perris was the first company in New York to produce detailed maps for the fire insurance industry, illustrating fire hazards by detailing the construction, materials, use categories, skylights and interconnections between buildings—anything that could be a factor in the spread of fire. Published by subscription, the loose leaf double folio maps were provided with a title page, an index, and a key to the codes they used. In the 1855 Brooklyn Perris the key clearly illustrates that single dashes crossing lot lines indicate "buildings communicating."

Sanborn, still a national corporation in 2007, bought the Perris company a century ago, in 1899. It seems odd that a researcher today would appeal to Sanborn for help in the interpretation of a code which predated Sanborn's ownership of Perris by four decades, especially when that code is quite clearly stated in key to the original 1855 Perris Atlas which AKRF must have consulted when it arranged to reproduce the map (though not the key) in its report.

**The Architectural Consultant.** Peer reviewer Dr. Cheryl LaRoche's Comment 13 (Report, Appendix B, pages 19-20), which notes at length that other sidewalk vault related hideaways were regarded as significant by other archaeologists and museums, receives this response from AKRF:

...with the exception of one "unpaved" section of flooring on Duffield Street, there are no anomalous cellar or sub cellar features, no communication between buildings exists at the cellar levels, and the identified features conform to general construction practices of the time period. If desired, Mr. Devonshire can meet with the peer reviewers to further explicate these features.

This is misleading on several counts.

The architectural consultant does not deal with the issue of the underground connection between the front vaults of the houses except to say that it does not exist, an unnecessary finding, since no one claims that the Duffield Street houses still have an underground connection today. The question is, were they connected in the 1850s. Oral history, including Joy Chatel's testimony that she saw such a connection before the vaults were altered, is confirmed by the Perris Atlas of 1855, which appears to show a connection. as noted above.

Instead of mapping, describing or photographing locations at the front of the properties which appear to be remains of underground vaults, and whose walls give evidence of later changes, the consultant limits his discussion to the back and side walls of the buildings. He states that a side wall chimney foundation is a normal construction feature, which is true.

However, his description of the back wall of the cellars (no photographs, no dimensions) lacks information which might be critical for those who have not been there. There are shafts which

the consultant identifies as original ventilation shafts: he does not give their dimensions, which are sufficient for a man with a ladder to use as an exit to the back yards.

It creates confusion when the report does not use consistent or standard terminology, and calls the basement both a “cellar” and a “raised basement” and the cellar a “sub cellar” while providing no section drawings of either a typical mid 19<sup>th</sup> century townhouse or of the existing conditions in these buildings. Then the architectural consultant writes:

Prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> C basements or cellars were used for kitchen areas. Because of the lack of side wall ventilation, there was usually a ventilation shaft at the rear facade, and a larger shaft, that served not only for ventilation, but as a means for conveying foods to the basement or cellar levels from the street. Frequently there is a wrought iron “crane” architectural feature that is frequently found on areaways in the fronts of 19<sup>th</sup> C New York row houses serving the same purpose. (Report Appendix D, page 4.)

This is preposterous. Despite constantly harping on the importance of “documentation” the consultants provide no evidence or references to substantiate the claim that 19<sup>th</sup> century New York townhouses were built with subterranean kitchens served by cranes and ventilated by shafts. We know of no instance of an early or mid-19<sup>th</sup> century townhouse with an underground kitchen for normal domestic use, and none of the contemporary architectural pattern books suggest such an arrangement.

The townhouse parlor floor, reached by the stoop, is half a story above street level; half a story below street level is the basement floor. Basement floors have windows; they generally open into the areaway under the front stoop, and into the back yard. Cellars—the normal term for the floor below the basement, and not a word interchangeable with basement in this context—lacked windows, were dark, low-ceilinged, and often had an earth floor, or stone paving. This arrangement is fully described in Charles Lockwood’s classic study of the New York rowhouse, *Bricks and Brownstone*.

It is quite normal (not “anomalous” as the consultant claims) to find an original earth floor in a cellar, and today people often excavate town house cellars that are little more than crawl spaces to create additional rooms. The foundations of houses of this period are stone, often rubble; the houses were not originally built on or with concrete slabs (later additions which the consultant rather quaintly describes as “rat slabs,” evoking irrelevant and distasteful images.)

Such a muddled, un-illustrated account might lead the architectural non-specialist to imagine that the cellar levels of these houses 1) were kitchens, ordinary open rooms in daily use, and 2) did not provide a potential inconspicuous second means of entrance and egress. That would be wrong. The cellars were obscure spaces, in this case, at the level of the communicating vaults under the areaways, and the shafts at the back provided potential escape routes. That does not prove that they were used by freedom seekers, or built for that purpose, but likewise, there is no evidence to preclude such use. It is gratuitous to try to gloss over the existence of possible escape routes.

**4. Walt Whitman was a neighbor of the Truesdells on Myrtle Avenue in 1850. He wrote:**

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,  
And went to where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,  
And brought water and filled a tub for his sweated body and bruised feet,  
And gave him a room that entered from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,  
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,  
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles,  
He stayed with me a week before he was recuperated and passed north,  
I had him sit next to me at table, my firelock leaned in the corner. (*Leaves of Grass*, 1855.)

Read into The Record.

**Braggin' About Brooklyn's**

**Preliminary Statement in the Application for  
Historical Landmark Designation of Defined  
Brooklyn Area**

Submitted by  
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Mr. Winston R. Von Engel, Deputy Director  
Department of City Planning  
City of New York  
Brooklyn Office  
16 Court Street 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Brooklyn, New York 11241

Dear Mr. Von Engel,

In reply to our recent telephone conversation, and aligned with your dedicated commitment to ensure the proper identification and protection and preservation of a significant historical themed community aspect in relation to African American history, it is with great pride to specifically establish and inform you and your office that therein your current downtown Brooklyn environment impact survey, there existed a community of significant historical value which has been discovered and identified as a significant historical community with a more than tremendous importance beyond reasonable doubt with relationship to and of great importance to American history and with a distinctive involvement with the historical Underground Railroad. As an acknowledged historian of Brooklyn's African American history and as a developing authority on and of the history of Brooklyn's involvement in the Underground Railroad, I believe there is a wealth of information to prove this fact.

The initial preliminary investigative statements by historians and academia professionals clearly and overwhelmingly substantiate and support the statement that the defined area of the environment impact survey is and can beyond reasonable doubt be proven to a significant historical location to America's history during its horrific slavery period. The area of definition of both your environment impact and the community of significant historical importance is bordered to the north by High Street, to the east by Flatbush Avenue, to the west by Jay Street and to the south by Livingston Street. In 1790, according to the Federal census, and as a result of the actions of those who lived in the defined area of the community of "Abolitionist" Brooklyn inherited the distinctive title as being "The Grand Central Terminal of the Underground Railroad". This distinctive and honorable title was and is only associated with Brooklyn after thus far researched material of the Underground Railroad of many states, which were involved in this country's first civil rights action during the era of slavery in America.

To date, acknowledged historians and noted published academia professional consultants concur that the area of this current discussion is with great contribution to America's history. It is perfectly clear that the community as described by the above boundaries and the contribution of those whom lived therein was a significant aspect to the development of Brooklyn and without question this development shaped the darkest moment that of the slavery era.

The protection of historical and cultural resources associated with African American history has been in adequately represented within the statewide historic

resource inventories to date. Identifying and protecting these historical areas is a critical issue in contemporary historic preservation. While there are many reasons why historic resources related to African American history has been often overlooked in traditional preservationist attempts to identify and protect historical sites of African American history and area of the slavery era, are perhaps far likely by the result of its painful memory of guilt and shame that it regenerates.

Also constraints of time and money often limit the kind of documental research and investigation needed to established significant historical African American communities. And while many scholars have developed knowledge and expertise about the history of the under represented cultural efforts to identify, protect and preserve these communities are met often with strong opposition because of the question of value in preserving resources that recall the oppression of one race over another. African American heritage is woven deeply into the fabric of American history and the notion that African American history is separate of American history is the notion that undermines the realities of the true stories of histories ever being told and fore stalling America into a fantasy of fable folklores not accurate accounts.

To dispel the accounts that occurred relating to the African American with regard to his role and contributions to history will forever be considered an unconscionable act of deceit. However even though there is not always time for a full fledged survey and while often many resources are lost such as in the late eighteenth century black community called the hills in Westchester County for example. This community was not identified nor documented and planning agencies in an unknown reason of haste eradicated the development before it could be protected, recorded and preserved. Upon this notification, such is hope not to be the case of this historical location of Brooklyn, which is defined and is developing through current research and identification as being one of the most concentrated areas of abolitionist churches and one of the richest abolitionist strongholds in America, located within the second largest slaveholding county of America after the 1790's and until the end of slavery in America.

Africans were some of the earliest settlers in New York. By 1643 Jan Francisco, an African trader and landowner had settled in Breukelen. While the slave population of New York State grew by the late 1700's, New York/Brooklyn had the largest slave population of any state north of Maryland. The ability of the academic communities to identify, protect and preserve specific properties of the African culture that represented history have lagged, and have been relatively non existent with the surviving remnants of the 18<sup>th</sup> century African burials.

While the African slave labor was a crucial component to the development of colonial Brooklyn, New York and America, the potential to provide significant opportunities to preserve and protect the many resources associated with these themes communities relative to history, for many reasons have failed, this current opportunity \* which of the identified area of definition of Brooklyn is of significant importance to American history if the truth is ever to be told accurately. \*

Noted is the ability and capacity of blacks in Brooklyn, New York during these early times in establishing for themselves separate communities and by 1796, blacks who practiced Protestantism, became frustrated by the segregation and discrimination of the white churches and formed their own religious organizations.

While many New York, Brooklyn residents both black and white play pivotal roles in the struggle for liberation from slavery, many associations and cultural institutions, like the Woolman's Benevolent association of Nassau Street in Brooklyn, along with public schools for blacks and separate black churches helped form and proved the resourcefulness of the under represented communities of blacks and helped develop in Brooklyn, one of the mightiest abolitionist locations of all of founding America. It can not be more emphatically stated with significance that the single most underlying factor that was created to undermine the evil political system of slavery - "Man's inhumanity to man" was the abolitionist movement, the growth of which ensured slavery's demise.

Eradicating the "identified area" which by documentation will be proven to have had the most significant concentration of abolitionist churches of any area located within America during that time, would display a deflection conscious and eradicating any historical defined fact, even that which is defined by, minimum of qualification for historical designation that by oral traditions and destroying the location that which is defined within the Brooklyn current environmental impact area information, would constitute the greatest atrocity against the preservation of treasured American history. Frankly I personally cannot imagine such a callous act in the name of any progressive development by a city governmental official or representative.

"A race of people without a history is, doomed for degradation" once quoted the Russian physicist Andre sackarov. It is inconceivable the desire to eradicate the history of the only ethnic group in Brooklyn who have survived progressively and who are not immigrants.

The Underground Railroad and the safe haven it created within the homes and churches of abolitionist and the followers of the abolitionist movement, is considered one of the greatest factual remnants that remind us of the commitment numerous individuals had towards the abolition of slavery. While it is understandably desirable and easy to decide to eradicate these remnants, which highlight the oppression of people of African decent, one only needs to consider the detrimental effect of eliminating valuable American history without the thought of preservation and without regard to the effect upon future generations and how history will remember those responsible for the eradication.

Currently, very few sites have been formally recognized for their association with this very critical theme of American history and its involvement with the Underground Railroad and the city planners should not be the first in line to eradicate their very own American history. The current locations on Duffield Street and Albee Square west Street must not be eliminated but investigated, researched and preserved for future generations to better understand the quality of character of which Brooklynites



were born with developed and used to help develop Brooklyn and shape the destiny of America.

Let's be perfectly clear the identification, recognition, protection and preservation of this defined historical location by all parties concerned can only serve as a source of civic ethnic pride and provide all brooklynites with a distinctive legacy associated with the struggles for freedom and rights of others and a lasting positive image for all future generations, the opposite will always question what manner of humans would destroy their legacy to history.

This preliminary overview establishes that the major historic theme relating to a specific area and its involvement with the Underground Railroad are presumptively clear. I have personally visited the states of Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Georgia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, and studied New York state areas, and in the past eight years of studying the underground railroad and working with individuals in each of these states and locations therein, in relationship to the underground railroad, and I have never personally experienced an area with such a high concentration of with abolitionist related churches as contained within the defined area of the Brooklyn environmental impact survey area that which includes Duffield Street and surrounding community.

To probe the question of any reasonable doubt will include the following research including but not limited to thorough investigation, analysis and evaluation of:

- a. Court records
- b. Birth records
- c. Death records
- d. Church directories
- e. Federal census
- f. Off year state census
- g. Tax records
- h. Military records
- i. Quaker meeting record
- j. Business records
- k. Deeds
- l. School records
- m. Black Newspaper

The thorough examination and research through published books, journals and unpublished book length manuscripts on the following subjects:

- a. slavery and free person of African descent in New York 1626-1827
- b. African American in antebellum New York 1827-1864
- c. The African American press 1827-1867

- d. American Revolution and Civil War military records
- e. The African American church 1776-1865 in New York

Research Team –

The following is the list of proposed human resources:

1. Professor Craig Wilder+
2. professor Robert Swan+
3. Dr. Amos Jordan\*
4. National Park Service\*
5. National Archive Association+
6. Brooklyn Historical Society\*
7. Queens Historical Society\*
8. New York Historical Society+
9. national Land Preservation Committee+
10. Ms. E. Hardy – Brooklyn Central Library – Brooklyn Collection\*
11. Mr. J. Driscoll – Queens Central Library – Long Island Collection\*
12. Mr. C. Moore – Schaumburg Library+
13. Ms. Michelle Williams – researcher\*
14. Ms. A. Meyer – Brooklyn Society Library+
15. Ms. Victoria Missick – researcher\*
16. Ms. Crystal Barkley – researcher\*
17. Braggin? About Brooklyn – (CEO Destiny Burns)\*

\*Committed participants

+ Anticipated participants

*African American Life in Weeksville, New York, 1835-1910*  
Judith Wellman, May 2005  
From National Register, Historic Context Statement  
For Society for the Promotion of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History  
Funded by Save America's Treasures

### ***Underground Railroad: A Safe Haven for Freedom Seekers***

Weeksville's origin was rooted in a search for safety, self-reliance, and citizenship. In many ways, the boundary between slavery and freedom was blurred for every African American, including those in Weeksville. Legally, the line between slavery and freedom was clear. Emotionally, socially, and culturally, however, it was often blurred. Family members might be both free and enslaved. Free people of color often shared values with those they had grown up with in Virginia or South Carolina. Free people as well as those legally enslaved often feared capture by kidnappers. Passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 made federal officials directly responsible for capturing accused freedom seekers and exacerbated fears of every African American, free or not.

While we have no specific well-documented references to Underground Railroad events in Weeksville, considerable evidence from the census suggests that Weeksville was an important haven for African Americans from the South.

Several documented references to the Underground Railroad relate to various areas of Brooklyn. Rev. J.W. C. Pennington, the "fugitive blacksmith," escaped from slavery in Maryland, settled in Long Island and then in New York, became a well-known antislavery activist, and wrote his autobiography. Rev. Amos Freeman of Siloam Presbyterian Church helped one young woman, Maria Weems, sent to him from William Still in Philadelphia, reach Canada. Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, European American minister at Plymouth Congregational Church, auctioned a young slave girl from his pulpit to raise money for her purchase from slavery. Willis Hodges, born free in Virginia, moved to Williamsburgh, and became an outspoken activist against slavery and for the rights of free African Americans. When he received a land grant from Gerrit Smith, he moved to the Adirondacks, where he wrote his autobiography, *A Free Man of Color*. Maritcha Lyons, who later became Assistant Principal in P.S. 83 in Weeksville, remembered that "every thinking man and woman was a volunteer in the famous 'underground railroad.'" Her own parents often helped freedom seekers.<sup>1</sup>

Undocumented stories about the Underground Railroad appear in the literature about Weeksville. Berean Church members reputedly assisted freedom seekers, for example. Circumstantial evidence supports this. Of the eight original African American members, all but one (Stephen Murray) were southern born. Four were born in Virginia, one in Maryland, one in North Carolina, and one (Francis P. Graham) in South Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

In 1841, supported by Governor William H. Seward, New York State passed a personal liberty law, giving freedom immediately to any enslaved person brought into the state. Previously, the state had allowed slave holders to bring enslaved people into New York for up to nine months. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* in 1842 overturned

<sup>1</sup> William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia, 1872), 186; James W.C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith: or Events in the History of James W.C. Pennington* reprint, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1971); Willis Hodges, *A Free Man of Color: The Autobiography of Willis Augustus Hodges* reprint (Nashville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Maritcha Lyons, "Memories of Yesterdays: All of Which I Saw and Part of Which I Was: An Autobiography," unpublished manuscript, c.1924, Brooklyn Historical Society, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Little Church on the Hill.

this law, declaring that no state could pass a law contradicting the 1793 U.S. law relating to fugitive slaves. While some abolitionists were distressed, others argued that *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* actually meant that no slaveholder could expect any assistance at all in retrieving freedom seekers from within New York State.

The Fugitive Slave Law, passed on September 18, 1850, changed all that. It mandated that federal marshals everywhere assist in capturing alleged fugitives, and it initiated a crisis for African Americans throughout the North. In a dramatic test case, James Hamlet was taken back to slavery from Williamsburgh. Reaction from the African American population in the greater New York City area was intense and immediate. On October 1, 1850, 1500 people (almost all of them African American, two-thirds of them women, "with a slight and visible sprinkling of white Abolitionists") crowded into Zion Church on Church Street in New York City. Some of those who attended were from Weeksville. Junius C. Morel, Weeksville teacher, journalist, and community organizer, himself born to a mother in slavery and plantation-owner father in South Carolina, gave a speech and also reported the proceedings for the North Star. "It would be exceedingly difficult," he noted, "to take a fugitive publicly from this city, but unfortunately the work is done secretly and in the dark."<sup>3</sup>

African Americans recognized that slavery threatened every free person of color. "Your Liberty, your Fire-side is in danger of being invaded!" read the call for the meeting. "Shall we resist Oppression? Shall we defend our Liberties? Shall we be FREEMAN OR SLAVES?" President William P. Powell opened the meeting with a stirring appeal to the African Americans and the American revolutionary tradition:

A more important subject than this, never in the history of this country, came before the American people, and it is nothing nor less than this - Shall the iniquitous Fugitive Slave bill, which subjects every free colored man, woman and child, to be seized upon, handcuffed, and plunged into perpetual Slavery? Shall the blood-thirsty slaveholder be permitted by this unrighteous law to come into our domicils, or workshops, or the places where we labor, and carry off our wives and children, our fathers and mothers, and ourselves, without a struggle - (loud cries of "No, no,") - without resisting, even if need be, unto death . . . . upon your decision this night hangs suspended the fate of millions. This "covenant with death, and agreement with hell," must be trampled under foot, resisted, disobeyed, and violated at all hazards. (Cheers.) When the mother country imposed upon the infant colonies the three-and-a-half per cent tax, and the stamp act, the very first blood that was shed was shed in resistance of the odious act by Attack, a colored man; . . . and throughout the revolutionary and late war, colored men stood side by side with white men, and achieved a most glorious victory in the name of liberty. We have met this night to decide, not whether we will pay the government a three-and-a-half cent tax or an impost duty, but whether we will suffer ourselves and families to be made slaves.

The meeting addressed a letter to C.S. Woodhull, Mayor of New York City, asking what protection they could expect, as free people of color, from local officials. They heard lengthy discussions of the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Law from local leaders such as George Downing, James McCune Smith, and Junius C. Morel himself. The meeting took up a collection to defray the expenses "of a number of fugitive slaves who are now in this city on their way to Canada." Several speakers advocated violent resistance. John S. Jacobs, a freedom seeker himself, advised "my colored brethren, if you have not swords, I say to you, sell your garments and buy one . . . . If there be any man here tonight who wants to know my name, tell him it is John S. Jacobs, of South Carolina, and that I am an American citizen . . . . They say that they cannot take us back to the South; but I say, under the present law they can; and now I say unto you, let them only take your dead bodies. (Tremendous cheers.)"

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<sup>3</sup> North Star, October 24, 1850, adapted from reports in the [National Anti-Slavery] Standard and Herald.

Junius C. Morel advised people to keep the peace, not to be aggressors, but to be prepared. "I would not tell you what to do, but I will tell you what I will do," he said. "I am a freeman, and I care not for the constitution or the laws made by man. There is a law above them; and I tell you that before they drag me into Slavery they will have to take my life."<sup>4</sup> The meeting collected \$800, enough to buy Hamlet out of slavery, and James Hamlet eventually returned to his wife and children in Williamsburgh.

A Committee of Thirteen was organized to oppose colonizationists and to aid freedom seekers. It had three members from Brooklyn: William J. Wilson, Junius C. Morel from Weeksville, and Dr. T. Joiner White. Maritcha Lyons remembered that no one outside the members themselves knew exactly who was on the committee. "Without officers, headquarters, passwords or treasury, this band was liberally supported," she remembered. "Aid was given to escaping slaves, financially or otherwise, by those who required no other details save that such help was needed. Any adventurer who had the courage to set out on a life or death journey from bondage to freedom, knew by the 'grape vine telegraph,' New York City would never prove indifferent to his needs in the exigency." Lyons' own parents, who lived both in New York City and Brooklyn, assisted about 1000 people on the Underground Railroad. "Thanks to mother's devotion and discretion," Lyons remembered, "refugees were kept long enough to be fed and to have disguises changed and be met by those prepared to speed them on in the journey toward the North Star. Father used to say humorously this part of his business was 'keeping a cake and apple stand.'"<sup>5</sup>

People generally perceived New York City to be the destination point for large numbers of freedom seekers throughout the antebellum period. In 1851, the Superintendent of Common Schools for the City and County of New York noted the "increasing numbers of fugitives and ignorant black people, who are constantly coming into the city."<sup>6</sup>

Census reports suggest that many of these freedom seekers found their way to Weeksville. Place of birth, as listed in the censuses, offers a clue about Weeksville's connections to slavery. Many people in Weeksville had been born in the South. We do not know whether they were born into freedom, earned their freedom, or left on their own. In any case, they certainly had experience with a slave system.

In 1850, almost thirty percent (29.5 percent or 105 of Weeksville's 366 African Americans) were southern-born. (Almost sixty percent--59.6 percent--of Weeksville's population had been born in New York State and seventy percent--68.9 percent--had been born in the North.) Southern-born Weeksville residents could have been free people of color. They could also have been born into slavery and come to Weeksville as a place of refuge. Most of these were from Virginia (60 people) or Maryland (27 people). Thirteen were either from North or South Carolina. Fewer than three percent of Weeksville's total population was foreign-born (seven from the West India, two from Africa, and one from England.) Those from the West Indies and Africa may also have been freedom seekers.

To place Weeksville in a comparative context, in 1850, Cincinnati, on the border of a slave state, and Buffalo, on the border with Canada, had a larger proportion of southern-born African Americans than did Weeksville. Almost 60 percent of Cincinnati's black population was southern-born in 1850, compared to 42 percent of African Americans in Buffalo and 29.5 percent of southern-born African Americans in Weeksville. In contrast, in 1850, 16.6 percent of Boston's black population had been born in the South, and, in 1860, 24.1 percent of the African American population of Boston was southern-born.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> North Star, October 24, 1850, adapted from reports in the [National Anti-Slavery] Standard and Herald.

<sup>5</sup> Lyons, "Memories of Yesterdays," 26, 46.

<sup>6</sup> John J. Zuile, "Report," Committee on Education, North Star, April 17, 1851.

<sup>7</sup> James D. Bilotta, "A Quantitative Approach to Buffalo's Black Population of 1860," Afro-Americans in New York Life and History (July 1988): 19-34; James Horton, "Shades of Color: The Mulatto in Three

Of those African Americans over the age of sixteen who lived in Weeksville in 1850, 44.7 percent (96 out of 215 people) were born in the South, double that for Brooklyn as a whole. Of the ten northern cities for which Leonard Curry compiled nativity data for 1850, only Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Buffalo had African American populations with larger proportions of people in 1850 over the age of sixteen born in slave states (Cincinnati had 71.9 percent, Pittsburgh 50.7 percent, Philadelphia 49.4 percent, and Buffalo 58 percent). With the exception of Pittsburgh, these were all on the borders of slave states or Canada. As a major port on the Ohio River, Pittsburgh would have been an attractive destination for freedom seekers. In contrast, figures for Brooklyn as a whole were 22.4 percent, Boston was 21.4 percent, New York City, 19.5 percent, and Providence, R.I. was 20.6 percent.<sup>8</sup>

As ports, all of these cities (including Boston, New York City, and Providence) would have been attractive destinations for freedom seekers. They also acted as funnels and primary channels for freedom seekers who went further north. Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia were the first free cities that freedom seekers encountered on their journey north. Buffalo was a major point of embarkation for Canada (as was Detroit and Oswego). For some, these major funnel cities would also have been their final destination. For others, they would have been jumping off places for points farther North. With 44.7 percent of its adult population born in the South, Weeksville more closely resembles these major funnel points than it does other urban centers.

### *Berean Church*

On August 15, 1850, a year after the founding of AME Bethel Church, Berean Baptist Church was incorporated, also in the Ninth Ward. Unlike AME Bethel Church, Berean Baptist was originally a biracial church. The names of thirteen male members plus two ministers of Berean Baptist Church were listed as founding members, either on the deed or on church incorporation papers. Of these, eight were African American (George Baker, Francis P. Graham, Charles Lewis, William Mitchell, Stephen Murray, Elijah Overton, Jephtha Reed, and John Weeks). Five of them (George Baker, Francis P. Graham, Charles Lewis, William Mitchell, and Jephtha Reed) had either lived in Weeksville or owned land there since 1840 or before. One, Francis P. Graham, shoemaker and land speculator, some of whose land holdings adjoined Hunterfly Road, had property worth \$8000.<sup>9</sup>

At least five of the original members (William Oliver, George Evans, T.J. Hutchinson, Peter Balem, John Treslow, Rev. Daniel Reese, and Rev. Daniel Underdue) were European American.

Berean Church was originally built on Warren Street, now Prospect Place, on land purchased for \$240. The original deed noted that it was in Carrsville, on block 1367. The site was high on a hill, earning the church the name "Little Church on the Hill." Sometime after its incorporation, several European American members left the church, claiming that the hill was too

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Antebellum Northern Communities," *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 129-130; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, "Table 6: Nativity of Boston Blacks," *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), 7.

<sup>8</sup>Leonard Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America*, Table A-6: Nativities of Adult Free Persons of Color in Fifteen Cities in 1850 (by percentage), 249.

<sup>9</sup>[Kings County, New York]. "Religious Corporations: Sept. 18, 1785, to Dec. 16, 1875." Vol. I. Ms. Kings County Clerk, Brooklyn. Copy at Weeksville Society. Hurley, 9; Swan, "Origins," fn. 33. *The Little Church on the Hill* [booklet about Berean Church's history] (n.p., n.d.); 1850 manuscript census; 1840 manuscript census; Robert J. Swan, "The Origin of Black Bedford-Stuyvesant," in Charlene Claye Van Derzee, *Black Contribution to the Development of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn, New York: New Muse Community Museum of Brooklyn, 1977).

difficult to climb. They built a second church on the corner of Herkimer Street and Rochester Avenue, under the pastorate of Rev. Daniel Reese, leaving Rev. Daniel Underdue as pastor at Berean Church. Peter Galem, one of the original European American members, took a twenty-year mortgage of \$1500 on the original church, ensuring its survival.<sup>10</sup>

About 1863, Berean received its first African American pastor, Simon Bundick. Rev. Bundick had moved to Weeksville with his five children about 1847. A history of Berean Baptist, The Little Church on a Hill, noted that Rev. Bundick had formerly been pastor of the Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn and that Lain's City Directory listed him as pastor of the "Weeksville Baptist Church" on Warren Street from about 1863 until 1874.

Like many churches, especially African American churches, Berean Baptist had a strong tradition of both spiritual strength and social activism. The Little Church on the Hill, noted that "Berean Missionary Baptist Church was founded on the solid foundation that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of all. Understanding that the Christian faith addresses the holistic needs of humanity, beginning with the spiritual and encompassing all other needs, the members of Berean have always had one foot planted firmly on the spiritual path and the other rooted in helping to improve conditions for our community and our people. Guided by that faith, and with a strong belief in the words of Christ when He said, ". . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me," our members have continually struggled to be doers of the Word and not hearers only." The Little Church on the Hill noted that church members supported efforts to gain voting rights for African Americans, to assist freedom seekers from the South, and to help those fleeing from the 1863 Draft Riots in New York City.<sup>11</sup>

Berean Church was destroyed by fire on September 18, 1865. Members met in the home of George and Mary Elizabeth Joan Baker until they were able to build a new church, buy a pump organ, and start their own choir. In 1879-80, under the leadership of Rev. Samuel Christian, the church paid off its original mortgage. By 1890, they had 35 members.<sup>12</sup>

#### The Bundick Family—1850

In 1850, Simon and Johanna Bundick lived in Weeksville with their five children, Isaiah (age 11), Margaret (10), Simon (8), Cornelius (5), and Barsella (2). Simon Bundick had been born in Virginia and had come to Weeksville about 1847. Johanna Bundick had been born in New Jersey. All of their children had been born in New York State. Simon Bundick listed his occupation as a laborer, but they owned a frame house worth \$1000. Johanna Bundick could not read, but Margaret and Simon both attended school.

Simon Bundick	42	\$1000	Male	Black	Laborer	b. Virginia
Johana Bundick	25		Female	Black		b. New Jersey
Isaiah Bundick	11		Male	Black		b. New York
Margaret Bundick	10		Female	Black		b. New York
Simon Bundick	8		Male	Black		b. New York
Cornelius Bundick	5		Male	Black		b. New York
Barsell Bundick	2		Male	Black		b. New York

<sup>10</sup> Little Church on the Hill, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Little Church on the Hill, 11, 12, 16-18.

<sup>12</sup> Little Church on the Hill, 17-19.

