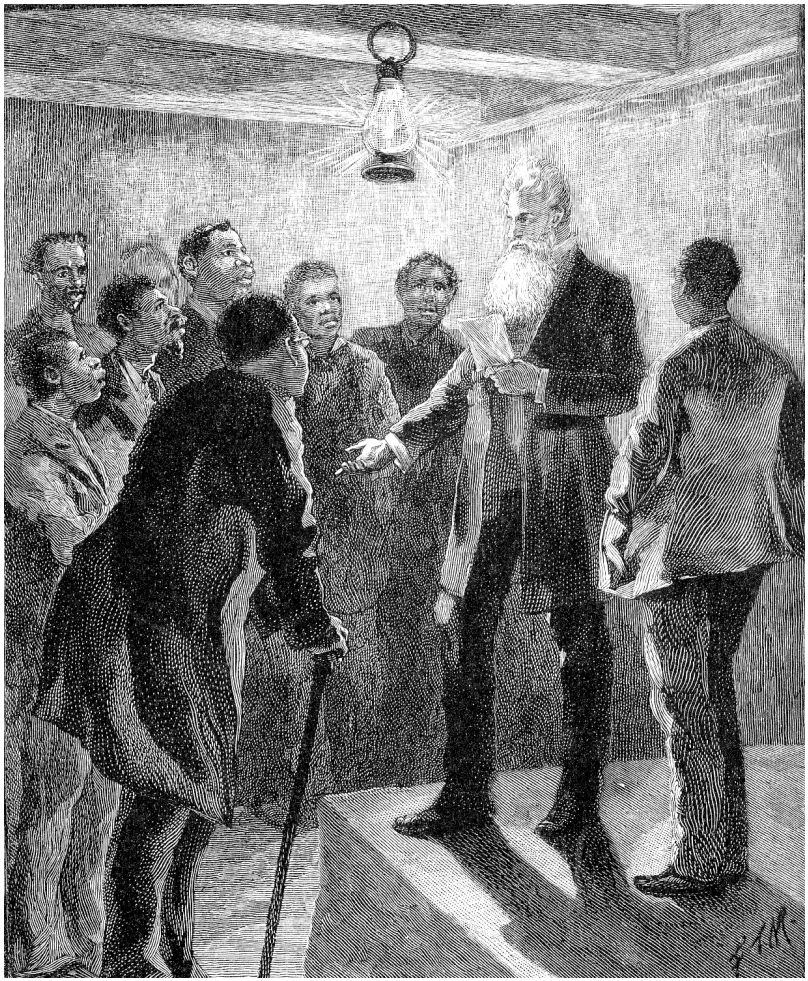

"A Meeting of the Gileadites at Springfield," 1851

Although often reproduced, this illustration is not historically accurate. In 1851, the 50-year-old John Brown had short brown hair and a cleanshaven face, not the flowing, white beard of his Harpers Ferry raid and subsequent execution. This fanciful image was first published in 1888 by M. A. Green in *Springfield, 1636-1886: History of Town and City*. Harry Andrew Wright reproduced it in his 1894 article "John Brown in Springfield" in the *New England Magazine*. In 1909 it was included in Charles H. Barrows' *The History of Springfield in Massachusetts for the Young*. Despite John Brown's national notoriety, both his anti-slavery activism and the militant "League of Gileadites" were proudly celebrated in Springfield. The city's African American community regularly commemorated Brown's birthday over many decades.

Who Were the Members of Springfield's League of Gileadites?

Cliff McCarthy

Editor's Introduction: *Radical abolitionist John Brown is typically given credit for founding the League of Gileadites in Springfield, Massachusetts, in January of 1851. The League was a self-defense organization created to protect fugitives (self-liberated men and women) from slave catchers after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Indeed, the most commonly-reproduced image of the Gileadites, first published in 1888, portrays Brown with his iconic, flowing white beard standing on a platform surrounded by a group of African Americans who appear to be listening attentively as he gestures and reads from a document. One man stands on the platform next to him, perhaps intended to represent Thomas Thomas, Brown's close friend and associate.*[1]

Although often reproduced, this illustration is misleading. In January of 1851 Brown was only fifty years old. He sported short, dark hair, not the long white beard and hair he displayed at Harpers Ferry. This image further obscures and distorts the historical record by placing Brown at the center, whereas Springfield's African American community was nationally known for its courageous anti-slavery activism. It had already published its own militant statement opposing the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, vowing to use "every means which the God of Love has placed in our power to sustain our Liberty."[2]

Although John Brown and his 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, continue to rouse controversy, and new biographies of Brown

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appear every decade, the lives of the courageous men and women who were members of Springfield's League of Gileadites have remained relatively obscure. It has taken the painstaking research of local historians and archivists, working over many decades, to identify these individuals and reconstruct the contours of their lives. Many became leading members of the city's African American community; others were self-liberated former slaves who spent only a few years in Springfield. One, William Green, wrote a brief autobiography describing his escape from slavery before disappearing from the historical record (until now). Other Gileadite members were interviewed over the years by reporters from the Springfield Republican. *A staunchly abolitionist newspaper, the* Republican *often published interviews and laudatory obituaries of the city's "colored" citizens. These provide important primary sources. For other Gileadite members, however, little more than a single entry can be found documenting their existence and presence in a city directory or census.*

It is remarkable that in 1888, when this image was first published, the Gileadites were proudly celebrated by city leaders as part of Springfield's public history, along with homage paid to John Brown's exploits and three years spent living in the city. Local historian Harry Andrew Wright concluded his 1894 article, titled "John Brown in Springfield," with the claim that "in the hearts of the world John Brown lives, an ever-shining example of self-sacrificing and heroic Christian life." In truth, nationally Brown had long been denounced by many post-Civil War pundits and politicians. In Springfield, however, Brown's birthday was celebrated well into the 1910s, particularly within St. John's Congregational Church (formerly the Sanborn Street "Free Church" where Brown himself had once worshipped).

Cliff McCarthy is an archivist at the Lyman & Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History and Belchertown's Stone House Museum in Belchertown. A president of the Pioneer Valley History Network, he has devoted decades to uncovering and documenting the lives of the members of the League of Gileadites and, in the process, telling the story of Springfield's nineteenth-century African American community. This painstaking, and ongoing, research has represented a labor of love. Each year, new leads are uncovered and new sources emerge. This article represents the latest research, but there may still be more to be uncovered. McCarthy documents the lives of thirty-three African Americans who were likely members of the League of Gileadites. The names of twenty-seven members were listed in Franklin Sanborn's 1885 volume, The Life and Letters of John Brown. *Six other men and women are presumed to have been members, based on other surviving sources and circumstantial evidence.*

* * * * *

> "Should one of your number be arrested, you must collect together as quickly as possible, so as to outnumber your adversaries . . . Let no able-bodied man appear on the ground unequipped, or with his weapons exposed to view . . . Your plans must be known only to yourself, and with the understanding that all traitors must die, wherever caught and proven to be guilty . . . Do not delay one moment after you are ready: you will lose all your resolution if you do. Let the first blow be the signal for all to engage; and when engaged, do not do your work by halves, but make clean work of your enemies."[3]

These stark warnings were among John Brown's "Words of Advice" that began the document that became the organizing principles of the Springfield Branch of the U.S. League of Gileadites. At a meeting on January 15, 1851, the white abolitionist gathered with members of Springfield's African American community and together organized a quasi-militia to resist the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 by whatever means necessary. As we shall see, the Black community had begun organizing many months earlier. On September 17, 1850, the "Colored Citizens of Springfield" had endorsed a militant declaration stating unequivocally that "we feel ourselves justified in using every means which the God of Love has placed in our power to sustain our Liberty." Their bold statement was publicized nationally through William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator,* under the title "Liberty or Death!" [4]

The Gileadites took their name from the Biblical Mount Gilead, where Gideon led the Israelites to freedom. The only known evidence of any other "branches" of the organization was a passing reference in an 1894 article in *Canadian Magazine* by James C. Hamilton which claimed that the League of Gileadites "had some members in Western Canada." Perhaps some of Brown's associates formed the chapter after fleeing north of the border. However, no surviving evidence or documentation exists.[5]

Much has been written about John Brown and this article will not attempt to recount his life. Many prominent historians have tried, but largely failed, at capturing the essence of this controversial and enigmatic man: his purported failures as a businessman, his murderous activities as a leader of anti-slavery forces in Bleeding Kansas, and his disastrous raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.[6] However, until Joseph Carvalho's 2020 article in the *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* titled "John Brown's Transformation: The Springfield Years, 1846-1849," this period of his life has received much less scholarly analysis.[7] Carvalho brought to light Brown's activities in

Springfield and the city's impact on him. Similarly, almost no attention had been paid to documenting the lives of the courageous African Americans who joined the League of Gileadites and risked their lives to protect members of their community.

This article has also benefited from the project dubbed, "Documenting Early Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts." Undertaken in the summer of 2021, this collaboration between the Public History Program at the University of Massachusetts and the Pioneer Valley History Network enabled students and volunteers to examine several local archives in depth for documentation about the people of color who lived in this area prior to the Civil War.

JOHN BROWN IN SPRINGFIELD, 1846-51

Brown first came to Springfield in 1846 to establish a commission house for the wool business of Perkins & Brown. True to his affinity for the underdog, the purpose of the business was to represent the interests of the western sheep farmers in their dealings with the powerful New England wool merchants. Perkins & Brown brought into Springfield wool from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and western Virginia and figured out that, by sorting the wool into different grades, they could command a higher price from the manufacturers. Perkins & Brown took a commission of two percent and the profits went back to the farmers. It was an interesting business plan; however, the New England manufacturers were unreceptive to the idea, claiming it would cost them more. Instead, they colluded to close Perkins & Brown out of the market. The company then tried to broker deals with English manufacturers and elsewhere in Europe, but these contracts also never materialized. Perkins & Brown closed its operation in 1849.[8]

Much has been made of John Brown's presumed failures as a businessman and its importance to his story. But that is not the distinguishing feature of his time in Springfield. The real importance of this short period of his life is in the development of his relationships with the anti-slavery community, both Black and white.

In the 1840s, Springfield was a center of anti-slavery activity. This is not to suggest that this sentiment was universal throughout the population, but the white leadership of the city, including its most prominent churches, most powerful businessmen, popular politicians, and even its influential newspaper—the *Springfield Republican*—were aligned, to varying degrees, against the southern slaveholders. As Brown's close associate, Thomas Thomas (1817-94), later recalled:

There was intense excitement here over the slavery question and we had the greatest speakers there were in the country at different times. Sometimes they wouldn't let the Abolitionists have a hall, and then they'd come to the colored church and speak. They were stirring times. The whole town would come out to the meetings and the largest hall in the place wouldn't hold the crowds.[9]

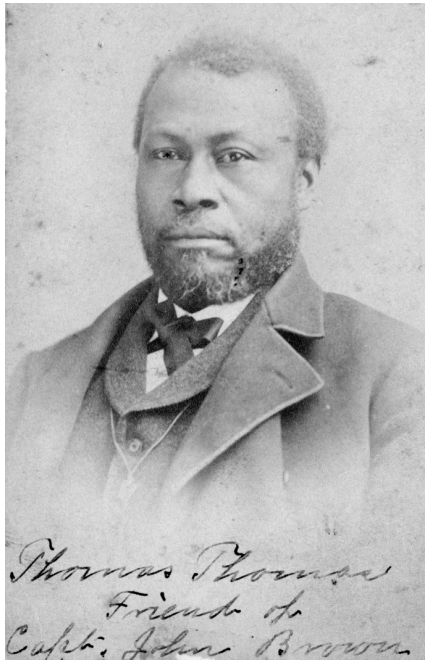

'Great Abolitionist' As He Looked When He Lived in This City

JOHN BROWN

John Brown

Republican, April 14, 1936 (p. 5)

On several occasions the newspaper titled photos of Brown "as he appeared when he lived in Springfield," perhaps to counter earlier misrepresentations. However, this photo was from 1856 as the earliest images of Brown (1848) were not made public until 1921. (See p. 197)



Thomas Thomas (1817-94)

A leading abolitionist, Thomas was a confidant, employee, and "Friend of Capt. John Brown."

Source: Wood Museum of Springfield History.

While in Springfield, John Brown used his business travels to forge friendships and make contacts among abolitionists throughout New England. Brown stood out among white abolitionists in his ability to relate to the African American community. He worshipped at the Zion Methodist church, also known as the "Sanford Street" or the "Free Church," the first Black congregation in Springfield.[10] He hired local African Americans, such as Thomas Thomas, for his wool business and he interacted socially with members of Springfield's African American community. He spoke with them about his ideas and, more importantly, he listened to them, to their tales of slavery and escape to the North. In Springfield, Brown took the measure of his Black friends and was impressed by their leadership capabilities and passion for freedom.[11] He developed some of his ambitious plans for ending slavery during this period.

At that time, abolitionist Gerrit Smith was granting small farms of forty acres in North Elba, New York, to Black families with the intention of establishing an African American community there. Some have hypothesized that this was Smith's response to the New York legislature, which had re-instituted a land ownership requirement for voting in New York State. When Perkins & Brown folded in 1849, Brown moved his family from Springfield to join the North Elba community and he took his leave of this city, but he never severed his connections to this place. He returned repeatedly over the next decade and used the city as a base for his fundraising efforts to secure weapons for the anti-slavery forces in Kansas.

FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT OF 1850

In the 1840s, Springfield was a hub of Underground Railroad activity and a prominent "station" on the northward route from New York to Hartford and on up to Florence (or Northampton) and eventually Canada. Springfield had railroads and riverboats and wagon roads, all of which were used to transport fugitives seeking freedom. Those escaping from slavery found many supporters in Springfield willing to help them, along with potential employers, if they decided to remain. Moreover, African Americans from the South could live fairly openly in Springfield, knowing that their former masters would have difficulty tracking them and gaining cooperation from the local authorities who were known to tip off the owners of safe houses before arriving to search their premises.[12]

Long after the Civil War, Thomas Thomas reminisced:

> There were quite a good many colored people in Springfield, and most of them had been slaves who'd taken "French leave" of their masters [i.e. a hasty, secret escape]. I've been a slave myself. That is, there were those said they had a claim on me. I never acknowledged this though, and I never have bowed to but one master, Him, God.
>
> But we were in no danger here. Runaways were all the time going through to Canada, mostly stopping with us colored people. They went about openly enough usually, but once in a while there'd be a timid one, or one would fancy he'd seen his master on the street. Then they'd keep dark [hide]. But after the fugitive slave law was passed, and some men were carried back from Boston, we all got pretty well scared and a good many went off to Canada.[13]

However, he added that after a few years "most of them came back."

Under the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act, passed as part of the Compromise of 1850, federal law required local and state authorities to cooperate with slave catchers who sought to reach into northern communities and drag former slaves back into bondage. Some had been living freely in northern states for years, had raised families, and acquired property. Suddenly, states and municipalities found themselves powerless to prevent the return to bondage of these members of their community.

Almost immediately, Boston had three high-profile cases which tested the new law. The first involved two Georgia slave-hunters who sought the return of William and Ellen Craft. The Crafts had made a dramatic escape from bondage in 1848 and then went on the lecture circuit to tell the story of their years in captivity. When slave hunters arrived, the Crafts' abolitionist friends immediately secreted them away into hiding and a "vigilance committee" hounded the slave hunters at every turn. A group of citizens offered to purchase the Crafts' freedom if they would turn themselves in, but the formerly enslaved couple refused the offer, saying that they didn't want to legitimize the law. Eventually, the slave hunters gave up, finding their task impossible. Despite this victory, the "vigilance committee," not wanting to risk the lives of two of their most important speakers, arranged for the Crafts to go on a speaking tour of Great Britain for their own safety.[14]

The second case involved a man who was working as a waiter in a coffeehouse under the name Frederick Jenkins, when he was abducted on February 15, 1851 and swiftly taken to the courthouse where it was claimed he was an escaped slave named Shadrach Minkins. While the hurriedly

assembled lawyers for both sides met, the "vigilance committee" assembled a crowd. When the court granted the defense a postponement and the courtroom emptied out, the crowd rushed the courthouse and, without any violence or difficulty, whisked Shadrach out and into hiding and eventually to freedom in Montreal. This became a huge embarrassment to the authorities and especially to Daniel Webster, who had crafted the Compromise of 1850 and who had just been appointed Secretary of State. Federal authorities vowed it would not happen again and southerners sought another case in which they could demonstrate, symbolically, their ultimate power.[15]

That case fell upon a twenty-three-year-old Black man named Thomas Sims. He had been working as a bricklayer when he was arrested by Boston police on April 3, 1851 on a fabricated charge of disturbing the peace. While in custody, he was turned over to federal marshals for a hearing before a fugitive slave commissioner. Under the Fugitive Slave Act, the commissioners who presided over these cases were paid more if the defendant was returned to slavery than if they were set free.

The federal courthouse was secured like a prison and the public was barred from the proceedings. For a week, Sims' volunteer lawyers sought any legal mechanism or loophole to have him freed, but Sims' fate was sealed. The order for his removal was issued on a Friday afternoon. Before daybreak on Saturday morning, three hundred Boston policemen, armed with military sabers, marched Sims to Long Wharf and the ship that returned him to his master in Savannah, where he was given 39 lashes in the public square. Reflecting the outrage of the abolitionists, Frederick Douglass wrote, "Let the Heavens weep and Hell be merry! Daniel Webster has at last obtained from Boston . . . a living sacrifice to appease the slave god of the American Union."[16]

1850 DECLARATION OF THE "COLORED CITIZENS OF SPRINGFIELD"

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act was a pivotal moment in the struggle over slavery and the African American community knew it. On the eve of its passage, on September 17, 1850, the "Colored Citizens of Springfield" convened a meeting at the Sanford Street Free Church. The meeting was called at the behest of Reverend C. W. Gardner, of Philadelphia, and was chaired by John N. Howard. Perry F. Adams was chosen Secretary. The group proceeded to discuss and ratify a remarkable declaration, which was published in its entirety in the *Republican* four days later.[17]

The declaration began with a Preamble citing the Fugitive Slave Act and claiming its effects:

> will be disastrous, not only to those who are now enjoying a state of nominal Freedom, but also to every free colored person and many of the whites, being liable at any moment to be claimed and forced off into perpetual bondage, upon the oath or affidavit of any Slave owner, who may be disposed to perjure himself by swearing to a false Identity.

Next followed six resolutions, describing various means of resistance. These included:

> 2d. *Resolved,* that we will repudiate all and every Law that has for its object the oppression of any Human Being, or seeks to assign us degrading positions.
>
> 3d. And, *Whereas* we hold to the declaration of the Poet, "that he who would be free, himself must strike the Blow,' and that resistance to Tyrants is obedience to God. Therefore, *Resolved,* that we do welcome to our doors every one who feels or claims for himself the position of a man, and has broken from the Southern house of Bondage, and that we feel ourselves justified in using *every means which the God of Love has placed in our power to sustain our Liberty* (emphasis added).
>
> 4th. And *Whereas* active vigilance is the price of Liberty, we resolve ourselves into a vigilant Association, to look out for the panting Fugitive, and also for the Oppressor, when he shall make his approach, and that measures be taken forthwith to organize a Committee to carry out the object of the Association.
>
> 5th. *Resolved,* that should the Task Master presume to enter our dwellings, and attempt to reclaim any of our brethren whom he may call his slaves, we feel prepared to resist his pretensions.

At its conclusion, the document was signed by the Reverend J. N. Mars, John B. Smith, and B. B. Young.[18]

This was a powerful and very public statement of defiance from the Black community, which had already begun organizing itself and had formed a self-defense "vigilant committee" four months before John Brown reappeared

in Springfield. The full text of their statement was reported nationally in *The Liberator,* where it was reprinted in its entirety two weeks later under the headline "Liberty or Death!"[19] Similarly, in Boston, African American "Friends of Liberty" published a full-page broadside titled "Declaration of Sentiments of the Colored Citizens of Boston, on the Fugitive Slave Bill" on October 5, 1850. However, it was not as radical as the Springfield declaration, perhaps because it was an appeal for support, subtitled an "Address to the Clergy of Massachusetts."

On October 10, 1850, the *Vermont Patriot & State Gazette* reported on the extraordinary events taking place in Springfield: "Great excitement here on account of the supposed presence of slave catchers. The colored people are arming. The Town Hall is thronged by thousands of excited people, determined that not a [single] slave shall be carried from Springfield, law or no law."[20] Similarly, a Lowell newspaper reported that Springfield citizens "had appointed a 'large committee of safety' after slave catchers had been reported in town" and that committee members "had formed themselves into squads to patrol the streets."[21]

It is unclear whether John Brown had read the declaration of the "Colored Citizens of Springfield" in the newspapers from his outpost at North Elba, New York, or if some of his Springfield friends alerted him to it, but it wasn't long before he returned to Springfield to assist his former comrades and associates. Thomas Thomas would have conferred with him, as would have the Rev. John Newton Mars, who had been preaching from the pulpit of the Sanford Street Free Church that the time had come "to beat plowshares into swords." And so, members of the city's Black community met on January 15, 1851, to organize the Springfield Branch of the U.S. League of Gileadites.

THE U.S. LEAGUE OF GILEADITES

Beginning with his "Words of Advice," Brown set out his thoughts about how the Gileadites should function. Under the heading, "Union is Strength," Brown laid out some principles around which the organization should be built. He stressed "personal bravery" and how it "charms the American people," stating that:

> no jury can be found in the Northern States that will convict a man for defending his rights to the last extremity. This is well understood by Southern Congressmen, who insisted that the right of trial by jury should not be granted to the fugitive.[22]

In addition to the passages quoted at the beginning of this article, there was this advice:

> After effecting a rescue, if you are assailed, go into the houses of your most prominent and influential white friends with your wives; and that will effectually fasten upon them the suspicion of being connected with you, and will compel them to make common cause with you . . .

And this suggestion:

> You may make a tumult in the court-room where a trial is going on, by burning gunpowder freely in paper packages, if you cannot think of any better way to create a momentary alarm, and might possibly give one or more of your enemies a hoist. But in such case the prisoner will need to take the hint at once, and bestir himself; and so should his friends improve the opportunity for a general rush. A lasso might possibly be applied to a slave-catcher for once with good effect.

The next section was entitled "Agreement" and began with a preamble, pledging allegiance to a "just and merciful God" and to "the flag of our beloved country." Next followed nine "Resolutions" which largely restated or embellished the preamble:

1. Resolved, That we, whose names are affixed, do constitute ourselves a Branch of the United States League, under the above name.

2. Resolved, That all business of this Branch be conducted with the utmost quiet and good order; that we individually provide ourselves with suitable implements without delay; and that we will sufficiently aid those who do not possess the means, if any such are disposed to join us.

3. Resolved, That a committee of one or more discreet, influential men be appointed to collect the names of all colored persons whose heart is engaged for the performance of our business, whether male or female, whether old or young.

4. Resolved, That the appropriate duty of all aged, infirm, female, or youthful members of this Branch is to give instant notice to all other members of any attack upon the rights of our people, first informing all able-bodied men of this League or Branch, and next, all well known friends of the colored people; and that this information be confined to such alone,

that there may be as little excitement as possible, and no noise in the so doing.

5. Resolved, That a committee of one or more discreet persons be appointed to ascertain the condition of colored persons in regard to implements, and to instruct others in regard to their conduct in any emergency.

6. Resolved, That no other officer than a treasurer, with a president and secretary pro tem., be appointed by this Branch, until after some trial of the courage and talents of able-bodied members shall enable a majority of the members to elect their officers from those who shall have rendered the most important services.

7. Resolved, That, trusting in a just and merciful God, whose spirit and all-powerful aid we humbly implore, we will most cheerfully and heartily support and obey such officers, when chosen as before; and that nothing but wisdom, undaunted courage, efficiency, and general good conduct shall in any degree influence our individual votes in case of such election.

8. Resolved, That a meeting of all members of this Branch shall be immediately called for the purpose of electing officers (to be chosen by ballot) after the first trial shall have been made of the qualifications of individual members for such command, as before mentioned.

9. Resolved, That as citizens of the United States of America we will ever be found true to the flag of our beloved country, always acting under it.[23]

Then came the names of forty-four individuals. These were not signed, but written in the hand of John Brown (according to Sanborn's account).

This is a remarkable document. A group of African Americans, many of whom were fugitives who had been recently enslaved, organized an illegal, armed network for mutual defense. This was a bold and risky action in the North, but it was a Southerner's worst nightmare. In putting their names on this document—secret though it was—they were risking their lives.

HOW DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE GILEADITES?

One of the most astonishing aspects about the League of Gileadites is that there was a written document at all and that knowledge of it has been preserved. Its first appearance in print was in a New York newspaper, *The Independent,* in March of 1870.[24] The author, William Wells Brown, had himself escaped from slavery and had become a famous abolitionist speaker

and writer. In the article, Wells Brown gave the text of the original document, although he does not explain how or where he came across it. Two years later, a version was published by Franklin B. Sanborn (a radical abolitionist and strong supporter of John Brown), first in an anonymous article in *The Atlantic* titled, "John Brown in Massachusetts" (April 1872) and later, in a much longer version, in his 1885 and 1891 collections, *The Life and Letters of John Brown*.[25]

According to biographer Louis A. DeCaro, both Wells Brown and Sanborn appear to have transcribed their account "directly from John Brown's original manuscript."[26] Sanborn explained in his 1872 *Atlantic* article that the original League of Gileadites document:

> exists in his [Brown's] handwriting, and is signed by forty-four men and women then resident in Springfield, including both white and colored persons, but largely made up of fugitives from slavery.[27]

Today, the whereabouts of the original document, if it still survives, is unknown.

Neither Sanborn nor Wells Brown included a list of signatories in their respective 1870 and 1872 articles. However, when Sanborn reprinted the Gileadites document in his 1885 and 1891 volumes, *The Life and Letters of John Brown*, he included a list of twenty-seven names, followed by the cryptic phrase "and seventeen others" (see image).[28] Given that he had reported in 1872 that the document was "signed by forty-four men and women," one might speculate that he had seen the full roster. Why, then, did he only list twenty-seven of their names in 1885? Might he have deliberately omitted some for the sake of anonymity? For example, the names of prominent Springfield residents such as Robert Wright or Thomas Thomas who were still alive and whom Sanborn may have known from his abolitionist circles and years in Springfield? Given that Sanborn published his original 1872 *Atlantic* articles anonymously, might he have sought to shield some of Springfield's Black leaders from unwelcome public scrutiny? In 1885 John Brown and his attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry remained controversial. Equally plausible, Sanborn may have simply grown tired of transcribing the long list of names or felt that they were not significant. We will never know for sure. But the result is that the names of only twenty-seven Gileadite members were identified in these early published sources.

Decades later, local historians sought to uncover the details of the Gileadites' lives. In 1894, Springfield resident Harry Andrew Wright (1872-1951)

***Resolutions of the Springfield Branch of the United States League of Gileadites. Adopted 15th Jan.*, 1851.**

1. ***Resolved***, That we, whose names are affixed, do constitute ourselves a Branch of the United States League, under the above name.
2. ***Resolved***, That all business of this Branch be conducted with the utmost quiet and good order; that we individually provide ourselves with suitable implements without delay; and that we will sufficiently aid those who do not possess the means, if any such are disposed to join us.

(omitted)

9. ***Resolved***, That as citizens of the United States of America we will ever be found true to the flag of our beloved country, always acting under it.[1]

[1] This is signed by the following members : —

B. C. Dowling.	Henry Johnson.	Henry Hector.
John Smith.	G. W. Holmes.	John Strong.
Reverdy Johnson.	C. A. Gazam.	Wm. Burns.
Samuel Chandler.	Eliza Green.	Wm. Gordon.
J. N. Howard.	Jane Fowler.	Joseph Addams.
Charles Rollins.	H. J. Jones.	Wm. Green.
Scipio Webb.	Ann Johnson.	Wm. H. Montague.
Charles Odell.	Cyrus Thomas.	Jane Wicks.
L. Wallace.	Henry Robinson.	James Madison.

And seventeen others.

Partial Text of Resolutions & List of 26 Members

Franklin Sanborn, an ardent abolitionist, journalist, and friend of John Brown, published the document in his edited collection, *The Life and Letters of John Brown* in 1885 (pages 126-27). However, Sanborn transcribed only 26 of the signatories' names, leaving future generations to try to determine the identity of the unnamed "seventeen others." The original document and list of members were all in Brown's handwriting. Whether or not it still survives is unknown..

penned an article titled, "John Brown in Springfield" which was published in the *New England Magazine*.[29] In it, he reprinted the manifesto along with the list of Gileadite members' names "together with their occupations, as far as can be ascertained at this date." Using sources available to him in 1894, Wright made assumptions about their occupations. This information formed the basis of a similar enumeration in an article in the Springfield *Republican* in 1909 and repeated in the *History of St. John's Congregational Church* in 1962 and, later, elsewhere.[30] Unfortunately, from our perch in the twenty-first century, we can see that some of that information was inaccurate. The following pages seek to correct the mistakes in the historical record and share what has been gleaned of the league's members.

It is impossible to ascertain where some errors may have been introduced into the historical record. John Brown himself may have incorrectly recorded some names (particularly those of individuals who had only recently arrived in Springfield and whom he didn't know). Or Sanborn may have made mistakes when copying the names from Brown's handwritten original, then over twenty years old and presumably aged and worn.

WHO WERE THE GILEADITES?

Who were these intrepid individuals? In attempting to research each of the Gileadites in the published accounts, the task is made difficult by uncertainties surrounding their identities. They were, after all, fugitives and many did not stay in Springfield long. In fact, we can find no information about four of the names listed: Samuel Chandler, C. A. Gazam, Reverdy Johnson, and H. J. Jones. In three other cases, there were multiple people in Springfield with the same or similar names: Henry Johnson, John Smith, and Henry Robinson. Some names might have been aliases. For example, Reverdy Johnson was the name of a prominent Maryland politician and Samuel Chandler was the name of a jeweler and spectacle maker in the nearby town of Monson. Moreover, several known signatories changed their names during their lifetimes, including William Green (who went by "Adams" by 1860), Robert Wright (who had abandoned his slave name of "Moses Bartlett Sohn" upon his 1840 escape), and William H. Ringgold (who went by "Thomas Ringgold" in Massachusetts). Thus, in some instances a "best guess" had to be made based on the available evidence. Even with that caveat, there is much to be learned about these courageous but largely forgotten individuals. We begin by offering an overall portrait of demographic characteristics (race, occupation, birthplace, and age), followed by individual biographies.

First, the published names of the Gileadites are all of African Americans, as far as can be determined. Both Sanborn and later Harry Andrew Wright stated that the Gileadites were interracial, comprised of Blacks and whites, but there is no evidence to support this, unless they were among the "seventeen other" names which Sanborn failed to publish.[31] In some cases, there were people of both races with the same name listed in local sources (for example, Henry Johnson and Henry Robinson) and Wright may have mistakenly assumed the more prominent white person was the Gileadite member. However, further investigation has identified a Black person of that name who was a more likely candidate. This is supported by the Gileadites' document itself which states: "We invite every colored person whose heart is engaged in the performance of our business, whether male or female, old or young."[32] Perhaps, there were sympathetic white allies among the group, but, if so, their names do not appear.

Second, members were largely migrants from the southern states and few were native to Massachusetts. This article contains the names of thirty-three individuals who were likely members of the League of Gileadites (twenty-seven named and six others assumed). Of those, we have information about the place of birth for twenty-six. This task is complicated by the fact that, for obvious reasons, many of the fugitives gave northern birthplaces on pre-emancipation records. In our research, when discrepancies occurred, the latest, usually post-war, source was used. Of those twenty-six, seventeen (65%) were from the slave states Virginia, Maryland, or the District of Columbia, with one from Alabama. Of the others, two were from New York State, two from Pennsylvania, and two from Massachusetts, with one each from Connecticut and Florida.

It is interesting to note that none of the named Gileadites was originally from Springfield. Perhaps those with local roots felt more at risk of negative consequences for putting their names on such a radical document, or maybe it simply reflected the relative youth of the African American community itself; most of whom were recent migrants. Springfield's community of color had grown rapidly from 1830 to 1855, increasing from 48 to 392 individuals (although this was probably an undercount). In 1850, 14.6% were willing to publicly acknowledge to census takers that they had been born in a southern slave state. Most likely this percentage was higher.[33]

Third, the range of their occupations was very limited. Even in the North, the occupations available to Americans of African descent were largely restricted to manual labor or service occupations. Discarding the inaccurate list of occupations generated by Harry Andrew Wright in his 1894 article and repeated by others, a more accurate list can be developed from other

sources, including city directories and census records. For those with multiple occupations during their lives, we counted them in multiple categories. This admittedly crude analysis shows that thirteen of the twenty-three (56%) were employed at some point as laborers, including painters and whitewashers; twelve (52%) were identified at some point with service occupations (cooks, waiters, and barbers); four (17%) worked in agriculture; and three (13%) in the transportation of goods, teamsters or truckmen. In addition, William Burns, who was primarily a baker, was once called a "wheelwright" in a city directory; Joseph Addams was a "blacksmith" in the only directory in which he appeared; and Perry Frank Adams apparently worked as a "jeweler" for a short time.

The Gileadites encompassed a wide range of ages. Although birth dates were rarely recorded and were unreliable when they were, we could make age approximations for twenty-six Gileadites, named or assumed, in 1851. These ages ranged from nineteen years (Jane Fowler) to fifty-one (John Smith). An estimated average age would be about thirty-four years.

WILLIAM GREEN (c. 1815 - 1895)

Of all the members of the League of Gileadites, the life of William Green is the most well-documented. He published his account in 1853 under the title, *A Narrative of Events in the Life of William Green, Formerly a Slave, Written by Himself.*[34] In this 24-page booklet, Green describes his mother. Matilda Jackson, an enslaved woman, was granted her freedom just three months after giving birth to him, when her owner died. William was supposed to gain his freedom at age twenty-five, but in the various transactions that subsequently occurred, that point got lost. He describes various masters, both good and bad. He tells the story of his escape with a friend in about 1840 and of the help they received along the way. Their route took them from Maryland to Philadelphia and then by boat to New York, where they were aided by famous abolitionist David Ruggles, among others. They then were brought up to Hartford and Springfield, where they spent a few days with abolitionist Rev. Samuel Osgood, before Green found a job and living quarters and settled into the Springfield community. He took a wife, Parthenia Peters of Connecticut, and they had four children at the time his narrative was published in 1853.[35] William Green became a trustee of the Zion Methodist Church. The Massachusetts state census recorded the family in Worcester in 1855.[36] Then, nothing.

For decades, researchers wondered what had happened to William Green and his family that caused them to suddenly disappear from the historical

record. Had they gone into hiding out of fear of the Fugitive Slave Law? Had they fled to Canada? Or Europe? Were they re-captured and taken south, even though Parthenia and her children were not fugitives from slavery? No one knew.

However, recent research has revealed new details about the family. A search of the 1860 U.S. Census (using his wife's name "Parthenia," born in Connecticut, rather than "William Green," which is far too common a name) uncovered the family living in Utica, New York under a new surname: Adams.[37] Green's business partner in Springfield had been one J. B. Adams.[38] Was there some connection? Did he take that name to honor his friend? The answer is not known, but the 1860 U.S. census lists the family as:

William Adams	45, male, Black, whitewasher, born in Maryland
Parthenia "	40, female, Black, born in Connecticut
Mary "	15, female, Black, born in Massachusetts
Anne "	13, female, Black, born in Massachusetts
Martha "	11, female, Black, born in Massachusetts
Bennett "	2, male, Black, born in Massachusetts

In 1870, the family was listed in Brooklyn, NY, consisting of 56 year-old William and 50 year-old Parthenia with their daughter, Martha, aged 21. William was working as a whitewasher and had personal property worth $375. Also living with them was daughter Ann Maria and her new husband Assu Foster, who had been born in China, along with the couple's one year-old son, Arthur, born in New York.[39] Sadly, later in 1870 Ann Maria Foster died in Brooklyn at age 23. Yet the family's connection to Springfield had endured. Anna Maria was buried in Springfield. Her husband, Assu Foster, had moved to Springfield by 1873 when he married Alice R. Moore. Foster was a painter who quickly joined the local Masonic Lodge and the Lincoln Literary Society. He died of consumption in Springfield on August 11, 1875.

William and Parthenia continued to live in Brooklyn for the rest of their lives where he worked as a "plasterer" and was engaged in "cleaning & repairing furniture." Parthenia died there in 1882. An African American newspaper, the *New York Freeman,* carried the following item in March 1885: "Mr. William Adams is seen on the street again after an illness of several months." William Adams is a common name, but the fact that this appeared under the "Springfield Notes" column leads one to believe he might be the same man. The notice also hints that he was a respected member of Brooklyn's Black community.

Proof of this Brooklyn connection can be found in the deeds for the St. John's church. The *History of St. John's Congregational Church* has this passage:

> [I]n 1849, Zion Methodist or Free Church had passed into the hands of some of the members of the church. In order to sell the property it was necessary to clear the title. Some of the owners had even moved away. However, on February 15, 1890 we find Wesley Francis, Eli Baptist, and Edwin Williams, Trustees of Old Zion, obtaining the final property deed and release from the two other surviving former Trustees of Zion Methodist, J. Nelson Howard of Baltimore, Maryland and William Green of Brooklyn, New York. These five men owned Zion.[40]

William died on December 5, 1895. He and Parthenia rest in Brooklyn's Evergreen Cemetery. More research is needed on the fate of their children.[41] If they had descendants, was the story of William Green's escape to freedom and journey to Springfield preserved in family lore?

JOHN N. HOWARD (c. 1816 - 1903)

John Nelson Howard also had a compelling narrative which he shared with the *Republican* in 1885. He grew up outside of Baltimore on the plantation of Talbot T. Gorsuch. As a child, he learned from his master's children how to read, write, and calculate numbers in his head. By age twenty, he had worked himself into a position of some trust and authority and was allowed to go into the city to buy and sell goods. On one of these trips, he learned from a Quaker that there were places where "Negroes were free" and slavery was illegal. He discovered the name of an Underground Railroad agent, a Quaker man in Baltimore, who gave him an address of another in Philadelphia

With this little information, he started forth to freedom, taking with him Mary, the woman he loved and hoped to marry once they were free. They left one night in the company of a young Black boy who rode with them for sixteen miles before turning back for home and returning their horses to pasture before they could be missed the next morning. The young couple proceeded on foot and had several close calls. Howard related one incident, when he was stopped by a white man, this way:

> He asked me if I had my master's pass. I told him of course. He asked me to show it. I refused. He insisted. I drew a small pistol

> and told him that was my pass. He raised a rifle at me. I leaned against the muzzle of the rifle and told him I would die there with him or go on free. I felt the rifle tremble against my breast; it dropped at my feet and the man stepped aside. His life was worth something to him, while mine was worth nothing. I would rather have died than gone back.[42]

Remaining within his network of Quakers, Howard was hidden for several days in an unoccupied house near the banks of the Susquehanna, while transportation across the river could be arranged and his pursuers searched for him close by. Once across the river, another Quaker contact put them in a freight car bound for Philadelphia. At one point, a trainman unlocked the door to their car and asked a few questions. The trainman then read to them a handbill giving their description and offering a reward for their return. When the couple quickly denied having seen anyone matching that description, the trainman hesitated, then turned away, locking the car door and letting them go on their way. From Philadelphia the couple found passage by boat to Connecticut where they were married by Rev. Noah Porter, pastor at Farmington, where they remained for a couple of years. The reverend's son, who would become president of Yale College, was at the time pastor at Springfield's South Church and he brought the Howards to this city.

John N. Howard became a highly respected member of the Springfield community; he worked variously as a truckman, a laborer, and the sexton at South Church. (Before this he had been a Trustee of Zion Methodist Church.) In 1850 he owned real estate valued at $600. In 1854, he purchased a home at 22 Salem Street from mason Emerson S. Crosier. A group of Springfield anti-slavery activists had sought to purchase Howard's freedom to ensure his safety after the Fugitive Slave Act was passed, but Howard refused to let them. However, Howard and his family fled to Canada for a time, before returning to Springfield in 1861. He lived at Salem Street until he sold the house in 1884. His house remains and is included on the Massachusetts Register of Historic Places.[43]

In 1873, the *Republican* provided a brief report that revealed his stature in the community:

> John N. Howard, the colored truckman, is talked of as a Republican candidate for councilman in ward 4. He would unquestionably prove a worthy and useful member of the council, and his nomination and election would be a proper recognition

> of the demand of his race for political equality in fact as well as name.[44]

However, there is no record that he ever ran for office. The first Black city councilor was not elected in Springfield until 1928 when lawyer and NAACP member Alford H. Tavernier was elected to the Common Council.[45]

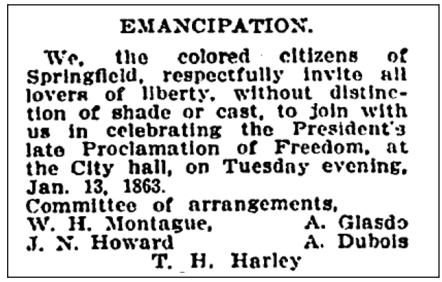
WILLIAM H. MONTAGUE (1822- ?)

Described in the census as a "mulatto," William H. Montague was born in Washington, D.C. in 1822. He was first listed in the Springfield city directory in 1849 as working at "Young and Montague Barbers." By the 1855 Massachusetts census he was listed as owning real estate valued at $1200, a significant sum at the time. He and his wife, Eliza, who had been born on Maryland's Eastern shore, had four children by 1853.[46] He became a Trustee of Zion Methodist Church.[47]

In 1857, the following item appeared in the *Republican*:

> Have a Bath, Sir? -- William H. Montague, under Cooley's hotel, has renovated his bathing and barbering establishment (the best to be found in the city,) and invites public attention to his abilities for thoroughly cleansing the outer man from head to foot, and leaving him a moral conviction that he feels better for it. There are multitudes in the city who ought to patronize him and themselves to a general swashing, the oftener the better for both; he knows it, and they know it. Who speaks first?[48]

As a successful small business owner, Montague was another prominent member of the city's Black community. He served on the committee that organized an "Emancipation Jubilee" held at Springfield city hall on Jan. 13, 1863. It celebrated President Lincoln's emancipation proclamation, which had gone into effect on January 1. Fellow Gileadite John N. Howard was also listed as a committee member, along with Alexander Du Bois, grandfather of W.E.B. Du Bois. Montague chaired the event and William Wells Brown



EMANCIPATION.

We, the colored citizens of Springfield, respectfully invite all lovers of liberty, without distinction of shade or cast, to join with us in celebrating the President's late Proclamation of Freedom, at the City hall, on Tuesday evening, Jan. 13, 1863.

Committee of arrangements,
W. H. Montague, A. Glasdo
J. N. Howard A. Dubois
T. H. Harley

Emancipation Jubilee
Republican, Jan. 13, 1863

was among the keynote speakers.[49] In 1868, Montague sold his barber shop to his son, William D. Montague, but retained "the other branch of his business – the sale of false hair, toilet articles, etc."[50]

BEVERLY C. DOWLING (c. 1815 - 1856)

Beverly C. Dowling's name heads the list of names on the Gileadites' document. He was born in Virginia. A fugitive slave, he arrived in Springfield by 1847. By 1850, he was the owner of an "eating saloon" called Union Lunch on the corner of Main and Fort Streets.[51] He had also been a barber for a time. In 1936 local historian Clifton Johnson wrote that Dowling and John N. Howard had been Thomas Thomas' "lieutenants" in the Gileadites and "all these men were intimate with Fred Douglass," but little else is known about Dowling. Sadly, he died in his early forties of consumption in 1856.[52]

HENRY HECTOR (1824 - 1875)

Henry Hector was born in Salisbury, Connecticut, and was first listed in the Springfield city directory in 1849. He appears in the 1850 U.S. census for Springfield as a laborer and owner of real estate valued at $700. According to a brief notice in the *Republican,* Hector was the first person of African descent buried with "military honors by colored soldiers" in the state of Connecticut when he died in May of 1875.[53] Listed as "mulatto" in military records, Hector enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1862 as a "landsman" (his occupation: waiter) and was discharged in 1865 at the end of the Civil War.[54]

Hector was a well-known caterer in Hartford until his death.[55] His obituary states that he "was for about fifteen years an attendant upon the New York line of boats, and was well-known to traveling people in all the river towns." His funeral was given a military escort by the Union Guard, a "colored" militia group. The cortege was headed by the city band.[56]

SCIPIO WEBB (c. 1820 - 1865)

Many of the Gileadites lived rich, full lives, but their details remain obscure. Scipio Webb appears in the 1850 U.S. census for Springfield as a "laborer," born in New York State in 1820, and working at the Hampden County jail. After that he disappeared from local records. He may be the Scipio Webber who, in September of 1864, enlisted in Company C of the 3rd U.S. Colored Cavalry at Vicksburg, Mississippi, but was credited to Massachusetts. This man died of disease at Memphis, Tennessee in April of 1865.[57]

CHARLES ODELL (c. 1802 - 1866)

This is almost certainly the Charles Oden (or Odin) who married New Orleans native Mary Gorden in 1849 in Springfield. The couple remained together until Charles' death in 1866 and they appear in each census (both state and federal) from 1850 to 1865. In each, Charles was listed as a laborer or farm laborer and his birthplace was given variously as Maryland or Virginia. In 1865, a child of ten years of age, Mary O., was listed in their household. No records have been found which would allow a fuller picture of his life. Mary (Gorden) Oden passed away in Springfield in 1878; her age was given as 95.[58]

JOHN SMITH (c. 1800 - 68) & CHARLES ROLLINS (c. 1826 - 99)

John Smith and Charles Rollins were related through marriage; Smith was Rollins' father-in-law. In 1868 the *Republican* ran an obituary for Smith, a well-respected community member:

> John Smith, the honest old colored man who has long been well-known in Springfield, went to his reward, yesterday morning. He was formerly a slave in Virginia and was the servant of one of our generals in the War of 1812. His "old master" made him free, but when the "young master" succeeded to the management of affairs, he re-enslaved John, who shortly after ran away, escaping in the cart of a tin peddler, who was paid $100 for the favor.[59]

Perhaps this story is why he was labeled as a "tinsmith" by Harry Andrew Wright, although census records and city directories consistently listed him as a laborer. However, there was an entirely different John Smith in Springfield who was a tinsmith, which may have confused Wright.[60] The obituary concluded, "Most of the time since, John has lived in Springfield, and has become the father of some fifteen or sixteen children. His integrity was never questioned, and if ever [a] Christian lived, that poor old negro was one."

One of John Smith's children was Elsa Smith who, by 1850, was married with the surname Holmes.[61] She married for a second time in 1852 to Charles Rollins, another Gileadite, for whom this was also a second marriage.[62] He was a waiter in 1855 and listed as a laborer afterwards.[63] In 1863, Charles was among the young men recorded in the Civil War draft registrations for

Springfield.[64] In early records, he gave his birthplace variously as New York or Massachusetts, but in 1865 he listed Virginia as his native state. The record of his death in 1899 from Bright's disease also lists Virginia as his birthplace.

CYRUS THOMAS (c. 1827 - ?) & ROBERT WRIGHT (1814 - 1904)

These two men, both formerly enslaved and self-liberated, were connected in several ways. Cyrus Thomas' name appears in the published list of Gileadites, although Robert Wright's name does not. However, in 1900 the *Republican* reported that Wright had been a member of the league and was "one of Brown's staunchest friends among the colored men."[65]

The following appeared in the *Republican* in 1883:

> An interesting case came up in yesterday's session of the [Massachusetts] supreme court. It appears that in 1849 two slaves came to Springfield and invested in unimproved real estate on what is now called Vine street. Soon after, one of them, Robert Wright, wishing for an education, borrowed $250 of the other, Cyrus Thomas, giving him his note and a mortgage on the land. Both disappeared, the property having come into the possession of Orrin R. Root, and no payments being made on the mortgage. Mr. Root now asks that the property be freed from the obligations of the mortgage, and Judge Holmes has granted the petition.[66]

In fact, both had actually arrived earlier in the 1840s and, for each, the circumstances of their "disappearances" around 1850 are intriguing: Wright was hiding from his former enslaver in Greenfield and Thomas had joined John Brown in North Elba, New York.

Cyrus Thomas first appears in the 1847 city directory as living on Mechanic Street. At some point he left Springfield to accompany John Brown to North Elba, where he worked as a farmhand. Wealthy social reformer and abolitionist Gerrit Smith had funded the creation of an African American settlement in upstate New York, called Timbuctoo. John Brown moved his family there to assist in this endeavor. Cyrus Thomas appears there in the 1850 Census as a 23-year-old "laborer" in Brown's household. Brown's daughter, Ruth, recalled that, after passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, her father "bade us resist any attempt that might be made to take any fugitive." The women in the household needed little persuasion. She reported that, "[O]ur feelings were so aroused that we would all have defended [Cyrus] though the women folks had resorted to hot water." But Cyrus did not need defending;

he chose to return to Springfield with Brown to aid in organizing resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act.[67]

Cyrus remained in Springfield for the next three decades, but seems to have led a troubled life. He appeared in court in 1856 for assault upon one Henry G. Avery, the result of a bar fight in which Avery's shoulder was broken.[68] In 1887, Thomas was charged with assault with a dangerous weapon when he stabbed his brother on Willow Street.[69] No further information on Thomas has been uncovered, although he was listed as a member of Zion Methodist.[70] Unlike other Gileadite members, he was never interviewed by the *Republican* and received no admiring obituary.[71]

We know more about Robert Wright because he told his story to the *Republican* in 1899.[72] Wright was born with the slave name of Moses Bartlett Sohn on a plantation near Richmond, Virginia in 1814. The son of "a free father and a slave mother," he had "several brothers and sisters" who were "all sold and never heard from afterward." He escaped in 1840 by using the free papers he purchased for fifty cents from a Black man named Robert Wright, whose name he then kept. Fifty cents was the "amount a free negro was charged for new papers when his old [ones] were lost." Wright was captured on his journey north, but when brought before a judge, the judge determined that he matched the description on the papers and declared him "as free as I am." Wright said he arrived in Springfield on his twenty-sixth birthday (about 1840).[73]

The earliest archival evidence documenting Robert Wright's presence in Springfield is a deed dated May 27, 1845 for the purchase of a parcel of land on Mechanic Street from George and Horace Kibbe.[74] In the 1846 city directory, he is listed as a waiter at the Exchange Hotel and listed as an assistant cook at the Massasoit House in 1847. That year, Wright married Delia Wells in Wethersfield, Connecticut and, in January of 1848, their first child was born in Greenfield.

In March of 1849, Wright purchased land on Pearl Street in Springfield from his friend, Cyrus Thomas. By September 1849 the Wrights had returned to Springfield where their second child was born.[75] However, when his former owner made an effort to "reclaim Wright to servitude," he fled and "disappeared" to Greenfield. He was enumerated there in the 1850 U.S. census and his third child was born there in 1851. That year, a group of Greenfield citizens purchased his freedom.[76]

During the time that he worked as a waiter at the Exchange Hotel, Wright met prominent local merchant James Byers, who then hired him to be his personal servant on a fishing trip to Canada. Wright worked frequently for the merchant until Byers' death in 1852.[77] It was likely after Byers' death that,

as Wright related, he ventured to California "during the gold fever" where he worked for miners and succeeded "getting a start in life which enabled him to return to this city [Springfield], where he made his home for 50 years."[78]

In the 1855 state census Robert and Delia Wright were listed in Northampton. It is likely that during this time he met John Payson Williston, an ardent abolitionist and station master on the Underground Railroad. Deed records show that in 1855 the Wrights mortgaged their Pearl Street property in Springfield to Williston. By 1859, the loan was repaid and the mortgage was discharged.[79] In the 1860 census, Wright was listed in Springfield at his Vine Street address with his wife and three children. He worked as a cook and in various other jobs and lived to age 91, dying in 1904.[80]

A tragic event befell Wright at the end of his life. In 1903 a *Republican* headline reported "Narrow Escape from Tragedy. Woman Sets Fire to a Bed in Which Her Aged Father Lay."[81] Purportedly, Wright's drunken granddaughter (mistakenly identified in the headline as his daughter) set fire to his bed, outraged that he had "deeded his home to a Mrs. Johnson so that he might be sure of proper care during the few years of helpless existence before him." Several acquaintances reported that the granddaughter had threatened several times to "get rid of the old man." Wright was not injured; neighbors had "rushed into the house and removed the old man from the burning bed and carried him to the home of a neighbor." However, he died only four months later.[82]

Although Robert Wright's name does not appear in Sanborn's list of Gileadite names, the *Republican* included an interview with him in a laudatory 1900 article titled "John Brown's Local History Told by Men Who Remember Him." As noted earlier, it reported that Wright had been a member of the league and was "one of Brown's staunchest friends among the colored men."[83]

WILLIAM BURNS (1810 – 1892)

William Burns was born in Baltimore in 1810. He was first listed in the Springfield city directory in 1848 as a cook at the Exchange Hotel. He appears in Springfield with his spouse Theodosia in each of the four censuses (federal and state) between 1850 and 1865. His occupation was listed as "cook" in 1850 and "wheelwright" in 1860. His birthplace is given variously as Maryland, Maine, and Indiana. Beginning in 1856, the city directories list him as a baker, living near the corner of Main and Cross Streets, across from what is today the MGM casino. The only other documentation concerning his life comes from a July 17, 1861, *Republican* report on a theft by his employee:

> William Lettimore, a young colored lad, employed by William Burns, a baker, was arrested yesterday and committed for examination, for stealing a sum of money from Mrs. Burns. He had been entrusted with $9.50 to pay for some flour at Mr. Parker's store, but instead of using the money for this purpose he appropriated it for his own use, and while seated in the early morning train for a trip to Boston, officer Shaw came along and recognized him from a description and arrested him. He found the stolen money in his possession together with a dollar taken at another time.[84]

Despite his many decades in Springfield, no obituary could be found for him when he died in 1892.

LOVELIS WALLACE (c. 1808 – ?)

Lovelis Wallace [Wallem, Wallems] was listed in the 1850 U.S. census as a 48-year-old laborer from Maryland. Also listed in that household were Alexander and Jane Weeks (see below) and 15-year-old Ellen Jane Wallems who was also born in Maryland. It is unclear what their relationship was. In 1852 Wallace married Harriet Lee in West Springfield, but that relationship appears to have been deeply troubled. The following notice appeared in the *Republican* in 1854:

> NOTICE – Whereas my wife Harriet, a colored lecturer and preacher, has left my bed and board, without just cause or provocation, I hereby caution all persons against harboring, trusting, aiding, abetting or employing her, as I shall pay no debts of her contracting. LOVELIS WALLACE

By 1854, Wallace had moved to Agawam where he was listed as a farmer. In 1862, he married Fidelia Adelaide "Delia" Burr. Delia was the daughter of Eli and Saloma Burr of Ludlow, Mass. and had Native American ancestry. [85]

FEMALE GILEADITES

There were four women among the identified Gileadites, although their lives remain shrouded in obscurity. All that is known about Eliza Green is that she was listed as a member of Zion Methodist Church.[86] Nineteen-year-old Jane Fowler was born in nearby Westfield, the daughter of Henry Fowler who was not among the named Gileadites. Although from Westfield, the Fowlers were living in Springfield for the 1850 census.

Jane "Wicks" was most certainly the wife of Alexander Weeks. The two were enumerated together in the 1850 census. When Jane Weeks died in 1854, her death record stated that she was a native of the District of Columbia. Although her husband was not listed as a Gileadite member, the couple had a possible connection to another Gileadite member: "L. Wallace" was likely the "Lovelis Wallem" who was living with Jane and Alexander Weeks in 1850.

Although there were several people in Springfield who shared her name, most likely Anna Johnson was either the wife or sister of Gileadite Henry Johnson. They were listed together in the 1850 U.S. census, aged twenty-five and twenty-four. This may be the same Anna Johnson listed in the Chicopee household of presumed Gileadite Thomas Ringgold in the 1855 state census (see the later section on Ringgold).[87] The 1865 Massachusetts state census for Springfield also shows a Henry and Ann Johnson, ages 45 and 40, respectively, with a son John, born in Massachusetts. Perhaps, this is the same couple, despite the discrepancy in their reported ages.

UNIDENTIFIED AND/OR OBSCURE MEMBERS

Little information has been uncovered about some of the Gileadites. As previously mentioned, we can find no information about four of the names that Sanborn listed: Samuel Chandler, C. A. Gazam, Reverdy Johnson, and H. J. Jones. All we know about William Gordon is that he was from Alabama, he worked as a waiter at the Union House and Warriner's Hotel, and he disappeared after 1851, perhaps fleeing to greater safety further north. G.W. [George W.] Holmes was listed in the city directories for 1849 and 1850 as a cook and a painter, but he too disappeared after 1850. (He was not the millwright and cabinet maker who lived and died in Southbridge in 1855 – that man was white.)[88]

James Madison [or Maddison] was born in Huntington, Pennsylvania in 1821 and was living in Palmer in 1850, working as a hostler [one who cares for horses, as in a livery or at an inn]. He was living in Springfield by 1853 when he married Mary Jane Brown, a white woman. The city directories for 1853

and 1854 show James Maddison living on Market Street and, in 1855 and 1856, he was employed by Harris & Colton, a sash and blind manufacturer. He died of consumption in the Springfield almshouse in 1858.

Henry Robinson was likely the Black man of that name listed in the 1850 census for Springfield as born about 1815 in New York. He is shown with fellow Gileadite member Scipio Webb as laborers at the York Street Jail. The city directories list him between 1846 and 1851 variously as a waiter at the Alden House and the Hampden House and as a joiner, boarding on North Main St., but there is nothing more after that. However, he seems to have been well-remembered. An 1885 *Republican* article on the history of Springfield's Black community recalled that "there used to be quite a colony of these refugees here," [i.e. self-liberated fugitives] and Robinson's name was included in the list, along with the names of Gileadite members John N. Howard, Beverly Dowling, and "Billy" [William] Green.[89]

Joseph Addams and John Strong also remain largely mysterious. The former appears only in the 1849 city directory as a blacksmith, boarding on Emery Street. He was listed as a member of Zion Methodist Church.[90] Carvalho writes that John Strong was born in Monson in 1806, the son of Jack and Cordelia "Dilley" Strong. The mortality schedule for the 1860 U.S. census lists a Black man named John H. Strong as having died in Hartford in April of that year. This John Strong was born in Massachusetts about 1806. Although somewhat speculative, these pieces all seem to fit together as the likely Gileadite. However, this was *not* the Springfield man whose occupation was listed by Harry Andrew Wright as a "machinist" – that man was white.

----------PRESUMED MEMBERS----------

PERRY F. ADAMS (1822 - 1868) & RUTH "HARRIET" (BAILEY) ADAMS (1822 - 1900)

Although Franklin Sanborn's 1885 published account listed twenty-seven of the signatures affixed to the Gileadites document, he reported that there were at least "seventeen others" whose names he did not publish. Two other likely members of the group were Perry Frank Adams and his wife Ruth "Harriet" (Bailey) Adams. Each had a remarkable story.

Harriet was born "Ruth Cox" in Easton, Maryland. Using the Underground Railroad network, she escaped from slavery, arriving at West Chester, Pennsylvania where she was sheltered by a Quaker family. While there, she heard Frederick Douglass speak at an abolition rally. Douglass was originally from the same part of Maryland and he and Ruth became good

friends. At the time, Douglass' home was in Lynn, Massachusetts and he invited Ruth to live with his family there, eventually calling her his "adopted sister." As many formerly enslaved people did, Ruth changed her name to "Harriet Bailey"; Frederick was originally Frederick Bailey, before he took the surname Douglass.

Ruth ("Harriet") Bailey

While in Lynn, Harriet met Perry F. Adams, whom she married in 1847. He was listed as a farmer from Springfield on their marriage record. They were living there by 1848, when he was listed a laborer for the J. D. Brewer Co. Later, he was employed by the Rumrill chain factory. Douglass had initially opposed their marriage due to Perry F. Adams' status as a common laborer with little education; Douglass worried that Perry was not "worthy" of her. However, Perry F. Adams had leadership skills and quickly earned the respect of the local Black community.[91]

The Adams became friends with John Brown. Knowing that Harriet was a self-emancipated fugitive from the South, Brown presented the couple with a dirk, or small knife, to be used, if necessary, in her self-defense. Perry Adams was one of the conveners of the September 1850 meeting of the "colored citizens of Springfield" in response to the Fugitive Slave Act. He is believed to have been one of the first to commit to the Gileadites when John Brown returned to Springfield.[92]

By 1860, Perry F. Adams was a deacon in the Zion Methodist (Sanford Street Free) Church. In covering an event that year, the *Republican* wrote, "Deacon Perry Adams thought slavery a sin, and the pulpit was a proper place to condemn it; he said the *Republican* had done more to break down the 'institution' than all the churches in Springfield, and he took that occasion to say a good word for it."[93]

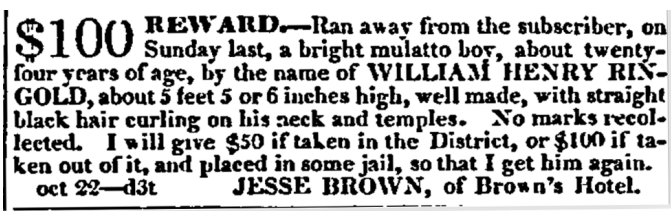
During the Civil War, the Adams went with Eli Baptist (see below) to the nation of Haiti joining the nascent American colony at Drurea, taking up the invitation of that country's president and President Lincoln. In a little-known episode, the colonists, 200 in all, were promised free passage, a

land grant, and support for a year. But conditions were difficult and disease was rampant. After three and a half years, only 35 of the original colonists remained. In June 1863, Eli Baptist and the Adams gave up the project and returned to Springfield disillusioned.[94] Perry Adams died in Springfield in 1868. After his death, his wife moved first to Rhode Island and then to Nebraska to be with her daughter Matilda Vanderzee. Harriet Adams passed away there in 1900 and was buried in an unmarked grave.[95]

WILLIAM H. (A.K.A. THOMAS) RINGGOLD (c. 1820 – ?)

Another likely, but unrecorded, member of the League of Gileadites was William Henry Ringgold, who went by the name of "Thomas" Ringgold during his years in the Springfield area. He was born near Hagerstown, Maryland and was the child of an enslaved mother and an unknown member of the family of wealthy planter Samuel Ringgold.[96] As a boy, William was sold to Jesse Brown, who was proprietor of "Brown's Indian Princess Hotel" in the District of Columbia, which catered to prominent politicians. Enslaved William worked at the hotel and it was from Brown that William took his freedom in 1845, disguised as a member of a visiting Italian opera company, making his way north via the Underground Railroad and landing in Springfield.[97] Taking the name "Thomas Ringgold," he settled in what was then the Chicopee section of Springfield, and began work as a barber.

Ringgold became friends with Perry F. and Ruth Adams; the Adams were from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where the Ringgold name was well-known (William's original enslaver was born in Kent County). Ringgold probably heard speakers Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth when they came to Springfield. He probably knew John Brown. He quickly became active in the anti-slavery movement.


$100 REWARD.—Ran away from the subscriber, on Sunday last, a bright mulatto boy, about twenty-four years of age, by the name of WILLIAM HENRY RINGOLD, about 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, well made, with straight black hair curling on his neck and temples. No marks recollected. I will give $50 if taken in the District, or $100 if taken out of it, and placed in some jail, so that I get him again.
oct 22—d3t JESSE BROWN, of Brown's Hotel.

***Daily National Intelligencer,* Washington, DC, Oct. 22, 1845 (3)**

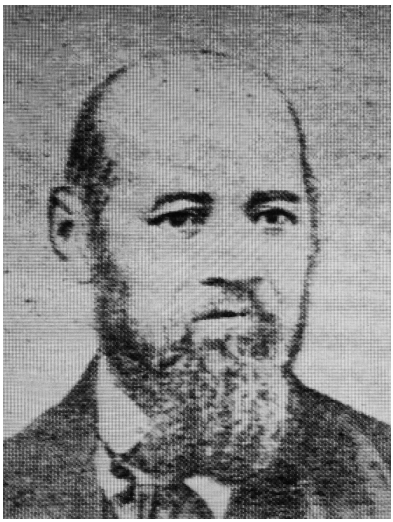
After the Fugitive Slave Act was enacted in 1850, members of the local community raised $600 to purchase Ringgold's freedom from the heirs of Jesse Brown, who had died in 1847. Working with an agent in the District of Columbia, a bricklayer named Richard Shekell, Ringgold worked out an arrangement with Brown's family. However, for some now-obscure legal

reason, he was required to travel to Washington to receive his manumission papers in person. This led to howls of suspicion as to Shekell's motives and concern that Ringgold was being set up for a double-cross. However, Ringgold made the trip and safely acquired his freedom papers from Shekell. Shekell, for his part, sued a Massachusetts newspaper for libel and, in 1852, he won a judgment of $400.

In 1854, Ringgold and Perry Adams represented Hampden County at the first meeting of the State Council of Colored People of Massachusetts in Boston. Later, he was elected a national representative of the Council.

The 1855 Massachusetts census showed Thomas Ringgold in Chicopee with four young children; shortly before, his wife Mary had died giving birth to a child who also died in infancy. Among the household members was a 45-year-old Black woman named Ann Johnson, born in Washington, DC, who was probably a caretaker for the Ringgold children.[98] She was also likely the Gileadite of that name. Given Ringgold's activism and his friendship with the Adams and the Johnsons, it follows that he would have been among the unnamed Gileadites.

In 1857, Ringgold married in Chicopee to Caroline E. Green, of Baltimore,[99] and by the 1860 census, he was listed under his original name, William Ringgold, living in the 6th Ward of that city, with his spouse and mother-in-law.[100]



Eli S. Baptist (1820-1905)
Republican, May 27, 1905

ELI S. BAPTIST (1820 - 1905)

Another curious omission from the published listing of named Gileadites is Eli Baptist. Born a free man in Cumberland, Pennsylvania, he recalled that he came to Springfield around 1846.[101] He initially found work in a factory making blinds and when that company closed, he began peddling soaps and candles for the R. M. Cooley Company.[102] In 1860, Baptist, along with Ruth and Perry Adams (above), went to Haiti as colonists, returning to Springfield in June 1863.

Haiti's loss was Springfield's gain as Eli Baptist became one of the city's leading citizens. There was hardly a

position in St. John's Church that he did not hold at some point, from deacon to Sunday school superintendent.[103] While his name is mentioned in several sources about the Gileadites, none actually claims that he was a member.

In 1900 at an event commemorating the 100th anniversary of John Brown's birthday, the elderly Baptist gave a brief speech titled "Personal Reminiscences of John Brown" in which he spoke of Brown's "commanding appearance and impressive sternness of character." He also recalled Brown's efforts in "organizing secret lodges among the Springfield negroes for the purpose of resisting the capture of fugitives."

In his obituary, another story involving armed self-defense was reported, "Mr. Baptist remembered, among other things, the time when [John] Brown went to Sanford Street church and distributed bowie knives among the colored people of the congregation and the excitement of that period never ceased to impress him." His obituary called him "probably the most notable colored man in the city" at his death in 1905. In 1884 he had received a justice of the peace commission from the governor. *The State Journal*, an African American newspaper published in Pennsylvania, described Baptist as "a well known colored citizen" and reported that prominent businessmen had endorsed this "well deserved" honor. In the 1980s, Springfield's Pendleton Avenue Park was unofficially referred to as "Eli Baptist Park" by local residents.[104]

THOMAS THOMAS (1817- 1894)

No discussion of the League of Gileadites is ever complete without mention of Thomas Thomas. Although his name appears nowhere in Sanborn and Wells' early accounts, local historians have credited him as one of the leaders of the organization. Harry Andrew Wright wrote in 1947 that, "Thomas formed the Springfield Gileadites, an order among colored people to resist capture of fugitives."[105]

Since Brown's trust and reliance on Thomas pre-dates the Gileadites, it would seem inconceivable that Thomas would not have been involved. Remember, Sanborn failed to publish the names of "seventeen other" Gileadite members. However, as a highly visible leader in

Thomas Thomas

the Black community, it is understandable if Thomas' (and others) may have chosen not to publicly sign.[106]

Thomas was a legendary character in Springfield's African American community. He was born enslaved in Oxford, Maryland in 1817 and, as a boy, was "hired out" to work on Chesapeake River steamboats as a waiter. During this period, he said that he met Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnett, two men whose fame would grow over the next decades.

When he was seventeen he "proposed to his master that he buy his freedom" and they agreed upon a price of $400 to be paid on the installment plan. However, "as his master had hired him out, he had to earn the money by work outside of his regular employment." At age nineteen he was sent to Mississippi where he worked on steamboats and eventually earned enough to buy his freedom. He continued to work the Arkansas and Mississippi river trade out of New Orleans and into Indian Territory. He also operated as an entrepreneur, buying vegetables and dairy products cheap and selling them at a profit in the cities. In 1843 he was once jailed in Louisiana for violating its laws against free Blacks entering the state and he was forced to leave. In 1844, he journeyed to Springfield, Massachusetts, where his mother and sister had settled. He went to work in the Hampden House hotel, at Court and Main Streets, and later at the Union House, near the railroad depot on Bliss Street.

There, he became acquainted with John Brown, who had opened his wool business in the same neighborhood and hired Thomas to work in the wool sorting rooms. Thomas became an active supporter of the abolitionist cause and, in addition to his activities with the Gileadites, he was also reported to have been an agent on the Underground Railroad.[107]

In 1850, Thomas became the steward at the Samoset House in Holyoke. Three years later, he left the area for Springfield, Illinois, where he worked at the American House, directly across from the office of an attorney named Abraham Lincoln, whom he served frequently. In 1855, the hotel closed and Thomas returned to Massachusetts in time to join a company of men leaving for California under the direction of Springfield resident Levi Tower.[108]According to Sanborn, John Brown tried to recruit Thomas to go to Kansas with him, but Thomas had already booked his passage to Eldorado.[109] After three years in California, he returned to Illinois and, according to legend, was working at the Cheney House, where Lincoln was staying when he was nominated as the Republican candidate for president in 1860.

By 1862, Thomas was back in Springfield. He opened a saloon and restaurant, first on Main Street and later on Worthington, near Main. His business was very successful and he entertained dignitaries, court officials, mercantile, and professional men.

Black fraternal organizations once played a vital role in the lives of many African Americans. Thomas Thomas was a leader in establishing a chapter of the Prince Hall Masons in Springfield.[110] He headed the list of petitioners and, on June 24, 1866, he was among the twenty-nine charter members of Sumner Lodge, No. 12 [later Number 5].[111]

Thomas was married three times; first, to a woman named Lydia, who died in Maryland, circa 1837. Thomas next married a Margaret Williams of Baltimore in 1841. She gave birth to two children who died young. In 1843, Thomas married Martha H. Hall and the couple adopted a child, Hattie Belle Thomas, formerly Simmons.[112] Thomas died in Springfield on March 9, 1894, leaving a will.[113] A chair, given to the Thomas family by John Brown, is on display at the Wood Museum of Springfield History.

In his obituary the *Republican* reported that "a really remarkable man has passed away." It described him as a "noble specimen of the negro race; gentle, courtly, and with an integrity and genuineness of character which made him prized." His funeral was attended by friends and admirers from far and wide, including: Washington D.C., Baltimore, New York, Newport, Hartford, Boston, Worcester, and Pittsfield.[114]

CONCLUSION

An in-depth look at the Gileadite roster provides a snapshot of life for African Americans in Springfield at that historic moment in time. Even in one of the safest and most hospitable places in the country for self-emancipated Black people, opportunities were limited and fears of being returned to slavery were real and ever-present. That fear is evidenced by the fact that only a handful of the twenty-seven named Gileadites could still be found residing in Springfield in 1855—just four years later. According to the Massachusetts census of that year, there were only seven of the named Gileadites present, although the city directory listed ten. Some had moved to other towns in Massachusetts or farther north to Canada. Some returned to Springfield after the Civil War. That fact, however, shows that fear of capture remained widespread.

Recent research has cast doubt upon the veracity of abolitionist William Wells Brown's account of the Springfield Gileadites in 1854. He described encountering ten to fifteen Black men at the train station "all armed to the teeth and swearing vengeance upon the heads of any who should attempt to take them" as well as his meeting with "Amazonian" women. He wrote that he had discovered them hovering over a cauldron of boiling liquid

known as the "King of Pain," ready to "fling it on" any intruders bent upon apprehending fugitives in their community.[115]

However, this embellished and perhaps fictionalized account does not negate the real existence of a powerful network of resistance and support that existed in Springfield. Its existence was demonstrated in the bold statement of resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act endorsed by the city's "colored citizens" in a public meeting September 1850, months before John Brown's return to Springfield. It was further demonstrated by the list of valiant individuals whose names appeared on the League of Gileadites' document. And it was evidenced in Wells Brown's accurate assertion that "no fugitive slave was ever afterward disturbed at Springfield"—a claim that has withstood scholarly scrutiny. Springfield was not a community where slave catchers dared to tread.[116]

HJM

Notes

1. Mason Arnold Green, *Springfield, 1636-1886: History of Town and City* (Springfield, MA: C. A. Nichols & Co., 1888), 505. Harry Andrew Wright, "John Brown in Springfield," *New England Magazine* Vol. 10 (3) (1894), 272-81. Charles H. Barrows, *The History of Springfield in Massachusetts for the Young* (Springfield, MA: Connecticut Valley Historical Society, 1909). However, Barrows did not include the image in his adult version.
2. "Colored Citizens of Springfield," [Springfield] *Republican*, Sept. 21, 1850, 2.
3. Franklin Sanborn, *Life and Letters of John Brown: Liberator of Kansas, and Martyr of Virginia* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885), 124-27.
4. "Colored Citizens of Springfield," *Republican*, Sept. 21, 1850, 2.
5. James Cleland Hamilton, "John Brown in Canada: A Monograph," *Canadian Magazine*, Dec. 1894, pp. 2 and 8. For example, fugitive slave Walter Hawkins, who had been at North Elba (NY) with John Brown, moved to Canada in 1852. He later became a bishop in the British Methodist Episcopal Church. See also Fred Landon, "Canadian Negroes and the John Brown Raid," *Journal of Negro History* (April, 1921), 174-182. Brown spent time in Canada and held his "convention" there in 1858 where he hoped to recruit Canadian Blacks for his Harpers Ferry raid. Landon refers to the existence "among the Negroes" near Chatham, Ontario (east of Detroit) a "secret organization, known under various names, having as its object to assist fugitives and resist their masters (181)."
6. For some of the most current biographies of John Brown, see: S. Reynolds, *John Brown Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Random House, 2014) and Evan Carton, *Patriotic Treason: John Brown and the Soul of America* (Boston: Free Press, 2009).

7. Joseph Carvalho III, "John Brown's Transformation: The Springfield Years,1846-1849," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Vol. 48 (1), Winter 2020, pp. 46-95. Even when compared to the numerous full-length biographies of John Brown, Carvalho's article offers the most in-depth coverage of Brown's relationship to Springfield's African American community and its leaders.
8. Harry Andrew Wright, "John Brown in Springfield," *New England Magazine*, Vol. X (3) May 1894, pp. 272-76; Clifton Johnson, *Hampden County, 1636-1936*, Vol. 1 (New York: American Historical Society, 1936), 358.
9. Johnson, *Hampden County*, 359. In the same interview Thomas told Johnson how he had come to be employed by Brown, "I met his son on the street the year before his father came. He had just got into town and he asked if there was a colored church here. I took him around to it and he came to my house and spent the evening with me. We had a long talk over the slavery question and he told me the plans of the wool association and engaged me to help in it."
10. The roots of today's St. John's Congregational Church lie in Methodism and that church's battles over slavery. At the national level, as the Methodist Church split into Northern and Southern factions, African Americans also became increasingly frustrated by their treatment within the church. This resulted in breakaway congregations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church and the African Methodist Zion Church. A similar story occurred in Springfield, where the abolition-minded Pynchon Street Methodist Church broke away from the First Methodist Society in 1844, but in that same year, a group of African American congregants formed the Zion Methodist Church, the first Black church in Springfield. Located on Sanford Street, this church was not affiliated officially with either the A.M.E. movement or the "Zionites," and so, became known as the "Free Church."

In 1848 the church's first pastor, the Rev. Leonard Collins vigorously defended Blacks' right to organize their own churches in a public debate against the legendary abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. The debate appeared in the pages of Douglass' *North Star* Newspaper. Douglass eventually came to accept the importance of establishing Black churches and attended services at the "Free Church." (Information from St. John's website, accessed June 3, 2022.)

In 1864, the desire to choose their own ministers led the group to change affiliations and they reorganized as the "Free Congregational Church." (For those who wished to remain within Methodism, the Loring Street African Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in 1866.) During the pastorate of the Rev. Samuel Harrison, probably in 1867, the Free Church was officially renamed "Sanford Street Congregational Church." In 1892, the Sanford Street Church joined with the Quincy Street Mission to form St. John's Congregational Church, which is no longer on Sanford Street. N. Cummings, M. McLean, S. Humphrey, M. Cobb, and D. Pryor, *History of St. John's Congregational Church* (Springfield: St. John's Church, 1962), 11-16, 23-26, 122.
11. Carvalho, "John Brown's Transformation," 53-57.
12. Aella Greene, "The Underground Railroad and Those Who Operated It, Part II," *Republican*, March 25, 1900. Greene relates the story of Constable Titus Chapin

of Cabotville, who often hid fugitives. Upon being forewarned by U.S. Marshal Isaac Barnes that he was searching for certain runaways and would be required to apprehend them if found, Chapin concluded, "So, the point with Marshal Barnes was to fail to find the fugitive!" Thus, Chapin knew to move them on. Barnes' exploits were also described in an earlier piece, "Anti-Slavery Times Recalled," *Republican*, June 21, 1890. A similar story regarding U.S. Commissioner Chapman's forewarning in Springfield was given in Wilber H. Siebert, "The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (Worcester, MA: April 1935), 93.

13. Johnson, *Hampden County*, 359.

14. See William Still, *The Underground Railroad: Authentic Narratives and First-Hand Accounts* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007), 199-210. This modern edition offers selections from his 1872 book. For key secondary sources on the Crafts, see Barbara McCaskill, *Love, Liberation, and Escaping Slavery: William and Ellen Craft in Cultural Memory Paperback* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

15. Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 408-409. See also: Gary Lee Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1998).

16. Mayer, 412. Editor's Note: Sims later escaped from slavery in 1863, made his way to General Grant's forces, and returned to Boston in April 1863 where he gave a public lecture sponsored by abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Afterwards, he returned south to help recruit slaves for the Union army. See: Robert S. Davis, "Chattanooga History Column: Thomas Sims' Epic Struggle for Freedom," *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, Feb. 5, 2017. Boston abolitionists were dismayed by their failure to save Sims. When a similar situation arose involving fugitive Anthony Burns in 1854, they responded far more forcefully. See Albert J. von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Earl M. Maltz, *Fugitive Slave on Trial: The Anthony Burns Case and Abolitionist Outrage* (University Press of Kansas, 2010).

17. "Colored Citizens of Springfield," *Republican*, Sept. 21, 1850, 2.

18. For more on the African American community leaders discussed in this article, see Carvalho, "John Brown's Transformation," and the detailed bibliographic entries in Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County, Massachusetts, 1650-1865*, second edition (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2011). *Black Families* is an essential reference for studying Springfield's Black community. The Springfield City Directory, another vital source, was published beginning in 1846.

19. *The Liberator*, Oct. 4, 1850, 2(2).

20. *Vermont Patriot & State Gazette*, Oct. 10, 1850. Editor's Note: In early October a Lowell newspaper reported that Springfield citizens "had appointed a 'large committee of safety' after slave catchers had been reported in town" and that committee members "had formed themselves into squads to patrol the streets."

21. Reported in National Parks Service, "The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts: Statement of Historic Context," endnote #49. This is an outstanding, in-depth

research project. Accessed July 15, 2021 at www.nps.gov. Perhaps inspired by this example, a month later in nearby Northampton, ten "fugitives from Southern Slavery" published a call to organize. At an ensuing meeting the group passed resolutions decrying the Fugitive Slave Act and calling for the "extermination of men-hunters, men-stealers, and men sellers . . . according to the most approved legal mode." They also offered assistance and called for the use of "all legitimate means" to prevent its enforcement. Sources: "To the Citizens of Northampton," *Hampshire Gazette,* 15 October 1850; "Meeting in Opposition to the Fugitive Slave Bill," *Hampshire Gazette,* 29 October 1850.

22. Sanborn, *Life and Letters of John Brown*, 124-127.

23. Sanborn, *Life and Letters*, 124-27.

24. William Wells Brown, "John Brown and the Fugitive Slave Law," *The Independent*, March 10, 1870. This article has been reprinted in a compilation of Brown's writings titled *William Wells Brown: Clotel and Other Writings* (NY, NY: Library of America, 2014). Wells Brown never explains how or where he was given access to John Brown's original Gileadite document.

25. Franklin B. Sanborn, "John Brown in Massachusetts," *The Atlantic* 29 (174), April 1872, 420-33. Sanborn, a regular *Atlantic* contributor, had been one of six Massachusetts men who had secretly funded John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. Sanborn dedicated much of his career to defending Brown. He was a correspondent for the *Springfield Republican* 1868-1914. For the version with the list of twenty-seven names, see Sanborn, *Life and Letters,* 124-27.

26. Louis A. DeCaro, *"Fire from the Midst of You": A Religious Life of John Brown* (NY: New York University Press, 2002), 318-19.

27. Sanborn, "John Brown in Massachusetts," 425.

28. Sanborn, *Life and Letters*. The Gileadite members' names appear on page 127.

29. Wright, "John Brown in Springfield." See also Harry Andrew Wright's chapter on John Brown in *The Story of Western Massachusetts*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co.,1949), 406-422. Wright mistakenly wrote that his list of names was "taken from a copy of the *New York Independent* of that period" (415). However, Wells Brown's 1870 article in the *Independent* did not include the list of signatories, unless Wright was referring to a different article in that same newspaper, which is highly unlikely. The list of Gileadite members' names did not appear in print until Sanborn's 1885 book, *Life and Letters of John Brown*.

30. "Local Intelligence: John Brown's Fugitives," *Republican*, June 12, 1909, 8; Cummings, et. al, *History of St. John's Congregational Church*, 19-20.

31. Wright, "John Brown in Springfield," 280.

32. Sanborn, *Life and Letters*, 126.

33. Karl Conway Helms, "Ethnohistorical Research Methodology for Classroom Use; Development of a Social Portrait of Springfield, Massachusetts, 1850 to 1880" (Ph.D. diss., Oregon State University, 1974), 79 and 88. One should treat these 1850 census figures cautiously; some fugitives may have failed to accurately report their state of birth or else hid themselves from census takers. Helms provides an in-depth

study of Springfield's African American community 1850-80. However, the dates that he provides for articles in the *Republican* are incorrect in several key places. See also Joseph P. Lynch, "Blacks in Springfield, 1868-80: A Mobility Study," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 7 (June 1979), 15-24.
34. William Green, *A Narrative of Events in the Life of William Green, (Formerly a Slave) Written by Himself* (Springfield, MA: L. M. Guernsey, 1853).
35. Clifford L. Stott, *Vital Records of Springfield, Massachusetts to 1850,* Vol. 2 (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2003), 900.
36. "Massachusetts, State Census, 1855," Ancestry.com
37. "1860 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com
38. "Joseph Addams" the Gileadite member is probably not the "J. B. Adams" with whom William Green was partners. Green first appears in the 1845 city directory. John B. Adams appears first in 1848 as Green's partner in "Green and Adams, whitewashers and jobbers" on Market Street. The next year the partnership does not appear, suggesting that it wasn't successful. In the 1849 and 1850 city directories, John B. Adams appears to be a barber on Market Street, but he disappears after that. There was also a John B. Adams who for many years was a well-known railroad conductor. All evidence suggests he was white and not Green's partner.
39. "1870 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com; "New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949," FamilySearch.org; "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2004); "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org.
40. Cummings et al. *History of St. John's Congregational Church*, 40.
41. "Springfield Notes," *New York Freeman*, March 1885. "New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949," FamilySearch.org.
42. "Springfield Colored People: The Rapid Growth of the Colony," *Republican*, March 8, 1885, 5.
43. Cummings, 40. *Republican*, April 18, 1884. Advertisement for auction of property by T.D. Beach, auctioneer. Massachusetts Historical Commission, Massachusetts Register of Historic Places Application Form B, Area AA, Form #3561, Michele Plourde-Barker.
44. *Republican*, Oct. 20, 1873, 2. The following year the *Republican* referred to Howard as a "man whom they all esteem" and noted that he was in charge of selling copies of a recent biography of Charles Sumner, *Republican*, June 9, 1874, p. 3(1).
45. "A.H. Tavernier Dies in New York," *Sunday Republican*, Sept. 7, 1961.Tavernier was a lawyer who had been born in the British West Indies. He lived in Springfield 1916-56. He was active in the local NAACP and was a leader in its "Stop Lynching" campaign in the1930s.
46. Carvalho, *Black Families in Hampden County*, 23.
47. Cummings, 20.
48. "Have a Bath, Sir?" *Republican*, March 21, 1857.
49. The 1863 "Emancipation Jubilee" notice was reprinted in the *Republican* on Jan. 1, 1913 under the title "When John Brown Made Springfield his Home," (article

continued from p. 1; page number illegible). For a report on the event see *Republican* Jan. 14, 1863 p. 4 (4) under "City News."
50. *Republican*, February 18, 1868.
51. "1850 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com
52. Johnson, *Hampden County*, 487. For more on the history of Black barbers in an adjacent community, see: Robert T. Brown, "The Payton Family of Westfield: An African American Success Story, 1845-1954," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 48:1 (Winter 2020), 96-125.
53. *Republican*, May 11, 1875, 6 reported that his funeral was the previous Sunday.
54. National Park Service, *Soldiers and Sailors Database; American Civil War Research Database* (Duxbury, MA: Historical Data Systems, Inc., 1997-2020).
55. "Brief Mention." *Hartford Daily Courant*, May 7, 1875, 2.
56. "Military Funeral." *Hartford Daily Courant*, May 10, 1875, 2. Unfortunately, a tragic incident occurred after Hector's funeral which attracted more press attention than the funeral itself. Union guard member Thomas Washington entered a Black drinking establishment run by Charles Clark. He was dressed in his military uniform, having just buried his friend. Some words were exchanged and Clark shot Washington, killing him instantly. Clark fled the scene but was quickly apprehended by police. "Murder in Hartford." *Constitution* [Middleton, CT], May 12, 1875.
57. *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War*, Vol. VII. (Massachusetts. Adjutant General's Office. 1931,1935), 410; *American Civil War Research Database* (Duxbury, MA: Historical Data Systems, Inc., 1997-2020); *National Park Service, Soldiers and Sailors Database* [on-line database]. Note: listed as "Webber, Scipis."
58. Stott, Vol. 2, pp. 1477 and 1621. "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org. "Massachusetts, State Census, 1855" Ancestry.com; "Massachusetts, State Census, 1865" Ancestry.com; "1850 United States Federal Census" Ancestry.com; "1860 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com.
59. *Republican*, Jan. 14, 1868, 4(1). A staunchly abolitionist newspaper, the Springfield *Republican* often published laudatory obituaries of the city's "colored" citizens.
60. *Springfield Directory, Preliminary to the Regular Issue of 1851* (Springfield: V. W. Skiff, 1850). 72.
61. "1850 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com. (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009).
62. "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org.
63. "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org; "1850 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com; "Massachusetts, State Census, 1855" [on-line database]. Ancestry.com.
64. "Hampden County Blacks in Civil War Draft Registrations," document compiled by Cliff McCarthy, Wood Museum of Springfield History, Springfield, MA [SMVF-325].

65. "John Brown's Local History Told by Men Who Remember Him," *Republican*, May 13, 1900, 10.
66. *Republican*, Sept. 28, 1883, 6.
67. Mary Brown quoted in DeCaro, 191.
68. "City Police Court," *Republican*, Feb. 25, 1856, 2.
69. "Springfield," *Republican*, April 27, 1887, 5.
70. Cummings, 20.
71. Proudly abolitionist, from the 1880s through the 1910s the *Republican* published frequent tributes to John Brown and, as the decades passed, published numerous profiles and interviews with the African American community leaders who had known him, along with reports of the various annual celebrations held in the city in his honor. These articles provide an important source of information about Brown's legacy and public memory locally, along with clues into the lives of the city's African American citizenry.
72. "He Was James Byers' Servant," *Republican*, Sept. 8, 1899, 16.
73. Wright's life story and these quotes were pieced together from the following articles: "Veteran Colored Man's Long Life," *Republican*, Oct. 16, 1904, p. 6 and "He Was James Byers' Servant," 16.
74. Deed from George and Horace Kibbe to Robert Wright, *Hampden Co. Registry of Deeds*, Book 129, p. 415.
75. Deed from Cyrus Thomas to Robert Wright, *Hampden Registry of Deeds*, Book 149, p. 4.
76. *Republican*, April 22, 1851, 2.
77. "He Was James Byers' Servant," *Republican*.
78. "Veteran Colored Man's Long Life," *Republican*.
79. Mortgage Deed from Robert Wright to J. P. Williston, *Hampden Registry of Deeds*, Book 178, p. 270. In fact, Wright owned several properties in Springfield and, at one time, held a mortgage from fellow Gileadite member William Burns. Source: Mortgage Deeds from William Burns to Robert Wright, *Hampden Registry of Deeds,* Book 136, p. 500 & Book 149, p. 5.
80. "Veteran Colored Man's Long Life," *Republican*.
81. "Narrow Escape from Tragedy. Woman Sets Fire to a Bed," *Republican*, May 29, 1903, 4. To extend the tragedy even further, Delia (Wright) Newport, the granddaughter, was herself consumed by a household blaze not two months after Robert Wright's death. "Horrible Burning Accident," *Republican*, Dec. 6, 1904, p. 3.
82. "Veteran Colored Man's Long Life."
83. "John Brown's Local History Told by Men Who Remember Him," *Republican*, May 13, 1900, 10.
84. *Republican*, July 17, 1861, 4.
85. "1860 United States Federal Census" Ancestry.com; "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org. *Republican*, March 20, 1854, 3; "1855 Massachusetts State Census for Lovelis Wallace, Agawam, Hampden Co., Massachusetts. "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org.

86. Cummings, 20.
87. A Henry and Eliza Johnson appear in the 1855 state census, ages 50 and 45, both listed as born in Virginia; Henry listed as a shoemaker. They had a daughter Ann, age 21. Note that in *Black Families in Hampden County*, Carvalho identified this Anna Johnson as the Gileadite. DeCaro also chose this one: "Henry Johnson, a shoemaker and carriagebuilder, was born in Maryland and joined the movement with his daughter Ann, the eldest of his five children" (p. 194). But this Henry Johnson is only listed in Springfield in the 1855 and 1856 directories. There is no evidence that he was there in 1851.
88. Information from Carvalho, *Black Families in Hamden County*. In 2022, at the request of the editor, Carvalho did a final search of the *Republican's* online archives from the 1860s-80s. He could find no other references that might match the named Gileadites.
89. "Springfield Colored People: The Rapid Growth of the Colony," *Republican*, March 8, 1885, 5.
90. Cummings, 20.
91. Editor's Note: Ruth Cox Adams' close relationship with Frederick Douglass is described in David W. Blight's magisterial biography, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018),163-66. See also Tekla Ali Johnson, John R. Wunder, and Abigail B. Anderson, "Always on My Mind: Frederick Douglass's Nebraska Sister," *Nebraska History* 91(2010), 122-135. Unfortunately, Perry F. Adams' death from typhoid in 1868 received only a two-line notice in the *Republican* (March 20, 1868, p. 10) and no obituary.
92. "Colored Citizens of Springfield." Carvalho, "John Brown's Transformation," 70. Note: Carvalho's footnote indicates that the source for the claim that Perry and Harriet Adams were members of the Gileadites is from correspondence: Frederick Douglass to Harriet Bailey/Ruth Cox Adams, March 9, 1894 and March 20, 1894, Cedar Hill, Anacostia, [VA]; and Harriet Bailey/Ruth Cox Adams to Frederick Douglass, May 1, 1894, Norfolk, Nebraska, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
93. "City Items," *Republican*, August 2, 1860, 4.
94. Carvalho, *Black Families in Hampden County*, 23 and 31.
95. "Society and Personal Mention," *Republican*, May 13, 1900, 10 (5).
96. For the best explanation of Ringgold's paternity, and for many other details of his story, see Terence Walz's indepth article with full sources at the "Freedom Stories of the Pioneer Valley" website, at https://freedomstoriespv.wordpress.com
97. *Daily National Intelligencer,* October 22, 1845, 3.
98. 1855 Mass.State Census for Thomas H. Ringgold, Chicopee, Hampden Co.
99. "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910," AmericanAncestors.org
100. "1860 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com. (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009). An interesting sidebar to the Ringgold story is that his son, George Ringgold, became a barber like his father and moved to Pittsfield. In January 1863, he married Helen Porter, a white woman, and barely a month later, he enlisted

in the 54th Massachusetts (the regiment depicted in the movie "Glory") and served for two years. He was promoted to corporal of Company A and mustered out in August of 1865. "Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1841-1910" AmericanAncestors.org. "Soldiers and Sailors Database," National Park Service.

101. Eli Baptist doesn't appear in city directories until 1853. However, it is clear that he knew John Brown and had memories of Brown distributing weapons, although no surviving sources directly name him as one of the Gileadites. The *Republican* reported in several articles that Baptist "was a close friend of Brown when the latter was living in this city" which indicates that Baptist must have arrived before 1850 (*Republican*, May 10, 1904). In 1900 Baptist recalled coming to Springfield in 1846. Like many African Americans, he may have left briefly, perhaps after Brown's own departure from the city. Source: "John Brown's 100th Anniversary," *Republican*, May 10, 1900, p. 4.

102. "Death of Eli S. Baptist, Notable Colored Resident," *Republican*, May 27, 1904, 4.

103. Cummings, 16-20.

104. "Death of Eli S. Baptist." *The State Journal,* Nov. 8, 1884, p. 5 (1) published in Harrisburg, PA. Note that his gravestone in Springfield Cemetery spells his name as "Baptiste." The Pendleton Street Park was officially renamed the Donna Blake Park on Aug. 3, 2001. Blake had served as a Springfield Park Commissioner from 1978-80 and as vice-president of the Urban League of Greater Springfield. It was the first time a Springfield park was named after an African American woman.

105. Wright, *The Story of Western Massachusetts*, Vol. 1, 487.

106. Johnson, *Hampden County*, 486-487.

107. Cummings. 16-20.

108. "Thomas Thomas's Retirement," *Republican*, Jan. 8, 1893.

109. Sanborn, *Life and Letters*, pp. 133 and 194. Sanborn thanked Thomas in his introduction for his assistance (vii).

110. "Massachusetts Negro Freemasonry" webpage accessed Sept. 16, 2021 at www.masonicgenealogy.com

111. Cummings, 17.

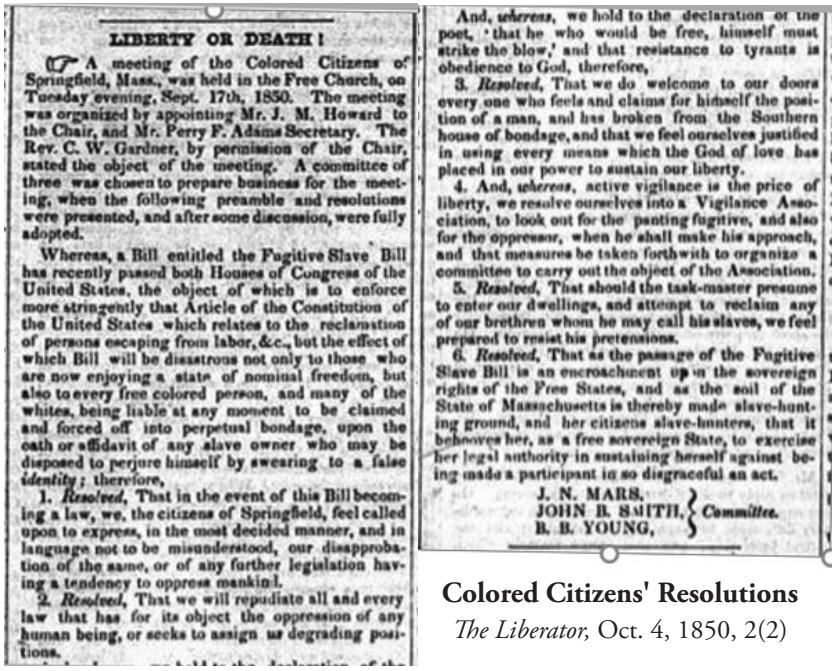
112. Carvalho, *Black Families in Hampden County*.

113. Will of Thomas Thomas, Massachusetts Probate Court (Hampden County), dated September 12, 1893, #19440.

114. "Death of Thomas Thomas," *Republican*, 10 March 1894; "Announcements," *Republican,* March 13, 1894, p. 6.

115. Carvalho, "John Brown's Transformation," 89-90, endnote #55.

116. Wells Brown, "John Brown and the Fugitive Slave Law," 6. For a debunking of Wells Brown's fanciful account, see L. Mara Dodge's lengthy endnote #54 in Carvalho, "John Brown's Transformation," 89-90. Note that Louis A. DeCaro uncritically repeats Wells Brown's account in *Fire from the Midst of You*, pp. 195-96.



LIBERTY OR DEATH!

☞ A meeting of the Colored Citizens of Springfield, Mass., was held in the Free Church, on Tuesday evening, Sept. 17th, 1850. The meeting was organized by appointing Mr. J. M. Howard to the Chair, and Mr. Perry F. Adams Secretary. The Rev. C. W. Gardner, by permission of the Chair, stated the object of the meeting. A committee of three was chosen to prepare business for the meeting, when the following preamble and resolutions were presented, and after some discussion, were fully adopted.

Whereas, a Bill entitled the Fugitive Slave Bill has recently passed both Houses of Congress of the United States, the object of which is to enforce more stringently that Article of the Constitution of the United States which relates to the reclamation of persons escaping from labor, &c., but the effect of which Bill will be disastrous not only to those who are now enjoying a state of nominal freedom, but also to every free colored person, and many of the whites, being liable at any moment to be claimed and forced off into perpetual bondage, upon the oath or affidavit of any slave owner who may be disposed to perjure himself by swearing to a false *identity*; therefore,

1. *Resolved*, That in the event of this Bill becoming a law, we, the citizens of Springfield, feel called upon to express, in the most decided manner, and in language not to be misunderstood, our disapprobation of the same, or of any further legislation having a tendency to oppress mankind.

2. *Resolved*, That we will repudiate all and every law that has for its object the oppression of any human being, or seeks to assign us degrading positions.

And, *whereas*, we hold to the declaration of the poet, 'that he who would be free, himself must strike the blow,' and that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God, therefore,

3. *Resolved*, That we do welcome to our doors every one who feels and claims for himself the position of a man, and has broken from the Southern house of bondage, and that we feel ourselves justified in using every means which the God of love has placed in our power to sustain our liberty.

4. And, *whereas*, active vigilance is the price of liberty, we resolve ourselves into a Vigilance Association, to look out for the panting fugitive, and also for the oppressor, when he shall make his approach, and that measures be taken forthwith to organize a committee to carry out the object of the Association.

5. *Resolved*, That should the task-master presume to enter our dwellings, and attempt to reclaim any of our brethren whom he may call his slaves, we feel prepared to resist his pretensions.

6. *Resolved*, That as the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill is an encroachment upon the sovereign rights of the Free States, and as the soil of the State of Massachusetts is thereby made slave-hunting ground, and her citizens slave-hunters, that it behooves her, as a free sovereign State, to exercise her legal authority in sustaining herself against being made a participant in so disgraceful an act.

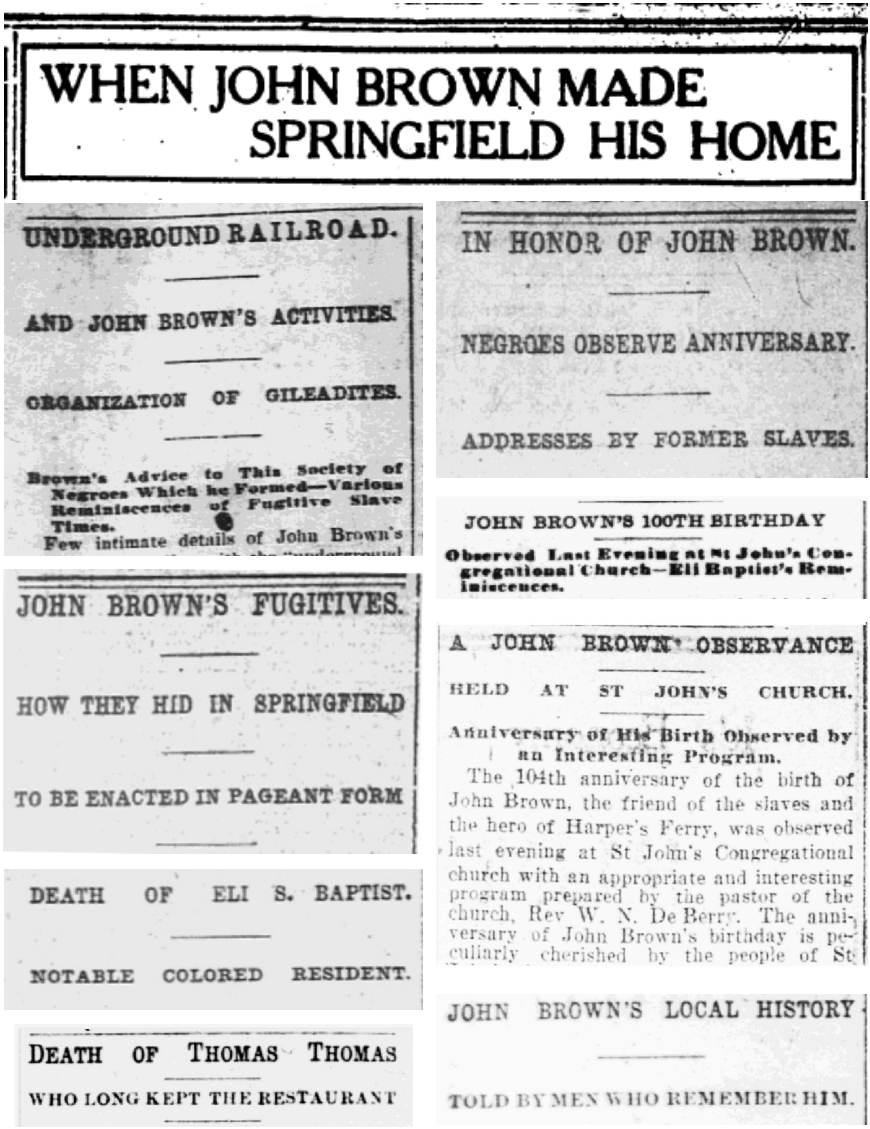
J. N. MARS,
JOHN B. SMITH, } *Committee.*
B. B. YOUNG,

Colored Citizens' Resolutions
The Liberator, Oct. 4, 1850, 2(2)

Thomas Thomas' Gravestone
Springfield Cemetery

Main Street in Springfield (1863)

This is the earliest known photograph. Thomas Thomas' "eating saloon" is in the next-to-last building on the left. In Thomas' obituary the *Republican* reported that "a really remarkable man has passed away." It described him as "gentle, courtly, and with an integrity and genuineness of character which made him prized." His funeral was attended by friends and admirers from far and wide. In his introduction to *Life and Letters of John Brown,* F.B. Sanborn had thanked Thomas for his assistance.



WHEN JOHN BROWN MADE SPRINGFIELD HIS HOME

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.

AND JOHN BROWN'S ACTIVITIES.

ORGANIZATION OF GILEADITES.

Brown's Advice to This Society of Negroes Which he Formed—Various Reminiscences of Fugitive Slave Times.

Few intimate details of John Brown's

IN HONOR OF JOHN BROWN.

NEGROES OBSERVE ANNIVERSARY.

ADDRESSES BY FORMER SLAVES.

JOHN BROWN'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

Observed Last Evening at St John's Congregational Church—Eli Baptist's Reminiscences.

JOHN BROWN'S FUGITIVES.

HOW THEY HID IN SPRINGFIELD

TO BE ENACTED IN PAGEANT FORM

A JOHN BROWN OBSERVANCE

HELD AT ST JOHN'S CHURCH.

Anniversary of His Birth Observed by an Interesting Program.

The 104th anniversary of the birth of John Brown, the friend of the slaves and the hero of Harper's Ferry, was observed last evening at St John's Congregational church with an appropriate and interesting program prepared by the pastor of the church, Rev W. N. De Berry. The anniversary of John Brown's birthday is peculiarly cherished by the people of St

DEATH OF ELI S. BAPTIST.

NOTABLE COLORED RESIDENT.

JOHN BROWN'S LOCAL HISTORY

TOLD BY MEN WHO REMEMBER HIM.

DEATH OF THOMAS THOMAS

WHO LONG KEPT THE RESTAURANT

Headlines from Springfield *Republican* Articles

"When John Brown Made Springfield His Home" (1/1/1913); "Underground Railroad" (7/4/1909); "John Brown's Fugitives" (6/12/1909); "Death of Eli S. Baptist" (5/27/1905); "John Brown's 100th Birthday" (5/10/1900); "John Brown Observance" (5/10/1904); "John Brown's Local History" (5/13/1900)

John Brown (1800-59)

Daguerreotype by Augustus Washington, c. 1848

John Brown's Portrait (c. 1848)

This is the earliest known image of John Brown. It was made by pioneering African American daguerreotypist Augustus Washington. The portrait exudes intensity. In a pose that dramatizes his anti-slavery activism, Brown stands with one hand raised as if repeating his public pledge to dedicate his life to the destruction of slavery. With his other hand, he grasps what is believed to be the standard of his "Subterranean Pass Way"—the militant alternative to the Underground Railroad that Brown sought to establish in the Allegheny Mountains more than a decade before his ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry.

Washington was the son of a former slave. Born in New Jersey, he entered Dartmouth College in 1843 and taught at a school for Black students in Hartford before establishing a studio there. He advertised widely in the local abolitionist press. He made at least three images of Brown that day. There's no record that this image was published until 1921. Ann Shumard, curator at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, explains that at the time Brown "was not by any means a public figure—he was a wool broker. . . . The picture, so significant now, was really intended as a personal testament to Brown's commitment to his cause." (Source: Owen Edwards, "John Brown's Famous Photograph," *The Smithsonian Magazine*, September 20, 2009.) In another image made that day, Brown posed with Thomas Thomas. It featured the two men with Brown's hand resting on Thomas' shoulder. Unfortunately, this remarkably symbolic image of an interracial friendship has not survived (DeCaro, 153-54 & Du Bois, 101).

The activities of Springfield's League of Gileadites are impossible to trace. As a clandestine and illegal organization, little record remains. However, the vigilance and anti-slavery activism of the city's Black and white abolitionists left a powerful record. John Brown returned to Springfield frequently during the 1850s to raise money for equipment and weapons for his Kansas "Free State" campaigns. Both the *Republican* and Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown* provide ample testimony of the ongoing support Brown received. W.E.B. Du Bois reported that Brown returned to Springfield in 1857 to hide out from federal officers among his former comrades (Du Bois, *John Brown*, p. 215). Carvalho speculates that Du Bois made have heard this story from his grandfather who had lived in Springfield and was a friend of Thomas Thomas Du Bois also wrote to Rev. DeBerry (pastor of St. John's Church) asking him to do some local research about Brown's years in Springfield "both as to libraries and the memory of older people." (Letter, April 30, 1907. Du Bois Papers, Special Collections, UMass Amherst Library.)