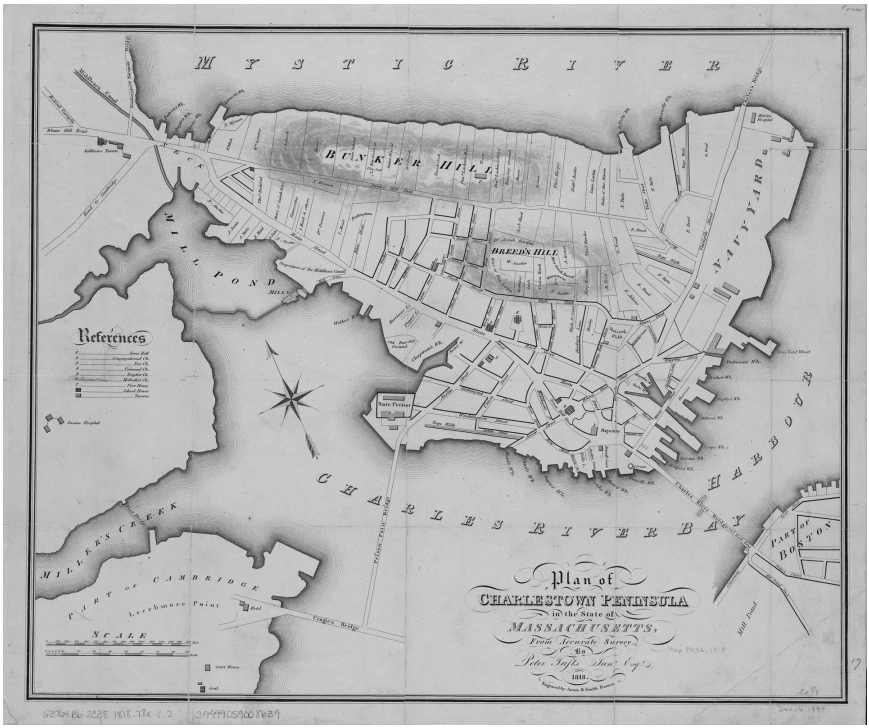


Charlestown, Massachusetts (1818)

Charlestown is located on a peninsula north of the Charles River, across from downtown Boston. It was originally a separate town and the first capital of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. On June 17, 1775, it was the site of the Battle of Bunker Hill. The town, including its wharves and dockyards, was almost completely destroyed by the British. In 1786, the first bridge was built across the Charles River to connect to Boston. In 1800 the population was 2,751. This nearly doubled over the next decade to 4,959 in 1810. The Navy Yard was established in 1800. The Charlestown State Prison opened in 1805 and the Massachusetts General Hospital Asylum for the Insane opened in 1818.

Racial Borders of Belonging:
Community Care, African Americans, and Citizenship in Charlestown (MA), 1780-1810

Angela Miller Keysor

Editor's Introduction: *This article explores racial disparities in Charlestown's provision of care to destitute inhabitants in the decades after the American Revolution. The records reveal that town selectmen overwhelmingly rejected petitions from men and women of African descent. In contravention to the governing case law, town leaders promoted imaginative fictions that rested on the premise that African Americans could depend upon their former masters for care or that their legal abode was the town where they had been enslaved. Charlestown's treatment of its needy Black citizens reveals racially exclusionary practices that extended into town welfare decisions. As African Americans' demands for inclusion increased, Charlestown selectmen drew the borders of the town's "care communities" more and more tightly.*

This article casts new light on and complicates Massachusetts' self-image as the moral conscience of the nation in the struggle for abolition and equal rights. The background context is important in understanding this case study. Thus, this article begins with an editor's introduction that explores the shifting landscape of legal and public opinion in Massachusetts. In 2020 the General Assembly declared July 8th as Emancipation Day, also referred to as Quock Walker Day. The celebrated case this alludes to, rather than representing a definitive "death

Historical Journal of Massachusetts, Vol. 50 (1/2), Summer 2022

blow," was only a small piece of the process that led to the gradual demise of slavery in the Commonwealth.

EMANCIPATION IN MASSACHUSETTS: A COMPLEX, CONVOLUTED & MULTI-FACETED PROCESS

Abolition in Massachusetts was not achieved by the stroke of a single pen. Enslaved Africans first arrived on its shores in the 1630s; slavery was legally sanctioned in 1641. The slave trade itself was an integral part of the state's economy. In 1780, when the Massachusetts Constitution went into effect, numerous laws existed that regulated and circumscribed the lives of slaves. However, enslaved Africans had repeatedly contested their subordinate status. In the early 1770s, groups of African Americans (both enslaved and free) had begun to petition the colonial government, arguing that freedom was a right belonging to all.[1] They also sought to use the judicial system. By 1780, nearly thirty enslaved men and women had sued their masters in court, asserting their right to freedom, most during the years after 1764. Juries were usually sympathetic and found in their favor. John Adams once remarked that he "never knew a Jury, by a Verdict to determine a Negro to be a slave—They always found them free."[2]

These jury trial victories reflected the fact that white public sentiment appears to have shifted significantly during the pre-Revolutionary War era, particularly in Boston and surrounding Suffolk County. In a recent study titled "Emancipation without the Courts or Constitution: The Case of Revolutionary Massachusetts," historian Gloria McCahon Whiting researched Suffolk County wills and probate records. She discovered that after 1775 few probate inventories listed "Negro servants" (the common euphemism for an enslaved person) as part of the deceased's property and "wills bequeathing human property all but disappeared at that time." She concludes that in Boston and Suffolk County, the revolutionary-era ideology of liberty and freedom "dealt slavery a major blow."[3] However, we do not yet have evidence about wills and probate inventories in more rural or western Massachusetts counties where the demise of slavery appears to have been more contested and resisted by white enslavers.

Although the Massachusetts state constitution adopted in 1780 declared in its first line that "All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights," it did not include a clear or unequivocal statement that slavery was therefore abolished. Nor did the state legislature ever pass a law banning slave ownership (although several bills were proposed in the 1780s).[4] Indeed, only Congress' passage of the 13th amendment in 1865

provided the definitive legal end to the practice, although nearly all evidence suggests that slavery as an institution had ceased to exist in Massachusetts by 1790.

From 1781 to 1783, in three related cases commonly referred to as the "Quock Walker" cases, jury verdicts helped to dismantle slavery's legal foundations. In the words of Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice William Cushing (1732 –1810): "[S]lavery is in my judgment as effectively abolished as it can be by the granting of rights and privileges [in the new state constitution] wholly incompatible and repugnant to its existence."

However, this blanket assertion only appears in Cushing's handwritten notes to the jury, and was not part of a formal or published judicial ruling. The case involved Quock Walker, who was born in 1753 to parents enslaved from Ghana. His name, which has many different spellings, may have been "Kwaku," meaning "boy born on Wednesday," reflecting a traditional Ghanian day-naming practice. In 1754 the family was bought by James Caldwell, a member of a prominent Worcester County family. Caldwell was one of the first settlers in an area that became the town of Barre in 1776. Caldwell promised Quock his freedom at the age of twenty-five, but died when Quock was ten years old. His widow Isabel reaffirmed the promise, even agreeing to free him at the age of twenty-one. In 1769 she married Nathaniel Jennison but died three years later. Jennison then inherited Quock, along with other members of his family, but he also held slaves of his own.

When the time came for Walker's promised manumission, Jennison refused to free him. In 1781, Walker, then aged twenty-eight, left and "ran away." Perhaps sensing the new, post-revolutionary spirit, he simply went to work for wages at a nearby farm belonging to Seth and John Caldwell, brothers of his deceased master. A few days later Jennison found him working there, beat him, dragged him back to his own farm, then locked him in a barn. The Caldwell brothers found Walker, freed him, offered protection, encouraged him to file a complaint with the local justice of the peace, and later helped procure skilled lawyers.

Eventually, Walker filed a civil suit against Nathaniel Jennison for assault and battery. Meanwhile, Jennison filed a suit against the Caldwell brothers for unlawfully enticing away his "servant" and asked for 1,000 pounds in damages. Both cases were heard in Worcester County Court on June 12, 1781. In *Jennison v. Caldwell,* Jennison won and was awarded 25 pounds. The verdict made no statement regarding Walker's status, but by favoring Jennison it supported his right to reclaim his "property." In *Walker v. Jennison,* Walker insisted that his former master had promised him his freedom while his attorney, Levi Lincoln, attacked slavery on moral grounds.

The jury agreed and found Quock Walker to be a free man and awarded him 50 pounds.

Both cases were appealed. In September 1781, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court dismissed Jennison's appeal because his lawyers had failed to submit the court records. In the *Jennison v. Caldwell,* appeal, Lincoln argued that slavery was contrary to both the law of God and to the Massachusetts Constitution's Declaration of Rights. Thus, the Caldwells were within their rights to employ him. The jury found for the Caldwells, declaring in their verdict, "that Quork is a Freeman and not the proper Negro slave" of Jennison.

In April 1783, two years after a criminal indictment had been brought in *Commonwealth v. Jennison,* Jennison was tried for assault. The jury rejected the evidence of ownership that Jennison presented: the 1754 bill of sale to James Caldwell for his purchase of the nine-month-old "Quaco" and his parents. The jury also rejected his lawyer's argument that no law existed to prohibit slavery in Massachusetts. They found Jennison guilty and fined him 40 shillings. In his forceful and unsparing charge to the jury, Justice Cushing had gone far beyond the immediate facts of the case. He had laid out the following principles:

> As to the doctrine of slavery and the right of Christians to hold Africans in perpetual servitude, and sell and treat them as we do our horses and cattle, that (it is true) has been heretofore countenanced by the Province Laws formerly, but nowhere is it expressly enacted or established [under the laws of the fledgling Commonwealth of Massachusetts].

Cushing argued that slavery "had been a usage" promulgated by Great Britain "for the benefit of trade and wealth." In an extraordinary rebuttal, he argued unequivocally that:

> [W]hatever sentiments have formerly prevailed in this particular or slid in upon us by the example of others, a different idea has taken place with the people of America, more favorable to the natural rights of mankind, and to that natural, innate desire of Liberty, with which Heaven (without regard to color, complexion, or shape of noses-features) has inspired all the human race.

He then turned to the newly-ratified state constitution, which clearly contradicted both the U.S. Constitution and the precedent from British common law, for justification:

> [U]pon this ground our Constitution of Government, by which the people of this Commonwealth have solemnly bound themselves, *sets out with declaring that all men are born free and equal – and that every subject is entitled to liberty, and to have it guarded by the laws, as well as life and property – and in short is totally repugnant to the idea of being born slaves*. [emphasis added]

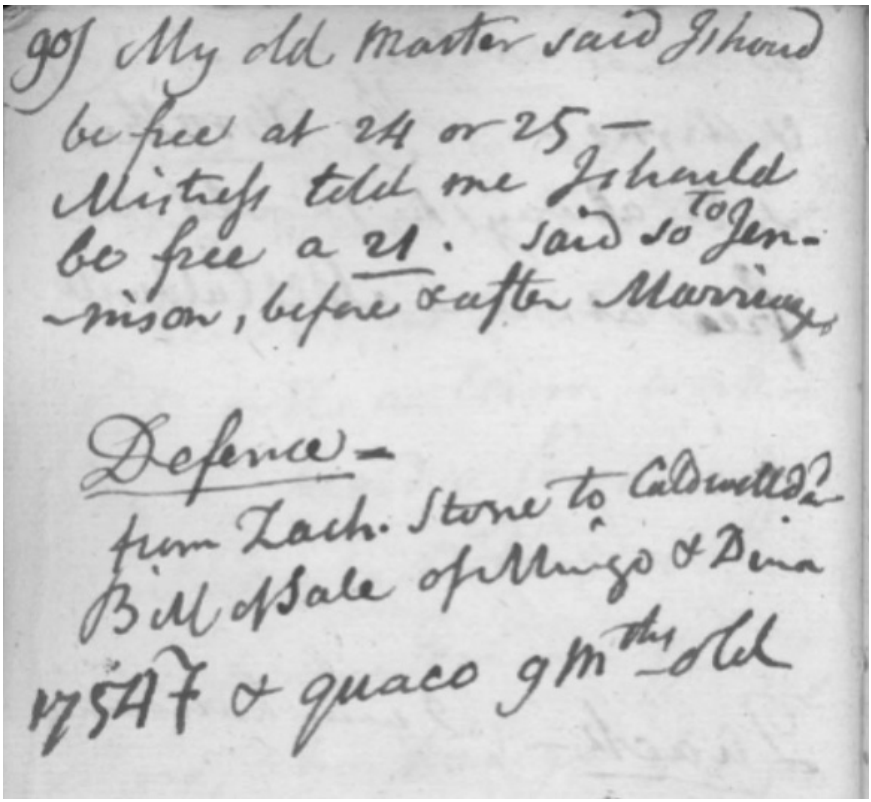
This presumed repugnance *"to the idea of being born slaves*" led him to conclude with the sweeping proposition that:

> This being the case, *I think the idea of slavery is inconsistent with our own conduct and Constitution;* and there can be no such thing as perpetual servitude of a rational creature, unless his liberty is forfeited by some criminal conduct or given up by personal consent or contract.

One scholar has labeled Cushing an "unlikely abolitionist" (his family had owned slaves). He would serve as Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court from 1777 to 1789 before being appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he served from 1789 until his death in 1810. Although some nineteenth-century historians claimed that "with this trial slavery ceased to exist in Massachusetts," modern historians offer a much more complicated assessment. For example, the case does not appear to have been widely reported during Cushing's lifetime. Scholar Emily Blanck argues that:

> Despite Cushing's unequivocal assertion, however, emancipation was far from immediate. Because slavery had been abolished by judicial decree rather than legislative act, the burden was on the individual rather than the system. In other words, enslaved men and women had to face their masters and assert their freedom; if the master refused, he could be brought to court, where his rights of ownership would no longer be protected.

Blanck concluded, "Outside of the courtroom, moreover, Jennison's significance was not widely understood." In central and western Massachusetts, however, both lawyers and enslaved people appear to have remained cognizant of Cushing's decision. Most accounts of the Quock Walker case end with Cushing's verdict. In 1786 Walker married Elizabeth Harvey in Barre and the following year he had amassed enough money "to purchase for ten pounds from Francis Nurse a building and a quarter acre of land." The couple had at least five children. His siblings and descendants



Portion of Justice Cushing's Notes

Source: Massachusetts Historical Society

Transcription:

Quock Walker: My old master said I should be free at 24 or 25—Mistress told me I should be free at 21. Said so to Jennison before & after marriage.

Defence: From Zach. Stone to Caldwell. [1754] Bill of Sale of Mingo & Dina & quaco 9 months old.

The original bill of sale read: "Sold this day to a Mr. James Caldwell . . . a certain negro man named Mingo, about twenty Years of Age, and also one negro wench named Dinah, about nineteen years of age, with child Quaco, about nine months old—all sound and well for the Sum of One hundred & eight pounds, lawful money, recd. to my full satisfaction: which Negroes, I the subscriber to warrant and defend against all claims whatsoever as witness my hand." –Zedekiah Stone

became prominent members of the state's African American community. However, Quock appears to have died before 1810, as his name does not appear in the census of that year.

Although emancipation was not publicly heralded across the Commonwealth in 1783, most recognize Walker's case as a turning point and a key part of the legal movement by enslaved Africans stretching back to the 1760s that had gradually undermined and eroded the legal basis for slavery. In a similar freedom suit brought by Elizabeth Freeman, an enslaved woman popularly known as "Mum Bett," a Berkshire County court ruled in her favor in 1781. Her owner decided not to appeal, perhaps because he was cognizant of the jury's decision in *Commonwealth v. Jennison.* In 2020 the Massachusetts state legislature declared July 8 as Massachusetts Emancipation Day, also known as Quock Walker Day.

Jennison himself expressed deep bitterness and publicly challenged the state's growing emancipatory sentiment. He belittled both judges' and juries' interpretations of the new state constitution. In a 1782 petition to the state legislature (one of several which he submitted), Jennison argued that even though the Bill of Rights "prefixed" to the 1780 constitution had declared "that all men are born free and equal," this did not mean that slavery was illegal. He claimed that this clause "*has been the subject of much altercation and dispute."* Yet despite these differing interpretations, "the Judges of the Supreme Judicial Court have so construed [it] . . . as to deprive your memorialist [petitioner] of a great part of his property, to which he thought his title good, not only by ancient and established usage, but by the Laws of the Land."

His outrage grew: "[H]aving been possessed of Ten Negro Servants, most of whom were born in his family, some of them young and helpless, others old and infirm," he was now informed by the Supreme Judicial Court that the:

> said Clause in the Bill of Rights is so to be construed, as to operate *to the total discharge and manumission of all Negro Servants whatsoever.* What the true meaning of said Clause in the Constitution is, your Memorialist will not undertake to say, but it appears to him [to be] . . . *very different from what the People apprehended at the time the same was established.*

Jennison claimed that the "people" or citizenry "could not mean to offend the Southern States . . . [and] thereby to endanger the Union," nor could they have meant "to establish a doctrine repugnant and contradictory to

the revealed word of God." He included numerous quotations from the 25th chapter of Leviticus. He concluded his petition with "an earnest appeal to the Legislature, that *if servants are to be made free, their masters may also be emancipated*—regarding the statute obligation to provide for the freedmen whenever they should be in want, as a species of slavery also inconsistent with the Bill of Rights."

Jennison's last appeal that masters be similarly "emancipated" was to prove prescient. Neither their former masters, the towns where they had lived, nor the Commonwealth wished to take responsibility for the plight of freed people, most of whom would eke out a bare living and face rampant discrimination over the ensuing decades. Some masters, however, found other ways to "emancipate" themselves from the burden of their slaves. Alerted to the shifting landscape of legal and public opinion in the Commonwealth, some took their enslaved persons to Connecticut and sold them there, as Jennison himself appears to have done after losing his final appeal in 1783.

The 1790 census counted no enslaved persons in Massachusetts (or none whom their owners would admit to). Yet the end of enslavement did not end racial discrimination or unequal citizenship. The following article raises new questions about African Americans' precarious and second-class legal standing in the years after their self-emancipation in the Commonwealth. It draws from Dr. Keysor's Ph.D. dissertation, "Community Care before the Rise of the Welfare State: Charlestown, Massachusetts, 1730-1820."

-L. Mara Dodge

* * * * * *

> "All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness."
> - Massachusetts Constitution (Part 1, Article I)

In 1808 Phyllis Reed, described in town records only as a "woman of color," suffered from a debilitating illness that restricted the movement of her legs. Concerned neighbors alerted the Dracut town authorities of Reed's plight. Town selectmen immediately engaged in a search of legal records in order to discover the community that should be held responsible for her care.[17] Where did Reed belong as a free person of color? What was her

legal "inhabitancy"? If she had been enslaved earlier in her life, should her former master be held liable for her care? Had she established herself as a resident of a particular community? If she had no discernable locale of legal belonging, had either of her parents been enslaved and, if so, could their ex-masters be held responsible for Reed's ongoing care and medical expenses? The surviving town correspondence reflects these questions as well as local authorities' attempts to answer them. However, no evidence has survived regarding Phyllis Reed's responses to their questioning about her family history and residency. There is also no record of whether Reed received the medical care she needed.

Phyllis Reed's existence as a historical actor appears within the town records of Charlestown, Massachusetts. Many other appeals from people of color seeking various forms of assistance also appeared in these records beginning in the 1790s and into the first decades of the nineteenth century. Hers was among the 50 "pleas for care" written on behalf of people of color, many formerly enslaved citizens, to the local selectmen.

The Charlestown records contain approximately 500 "pleas for care" from residents between 1796 and 1813. These were usually written either by the individual requesting relief or someone on their behalf.[18] Their content and length took many forms. Some were very short and consisted of brief statements such as, "I am in need of care, as the Selectmen are already aware." Others were longer. For instance, there were accounts from impoverished women whose husbands had been lost at sea or were in debtor's jail.

After the American Revolution these letters became lengthier and often described the residence and movements of the person who claimed to be in need in order to demonstrate that they "belonged" to the community. These longer accounts of geographical movements and family ties to a community coincided with the end of enslavement. A great many of these pleas involved newly freed people of color who attempted to prove that they "belonged" to Charlestown and, as a result, were entitled to receive various types of assistance. In addition to medical care, destitute individuals commonly requested food and money, as well as items such as clothes, a bed, linens, and housing (such as a room to stay in).

As one reads the Charlestown selectmen's descriptions of these cases, along with their frequent claims that other communities should be held responsible for the health and welfare of people of color, many questions are raised: What significance do these cases hold in understanding local welfare decision-making in the early Republic? What informed the conversations between town selectmen? How were racial distinctions used to determine who received assistance? To what extent was the community provision of care

for the sick, injured, disabled, and indigent seen as a right? How did needy residents of Massachusetts communities receive assistance? To what degree was this right based on notions of race?

My larger research project is centered on understanding eighteenth century community care networks and how and why these informal networks were replaced with institutional care in the early nineteenth century. This study focuses on Charlestown due to the richness and detail of the Charlestown Records.[19] Throughout the eighteenth century, Charlestown authorities, residents and those in need participated in what I have termed in local "care networks." Charlestown residents acted as care providers to local individuals living in Charlestown who were in need of physical care. Town selectmen paid these local caregivers out of the town treasury. Prior to the American Revolution nearly all participants and recipients were Anglo American residents. During this time, selectmen viewed community care as a right of every legal inhabitant, that is, a right of local citizenship.

SOURCES & OVERALL STATISTICS

The primary sources for my research is the collection of Charlestown Records housed within the City of Boston City Archives in Roxbury, Massachusetts. The pleas for assistance begin in 1726 and increase steadily thereafter until approximately 1820, when the Massachusetts General Hospital (founded in 1818) began to take in many who were formerly cared for by local communities. Within this time period, there were approximately 500 pleas for care directed to the Charlestown Selectmen: 156 occurred prior to the revolution and 344 afterwards.[20]

Within the 156 pleas received prior to the revolution, there is evidence that 140 (89.7%) were granted (the selectmen made a mark noting their acceptance of a plea on the plea itself). All of these appear to have been written by or on behalf of Charlestown residents of European descent. The outcome of the remaining 16 pleas (10.3%) cannot be determined as the actions taken by the Charlestown Selectmen are not clear from the manuscripts.

Of the 344 pleas for care submitted after the American Revolution, 50 were written by or on behalf of African Americans (14.5%). There is no evidence that any of these supplicants were granted aid or assistance. In contrast, even those of European descent who were not local residents usually received some form of aid. In all, there were 110 pleas written by or on behalf of white non-residents. Of these, the selectmen responded in some way to 77 (70%), although at times their responses only partially addressed the needs expressed. For most (58 of the 77 pleas or 75.3%), the selectmen indicated

that the non-resident was provided aid because their condition was "dire" and immediate assistance was required. In these cases, after immediate care was given the selectmen attempted to determine the individual's legal inhabitancy and then forwarded a bill to that town.

This type of correspondence took off in the 1780s and 1790s as Massachusetts towns began to send bills to one another in the hope that another community would be forced to reimburse them for the care of those deemed to be their legal inhabitants. There were several disputes regarding who was or wasn't an inhabitant of a particular town which generated a great deal of litigation. In the case of the pleas written on behalf of the 50 African American petitioners, however, these "inhabitancy" disputes never resulted in assistance and often turned upon the residence of their former masters.

POST-REVOLUTIONARY PLEAS

The "pleas for care" written after the American Revolution are at the heart of this study. During the 1780s and 1790s, local care networks faced tremendous pressures. The official records reveal an increasing number of indigent strangers wandering from town to town, both of European and African descent, many of whom were in need of financial support or medical assistance. However, due to the burning of Charlestown in 1775 and the expenses required to rebuild the community infrastructure after the war, town authorities had limited funds to pay local caregivers. Meanwhile, the General Court passed legislation stating that the Commonwealth would pay for the medical costs of any individual who did not have a legal inhabitancy. The legislation stated, "In such cases where necessity requires it, by reason of no relations with any community, they shall be supplied out of the publick treasury."[21]

"Publick treasury" referred to the funds of the provincial and later commonwealth government. The law specifically directed town selectmen to "write the name of individuals, a summary of research on inhabitancy and the expense the town has been at for care." After the provincial or commonwealth government received the information, the town was to receive monies compensating them for the care of the transient non-inhabitant.

Despite this, state reimbursements were slow in reaching town selectmen. Towns were left to pay for the medical costs for all of those in need found within their borders. When the province/commonwealth did respond to Charlestown selectmen's requests for compensation, the town was only given a fraction of what they had been asked. For example, to reimburse authorities

for the care of the following non-residents, the state treasury provided only $2 for each case.

In 1792 Joseph Lewis had lived with a Mrs. Acock in Charlestown but he had never officially gained an inhabitancy. When Lewis later became bedridden, he required "care and medicines" provided by Charlestown physician William Rand. The town treasurer paid Dr. Rand $10 for Lewis' care. In 1787 Abigail Lock, described as "a stranger," went to the Charlestown Meeting House desperate for food and shelter. John Delano, a Charlestown inhabitant, agreed to take Lock into his household if he received a weekly five-dollar payment from the town. In another case, in 1789 a Charlestown resident found Edmund Bowman, a man whose past was "unknowable," by the Charles River. Town authorities reported that Bowman was "sick and very expensive" with town ledgers showing that $40 was spent for his care. In all these cases the two dollars' compensation received from the Commonwealth was a fraction of the costs incurred by the town. By the 1820s, a hospital and asylum would largely replace Charlestown's overstretched local care networks.

THE LEGAL "INHABITANCE" OF THE FORMERLY ENSLAVED

The 1790s and first two decades of the nineteenth century are critical in understanding how and why local care networks were replaced with institutional care. Until the late 1790s, no person of color is mentioned as having received either care or support from the town. After the various court decisions that led to the demise of chattel slavery, newly freed people who required assistance due to sickness, injury or disability began to turn to and request help from local care networks paid through the towns' coffers. Their requests, along with the growing number of pleas from other recent migrants, coupled with a depleted town treasury, increased the pressures on local resources. Town authorities were forced to make choices: who would receive assistance and who would be denied support?

Massachusetts' town authorities claimed that they followed legal precedents in their decision-making regarding who was eligible to receive assistance. However, a major loophole confronted African Americans. Although court decisions had declared enslavement incompatible with the state constitution, the *legal* inhabitancy of former slaves was never ruled upon and remained unclear. Although Massachusetts courts had affirmed legally-sanctioned freedom from bondage, these same courts did not agree on who should be responsible for the health and welfare needs of freed people.

THE CONFLICTING *SHELBURNE* & *LITTLETON* COURT DECISIONS (1796)

Two county court decisions issued in 1796 offered little guidance to town authorities attempting to ascertain the inhabitancy of the formerly enslaved and who should be responsible for their care. In *Shelburne v. Greenfield* (1796) the court looked to provincial slavery laws for answers. In contrast, the presiding judge in *Littleton v. Tuttle* (1796) focused on the state constitution and its declaration of equality. Although on their face these opinions claimed to be based solely on an interpretation of existing law, the courts were deeply influenced by competing ideas of racial equality and who should bear financial responsibility for the care of former slaves. The inconsistency between the *Shelburne* and *Littleton* decisions created legal confusion for towns such as Charlestown. Town leaders took advantage of the conflicting case law to pick and choose legal precedents to justify their desired course of action in individual cases.

In *Shelburne*, the county court held that the "inhabitancy" of a formerly enslaved person remained derivative.[22] This meant that a former slave's inhabitancy remained that of their former master, irrespective of the actions of the newly freed person. In this case the medical costs for two former slaves were at issue. In 1753 Romulus and Rosana had been sold as slaves to a resident of Greenfield, in Hampshire County. In 1776 they escaped from their master, "claimed their liberty," and married.[23] The husband and wife lived in Shelburne during the 1780s but by 1789 they had become needy and required medical assistance. Shelburne authorities refused to provide care and filed suit against the town of Greenfield based on the inhabitancy of their former enslaver. Greenfield's attorney countered by emphasizing his client's freedom. He argued that Black and White residents with no inhabitancy of their own "were the proper charge of the commonwealth."[24]

The county court disagreed and held that the former slaves "gained a settlement, where their masters were settled." The judge then ordered that "the persons of color should be removed to Greenfield, the place of their last master's inhabitancy." In the end, Greenfield was required to pay for the costs of medical care.[25]

However, if local selectmen did not like the holding of Shelburne, they could look to *Littleton v. Tuttle*. The *Littleton* court held that the inhabitancy of a white resident and a formerly-enslaved person should be determined using the same criteria.[26] In 1779, a man named Tuttle had bought six-year-old Cato and took the enslaved child to his residence in Littleton.[27] In 1794 Cato suffered an injury which left him unable to walk.[28] Tuttle then carried

the crippled Cato "to the [Littleton] Overseers of the Poor for support . . . refusing to make any provision for him."[29] However, the Littleton selectmen rejected the responsibility and argued that it was Tuttle's responsibility, as a master, to care for Cato.[30]

The court sided with Tuttle and held that the "free and equal" clause within the 1783 constitution should be applied retroactively to mark as "free and equal" those in bondage prior to the creation of the Commonwealth. It adopted the legal fiction that "a negro born within the state before the constitution, was born free."[31] Hence, the presiding judge declared Cato a "proper inhabitant" of Littleton and found town authorities liable for his welfare "in such a manner as it would have been if he had been a white person."[32]

Charlestown selectmen experienced the legal confusion of *Shelburne* and *Littleton* as administrators who were frantically attempting to finance local care networks with increasingly limited funds. They researched the life histories of needy claimants and argued that the frequent movements of people of color from town to town after their emancipation made a determination of inhabitancy complicated. When Charlestown representatives interviewed newly-freed residents and their past employers and masters, each party maintained a different definition of what 'freedom' meant and when it had occurred. Town selectmen chose their course of action and then used either *Shelburne* or *Littleton* to justify their decisions, which were often contradictory. The following cases of Grace Groves, Prince Sutton and Fanny Sanders Hanson vividly illustrate how selectmen acted when confronted with African Americans' inhabitancy claims and the specious legal reasoning they employed to justify their failures to provide assistance.

THE CONTRADICTORY CASES OF GRACE GROVES, PRINCE SUTTON & FANNY HANSON

In 1803 authorities in nearby Boston and Salem used the *Shelburne* decision to argue that Charlestown was responsible for supporting Grace Groves, described as a "mulattoe."[33] In 1803 the indigent Groves had appeared at the Boston Almshouse in need of food and clothes. She informed the Boston Overseers of the Poor that she was from Salem. When the Boston selectmen contacted Salem, authorities there argued forcefully that Groves was not their responsibility because she was legally a "true inhabitant" of Charlestown.[34]

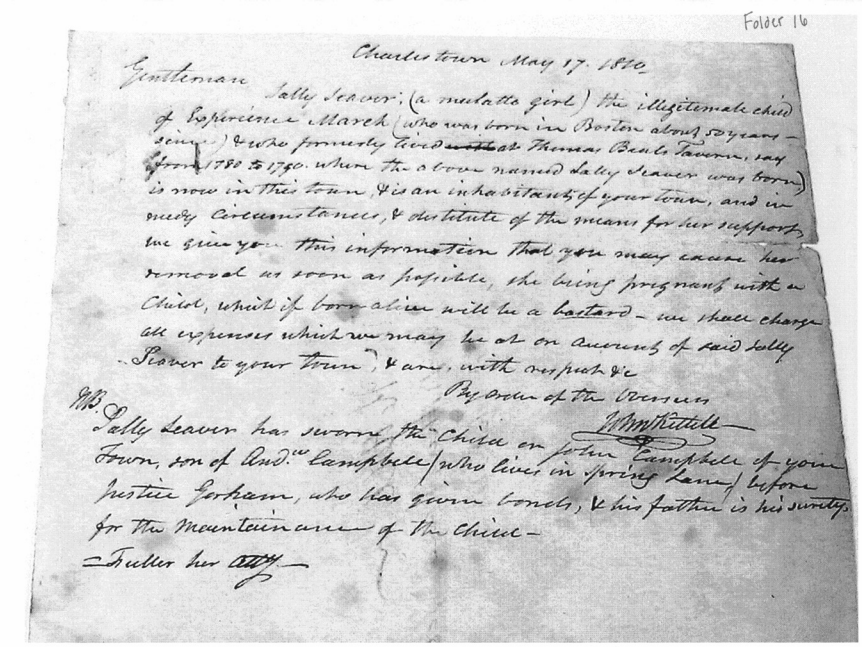
The Salem selectmen offered the following evidence and rationale: Before the American Revolution, Grace's father, Cato Conant, had been owned by a

Mr. Conant, a Charlestown baker. During the war, Cato left his master and declared himself free. He fought for the patriots on an American privateer. After the war, Cato moved to Salem and married a former slave. Soon thereafter, Cato's wife became pregnant and bore Grace.[35] The twenty-one-year-old Grace told the Boston authorities that she had lived her entire life in Salem.[36] Despite her father's declaration of his own freedom and Grace's Salem residency for approximately twenty years, Salem authorities focused on the inhabitancy of her father's former master, Mr. Conant, the Charlestown baker.

Thus, both Boston and Salem refused to offer care. With the two towns arguing that Charlestown was the legal site of Grace's inhabitancy and liable for her medical costs and lacking funds to pursue a legal case against these towns, Charlestown's selectmen reluctantly agreed to offer care. A constable travelled to Boston and brought Grace to Mrs. Howell's, a local caregiver.[37] Ironically, this was the first time Grace Groves had actually lived in her ostensible legal place of inhabitancy.

Similarly, Phyllis Reed and Nancy Blake both found themselves in the Charlestown records after allegations from other towns that their inhabitancy followed a parent who had once been enslaved by a local resident. As explained in this article's opening vignette, Phyllis Reed, "a woman of color," lived in Dracut in 1808 when she was struck by a mysterious illness that restricted the movement of her legs.[38] Nancy Blake, a "mulatto person," required medical care in Weston. Weston sought to bill Charlestown for her care.

In contrast, in determining Prince Sutton's inhabitancy in 1806, Charlestown and Woburn authorities used *Littleton* to pressure Boston into accepting Sutton as an inhabitant. A Boston constable had found Prince Sutton on the streets. He was described as "an elderly negroe man sick and cold."[39] The constable took him to the Boston Almshouse and a search for his place of inhabitancy ensued. Sutton told the Boston selectmen that he "was a freeman since the War" and had lived in many places including Charlestown and Woburn.[40] Sutton "believed he belonged nowhere."[41] A Charlestown representative researched Charlestown and Woburn records and found that Sutton had worked in both locales before the revolution. Sometime during the 1750s, Prince Sutton had "lived with Mr. Sutton a leather dresser in Charlestown."[42] (Here "lived with" was a euphemism for having been owned by the leather dresser). After this, Sutton moved to Woburn and "worked with a man named Easton."[43] Boston authorities, however, using *Shelburne,* claimed that either Charlestown or Woburn was his legal place of inhabitancy.[44] In their view, Sutton's inhabitancy derived from one of his former masters (either the leather dresser Sutton or "man named Easton").


Folder 16

Charlestown May 17. 1810

Gentlemen

Sally Seaver; (a mulatto girl) the illegitimate child of Experience March (who was born in Boston about 50 years since) & who formerly lived with at Thomas Beals Tavern, say from 1780 to 1790. where the above named Sally Seaver was born) is now in this town, & is an inhabitant of your town, and in needy circumstances, & destitute of the means for her support, we give you this information that you may cause her removal as soon as possible, she being pregnant with a Child, which if born alive will be a bastard – we shall charge all expenses which we may be at or on account of said Sally Seaver to your Town & are with respect &c

By order of the Overseers

J. Wm Kettell

N.B. Sally Seaver has sworn the Child on John Campbell of your Town, son of And.w Campbell who lives in Spring Lane/ before Justice Gorham, who has given bonds, & his father is his surety for the Mountainance of the Child –

Teste her

Charlestown, May 17, 1810

Gentlemen,

Sally Seaver; (a mulatto girl) the illegitimate child of Experience March (who was born in Boston about 50 years since) & who formerly lived with at Thomas Beal's Tavern, say from 1780 to 1790 where the above named Sally Seaver was born) is now in this town, & is an inhabitant of your town, and in needy circumstances, & destitute of the means for her support. We give you this information that you may cause her removal as soon as possible, she being pregnant with a Child, which if born alive will be a bastard – we shall charge all expenses which we may be at or on account of said Sally Seaver to your Town & are with respect &c.

Per order of the Overseer, John Kettle

N.B. Sally Seaver has sworn the child on John Campbell of your Town, son of Andrew Campbell who lives in Spring Lane/ before Justice Gorham, who has given bonds, & his father is his surety for the maintainance [sic] of the child.

Both Charlestown and Woburn's selectmen disagreed. Charlestown authorities adopted *Littleton*'s holding and wrote, "As in *Littleton*, Prince Sutton's inhabitancy is determined solely through Prince Sutton. If he has no inhabitancy of his own, Boston must care for him and then look to the State." In the end, Boston authorities paid for Sutton's care.[45]

In 1810, Charlestown selectmen used arguments similar to the ones employed in the Prince Sutton case to determine Sally Seaver's legal inhabitancy. Seaver was described as a "mulatto" and the "illegitimate daughter" of one Experience March. Boston claimed that her father had once been enslaved by a Charlestown resident, although the evidence was not definitive. Charlestown vehemently rejected Boston's claims.[46] According to their investigation, Seaver had been born in Boston, and her father had lived there for a time. Charlestown was particularly anxious to have Boston accept financial responsibility for her case. The selectman explained that she was:

> in needy circumstances, & destitute of the means for her support. We give you this information that you may cause her removal as soon as possible, she being pregnant with a Child, which if born alive will be a bastard – we shall charge all expenses which we may be at or on account of said Sally Seaver to your Town [Boston].

In addition to being pregnant, Seaver had "sworn the child" or named a Boston resident as its father. Charlestown claimed that the father himself had even testified before a justice and "given bonds" as surety for the child's maintenance.

At times, selectmen even took extralegal action. The inhabitancy dispute involving Fanny Sanders Hanson and her child provides a particularly vivid illustration. In May 1814, a Charlestown resident found Hanson and her young daughter sick along the Charlestown Ferry Road.[47] Charlestown authorities took the two to a Mrs. Pritchard's home for care. After Fanny recovered, she informed the selectmen that her father, Joel Sanders, had been a slave in Bradford before the revolution and was still living there with Fanny's mother. Fanny asserted that her father was a Bradford inhabitant and that she had no inhabitancy of her own.[48] To the Charlestown selectmen it was clear where Fanny's inhabitancy lay: in Bradford. Although Bradford authorities admitted to Charlestown that Fanny's "father came here about 1769 from Boxford and still lives here," in the next sentence they insisted that he "has had no property nor has been taxed." [49]

Instead of engaging in a legal battle with Bradford, Charlestown took drastic action. On August 1, 1814, a Charlestown selectman placed Fanny

Hanson and her child in a stagecoach, directing the driver to leave them both in the town of Bradford. Bradford's selectmen were outraged. The town clerk wrote the Charlestown selectmen demanding that they remove Fanny and her child "as soon as possible."[50] The Charlestown selectmen were unmoved and did not respond.

What other resources could Grace Groves, Prince Sutton, Fanny Sanders Hanson and other residents of color avail themselves of if they could not access their local community care networks? There is evidence that African Americans maintained their own far-reaching networks and mutual aid societies. Charlestown selectmen write of funeral processions and gatherings that included former slaves who gathered in Charlestown from distances of thirty miles or more.[51] One selectman mentioned that they collected money among themselves to pay burial fees and for an adequate amount of food and spirits for the participants.[52]

There are also references to men and women of color "taking care of their own."[53] Although there is little elaboration about what this may have entailed, it does indicate that people of color possessed resources and formed communities apart from the white communities of Charlestown. Freed people, who were often highly mobile after gaining their freedom, and often had to travel far and wide to find employment, most likely constructed networks unrelated to town jurisdictions.[54] As we have seen, local responsibility for the health and welfare of townspeople did not extend to residents of color. The articulation of citizenship rights was clearly circumscribed by race.

CONCLUSION

These disputes over inhabitancy reveal more than a state of legal confusion; courts and communities throughout Massachusetts struggled to define the place of freed people in society at large. As selectmen struggled to maintain local care networks when strangers and transients flooded their community after the revolution, they were also forced to contemplate the place of freed people within their welfare systems. Charlestown's residents of color now had legal autonomy. However, this autonomy was contested in the realm of community health and welfare decision-making.

Charlestown's selectmen used arguments over finances to construct substantial differences in the welfare assistance the town provided to their white and Black residents. It is true that financing was a real and pressing concern. But they were also frustrated by the social changes that they saw within their community. At the same time that they engaged in inhabitancy disputes with other towns during the 1790s and early decades of the

nineteenth century, they regularly accepted the pleas for care submitted by transient white strangers. These white non-residents were provided with a minimal level of support within local care networks in at least 70% of recorded cases.[55] In sharp contrast, Charlestown's selectmen initially denied local care to all needy residents of color.[56] Thus, while the Massachusetts Chief Justice William Cushing may have declared all African Americans in Massachusetts "free and equal" in 1783, Charlestown authorities maintained racial lines to avoid caring for residents of color.

Charlestown authorities' response to the needs of its African American residents reveals the increasing rigidity of the town's social borders. The effectiveness of the eighteenth-century care networks prior to the American Revolution rested in large part on the fluidity and adaptability of social relationships, relationships that existed between Anglo American residents. The town's treatment of its African American residents after the American Revolution reveals its exclusionary racial practices. These findings support Joanne Pope Melish's assertion that notions of difference solidified in New England during the late eighteenth century as a result of "concerns about citizenship and autonomy posed by emancipation and post-Revolutionary dislocation."[57] Legally, slaves were granted equality in 1783, but freed people did not realize this equality in local welfare decision-making. These practices of racial exclusion would continue in the care provided in Charlestown's nineteenth-century welfare institutions.

HJM

Notes

1. For examples of these petitions, see the website of the Massachusetts Historical Society: www.masshist.org/features/endofslavery/struggle. For some of the most recent books on slavery in New England, see: Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Norton, 2019); Jared Ross Hardesty, *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds: A History of Slavery in New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019); Jared Ross Hardesty, *Unfreedom: Slavery and Dependence in Eighteenth-Century Boston* (New York: NYU Press, 2018), Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), and Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Graduation Emancipation and "Race" In New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

2. John Adams to Dr. Jeremy Belknap, 21 March 1795, quoted in L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel (eds.) *Legal Papers of John Adams, Vol. 2* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 48. The editors point out that Adams' memory was not entirely correct. Court records show that in at least one case that he was involved in, Newport v. Billing, the jury found in favor of the enslaver. Here Adams had served as counsel for the owner.

3. Gloria McCahon Whiting, "Emancipation without the Courts or Constitution: The Case of Revolutionary Massachusetts," *Slavery and Abolition* (2020; Vol. 41:3), 466-67.

4. See George Henry Moore, *Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts* (NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1866).

5. Various documents refer to him as Quok, Quarco, Quack, Quork, Quaco, and Quarko. Quock's father, Mingo, escaped from the widowed Isabel Caldwell two years after her husband's death, as shown by an advertisement she placed in the *Boston News-Letter* on June 13 and June 20, 1765. Perhaps she had reiterated her husband's promise to free Quock, lowering the age to twenty-one, in order to prevent his attempting a similar escape. His mother, Dinah Caldwell, married an African American man named Cumberland Chandler in Worcester on Nov. 29, 1767. Source: Blogpost by J. L. Bell titled "With child Quaco, about nine months old," accessed 4/17/22.

6. Walker was represented at various times by Caleb Strong, a future governor of Massachusetts, and Levi Lincoln, who would become the first Attorney General of the United States. According to John D. Cushing, trouble between Jennison and his brothers-in-law had been brewing for years. After Isabel's death, they were involved in several legal cases against Jennison concerning promissory notes and debts.

7. There was no formal opinion written in the case. Chief Justice Cushing set forth these points in his instructions to the jury. Quoted from a transcription of Chief Justice William Cushing's Notebook, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. 13, (1875), p. 293. For the original notes, see: MHS Collections Online: Legal notes by William Cushing about the Quock Walker case (www.masshist.org).

8. Harry Downs, "Unlikely Abolitionist: William Cushing and the Struggle Against Slavery," *Journal of the Supreme Court*, 29 (June 2004), 118-44.

9. Emily Blanck, "Seventeen Eighty-Three: The Turning Point in the Law of Slavery and Freedom in Massachusetts," *New England Quarterly* 75 (1) (2002), 29. This excellent article sheds new light on Cushing and the limitations of his other decisions regarding slavery. Edward L. Bell offers a similar interpretation in *Persistence of Memories of Slavery and Emancipation in Historical Andover* (Shawsheen Press, 2021). He explains that: "The 'Mum Bett' and 'Quock Walker' cases were heard as jury trials with party-particular outcomes. The decisions . . . were unpublished and only existed in original manuscript form. In eighteenth-century legal circles, which depended on memory of judicial decisions . . . the cases were soon forgotten." However, he then notes that, "Practicing legal professionals in at least Berkshire and Worcester counties remembered the outcomes for a time, and advised their slave-owning clients of the

futility of defending or appealing lawsuits for liberty in a changed legal landscape" (p. 197). For another refutation of the significance of *Commonwealth v. Jennison*, see William O'Brien, "Did the Jennison Case Outlaw Slavery in Massachusetts?" *The William and Mary Quarterly* (April 1960), 219-41.

10. Helen Webber Connington, *History of Barre: Windows into the Past* (Barre, MA: Barre Historical Commission, 1992), 266-67.

11. The grave of Prince Walker (most likely a much younger brother, although some accounts posit that he was Quock's son) and family cemetery in Barre has recently been discovered. A marker to "Quork Walker" was erected in Barre in 2005. See George Barnes, "Path to Freedom: Woods in Barre Hold Markers of Slavery's End in Mass.," *(Worcester) Telegram & Gazette*, Aug 14, 2015. For more on Quock Walker's extended family, see: Connell O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis: 'An Example for His More Whiter Brethren to Follow,'" *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 48–100. Named after his uncle, Quack Walker Lewis (1798-1856) was prominent in African American communities in both Boston and Lowell. An abolitionist, he was "one of at least three men of Black-African descent ordained to the Latter-day Saint priesthood during the lifetime of Joseph Smith." However, his ordination along with his son's interracial marriage "drew negative attention . . . and contributed to Brigham Young's assertion of a racial priesthood restriction and his strident condemnation of race mixing." Quoted from Jordan T. Watkins, "Quack Walker Lewis: Biography," on the website *Century of Black Mormons*.

12. See John D. Cushing, "The Cushing Court and the Abolition of Slavery in Massachusetts: More Notes on the 'Quock Walker Case'," *American Journal of Legal History* 5 (2) (1961), 118-144; Elaine MacEacheron, "Emancipation of Slavery in Massachusetts, 1770-1790," *Journal of Negro History* 55 (4) (1970) 289-306; Robert M. Spector, "The Quock Walker Cases (1781-1783)," *Journal of Negro History* 53 (1) (1968), 12-32; and Arthur Zilversmit, "Quok Walker, Mumbet, and the Abolition of Slavery in Massachusetts," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25:4 (1968), 614-624.

13. The full account of Jennison's many petitions to the state legislature can be found in George H. Moore, *Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts* (NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1866), 211-20.

14. Moore, 218.

15. Emphasis is added. According to Moore, the General Court sent Jennison's petition back and forth between its chambers for a few years, but never gave an answer.

16. Helen Webber Connington's *History of Barre: Windows into the Past* (1992) reports that after 1793 Jennison sold his property and "took the remainder of his slaves to Connecticut where he sold them" (266-67). No sources or documentation is provided, but local lore seems to hold this to have occurred. Prince Walker is purported to have been among those sold to Conn. (Connington, 234; phone call interview with local historian Harry Richardson, April 15, 2022). However, Prince eventually escaped and returned to Barre, where he purchased land and became a

"well respected laborer." Connington speculates that Jennison's sale of his slaves to Conn. may have been "a necessary action to pay the damages and court costs of the protracted litigation." By 1805 "Jennison's estate went into insolvency, and his effects were sold at 'public vendue.'" (266)

17. Dracut to Charlestown, 30 May 1808, Document 18, Folder 12, Charlestown General Records (hereafter referred to as CGR), City of Boston Archives, West Roxbury, Massachusetts (hereafter referred to as CBCA). For more on sources, see my dissertation, Angela Miller Keysor, "Community Care before the Rise of the Welfare State: Charlestown, Massachusetts, 1730-1820," PhD dissertation (University of Iowa, 2013).

18. If someone else wrote the plea, the writer's name would not be on the document, but the subject involved would place an 'X' or another mark. Unfortunately, I have found no clues in the Charlestown Records to identify the person who wrote the pleas on others' behalf.

19. These records are located within the City Archives for the City of Boston, located in West Roxbury, Massachusetts.

20. Because Charlestown was destroyed by fire in 1775, the Charlestown records stop in this year and then start again in 1781.

21. General Court, *The Charters and General Laws of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: T. B. Wait and Company, 1814), Chapter LXXV.

22. This case originated in Hampshire County, Massachusetts. It is cited as *Shelburne v. Greenfield* 5 Mass. Hist. Coll. (1st ser.) 46, 1795 or *Shelburne v. Greenfield*, 2 Dane Ab. 412 (1796).

23. There are general references to slaves "claiming their own liberty as was common at the time." See Nathan Dane, *A General Abridgment and Digest of American Law, With Occasional Notes and Comments, Vol. II* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard & Co., 1824), 412.

24. *Shelburne v. Greenfield*, 2 Dane Ab. 412 (1796).

25. Ibid.

26. *Littleton v. Tuttle*, 4 Mass. R. 128 (1796).

27. Christopher L. Tomlins, *Law, Labor and Ideology in the Early American Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 336.

28. There is no indication in the records of exactly what caused Cato's injury.

29. *Littleton v. Tuttle*, 4 Mass. R. 128 (1796).

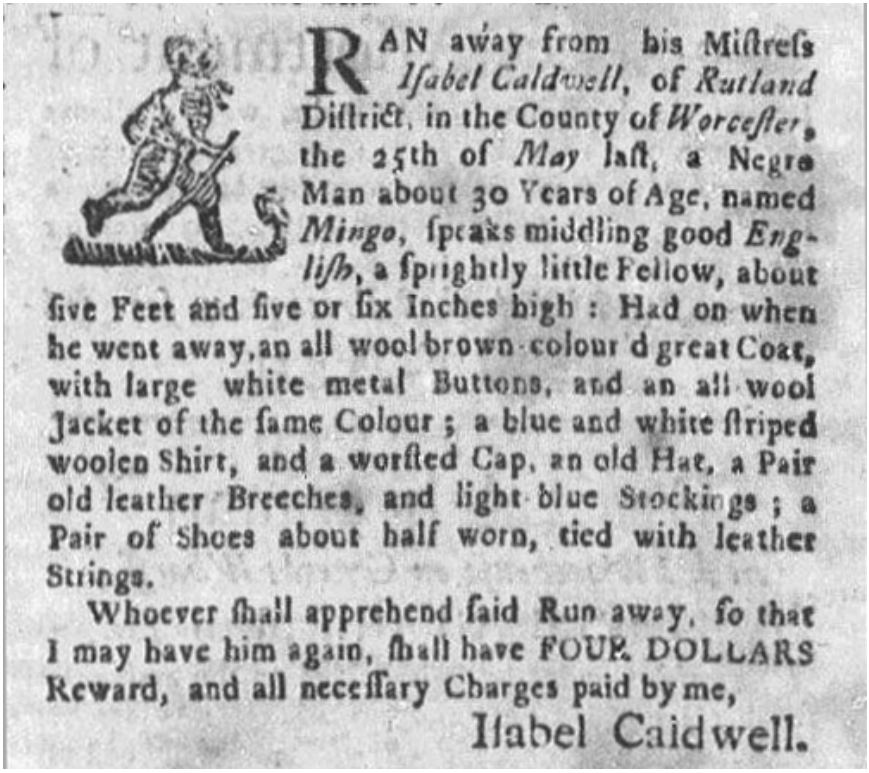
30. Although the General Court declared that slavery was abolished in 1783, certain masters continued a "slave-type" relationship as master and servant. However, legitimate masters and servants entered into legal contracts which specified length of service and what each party owed to the other. In the litigation I have examined, in which a master claimed that their former slave was now a servant, in no case did a master produce a contract he/she had made with their "negroe" servant. See for example *Winchendon v. Hatfield* 4 Mass. R. 127 (1808).

31. Tomlins, 149.

32. Dane, 14.

33. Letter from Boston selectmen to Charlestown selectmen, 18 April 1803, Document 18, Folder 7, CGR, CBCA.
34. Boston selectmen to Salem selectmen, 12 April 1803, Document 21, Folder 7, CGR, CBCA.
35. Salem selectmen to Boston selectmen, 18 April 1803, Document 22, Folder 7, CGR, CBCA. There is no indication within the Charlestown Records why Grace Groves was in Boston.
36. Salem selectmen to Boston selectmen, 18 April 1803, CBCA.
37. Charlestown selectmen record, 18 May 1803, Document 26, Folder 7, CGR, CBCA.
38. Dracut to Charlestown, 30 May 1808, Document 18, Folder 12, CGR, CBCA. Weston to Charlestown, 25 May 1812, Documents 11 and 12, Folder 3, Second CGR, CBCA.
39. Boston to Charlestown, 30 August 1806, Document 51, Folder 9, CGR, CBCA.
40. Boston to Charlestown, 30 August 1806, CBCA.
41. Ibid.
42. Charlestown to Boston, 14 November 1806, Document 7, Folder 10, CGR, CBCA.
43. Woburn to Charlestown, 21 August 1806, Document 46, Folder 9, CGR, CBCA.
44. Charlestown to Woburn, 10 September 1806, Document 61, Folder 9, CGR, CBCA.
45. Charlestown to Woburn, 10 September 1806, Document 61, Folder 9, CBCA.
46. Charlestown to Boston, 17 May 1810, Documents 25, 26, 27, Folder 16, CGR, CBCA.
47. Selectmen Notes on Fanny Sanders Hanson, 1 May 1814, Document 37, Folder 5, Second CGR, CBCA.
48. Ibid.
49. Bradford selectmen to Charlestown regarding Fanny Hanson and child, 14 May 1814, Documents 39 and 40, Folder 5, Second CGR, CBCA.
50. Bradford to Charlestown, 2 August 1814, Documents 13-16, Folder 6, Second CGR, CBCA.
51. August 1798, Documents 23-26, Folder 16, CGR, CBCA.
52. Ibid.
53. March 1803, Document 62, Folder 3, CGR, CBCA.
54. An examination of local welfare records throughout New England may help trace the lives of African Americans. The Charlestown Records reveal that many African Americans travelled extensively after the American Revolution and often lived in many towns during their lifetime. Combining the findings of the Charlestown Records with other communities' correspondence and ledgers may provide critical insights into how African Americans experienced need and how local welfare networks reacted.
55. See Folders listed 1796 through 1821 in CGR, CBCA. The total number of pleas to the selectmen for care is 513.

56. Not only were the formerly enslaved denied care when they were in need; the records suggest that they could not submit "pleas for care" on their own behalf. In all cases residents of color did not directly seek assistance; instead, white residents wrote on their behalf (although this may have been due, in part, to higher rates of illiteracy among African Americans). For example, see the case of white Charlestown resident Ezekiel Smith who notified authorities of the need to care for Eliza, a "mulattoe stranger." November 1811, Document 54, Folder 2, Second CGR, CBCA.
57. Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 5.



RAN away from his Miſtreſs *Iſabel Caldwell*, of *Rutland* Diſtrict, in the County of *Worceſter*, the 25th of *May* laſt, a Negro Man about 30 Years of Age, named *Mingo*, ſpeaks middling good *Engliſh*, a ſprightly little Fellow, about five Feet and five or ſix Inches high: Had on when he went away, an all wool brown colour'd great Coat, with large white metal Buttons, and an all wool Jacket of the ſame Colour; a blue and white ſtriped woolen Shirt, and a worſted Cap, an old Hat, a Pair old leather Breeches, and light blue Stockings; a Pair of Shoes about half worn, tied with leather Strings.

Whoever ſhall apprehend ſaid Run away, ſo that I may have him again, ſhall have FOUR DOLLARS Reward, and all neceſſary Charges paid by me,

Iſabel Caldwell.

Mingo Walker: 1765 Runaway Ad

Quock Walker's father, Mingo, escaped from the widowed Isabel Caldwell two years after her husband's death, as shown by an advertisement she placed in the *Boston News-Letter* on June 13 and June 20, 1765. Perhaps she reiterated her husband's promise of freeing Quock, lowering the age to twenty-one, in order to prevent the then twelve-year-old Quock from attempting a similar escape. Mingo is described as a "Negro man about 30 years of age" who "speaks middling good English" and is a "sprightly little fellow." The Walker family history is worthy of a full article in its own right. Many descendants became prominent members of the state's African American community.