



Memory and Enslavement:

Schuyler House, Old Saratoga, and the Saratoga Patent in History, Historical Practice, and Historical Imagination



Myra B. Young Armstead

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Presented to Saratoga National Historical Park
Interior Region 1, North Atlantic—Appalachian

In Partnership with
the Organization of American Historians/National Park Service

May 2023

Cover Image:

Mrs. Schuyler Burning Her Wheat Fields on the Approach of the British, Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, 1852,
Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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the Organization of American Historians

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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May 2023

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To Mommy



Acknowledgments

Rarely does a scholar have the opportunity to come full circle in quite the way this book has afforded me. Decades ago, I began my career as a historian by exploring what was then a barely researched subject—resort towns as urban places, using Saratoga Springs, New York as one of two case studies. The resulting dissertation and monograph focused on Black communities in both places during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After the appearance of those two works, I expanded my research on Saratoga Springs into the late twentieth century, at the request of local historical societies in Saratoga County. With this historic resource study for the National Park Service, my reach into Saratoga’s history now stretches backward to the colonial period and forward to the antebellum nineteenth century for the eastern part of the county. I emerge from this work with a personally enriching, temporally comprehensive, and more theoretically complex understanding of African American history in Saratoga County enhanced by national and global contextualization.

It has been very satisfying to me to fashion a historical narrative that speaks to both the general public and academic audiences. As a middle schooler, I realized that nothing I was learning in my otherwise engaging and demanding public school responded to the questions forming in my mind about nineteenth-century Black American experiences in the northern United States. So, in my progressive high school I satisfied myself with an eclectic, self-made, dubiously pertinent, supplemental “curriculum” consisting of an elective social studies course on the postwar civil rights struggle, biographies of famous Black people, Harlem Renaissance literature, and the poetry of the Black Arts Movement then centered in many northern cities. In college, and later graduate school, I built on this rudimentary knowledge and expanded my investigations diasporically into African history and contemporary politics. Yet, the relative absence of treatments of past Black experience in the North beyond sociologists’ concerns with life in industrial cities persisted and continued to draw me. Now, nearly half a century later, I am pleased to say that many of my initial queries have been addressed or are being answered by a robust, growing historiography on this subject. I am honored to think that I have been a part of current efforts contributing to a deeper, broader public knowledge of the history of African Americans in the North from enslavement to freedom.

The National Park Service (NPS) staff of the Saratoga National Historical Park has been essential to the completion of these pages. Chris Martin, Chris Valosin, Eric Schnitzer, and early on, Amy Bracewell, were consistently generous in sharing their expertise along with the site’s prior, related research findings. They also provided helpful, critical feedback on my drafts. Heidi Hill, Historic Site Manager at Schuyler Mansion and Crailo

State Historic Site, was equally supportive. I thank these public history professionals. Without them, the prohibitions against access to archives through the worst of the COVID pandemic would have thoroughly halted this work. I have also appreciated their steadily levelheaded exchanges with me despite the public's roiling discomforts, anger, and political sensitivities associated with reexaminations of American slavery—a hard reality they face during a time of national reckoning with the subject.

At the Organization of American Historians (OAH), Derek Duquette, then Public History Program Associate, aided my introduction to the project. Eventually, Paul Zwirecki, Director of Public History Programs for the OAH, served as an invaluable, patient, dependable, and well-informed interlocuter and guide, facilitating my ability to mesh NPS needs with scholarship. Without Paul's assistance, particularly as my family focused daily on my mother's serious illness, reaching the finish line for this historic resource study would have been greatly delayed.

Several additional entities provided opportunities for me to present or refine this work while it was in progress. These included The Albany County Historical Association/Ten Broeck Mansion, the Saratoga County History Roundtable, and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Ismail Rashid of Vassar College's History Department was a congenial and able commentator on those sections of this work dealing with the West African slave trade; he aided the rekindling of my graduate school training in African history. At Bard College, Rob Cioffi in Bard's Classics Program and Jay Elliott in the Philosophy Program helped me follow a hunch I had about manumission rites dating back to western antiquity. I wish to thank Miles Rodriguez for being my most consistent backer at Bard, especially in the early stages of the work. As chair of the Historical Studies Program, Tabetha Ewing arranged a history seminar in which I presented a small portion of this research in its very late stage. At that forum, Miles and colleagues Cecile Kuznitz and Christian Crouch asked probing questions that prompted me to buttress an important argument in the manuscript. Bard's Web Services Manager, Juliet Meyers, kindly lent her expertise in the creation of the beautiful maps. One of my Bard student advisees, Vivian Hoyden, carefully helped me organize a draft bibliography as this project neared completion. Deirdre d'Albertis, as Dean of Faculty at Bard, cheered for me from the sidelines at key points; her boosterism was always timely, welcome, and necessary. By their own teaching and investigative projects, other long-standing colleagues in Bard's Historical Studies Program—Rob Culp, Greg Moynahan, Wendy Urban-Mead, Richard Aldous, Sean McMeekin, and Drew Thompson—have continuously fostered a rigorous climate and encouraging context for my own academic research. I am deeply appreciative of these forms of intellectual and material assistance.

Friends and family sustained my efforts as well. My sons, Matthew and Nathan, are excellent readers and offered smart commentary on prose and tone. My husband Tyrone listened to many reworked paragraphs and endured my need for isolated concentration.

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Friends Patricia Turner, Marsha Daria, Sandra Tunstill, Greta Davey, Juanita Wallace, Andre Lewis, and my siblings supported me with prayers, fellowship, and laughter. I am grateful for them all.

Finally, I thank God through Jesus Christ for a curious, critical mind and all of the above, enabling means to pursue this inquiry.

Introduction

African-born men and women and their descendants once breathed and died in a hilly countryside alongside Mohawks and their Mohican neighbors, the first humans to occupy the region fanning outward from the Upper Hudson River. The Indigenous people named the grounds some thirty miles north of present-day Albany, New York “Se-rach-ta-gue.” When European settlers built a fort and frontier settlement there, they adapted this word to call both locations “Saratoga.” In history books, the fame of the area dates back to the eighteenth century as the site of the Battle of Saratoga, the fabled turning point in the Revolutionary War. Because members of the Schuyler family, leaders in colonial Albany and in the nation’s founding, also resided in this spot from its outpost beginnings into the early nineteenth century, its name was changed a final time to Schuylerville in 1831.¹ Some historians call the place Old Saratoga to distinguish it from the resort city ten miles to its west, Saratoga Springs. Throughout the entire period of the Schuylers’ presence there, Black people who were coerced into relationships with that family labored at, lived in, and left the rural community of Saratoga. This historic resource study (HRS) foregrounds the story of these human beings.

Authorized by the United States Congress in 1938, the National Park Service established the Saratoga National Historical Park to commemorate the critical military events at Old Saratoga during the autumn of 1777. Today, the park preserves the Revolutionary War combat zone of the Battle of Saratoga; the residence called Saratoga House, rebuilt there by Revolutionary War General Philip Schuyler, Commanding Officer of the Northern Department of the Continental Army, just weeks after its destruction during the battle by the British; and the Saratoga Monument, an obelisk conceived by local Saratogians in 1856 and completed in 1887, adorned with bronze statues of three Continental Army officers associated with the battles—Schuyler, Colonel Daniel Morgan, General Horatio Gates. An empty niche represents General Benedict Arnold. Interior decoration features a series of bronze relief plaques of scenes from this British-American military encounter and its social context. The park, in other words, has long proclaimed a message of national glory.

However, the National Park Service acknowledges a somber and different narrative about Old Saratoga with this HRS—the largely untold history of enslavement and slaveholding on those grounds within the park that overlap with the historical Saratoga Patent, a land

¹ Thomas N. Wood III, “History of the Town of Saratoga,” <https://townofsaratoga.com/history/history.htm>, accessed January 10, 2021. For treatments of the battle in historical monographs, see, as examples, John R. Alden, *A History of the American Revolution* (New York: De Capo, 1989, 1969), 313–316, 318, 380–383, 387; or Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 31, 39, 61, 70, 154–159.

grant which included among the original patentees brothers Pieter Schuyler (1657–1724) and Johannes Schuyler (1668–1747). The portion of the Patent west of the Hudson River alone encompassed about fifty-three square miles, from Fish Kill (or Fish Creek) to the north down to Anthony Kill (or Anthony's Kill) to the south (see Figures 1 and 2). The knotty tale of the Patent, slavery, and the Schuylers covers the period from 1684 (the land grant's beginning) until 1837, when Patent lands passed from Schuyler family hands.

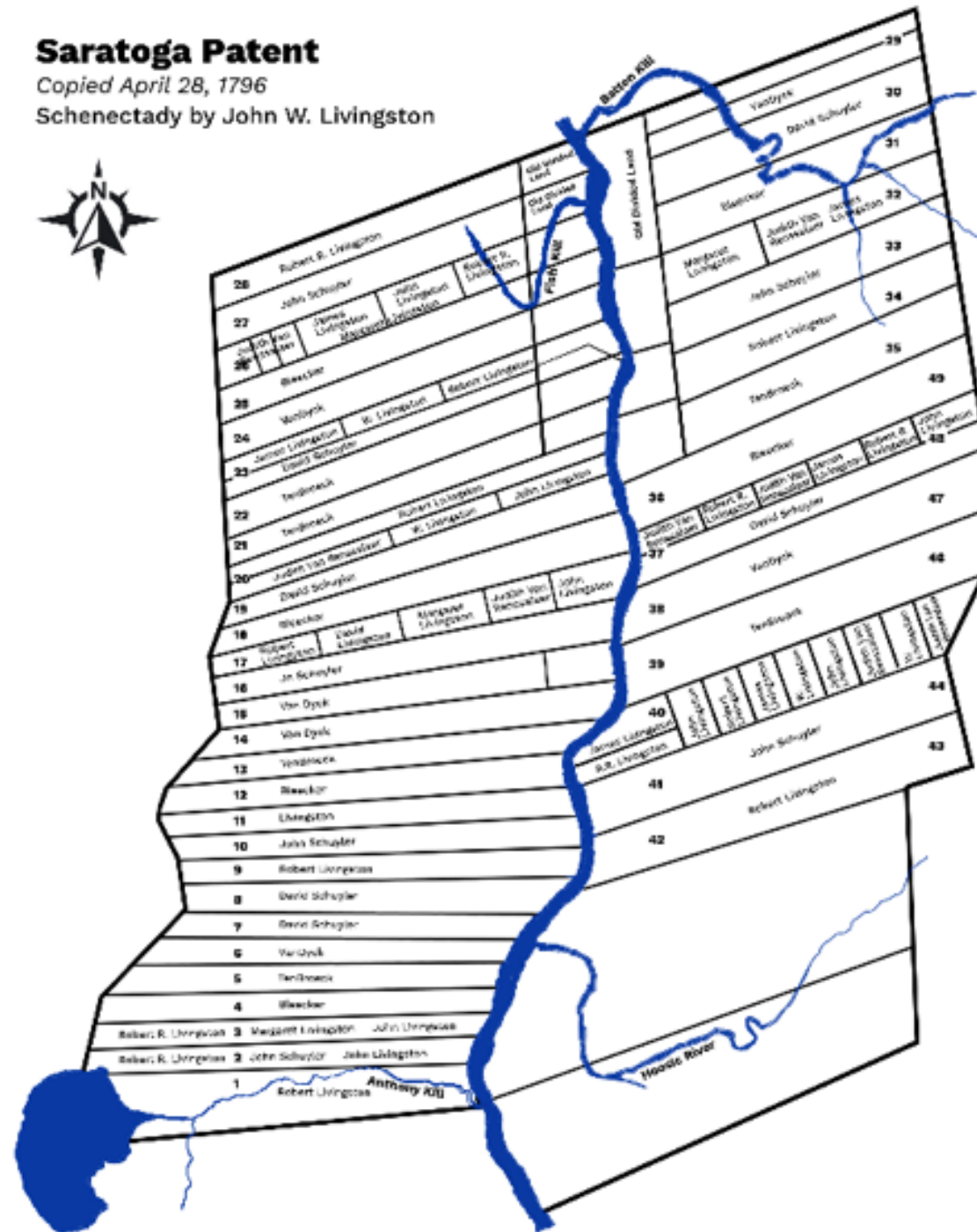


Figure 1. Map of the Saratoga Patent.

Source: Saratoga Land Patent, New York State. Mr. Livingstone Jnr. (Surveyor?) Schenectady: Copied April 28th 1796.

<https://www.bonhams.com/auction/25263/lot/102/saratoga-land-patent-new-york-state-mr-livingstone-jnr-surveyor-saratoga-patent-schenectady-copied-april-28th-1796>.

Also see link at <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/na/sarapat.html>

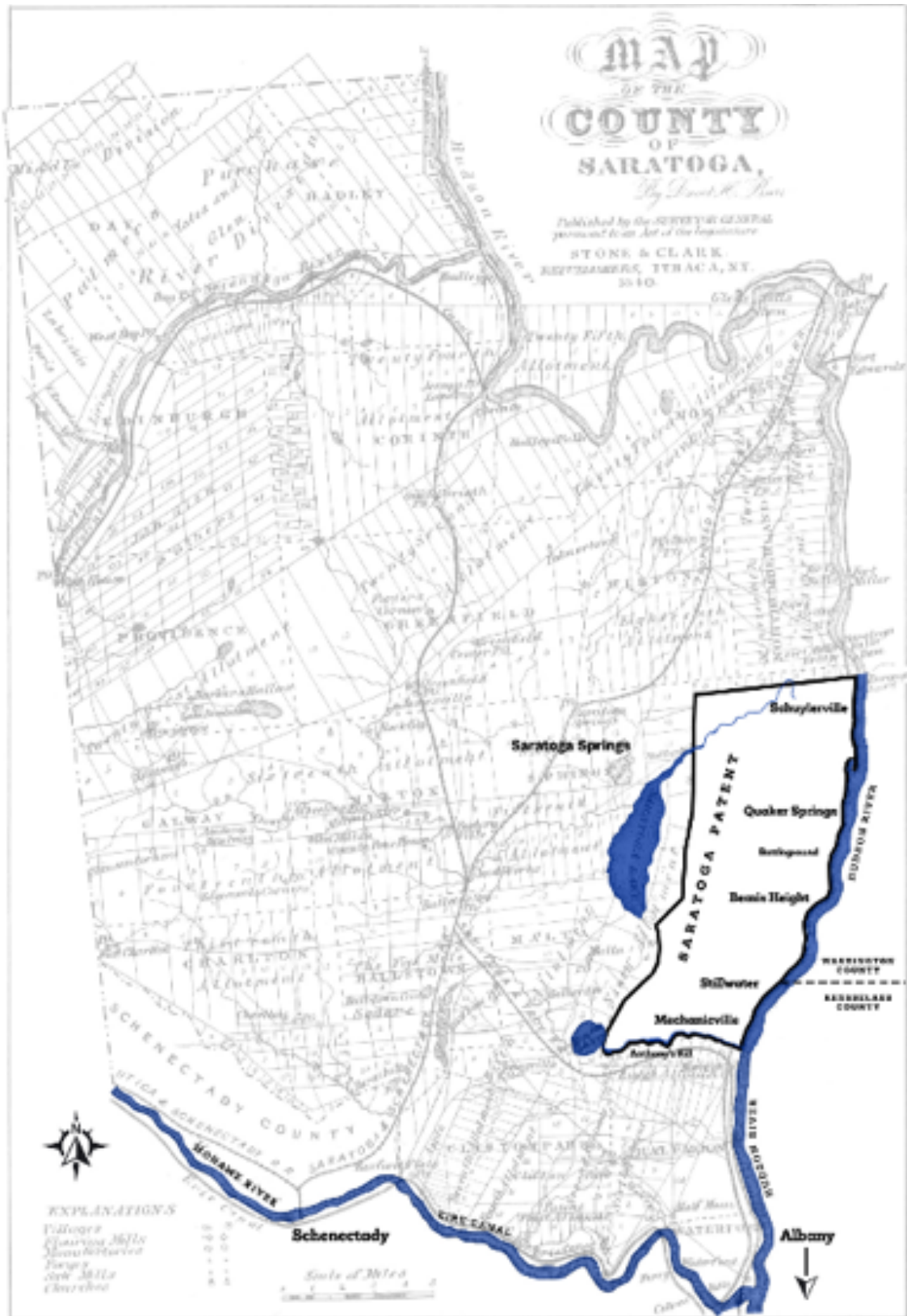


Figure 2. Map of the Western Portion of the Saratoga Patent in Relation to Its Surrounding Area.

Source: Daniel H. Burr, Map of the County of Saratoga (Ithaca, NY: Stone and Clark, 1840).

During three time periods within this span—1702–1745, 1746–1777, and 1778–1837—the Schuylers facilitated lucrative transformations of the landscape through the use of enslaved labor. I call these transformations “imprints,” owing to their environmental impact (and because I wish to signal the need for future historical research on this subject). Because British, French, and Native dwellers on this frontier fought for control of it until 1763, the region surrounding Old Saratoga was insecure for European settlers for roughly a century. It was therefore risky for Johannes to become the first Schuyler to develop Patent lands in 1702—acreage originally owned by Johannes Wendell, whose widow, Elizabeth “Elsie” (Staats) Wendell, he married in 1695. Schuyler acquired Lots 4 and 27 after this marriage. (Johannes Wendell willed Lot 4 to his son Abraham, from whom Johannes Schuyler purchased it.) There were probably enslaved people among the “Chattels” Wendell willed to Elizabeth, and these would have been a part of Johannes Schuyler’s Saratoga household, but the bequest did not specify names or numbers.²

Before Johannes Schuyler died, he passed his Saratoga land, farm, grist mill, saw-mill, and “all the negroes” at the saw mill to his son Philip Schuyler (1695–1745).³ When this Saratoga heir, Philip, died violently and unexpectedly in 1745 in a French and Indian attack that destroyed the first Schuyler House, he already had a will prepared in which he bequeathed “a Negro wench ‘Belle’” and “a Negro wench” to his wife and brother-in-law, respectively. No other enslaved people were mentioned in this document, although there were additional ones among his mill workers, as we will see. Nothing more seems to be known about the family of Philip’s wife, Margaret, and her possession of enslaved Blacks. The pair apparently died childless and further development of the Schuyler portion of the Patent ceased for nearly two decades.

With no sons or daughters of his own, Philip bequeathed his Saratoga property to his nephew and namesake, Philip Schuyler (1733–1804), who began working the property from a new country home he built there in the 1760s while he simultaneously maintained a residence in Albany—“The Pastures,” known today as Saratoga Mansion. His wife, née Catharine Van Rensselaer, brought into their marriage “a negro” she had been given by her father John Van Rensselaer.⁴ According to the day’s conventions, this second Philip’s parents would have also already given him at least one Black servant as a personal slave by the time he inherited Saratoga from his uncle. This Philip gained notoriety as a rural entrepreneur and military leader whose home was also attacked and destroyed, this time by the British in October 1777 during the Revolutionary War. He constructed a second Schuyler

² The “Will of Johannes Wendel of Albany” can be found in James Rindge Stanwood, *The Direct Ancestry of the Late Jacob Wendell* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1882), 32–33.

³ “Abstract of Wills on File in the Surrogate’s Office: City of New York,” Vol. IV, *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, 134–135.

⁴ This type of bequest was traditional among the colonial aristocracy, as will be discussed below, especially in Chapter 6.

home there by November 1777 where he sometimes lived with his family and enslaved Black servants until his death in 1804. In leaving his property to his sons, this second and later nationally renowned Philip used and eventually disposed of the Black people he enslaved during his long, prosperous occupancy of the land in ways that will be elaborated in later chapters. By the time of his death just after the start of the nineteenth century, gradual manumission laws in New York State made slavery a dying institution there.

Philip Schuyler devoted his business life after marriage to building a fortune from land speculation, the output of farms he leased to tenants, and exploitation of various properties—living and inanimate, human and animal—he purchased or erected. He would eventually own Patent Lots 2, 10, 11, 16, 17, 27, 29 (the western portion), 32, 33, 44, and 48 (the eastern portion), as well as the Old Divided Lands to the west of the Hudson (see Figure 1). The “farm at Saratoga” that is the focus of most of this book centered on Lot 27, the western Old Divided Lands, and activity west of the Hudson but it is important to note that Schuyler also owned land east of the river in Washington County (see Figures 1 and 2).

Slavery and slaveholding defined the Schuyler occupancy of the Saratoga Patent. They were critical in the moneymaking ventures and daily operation of the residences the Schuylers erected there. The last of these, the present Schuyler House, sat on Lot 27 and part of the “Old Divided Land” and was called a “commodious box” by its owner, Philip Schuyler—the Revolutionary War general and most celebrated of the Schuylers (see Figure 3). There is a cleverness in Schuyler’s description, a witty play on words as he referenced the rather simple external architecture of the house in the country where he entertained and made the lion’s share of his wealth while also maintaining another residence, Schuyler Mansion, in Albany. In contrast to Schuyler’s glib language, this book explores subtextual, unspoken vocabularies in the silences and actions of captive Africans and their descendants who inhabited the space between 1702 and 1805.



Figure 3. Philip Schuyler House, Saratoga National Historical Park, National Park Service
Source: <https://www.nps.gov/thingstodo/tour-the-philip-schuyler-country-estate.html>

“Commodious box” then serves as a perverse metaphor, under examination as I look closely inside the box, exposing previously unexplored content, and teasing out its meaning in new ways. As far as sources allow, this narrative will center on those enslaved people attached against their will to the Schuylers. It seeks to uncover their collective experiences and highlight individual life stories as examples. Therefore, it is mainly preoccupied with the subjectivities of the enslaved and the community of the enslaved, while necessarily tracing the thinking and activities of the Schuyler enslavers.

On Memory and Narrativity

Memory is an important analytical category in the story being constructed here. I am concerned with both the use and construction of memory. More precisely, I explore memory in two historical ways. I investigate the influence of memory on the lives of enslaved people—how memory of African homelands and family members shaped decision-making and the experience of Blacks held in bondage. Certainly, the cultural memories, associated emotions, and related psychological states of historical actors during any historical period affected their behavior on all levels.⁵ If we acknowledge this for the Anglo-Dutch and other European settlers of New York, we must recognize the same for the enslaved population.

⁵ Rob Boddice, “The History of Emotions: Past, Present, Future,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 62 (October 2017): 10–12; Susan J. Matt, “Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History From the Inside Out,” *Emotion Review* 3, no. 1 (January 2011): 117–121; Sasha Handley, Rowan McWilliam, and Lucy Noakes, eds., *New Directions in Social and Cultural History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 2.

I also examine how, in the past, enslavers and their descendants constructed their *memory* of enslavement—the ways in which they remembered and commemorated history involving enslaved people at Saratoga House, on the Schuylers' Patent lands, and in similar regions of the Hudson River Valley. Such cultural representations of chattel slavery are as much a part of the history of enslavement as are the social, economic, political, legal, and military details related to the shameful institution. They deserve historical attention because they often encode the emotional and psychological histories of particular periods that were passed on to successive generations. Cultural relics such as commemorative art from a later period, for example, can reveal the thoughts of historical actors from an earlier period, especially when the artist was a direct descendant of the historical figures being depicted or in close communication with those having access to information handed down to them from living historical witnesses. In other words, *ex post facto* historical visualizations can be “factual” to the extent they are direct or encrypted generational transmissions of stories of the past.

Historian Pierre Nora writes about “ethnic minorities, families and groups that until now have possessed reserves of memory but little or no historical capital.”⁶ Both the distinction he makes between memory and history and his explanation of the function of commemorative sites is at the heart of understanding this project. For Nora, history is the formal, authoritative, commanding organization of the past—“a representation of the past.”⁷ Quite differently, memory is both spontaneous and perpetual; it is living, residing in traditions and collective values. Nora argues that relentless change often disrupts the conditions that sustain memory organically. The spiraling rapidity of technological, cultural, social, economic and political transformations in the Modern Era since 1800 is responsible for the disappearance of memory, for its conquest and replacement by history. Historical sites like Saratoga National Historical Park—places of memory (*lieux de mémoire*)—then emerge intentionally and artificially to recapture and preserve vanishing, original, “real” memory (*milieux de mémoire*). Such sites stand between authentic memory—especially for marginalized groups—and official history in their conscious and deliberate effort to carefully reconstitute and archive a disappearing, threatened past.⁸ Applying Nora's insights to Schuyler House as a historic site, my treatment of slaveholding and slavery is a conscious, methodical recovery effort—a recuperation from memory loss, a revelation of the experience of those enslaved in the box and its surrounding grounds.

⁶ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History,” *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), 7.

⁷ Nora, 8.

⁸ Nora, 7–24; Jay Winter, “Sites of Memory” in *Memory: History, Theories, Debates*, eds., Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 312–324.

While I am influenced by Nora in highlighting memory as a core theme of this book and while I employ Nora's approach to memory mainly as a collective phenomenon rather than an individual one, there are some caveats. I am not entirely comfortable with aspects of the dichotomy Nora posits between memory and history. This distinction has given his progeny the license to relegate memory too frequently to the realm of romantic abstraction or to locate memory far too vaguely in unresolved group trauma while associating history only with the empirical and the powerful.⁹ In contrast, I have tried to tell a story here that grounds Black and White memory in evidence from primary sources: ships' logs, travelers' accounts, memoirs, correspondence, and art that help chronicle the acquisition of enslaved labor from specific areas of West Africa by the Schuylers, the formation of Black families in the Schuyler household from those captives, and the Schuylers' generational use of these family lines. Visual archives—historical paintings, drawings, and murals—are especially useful in this effort.

In this HRS, I consider the homeland of a people painfully hurled into diaspora from particular documented regions of West Africa, and the implications of that rupture for life in a new host society. Persuaded by Sterling Stuckey's¹⁰ pioneering insistence on African retentions in North America, I cannot be satisfied with the supposition or presumption that the geographical origins of coerced Africans can be overlooked. African roots mattered in their details. The first generation of captives claimed by the Schuylers had a precise *mentalité*. Ripped from their homelands—in this case, Loango and the Kongo—the people the Schuylers enslaved nonetheless remembered their beginnings. They carried memories that informed the lives they were forced to make for themselves and their descendants on the terminal side of the Middle Passage. They were empowered by memory. Wherever the historical record makes possible therefore, I interrogate sources for what they can tell us about the social and cultural world of the Black servants the Schuylers legally owned. Inspired by A.J. Williams-Myers, I search first for “the African presence in the Hudson Valley” but go further to imagine how that informed the regional African American experience and the general history of the Hudson Valley.¹¹

Memory inheres within rituals. Cultural theorists have expounded on this point. Ceremonial performances or rituals consist of predictable, regularized, usually public acts that purposefully call up and repeat similar, past acts. Such practices are undertaken to remember and reaffirm something of importance to a community—say, national pride and investments of power in a monarch at a coronation, shared beliefs and entry into a circle of

⁹ Stephan Palmié, “Slavery, Historicism, and the Poverty of Memorialization” in *Memory: History, Theories, Debates*, eds., Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 376–388.

¹⁰ See Sterling Stuckey, “Through the Prism of Folklore: The Black Ethos in Slavery,” *The Massachusetts Review* 9, no. 3 (1968): 417–437.

¹¹ A. J. Williams-Myers, *Long Hammering: Essays on the Forging of an African-American Presence in the Hudson River Valley to the Early Twentieth Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994).

faith at church confirmation services, or the social valuation of marriage at weddings.¹² I have identified public rituals that involved the participation of the Schuylers, those of their rank in the Hudson Valley, and enslaved people attached to the Schuylers. These include the rite of assignment of slave children to child masters, the springtime festival called Pinkster, and the manumission rite—all of which will be assessed in ensuing chapters for the ways in which they sustained (or challenged) power relations between enslaver and enslaved.

Memory is also an essential element in the development and evolution of social identities. Beyond just the encrypting, warehousing, and retrieval of information, memory is used to maintain subjectivities—an appreciation and maintenance of the self in relationship to others—by moderating emotions and determining present and future behavior. In this sense, memory helps in the creation of a coherent identity in the face of changing circumstances.¹³ Memory used in this way can have both negative and positive effects. For example, it has been argued that the remembrance of historical trauma among Native Americans—"the loss of people, land, and culture" along with "a systematic transmission of trauma to subsequent generations"—can explain American Indian mental health problems, which include high rates of alcoholism and suicide.¹⁴ With very opposite results, however, memory can infuse personal and group resilience, as it did for the 500 Apaches defeated by the US Army in 1886 and taken prisoner to Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. The captives, once known for their fearlessness, recalled their former pride and culture by various means: etching a carving of a traditional Apache Fire Dancer on a wall of Fort Sill in Oklahoma to which they were relocated, honoring elders possessing traditional ceremonial knowledge, noting acts of bravery, holding traditional feasts, and supplementing the paltry diet supplied by the army with mesquite beans found on surrounding lands by their women. In other words, they retained and deployed their culture as a coping mechanism despite the poverty and miserably overcrowded conditions of their confinement.¹⁵ It is in this vein that I explore the memory banks of the African and

¹² Stephan Feuchtwang, "Ritual and Memory" in *Memory: History, Theories, Debates*, eds., Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 281–285; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 41–71; Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Memory and History: Liturgical Time and Historical Time," *History and Memory* 41 (May 2002), 149–162; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

¹³ John Sutton, Celia B. Harris, and Amanda J. Barnier, "Memory and Cognition" in *Memory: History, Theories, Debates*, eds., Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 213; Anne E. Wilson and Michael Ross, "The Identity Function of Autobiographical Memory: Time is on Our Side," *Memory* 11, no. 2 (2003): 137–149.

¹⁴ Kathleen Brown-Rice, "Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma Among Native Americans," *The Professional Counselor* 3, no. 3 (2013): 117–130.

¹⁵ Brenda L. Haes, "The Incarceration of the Chiricahua Apaches, 1886–1914," M.A. Thesis, Texas Tech University, December 1997, 60–69, 98–99; National Park Service, "Apache Incarceration," April 20, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/casa/learn/historyculture/apache-incarceration.htm>, accessed July 23, 2022.

African-descended population the Schuylers enslaved. By doing so, I seek to chart when and how these memories functioned as a resource that assisted Black people in crafting workable, culturally distinct identities in colonial Saratoga.

Through all these perspectives on memory, this narrative seeks to historicize the site by emphasizing memory from the vantage point of those considered human property under the self-serving laws of Anglo-Dutch authorities. The memory of the enslaved in Old Saratoga sprouted first in Africa, moved across the Atlantic with Black captives, and reformed itself as an adaptive measure on new American soil owned by the Schuylers. This memory work flourished, shaping the lives of enslaved people and their enslavers although its depth, complexity, and extent generally escaped the notice of White colonists.

Who Cares

Calls for such a narrative come from several directions, as an assortment of public historians and scholars wish to make visible previously unacknowledged pasts. I will set aside scholarly concerns until the next chapter. Turning to public historians first, it is noteworthy that they have sounded this cry since the 1980s, when social history perspectives and methodologies regarding diversity and inclusion began to impact the field of public history. Historic sites, museums, and historical societies revisited their curatorial practices, exhibitions, lectures, publications, and tour scripts in ways that honored multiculturalism, especially regarding issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Along these lines, the National Park Service (NPS) undertook several studies in the 1980s that first charted the low level of visitorship to national parks among non-European, minority populations. A seminal piece by recreation scholar Myron Floyd, who synthesized this literature in 2001, asserted, “Of the many challenges facing the National Park Service (NPS) in the 21st century, engendering support for its program from an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse society may be the most critical.”¹⁶ Since 2003, the NPS Executive Director’s Office has issued and renewed an order to “institutionalize a civic engagement philosophy and vision that will help ensure the relevance of NPS resources and programs to people, as well as ensure NPS responsiveness to diverse public viewpoints, values, and concerns.”¹⁷ This book therefore responds to these clarion calls for greater inclusiveness in the agency’s interpretive work in two ways. It recognizes that the two most scholarly and well-researched biographies of Philip Schuyler—Don R. Gerlach’s authoritative *Philip Schuyler and the American Revolution in New York 1733–1777* (University of Nebraska Press, 1962)

¹⁶ Myron F. Floyd, “Managing National Parks in a Multicultural Society: Searching for Common Ground,” *Managing Recreational Use* 18, no. 3 (2001): 41–51. This article summarizes the results of NPS visitor surveys.

¹⁷ See National Park Service, Director’s Order #75A, <https://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/75A.htm> Accessed 18 December 2019.

and *Proud Patriot: Philip Schuyler and the War of Independence 1775–1783* (Syracuse University Press, 1987) do not treat its subject as an enslaver to any degree, except for intermittent mentions of servants in larger narratives of the General’s military and political career. Neither volume even includes slavery as an item in its index. This HRS therefore seeks to expand public understandings of Saratoga National Historical Park beyond its historical military significance. It will also deepen public understandings of the historical prominence of the Schuyler family beyond its wealth in mansions, real estate, livestock, lumber, grains, foodstuffs, financial sureties, and inanimate objects to include wealth in and made by enslaved human beings.

In a related way, this book addresses contemporary concerns coming from the general public itself about the significance of slavery in the colonial Revolutionary era, and early national history—the very questions that fuel this case study of the Schuylers of Old Saratoga. At this writing, debates burn over the diverging claims of *The 1619 Project* and *The 1776 Report* regarding the significance of slavery at the country’s foundation. Written by Nikole Hannah-Jones for the *New York Times*, the *Project* names slavery as America’s original sin, structurally and historically marring national claims to the ideals of equal opportunity and racial equality. Quite opposite, the report produced by former President Donald Trump’s Advisory 1776 Commission argues that America was born with the Declaration of Independence, an assertion of liberty as a natural right of “all men.” Among those supporting the *Report* are the libertarian think tank The Cato Institute, conservative publications like *The Federalist*, blogs like The Resurgent, and a grassroots political action committee called Moms for America who works to contest the use of *The 1619 Project*’s teaching materials in public schools. On the other side, promoting the *Project* are several educational groups such as the Pulitzer Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center’s advisory board (called Teaching Hard History).¹⁸ Falling somewhere in the middle is the National Council on Social Studies, upholding academic freedom with the pronouncement, “curriculum resources like the 1619 Project should be used at the discretion of

¹⁸ See Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* (New York: One World, 2021); The President’s Advisory 1776 Commission, *The 1776 Report*, January 2021, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Presidents-Advisory-1776-Commission-Final-Report.pdf>, accessed May 10, 2022. On the debate, see J. Brian Charles, “The New York Times 1619 Project is Reshaping the Conversation on Race. Conservatives Hate It,” *Vox*, August 20, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/8/19/20812238/1619-project-slavery-conservatives>; Lauren Michelle Jackson, “The 1619 Project and the Demands of Public History,” *The New Yorker*, December 8, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/the-1619-project-and-the-demands-of-public-history>; William Hogeland, “The Historians Are Fighting,” *Slate*, October 30, 2021, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2021/10/1619-project-historians-controversy-gordon-wood-woody-holton.html>; Timothy Sandefur, “The 1619 Project: An Autopsy,” *The Dispatch*, October 27, 2020, Reprinted by the Cato Institute at <https://www.cato.org/commentary/1619-project-autopsy>, accessed July 26, 2022; Adam Serwer, “The Fight Over the 1619 Project is Not About the Facts,” *The Atlantic*, December 23, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/12/historians-clash-1619-project/604093>; Moms for America, “The 1776 Project PAC,” June 25, 2021, <https://momsforamerica.us/policy-issues/the-1776-project-pac>, accessed July 26, 2022.

professional educators, not by the dictate of elected officials.”¹⁹ By interrogating slavery’s hold on the Saratoga Schuylers—a prominent family of colonial American pioneers who produced a Revolutionary War general and proximate founding father—this HRS implicitly enters this charged arena.

In a far more light-hearted, entertaining way the recent popularity of the Broadway musical, *Hamilton*, sparked enormous interest in Philip Schuyler (1733–1804), who was responsible for the original construction of Schuyler House, and his immediate family since his daughters figure prominently in the story. The play’s uniquely calculated preoccupation with diversity in its casting and script has ignited public curiosity about slavery, racial inequality, and gender roles at the time of the nation’s birth. These pages attempt to speak to these concerns in a specific, local geography by drawing on and supplementing the research behind public history programming at Schuyler Mansion, Schuyler Flatts, and other related historic sites in the Greater Albany, New York Capital District on these subjects, where innovative exhibits, websites, and reenactments already portray the contours of enslaved lives. This project therefore is part of a collective effort to revisit the history of enslavement at one site as much as possible from the point of view of its enslaved population, and to construct a systematic and comprehensive overview of that past for the general public.

The HRS is intended to reveal a “tangible, substantive image of [enslaved] people” at Schuyler House. It draws inspiration from Heather Williams’ work on the psychological toll of forced family separations, and the “critical fabulations” of Saidiya Hartman in aiming to convey the full humanity of Black people who were involuntarily held generationally as the chattel of others.²⁰ It searches inside the box of enslavement and peers into the interior lives of slaves—hoping to reveal their mysteries and complexities. By animating these otherwise dispossessed people and identifying the sources for this portrayal, ideally it will relate a more complete, extended, rounded, and convincing narrative of slavery not only at Schuyler House, but of slavery in the Hudson Valley, the North, the country, and the Atlantic World.

There is a logic to the chapters that follow. Chapter 1 provides an overview of slaveholding in New York within the rise of capitalism and the place of the Schuylers within it. Next, focusing on unpaid, forced work routines and tasks invented by the slave masters and performed by these slaves on Saratoga Patent lands, chapters 2, 3, and 4 will detail the major assignments given to Black workers by Schuyler proprietor-enslavers and the large

¹⁹ National Council on Social Studies, “‘Saving American History?’ Start by Teaching American History” February 8, 2021, <https://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/saving-american-history-start-teaching-american-history>, accessed July 28, 2022.

²⁰ Heather Andrea Williams, *Help Me Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Trade Route* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2006); Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

profits they generated for the Schuylers over three, consecutive periods of that family's occupation of Patent lots. Chapter 5 angles our lens toward the creativity and the inventiveness of the enslaved population. In this chapter, I consider the capaciousness of the enslaved community's ability to craft unique religious cosmologies and traditions, leisure practices, family structures, and other cultural forms as they navigated their way through African, European, and Native American worlds. Finally, chapter 6 is concerned with the slaves' imaginary as they fashioned exit strategies, ways both real and psychological, out of the incommensurable box of enslavement.

CHAPTER ONE

The Schuylers, Capitalism, and Slavery

At its root, American slavery was a labor system and because of that, this narrative foregrounds economic considerations. It necessarily begins by charting the particular history of the Schuylers' position within emerging, early modern capitalism as it played out for New Yorkers in both the British New World and larger Atlantic World. Historians Joyce Appleby and Jürgen Kocka have chronicled how capitalism solidified as the ascendant economic system in England and western Europe by the seventeenth century, following the emergence of new cultural and political conceptions validating the private investor as society's central economic actor. Capitalism's spread eroded communal approaches to land. Major shifts in understandings of the natural world therefore accompanied Dutch and English occupation and domination of North America, and more precisely, the Hudson River Valley, replacing Indigenous land use systems in the region.¹ Land would become private property; geographies would be commodified—bought and sold. Profits would be extracted from topographies by landowners and, to a lesser extent, leaseholding tenants. Some people—in time, Black people exclusively—would become commodified as enslaved laborers mostly assigned agricultural and rural tasks to benefit their owners. As commodities, slaves provided yet another opportunity for material gain: they could be traded for profit. Schuylers were involved in all these ways of securing capital gains—land expropriation from Native Americans, exploitation of enslaved Africans and their descendants, and slave trafficking.

The Schuyler family on the Saratoga Patent descended from two Dutch immigrant brothers—David Pieterse Schuyler (1636–1690) and Philip Pieterse Schuyler (1628–1683)—who came from the Netherlands in the 1650s to seek their fortune in Beaverswyck, as Albany was then known. While both these men and their progeny successfully pursued opportunities as traders, political officeholders, and soldiers, and became prominent leaders in these areas, it is the descendants of this first Philip Schuyler to live in America who will be traced for their connection to the Saratoga Patent. During the period covered

¹ See Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010); Jürgen Kocka, *A Short History of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); William A. Starna, *From Homeland to New Land: A History of the Mahican Indians 1600–1830* (University of Nebraska, 2013).

in this HRS, this expansive branch of Schuylers frequently intermarried with other similarly high-ranking families, most notably the Van Rensselaers and the Livingstons, in the Albany and Hudson River Valley regions.²

The granting of land patents to European settlers by colonial authorities was one way the privatization of Indigenous land proceeded in New York province, especially in the Hudson River Valley, but this was an involved process. Provincial governors awarded large cessions of so-called unclaimed land to favored individuals for several reasons—to secure their political loyalty and to pass the costs of fortifying borderlands, encouraging settlement, and laying out roads onto private owners rather than the Crown. However, would-be patentees had to first petition the governor and the provincial council for a license to buy a particular piece of land from a Native American group. At this early point, the geographical boundaries of the patents were often loosely defined. Once such a license was granted, patentees conducted negotiations with the traditional Indian occupants of the grounds for access in order to acquire deeds. The next step was to apply to the governor and council for permission to survey the lands gained through purchase from the Indigenous peoples. Finally, patentees petitioned the governor and council for a royal letter patent to register the patent formally. All of these steps included patentees paying numerous clerical fees to recording, copying, and filing agents. Yet these were miniscule, frankly negligible, compared to the profits to be gained from land speculation through patent acquisition. Only after the attainment of a legally secure title did patentees subdivide patent lands among themselves and rent sections of their lots to tenants.³ This is partly why it was some eighteen years before a Schuyler family member began to develop or actually took up residence on any part of the Saratoga Patent.

Historians have long acknowledged the reliance on enslaved labor in the Greater Hudson Valley on the large estates created from land grants made during the colonial period.⁴ Yet, because so much American slave historiography has focused on the South, where the overwhelming majority of enslaved people in this country resided, scholars for most of the twentieth century simply noted the extent of slaveholding in this region of the North as “exceptional.” In the 1990s, academic publications by historians Graham Hodges and Ira Berlin brought attention to the realities of Black human bondage in New York and the North but these works implicitly or explicitly confirmed that New York, both as a

² Joel Munsell, *Schuyler Family* (N.Y. Genealogical and Biographical Record, 1874), 4–6.

³ Cynthia A. Kierner, *Traders and Gentlefolk: The Livingstons of New York, 1675–1790* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 23; Michael G. Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 1975), 110–111, 156; Sara Stidstone Gronim, “Geography and Persuasion: Maps in British Colonial New York,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (April 2001): 376–377; Charles Worthen Spencer, “The Land System of Colonial New York,” *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 16 (1917): 155–158.

⁴ See Edgar McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966); Edgar McManus, *Black Bondage in the North* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973); Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989) as examples.

colony and an early antebellum state, was best categorized as a “society with slaves” (like other northern settlements) rather than a “slave society” (like settlements in the South).⁵ The reigning paradigm, in other words, for a long while blunted a full recognition that the Hudson Valley—from Manhattan to Albany and the surrounding areas—was, in fact, a slave society with heavy reliance on involuntary Black labor. Recent monographs like Christy Clark-Pujara’s *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island* have carefully documented the existence of slave societies in northeastern America, in part by measuring the engagement of selected populations in the state working in maritime trade in cotton and in textile mills that produced cotton cloth.⁶

Berlin himself even argued that in the first generations of colonial American settlement during the seventeenth century, which he labeled “the charter generations,” “the great estates of the Hudson Valley... *depended* on slave labor [emphasis added].”⁷ The importance of enslaved labor only increased in the region over the next hundred years. Again, Berlin wrote, “The growth of slavery in the mid-eighteenth century was even more profound in the Hudson River Valley...”⁸ He probably believed this part of New York fell short of being a full-fledged slave society because of the absence of certain criteria he outlines. There were no slave quarters, the rows of small cabins in which the enslaved lived at a distance from the slaveowner’s residence on a plantation. Enslaved laborers were not generally organized into gangs as work units. They grew no single staple crop. The number of enslaved people per enslaver in the Valley compared to the South was relatively small. But when the Hudson Valley’s large landholders’ dependence on enslaved laborers, to which Berlin *does* admit, is combined with his other political and economic indices for such societies, the Hudson River Valley most definitely *was* a slave society. Berlin refers to the slaveholders’ “control of the state” and “seizure of power,” presumably over non-slaveholding, rural farmers in slave societies. While he is not explicit in describing these terms or processes, we can deduce

⁵ See, as examples, Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., “*Pretends to Be Free*”: *Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994); Graham Russell Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East New Jersey, 1613–1865* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) and Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone, The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁶ Christy Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island* (New York: New York University Press, 2016). See also Jared Ross Hardesty, *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds: A History of Slavery in New England* (Amherst, MA: Bright Leaf/University of Massachusetts Press, 2019); Rick Geffken, *Stories of Slavery in New Jersey* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2021); Russell Graham Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665–1865* (Lanham, MD: Madison House Publishers, 1997); Jared Ross Hardesty, *Unfreedom: Slavery and Dependence in Eighteenth Century Boston* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005).

⁷ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 56.

⁸ Berlin, 181.

from other portions of his argument that he is referring to enslavers' ability to enact laws supporting the existence of slavery and its viselike restrictions on nearly every aspect of the lives of those they enslaved. Yet, political power in the Hudson Valley was more equally distributed than early twentieth century historians concluded; it was not as concentrated in the hands of elites—large landholders—as once believed. Later and recent studies of electoral participation in colonial and late-eighteenth-century America suggest relatively wide access to the vote by adult White males over the age of twenty-one, including even lesser property holders without slaves. Tenant farmers in New York, for example, could vote if they held the typically long lifetime leases Valley landlords like the Schuylers preferred.⁹ It therefore seems that a legislative monopoly on the part of slaveholders was not necessary in the Hudson Valley for the provincial assembly (a near exclusively White electorate) to permit the passage of slave codes that defined the control and power Berlin references in slave societies; the White majority from all ranks favored such policies.¹⁰ Moreover, the Hudson River Valley produced another of his criteria—a “salable commodity”—in this case, food provisions for the West Indies and lumber.¹¹

In fact, the areas of today's New York State capital district along the Upper Hudson River quickly became slave societies relying on Black workers as essential human capital. The regular use of enslaved African captives began within two years of the establishment of New York as a colony by the Dutch West India Company in 1624. Since the Dutch patroon system of land distribution—granting huge tracts to a few privileged recipients—had the effect of discouraging European immigration to New Amsterdam at first, the company turned to chattel slavery as a source of labor to develop the colony's infrastructure and wealth—to clear forests, to make roads, to construct docks, to farm, and to perform skilled labor. European settlers used slaves as private servants as well. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, as the Hudson River Valley's fur trade declined because of source depletion, White colonists turned to more diversified economic pursuits after British rule was established in 1664. Large landholders increasingly relied on enslaved labor as farm hands, domestic servants, and skilled workers tied to the new livestock and food provisioning services offered by the region for the mono-crop sugar-producing colonies of the British West Indies. By 1720, New York ranked fourth among the thirteen colonies, behind

⁹ Nicholas Varga, “Election Procedures and Practices in Colonial New York,” *New York History* 41, no. 3 (July 1960): 249–255, 260–262; Donald Ratcliffe, “The Right to Vote and the Rise of Democracy, 1787–1828,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Summer 2013: 219–220, 222, 225

¹⁰ David N. Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom 1777–1827* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 16–17.

¹¹ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 8–10.

South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland in Black population, the overwhelming majority of whom were enslaved—caught in the web of multiple triangular trade routes involving Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and North America.¹²

The Schuyler family's oversight of Saratoga Patent lands epitomized these dynamics of New World capitalism in New York province as household heads forced enslaved labor there to help produce, transport, and process goods as part of the general use of slaves in marketing activities for both their own and their tenants' farm output. In this, the Schuylers replicated other patent owners. In the Hudson River Valley these included downstate landowners like the Philipse of Philipse Manor, a 90,000 acre Westchester County plantation that once claimed twenty-three enslaved people; the Van Cortlandts of Cortlandt Manor in the Bronx, a site with as many as seventeen Black forced laborers; mid-upper regional gentry like the Livingstons of Livingston Manor of Columbia County, on which forty-four enslaved people once labored at an ironworks; and other capital district elites like the Van Rensselaers of Rensselaerswyck, a parcel of over a million acres where fifteen enslaved humans lived in 1790. All the families attached to these highly lucrative properties were involved in slave trafficking domestically and/or internationally as well.¹³

The political scientist Cedric Robinson was one of the first to put forth a theory of capitalism accounting for the system's "racialisms." A Marxist himself, in the early 1970s Robinson nonetheless took issue with the Marxian assumption that capitalism was an equal opportunity economic system treating everyone alike as rational actors as it replaced feudalism in late medieval Europe. Instead, Robinson identified a central racial component in capitalism's rise and subsequent spread. Wherever capitalism appeared, social and

¹² James G. Lydon, "New York and the Slave Trade, 1700 to 1774," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (April 1978): 375; Jonathan Leitner, "Transitions in the Colonial Hudson Valley: Capitalist, Bulk Goods, and Braudelien," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 22, no. 1 (2016): 214–246; David Kobrin, *The Black Minority in Early New York* (Albany: University of New York State Education Department, 1971), 8; Edgar J. McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966); Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 23–47, 161–190; Daniel P. Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518–1865* (New York: Viking Press: 1962), 55, 162; Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 32, 35, 51–56, 172–176, 191, 202–206, 211–212.

¹³ Historic Hudson Valley, "The Philipse Family and the Slave Trade," *People, Not Property: Stories of Slavery in the Colonial North*, <https://peoplenotproperty.hudsonvalley.org/the-philipse-family-and-the-slave-trade.phpH>, accessed July 14, 2021; Arthur Bankoff and Frederick A. Winter, "The Archaeology of Slavery at the Van Cortlandt Plantation in the Bronx, New York," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 9, no. 4 (December 2005): 291–318; Kierner, Traders and Gentlefolk; "Revisiting Slavery in Columbia County," *MainStreet Magazine*, February 21, 2022, <https://mainstreetmag.com/revisiting-slavery-in-columbia-county>, accessed December 28, 2022; Stefan Bielinski, "Rensselaerswyck," <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/na/rensselaerswyck.html#borders>, accessed March 12, 2020; Kendra Boyd, Miya Carey, and Christopher Blakley, "Old Money: Rutgers University and the Political Economy of Slavery in New Jersey," in Marisa J. Fuentes and Deborah Gray White, eds., *Scarlet and Black: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History*, Vol. 1 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 45–51; Paul Grondahl, "Albany's Long Neglected History of Slavery," (*Albany*) *Times Union*, February 4, 2016; Oscar Williams, "Slavery in Albany, New York, 1624–1827," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, July 1, 2010, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Slavery+in+Albany%2c+New+York%2c+1624-1827.-a0236731633>, accessed December 10, 2019; A.J. Williams Myers, *Long Hammering: Essays on the Forging of An African American Presence in the Hudson Valley to the Early Twentieth Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994), 22; US Census, 1790.

cultural difference—"race" or ethnicity in Robinson's calculation—determined who would benefit and who would be exploited along preexisting, fixed lines of racial/ethnic ordering. Capitalism's operation always reflected those historical, established social hierarchies specific to a particular locality or region and time period. Robinson elaborated:

The bourgeoisie . . . were drawn from particular ethnic and cultural groups; the European proletariat and the mercenaries of the leading states from others; its peasants from still other cultures; and its slaves from entirely different worlds. The tendency of European civilisation through capitalism was thus not to homogenise but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into "racial" ones.¹⁴

Thus, as examples, Jews, Roma (gypsies), the Irish, and Slavs were routinely denied access to the fullest range of material resources or else relegated to the laboring or enslaved classes. Robinson called this system "racial capitalism" and argued that it was well in place before Africans entered the world stage as human commodities in global capitalism. However, with the European discovery of the New World and the establishment of European colonies in the Caribbean and on the North and South American continents, such racial capitalism took on a new particularity when it was applied to involuntarily transplanted Africans and their descendants. Feeding a distinct set of economic arrangements, Africanized slavery quickly became indispensable to New World capitalism.¹⁵

Other historians have made this point by building upon Seth Rockman's rejection of the facile association of free labor and freedom with capitalism in conventional understandings of US economic growth after the Revolution, because this view overlooks the role of unfree labor in the marketplace. Walter Johnson argues that slavery commodified Black people in order to advance the material welfare of Whites. Sven Beckert traces the lines of connection between southern slavery, on the one hand, and the growth of northern maritime trade, northern industrial capitalism, and European industrial capitalism on the other. Edward Baptist's rejection of the notion that southern slavery was the inefficient antithesis of northern capitalism is persuasive, as is his argument that southern slaveholders participated fully in the development of transatlantic capitalism. Baptist found that the liquidity of slaves accounted for a third of all wealth in the US in the 1820s.¹⁶

¹⁴ Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of a Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000, 1983), 26.

¹⁵ Robinson, 9–28.

¹⁶ Seth Rockman, "The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism," in Cathy Matson, ed., *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Calvin Schermerhorn, *The Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism, 1815–1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

The descendants of Philip Pieterse Schuyler, the patriarch of the main line of American Schuylers studied here, along with the microcosmic operations within Schuyler House were a part of the macrocosmic slave society that once defined the Hudson Valley, and which undergirded early capitalism in America and the Atlantic World. Retracing the ports-of-call of New York's Atlantic slave trading vessels illustrates the crisscrossing trade patterns of such ships. One human being, identified only as a "Negro," was among the cargo of the *Esther*—an example of these grim seacrafts. Coming from Jamaica in April 1740, it docked in its home port of registration, New York Harbor. The journey must have been uniquely lonely for the sole Black captive, shackled below deck in the dark hold, squeezed between hogsheads of sugar, vats of molasses, and casks of rum for long days and days.¹⁷ The *Esther* was a bilander, an uncommon sailing ship used chiefly by the Dutch principally but not exclusively for coastal trade. Two of the *Esther*'s three owners, in fact, were of Dutch ancestry. They were Schuylers. By coming together to build, own, and operate an Atlantic commercial vessel, the trio meant business. Seriously profitable business. Fortunes were to be made from trade in slaves, sugar, tobacco, wool, cod, and herring. Enterprising European men in the seventeenth century considered all on this list to be commodities. After its launching in 1733, the *Esther* engaged in commercial exchanges and paid its owners, masters, captains, and crew by doggedly zigzagging the Atlantic and beyond in a cobweb of mercantile voyages mainly linking the southern and eastern coasts of England to the Caribbean and North America. The ship's movements were frequent and asymmetrical—demonstrating its underwriters' voracious appetite for reward. In the years 1740 to 1744 alone, as examples, it sailed from Virginia to Gravesend, Dartmouth to Dover, Shields to London, The Strait of Belle Isle in Newfoundland to Gravesend, Virginia to Devonshire, London to Bermuda, Maryland to Newcastle, London to Virginia,

¹⁷ New York Slavery Records Index, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, https://nyslavery.commons.gc.cuny.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/3171/files/2017/12/Donnan_TableOfSlaveships.pdf, accessed 10 November 2019; Chuck Meide, "The Sugar Factory in the Colonial West Indies: An Archaeological and Historical Comparative Analysis," (December 2003), 2–3, 17–19, https://www.academia.edu/3258102/The_Sugar_Factory_in_the_Colonial_West_Indies_an_Archaeological_and_Historical_Comparative_Analysis, accessed November 14, 2019. Regarding the mixing of slaves with cargo on vessels carrying fewer than 150 slaves, see Gregory E O'Malley and Alex Borucki, "Patterns in the Intercolonial Slave Trade Across the Americas Before the Nineteenth century," *Tempo* 23, no. 2 (2017): 314:338. Available from: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1413-77042017000200314&lng=en&nrm=iso>. ISSN 1413-7704. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/tem-1980-542x2017v230207>, accessed November 20, 2019.

Newfoundland to Leghorn (Livorno, Italy), Virginia to Dartmouth, Bermuda to Devonshire, and Bermuda to Gravesend. The *Esther* chased opportunity, traveling wherever favorable reports of profit beckoned.¹⁸

“P’r and Jon. Schuyler” co-owned the *Esther* with in-law John Walter, and Schuyler siblings, sons, nephews, and cousins—venturing alone, with each other, and other partners—were deeply involved in slave trafficking as a major commercial undertaking during the eighteenth century when the Atlantic trade to the Americas crested. The Schuylers were busiest as international slave traders relatively early in the game—before New Yorkers’ most active years of engagement in Atlantic slave commerce: James Lydon’s research revealed that before 1750 or so, New Yorkers’ “interest in the slave trade was fitful” and that they “did not seriously enter the African trade until the late 1740s,” but Table 1 documents a reverse pattern for the Schuylers.¹⁹ The eight ships which they built, owned, or in which they invested brought in a daunting 571 enslaved Africans in the three decades between 1720 and 1750. The Schuylers landed their largest hauls in human flesh—521 people or 92 percent of the grand total—in Perth Amboy, New Jersey rather than Manhattan, no doubt to escape the hefty ten percent duty attached by the British crown to imported, enslaved freight coming directly from Africa into New York City during these years; this fact also underscores the Schuylers’ fixation on maximizing profits.²⁰

¹⁸ *Lloyd’s List 1741–1744* (Westmead: Gregg International Publishers, Ltd., 1969), No. 567, January 27, 1740; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 572, February 13, 1740; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 573, February 17, 1740; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 577, March 3, 1740; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 591, May 1, 1741; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 645, November 10, 1741; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 851, January 13, 1743; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 852, January 17, 1743; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 865, March 6, 1743; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 870, March 23, 1743; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 872, March 30, 1744; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 879, April 24, 1744; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 899, July 3, 1744; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 903, July 17, 1744; *Lloyd’s List*, No. 909, August 7, 1744. On *Lloyd’s List*, see John J. McCusker, “European Bills of Entry and Marine Lists: Early Commercial Publications and the Origins of the Business Press, Part II: British Marine Lists and Continental Counterparts,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1983): 316–339.

¹⁹ Lydon “New York and the Slave Trade,” 376–378.

²⁰ On customs duties assigned to slave imports, see Lydon, “New York and the Slave Trade,” 377. Governors Montgomerie and Rip Van Dam in 1729 and 1730 referenced New York slavers’ practice of evading taxes on their human imports through New Jersey landings in their correspondence: Governor Montgomerie to the Lords of Trade, October 20, 1729, E. B. O’Callagan, M.D., ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, Vol. V. (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1855), 895 and E. B. O’Callagan, M.D., ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, Vol. V. (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1855), 927.

Table 1. Summary of Schuyler Family Atlantic Slave Trafficking

Year	Vessel's Name	Shipowner/ Investor*	Slave Origin	# of Captives	Landing Point
1722	Arent	Abraham Schuyler	Jamaica	2	New York City
1725	Mary	A.Schuyler	Jamaica	11	New York City
1725	Mary	Od. Schuyler Robert Schuyler	Jamaica	10	New York City
1725	Mary	Od. Schuyler Peter Schuyler	Jamaica	2	New York City
1729	Mary	Ar't Schuyler	Jamaica and Madeira	10	New York City
1730	Catherine	Adoniah Schuyler Arnot Schuyler Peter Schuyler	Loango	257	Perth Amboy, NJ
1731	Catherine	Arnot Schuyler	Africa/Angola	130	Perth Amboy, NJ
1733	Catherine	Arnot Schuyler	Africa	100	Perth Amboy, NJ
1733	Esther	John Schuyler Peter Schuyler	Jamaica	2	New York City
1733	Sarah	John Schuyler Peter Schuyler	Suriname	2	New York City
1737	Ranger	John Schuyler	Antigua	41	Perth Amboy, NJ
1740	Esther	John Schuyler Peter Schuyler	Jamaica	1	New York City
1740	Ranger	John Schuyler	Antigua	2	New York City
1741	Arent	A.Schuyler	Jamaica	1	New York City
1749	Rhode Island	Unspecified Schuyler	Africa	--	New York City

*I have only included Schuyler owners and investors, although they partnered with non-family members in ownership of some of the ships.

Sources: Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932), III, 462–511; Alex Borucki and Greg O'Malley, *The Intra-American Slavetrading Database*,

<https://www.slavevoyages.org/american/database>, accessed January 2022; *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>, accessed November 2020; *New-York Gazette*, July 31, 1749, 3.

Historian Jeanne Chase has distinguished between two types of New York-based slave traffickers between 1698 and 1741—generalists and specialists—both categories which embrace the Schuylers. The generalists had long years of contact and experience in the Caribbean provisioning trade; these merchants flipped in and out of slave trafficking, picking up and dropping off a few enslaved bodies here and there on special consignment

along with other island commodities like rum, molasses, and sugar.²¹ The lone Black captive on the *Esther* was surely acquired this way, illustrating that the Schuylers were in this group. Often solitary or small slave cargo from the West Indies to North America had proven themselves to be unsuitable or undesirable workers who resisted or failed the “seasoning process” of breaking in African newcomers to the harsh rigors of labor on sugar plantations. New York’s Governor Rob Hunter called them “refuse and sickly Negroes” in 1718 and Governor Rip Van Dam dismissed them in 1731 as “very badd.” In accepting such humans as commercial items, the Schuylers relieved their island owners while anticipating a return from a New York buyer.²² Chase identified a second group with a narrower focus on African trade and dubbed them “the New York professionals.” These were “a few wealthy merchants who concentrated on the trade [in Africa] in a carefully chosen geographical range for supply and sale of captives.”²³ Certainly, the Schuylers fit into this classification as well.

Already individually wealthy, the three owners of the *Esther* were following in their extended family’s entrepreneurial tradition by investing in their new maritime venture. “P’r” might have been Peter Schuyler (1710–1762), a young man who stood to gain the most by partnering with his uncle, Johannes “John” Schuyler (1668–1747) or cousin, Johannes Schuyler, Jr. (1697–1741), and father-in-law, John Walter.²⁴ Peter’s father, Arent (1662–1730), and Johannes “John” were brothers from Albany and sons of the first Philip Schuyler to reach American shores. In launching the bilander, the Schuylers—those on Saratoga Patent lands among them—followed a tried path to riches in the New World for European immigrants to the Greater Hudson Valley during the colonial period: trade with and/or extract land from Indigenous people; secure legal ownership of that land through a patent; acquire Black enslaved people and White tenants to work the land; exchange the land’s surplus yield for profit.

“A likely Negro.” This now arcane turn of phrase appeared frequently in North American newspaper advertisements for eighteenth and early nineteenth century slave auctions and private sales of slaves. The compact description was shorthand for a host of

²¹ Jeanne Chase, “New York Slave Trade, 1698–1741: The Origins of a Displaced People,” *Histoire et Mesure* 118, nos. 1/2 (2003): 96.

²² Robert Hunter to Lords of Trade, July 7, 1718, E. B. O’Callagan, M.D., ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, Vol. V. (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1855); Rip Van Dam to the Lords of Trade, November 2, 1731, E. B. O’Callagan, M.D., ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, Vol. V. (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1855), 927. On seasoning, see Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, “The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655–1788,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 205–228.

²³ Chase, “New York Slave Trade,” 96.

²⁴ Cuyler Reynolds, *Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1911), 28–41; *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Vol. XLIX, No. 1 (October 1918), 372.

qualities meant to catch a buyer's eye: healthy, strong, skilled, familiar with a variety of tasks, agreeable.²⁵ Members of the Schuyler family placed such ads. One shouted, "Just imported from Africa, and to be sold on board the Sloop Rhode-Island, at Mr. Schuyler's Wharf; A Parcel of likely Men and Women; also Negro Boys and Girls."²⁶ Arent Schuyler's daughter-in-law, Mary, similarly advertised a farm "equipped with barn, orchard, house, cattle, horses, and a fine young Negro Fellow that is used to the Farm."²⁷

Ad terminology was generally more specific for enslaved Black women. They were called "wenches," as in the following news item: "To Be Sold. A likely young Negro Wench, Between 13 and 14 years of age, understands all kinds of house work—and sold for no fault."²⁸ In eighteenth century usage, "wench" had negative social connotations associated with prostitutes, disreputable women, or women of low status.²⁹ The routine application of this language to females of African descent sexualized them for potential buyers. It emphasized and essentialized their reproductive function as breeders.

These advertisements, along with General Philip Schuyler's correspondence and the business dealings of his peers, reveal much about the commodification of Black people in colonial America, and the critical role of the practice in wealth-making. For instance, anxious to settle his feckless son in a comfortable situation, Philip's brother-in-law John Cochrane asked for a cash advance to buy slaves: "[I]t is quite agreeable to your sister and me that he be advanced money to purchase slaves stock"; Cochrane hoped at the time of this request that "Aunt Schuyler" would will farmland to his aimless Peter.³⁰ On another occasion, John Cochrane explained a prominent friend's need to be paid cash: "I would be glad you'd sending the order [for] Mr. Smith's paying the money as soon as convenient for Mr. Livingston has a purchase of Mr. Antiles Farm within half a mile of their Town for £4600 light money, and depends on that money for the purchase of some negroes, & which wants immediately as he is to have the possession shortly."³¹ Madame du la Tour du Pin and her husband, refugees in the Albany area from France's Reign of Terror, reported the following counsel they received from General Schuyler and another wealthy, local leader on restarting their lives in the Hudson Valley:

²⁵ For examples, see *The New-York Weekly Journal*, September 9, 1834 and *The New-York Packet*, August 5, 1784; *Poughkeepsie Journal*, April 2, 1792; *Poughkeepsie Journal*, February 13, 1793; Willis L. Brown, "A Likely Negro and Without Fault," *Negro History Bulletin* 18, no. 8 (May 1955): 177–179.

²⁶ *New-York Gazette*, July 31, 1749.

²⁷ *New-York Gazette Revived*, October 16, 1752.

²⁸ *Poughkeepsie Journal*, February 9, 1790.

²⁹ Jan Kurth, "Wayward Wenches and Wives: Runaway Women in the Hudson Valley, N.Y., 1785–1830," *NWSA Journal* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1988–1989): 199–200; Bożena Kochman-Haładaj, "'Low Wenches' and 'Slatternly Queens': On Derogation of Women Terms," *Studia Anglicana Resoviensia* 4 (2007): 211–212.

³⁰ John Cochrane to Philip Schuyler, August 23, 1767, Philip Schuyler Papers (PSP), New York Public Library (NYPL), New York, NY.

³¹ John Cochrane to Philip Schuyler, May 31, 1768, PSP, NYPL.

General Schuyler and Mr. Van Rensselaer advised my husband to divide his funds into three equal parts: A third for the purchase [of land]; a third for the management, the purchases of negroes, horses, cows, agricultural implements and household furniture; and a third part, added to what remained of the 12,000 francs brought by us from Bordeaux, for a reserve fund to meet unexpected circumstances, such as the loss of negroes or cattle and also for living expenses the first year.³²

“Negro” was synonymous with “slave” or Black laborer—a capital investment required with any substantial farm purchase to make it pay. For the Schuyler clan, this understanding of the African-born and African-descended as venture capital was critical in their tried-and-true formula for material success.

The duties of the Black human beings owned by the Schuylers at Old Saratoga depended on their shifting economic priorities and social standing. The family’s first settlement at the start of the eighteenth century was very much a pioneer arrangement preoccupied with building a foundational infrastructure for greater moneymaking. Black bondspeople constructed the physical framework for Schuyler market activity. This setup lasted until a raid during the last of the French and Indian wars destroyed it. In a second period, farming and extractive operations were relaunched and expanded to run lucratively. The use of enslaved workers in crop cultivation and processing for commercial exchange brought General Philip Schuyler huge profits during this stretch. In a final period, work rhythms at the site resumed after a second attack, this time by the British during the American Revolution. Anchored by the newly built commodious box, routines soon recommenced at the Schuyler gentry’s Saratoga country seat which continued to produce a substantial fortune for its posterity. Putting the enslaved to non-market-oriented, domestic routines for the Schuylers’ consumption, comfort, and maintenance of lifestyle more than ever characterized this time. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Schuylers became a colonial aristocracy on the backs of their toiling slaves. A few of these same enslaved persons found a few miniscule opportunities to enter the market for themselves and labor for their own personal gain.

General Philip Schuyler moved his human chattel back and forth between Schuyler House in Saratoga, his country house, and Schuyler Mansion, his home on the south end of present-day Albany. At any one moment, he owned nine to thirteen Black people, above the three to four average for most slaveowners in colonial New York. A roster of known names of the people he enslaved suggests a sex imbalance that partly conformed to a pattern of American preferences during the eighteenth century for brawny workers to perform strenuous field and outdoor labor. At the point of arrival, the number of enslaved males imported to North America generally outstripped their female counterparts, usually by a

³² Madame de la Tour du Pin, *Recollections of the Revolution and the Empire*, (New York: Brentano’s, 1920), 197.

factor of three. Among Schuyler’s enslaved people, males outnumbered female slaves, too, but to a lesser degree (see Table 2). Of the fifty-four persons who can be identified by name as Schuyler’s human chattel, thirty-seven were male, putting the overall male-female ratio at just over 2:1. There are several possible reasons for these demographics—supplies available from the Schuylers’ particular African sources, prices of female versus male slaves, costs of shipping male versus female slaves, Schuyler needs, Schuyler preferences, and conditions within Schuyler households.³³ For our purposes here, it is enough to note that on average there were twice as many males as females on hand to fulfill an enslaved person’s duties at Old Saratoga.

Table 2. Persons Enslaved by the Schuyler Family in the Albany Area Whose Names Are Known (Through 1805)

Males		Females
Adam	Louis/Lewis*	Bet/Bett
Anthony/Tone	Lisbon	Breth/Brith*
Big Cuff	Matthew	Britt
Bob	Mink	Cloe
Bol	Moses	Diana
Cato	Nicholas/Claas/Class	Dinah
Cesar	Old Dick	Hannah
Charles	Patrick	Jane
Cob	Pompey	Jenny
Cuff	Prince	Libea/Libey
Daniel	Sam	Lively*
Dick	Scipio	Mary
Ham	Silleve*	Moll/Molly
Hanover	Stephen	Phoebe/Phocab
Harre/Harr/	Toby	Pol
Har/Harry	Tom Buick/Tom/Thom	Silva/Silvia
Jacob	Will/Bill	Tally ho
James/Jim	Yapock	
Jube/Jupiter	Young Dick	

*Sex is unclear from the name and sources so it has been assigned according to the author’s determination.

**His adult name is sometimes spelled “Louis” or “Lewis” as in Louis Cook or Lewis Cook, respectively, in both primary and secondary sources. His status as an infant, enslaved v. free, is unclear since his mother was Native American and his father African, as will be discussed in the Chapter 2.

Sources: Diary Entry, November 15, 1769, Diary 1802, Philip Schuyler Collection (PSC), New York Historical Society (N-YHS);

Patrick Carney, Account of Shoes Made, December 16, 1771, Philip Schuyler Papers (PSP), New York Public Library (NYPL);

Jacob Hendrick, “Account of Work Done for Major General Schuyler,” January 4, 1776;

Dan Hale, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 11, 1776, PSP, NYPL; Mr. McCullough, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 20, 1776, PSP, NYPL;

Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 8, 1777, PSP, NYPL; Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 12,

1777, PSP, NYPL; J. Lansing, Jr., Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 12, 1777, PSP, NYPL; J. Lansing, Jr., Letter to Philip

³³ David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, “Fluctuations in Age and Sex Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 1663–1864,” *The Economic History Review* 46, no. 2 (May 1993): 308–314; Herbert S. Klein, “African Women in the Atlantic Slave Trade,” Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, eds., *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women’s History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 67–75.

Schuyler, March 31, 1778, PSP, NYPL; Mr. Kinear, Account of Shoes for Estate of General Philip Schuyler, October 8, 1775, PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Dear Child (John), December 3, 1787, PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Dear Child (John), December 6, 1787, PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Dear Child (John), December 12, 1787, PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Dear Child (John), December 27, 1787, PSP, NYPL; Medical Accounts," January 3, 1787 to December 19, 1787, PSP, NYPL; "Receipt for Negroes Purchased," July 21, 1797, PSP, NYPL; New York State Book of Manumissions; Account Book, Philip Schuyler Collection, New-York Historical Society, <https://digital.collections.nyhistory.org/islandora/object/nyhs%3Aschuyler>
Names that were likely nicknames or alternative spellings for the same person were combined.

Economic historian Gavin Wright summarized the range of agricultural tasks performed by enslaved populations on large properties devoted to diversified farming like the Schuylers' Saratoga spread:

Slaves' work included laying off new fields; removing stones from the fields and hauling them away; cutting trees and hauling wood to town, to the railroad depot, or to sawmills; harrowing; scraping manure from barnyards; hauling, plowing, and spreading gypsum and manure; sowing; constructing and maintaining log and stone fences to keep cattle out of the fields; harvesting and threshing wheat; cleaning, sowing, threshing, and hulling clover that was used to replenish nitrogen in the wheat fields; stacking wheat; repairing wheat stacks; cleaning and screening wheat; hauling wheat to the mill; hauling wheat straw, fodder, and chaff; burning straw and chaff; preparing seed wheat; cutting clover grown in the wheat fields after harvest; and foddering the cattle. Once these chores were done, slaves did not rest. There was coal to haul; ice to cut and load; beef and mutton to salt; and corn to plant, thin, or shell. Other slave tasks included bringing loads of gypsum or buckwheat; shucking corn; pounding hominy; planting and tending gardens; digging out hotbeds; planting and digging potatoes; patching bags; making shingles; making butter and cheese; burying cabbage or beets; repairing cisterns; sheering sheep; tending livestock; greasing and oiling harnesses; working on roads; making currant wine; mowing; cutting oats; and working on neighboring wheat farms, if one's master lent or hired out his labor force to a neighbor.³⁴

This list, while based on a review of colonial and antebellum diaries of mixed-crop farmers, is not exhaustive, but it offers an idea of the wide range of work human chattel undertook for their enslavers' benefit in rural areas. Berlin offers a very similar description of enslaved work "at various tasks of mixed cultivation" on rural farms of the colonial Hudson Valley that is also worth quoting at length:

[T]hey sowed in the spring and reaped in the fall. In slack times, slaves manured the land, chopped wood, broke flax, pressed cider, repaired fences, cleared fields, and prepared new lands for cultivation. Slaves played an especially large role in the carrying trade, as boatmen and waggoners. Moving from job to job as labor demands changed, slaves found themselves in the field one day and in the shop the next, smithing horseshoes, tanning leather, making bricks, or

³⁴ Gavin Wright, "Slavery and American Agricultural History," *Agricultural History* 77, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 543.

repairing houses, barns, and furniture. On other days they could be back in the field or driving a wagon, piloting a boat, or delivering a message. Upon occasion, men and women who worked in the fields were assigned to domestic tasks as servants and gardeners. Although the sexual division of labor grew more pronounced with the rise of agricultural wealth, the division between house and field remained open and ill defined.³⁵

Memoirs and paintings from and of this period in Hudson Valley history repeat these findings. Land clearance and preparation in its various forms, processing of natural resources and foodstuffs, building and construction-related work, portage and transportation, and domestic chores are the main categories of labor gleaned from these materials. Describing selected tasks within these categories will provide an overview of the everyday toils of Black involuntary servants expending their lives on the Schuyler family's Saratoga Patent holdings.

³⁵ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 56.

CHAPTER TWO

Laboring at a Homestead in the Wilderness: First Imprint, 1702–1745

Neither Pieter Schuyler or Johannes Schuyler, two of the six original patentees, chose to establish residences on the Saratoga Patent themselves. Instead, as the first mayor of Albany and as the head of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Pieter (or Peter) lived in Albany proper with his family, as did Johannes—member of the city council, city mayor, and member of the provincial assembly. But Johannes built a farm, saw mill, and a grist mill on his Patent land as an absentee landlord as early as 1702, after marrying the widow of Abraham Wendell, the first owner of that particular Patent section.¹ Johannes then bequeathed this investment to his son, Philip Johannes Schuyler (1695–1745), who settled on these family lands in Old Saratoga probably in the 1730s. The bequest, dated 1742, included all the “negroes and wenches at the farm” except one. When he died in November 1745 during a French-led Indian raid that destroyed the first Schuyler House and the tiny town of thirty structures that had sprung up around the mills, several Africans were among those who lost their lives there or were taken captive to Montreal. The Schuyler homestead would remain, however.²

The arms and hands of enslaved people up and down the Hudson Valley were forced to make fierce alterations to the natural environment at their masters’ command. The imperative to transform the yield of the land into market goods explains the Patent’s first grist mill and saw mill, which were built immediately, but only after the forests had been cut back. The Van Bergen Overmantel, a painting of a Hudson Valley farmstead

¹ Stefan Bielinski, “Pieter Schuyler,” <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/s/pischuyler61.html>, accessed March 3, 2021; Stefan Bielinski, “Johannes Schuyler,” <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/s/joschuyler100.html>, accessed March 3, 2021; Will of John Schuyler–1742,” <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/wills/willjoschuyler100.html>, accessed March 4, 2021; George Baker Anderson, ed., *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive and Biological Record of Saratoga County, New York* (Boston: Boston History Company, 1899), 38–39, 348; Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 358.

² David L. Preston, *Colonial Saratoga: War and Peace on the Borderlands of Early America* (National Park Service, 2018), xiii, 49–59; Nathaniel B. Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County*, 39, 47, 260, 338, 362; Anderson, *Our County and Its People*, 26, 38–39, 348; George W. Schuyler, *Colonial New York: Philip Schuyler and His Family* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1885), 239–240.

roughly sixty miles south of Old Saratoga in Leeds, New York and completed between 1728 and 1738 during this first stage of Schuyler occupation, suggests one of the chief early tasks performed by male slaves: clearing the thick forest. A male slave walks away from the house, ax in hand—toward what is perhaps a woodshed, perhaps toward the woods beyond the homestead—while dense trees and a mountain ridge rise behind him to populate the background of the piece (see Figure 4, center and right details of the Van Bergen Overmantel). The house sits on level ground surrounded by a mowed lawn. It was the slave’s ax that helped accomplish this manicured landscape. Against their will, enslaved laborers executed the deforestation of the forests and woodlands.

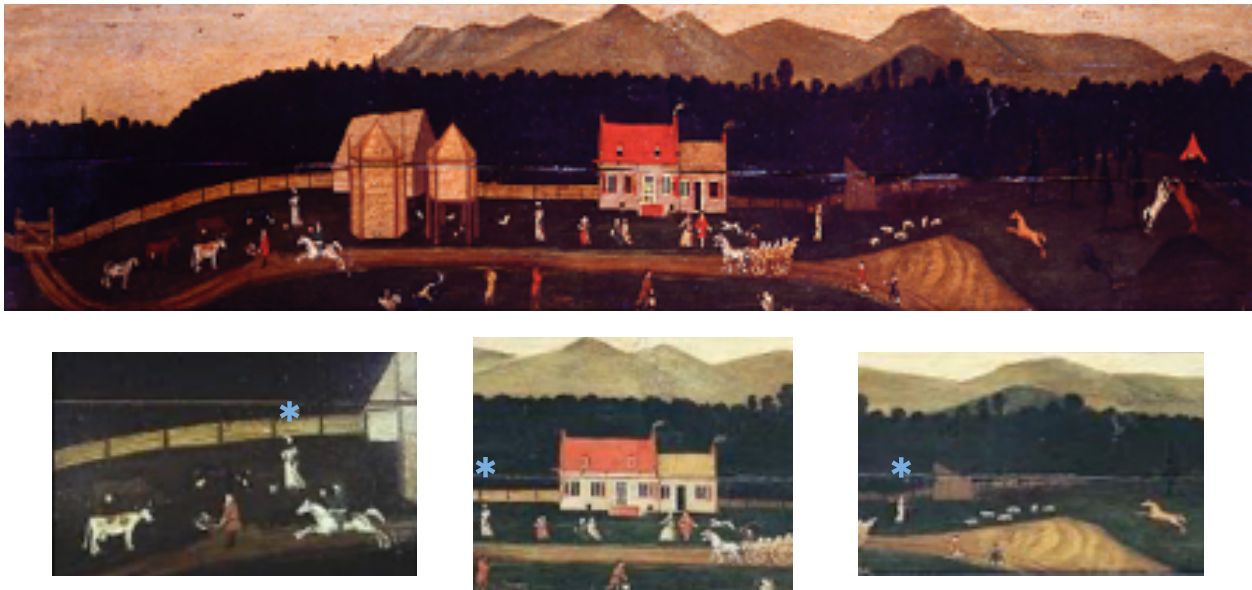


Figure 4. Van Bergen Overmantel, full view and sectioned details with blue highlighting added.

* Enslaved woman going to milk cows. Second enslaved woman with milk bucket. Enslaved man with ax.

Source: The Van Bergen Overmantel, attributed to John Heaten (active 1730–1750), Leeds, Greene County, New York, ca. 1728–1738, Fenimore Art Museum, New York Historical Association.

Enslavers like the Schuylers assigned enslaved workers the job of attacking the untamed geography they first encountered on their patents. From one perspective, the surroundings were idyllic. Henry Hudson described “good ground for Corne, a great store of goodly oakes, and walnut trees, and chestnut trees, ewe [yew] trees, and trees of sweet wood in great abundance” in his 1609 journal of his trip upriver on the Hudson.³ The western banks of the Hudson, before European settlement, were mostly “a wilderness along the water side” consisting of “oaks, alders, beeches, elms, willows, and nut trees

³ Cited in Cuyler Reynolds, *Albany Chronicles: A History of the City Arranged Chronologically, From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Albany, NY: J.B. Lyon Company, 1906), 2.

[growing] in the heavy clay soil...along with marshlands and swamps.”⁴ Settlers found the grounds of Albany County (in which the Saratoga Patent was located) “then covered with the pine, the maple, the oak, and the elm” and that “[t]he wild vine clambered in rich luxuriance on the forest trees, and threw its graceful festoons from the mossy banks of the [Hudson] river.”⁵ Another historian confirmed these effusive descriptions, declaring that before the 1750s, “the whole county was an unbroken forest back from the two rivers [the Mahicanituck, or later, Hudson River and the Mohawk River].”⁶

It is not that the land stood pristine and untouched by human hands, however. Native occupants certainly altered the grounds through their own plantings, trails, villages, and periodic burnings of underbrush. Rather, it was that the colonists who now controlled the land, colonists like the Saratoga Patent owners, sought to recreate familiar, European topographies and to transform the land to their private economic advantage.⁷ This required major deforestation, clearing the wild tree growth for “open fields for crops and orchards, meadows on which to graze livestock, and lumber—for building and heating houses, for fences and machines, and for dams on rivers to power mills.”⁸ Tree removal was necessary to achieve the full look of the Overmantel—a house surrounded by a mowed lawn, meadows for animal grazing, and fields for cultivation.⁹ But this came at a cost of human labor. The “virgin woods” that prefigured such bucolic scenes were both impediment and opportunity for the Schuylers.

The impediment was removed by setting the ax, hewn by enslaved labor, to the dense woodlands and forests. Carving a clearing for settlement was the first order of business. Throughout the colonial period (and even through the nineteenth century), land clearance was “the major task of farm improvement.” This was backbreaking work requiring long, steady persistence, because it took the most diligent family a year to remove five acres of trees when that work was combined with crop tending. Two hundred acres of cleared land was

⁴ Donna Merwick, “Dutch Townsmen and Land Use: A Spatial Perspective on Albany, New York,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (January 1980): 56. Merwick cites John Romeyn Brodhead, trans., “Korte Ontwerp van de Mahakuase Indian en in Nieuw Nederlandt, door Johannem Megapolensem, juniorem, Predikant aldaer” (1651), New-York Historical Society, Collections, 2d Ser., III (1857), 149.

⁵ William Barnes, *The Settlement and Early History of Albany* (Albany, NY: J. Munsell, 1864), 10.

⁶ Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County*, 246.

⁷ Sylvester, 338; S. Max Edelson, “Clearing Swamps, Harvesting Forests: Trees and the Making of a Plantation Landscape in the Colonial South Carolina Low Country,” *Agricultural History*, 381–401.

⁸ Sara S. Gronim, *Everyday Nature: Knowledge of the Natural World in Colonial New York* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 18; Mary Morton Cowan, *Timberrr!: A History of Logging in New England* (Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 2003), 7–9.

⁹ Edelson, “Clearing Swamps, Harvesting Forests,” 387.

“the work of a lifetime” for the average farmer.¹⁰ If one divides the forty-two plots¹¹ in the 150,000-acre Saratoga Patent, as seems to have been done in extant sketches of its sectioning, there were roughly 3,571 acres in each of the parcels (see Figure 1). Clearing each parcel would take the work of nearly eighteen lifetimes. Using slaves alongside other laborers sped the process for those seeking maximum profits from the forests.¹²

So, axes and saws in hand, male slaves—sometimes alone, sometimes with other enslaved laborers, sometimes with hired hands, or perhaps sometimes with Schuyler tenants providing their obligatory service on “riding days”—went into the woods with instructions from Johannes and Philip to chop down trees, often during November through February, when snow cover made it easiest to move them overland and the cold interrupted other agricultural rhythms.¹³ The tools were felling axes, eight-to-nine inches long with wrought iron heads and weighing three to four pounds. They were described by archaeologist Henry Chapman Mercer as “heavy, long bitted, tree-felling instruments,” imported to America from Holland or made by “white blacksmiths” in North America; these were in use throughout the colonial period in New York.¹⁴

Slaves denuded the forests using several methods common to the time. One procedure, labeled the Indian method when borrowed from indigenous Algonquin groups but also practiced by Swedish foresters from whom the British navy purchased lumber, called for girdling the tree—cutting out a large circular strip of the bark in its entirety—and leaving the tree to dry out and die; a gust of wind would topple it eventually.¹⁵ It was important to wait for the trunks to dry out as part of their physical transformation into lumber for any sort of construction. The wood of freshly downed trees, called “green” trees, normally would shrink as the moisture they contained evaporated. Enslaved ax-men also employed “the Yankee method” of deforesting, which sped the process. The loggers

¹⁰ John Sinton, “Earth Matters: How the English Colonists Transformed the Forests of the Pioneer Valley,” *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, June 14, 2019.

¹¹ This number discounts the fact that six plots, Numbers 43 through 49, were numbered twice in the 1796 sketch of the patent.

¹² Martin L. Primack, “Land Clearance Under Nineteenth-Century Techniques,” *The Journal of Economic History* 22, no. 4 (December 1962): 484.

¹³ On riding days, “tenants were obliged to use their own teams of oxen or horses to plow the landlord’s soil or to carry the landlord’s products to market.” See Martin Bruegel, “Unrest: Manorial Society and the Market in the Hudson Valley, 1780–1850,” *Journal of American History* 32, no. 4 (March 1996): 1407.

¹⁴ Henry C. Mercer, *Ancient Carpenters’ Tools: Illustrated and Explained, Together with the Implements of the Lumberman, Joiner, and Cabinet-maker in Use in the Eighteenth Century* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.: 2000), viii, 1–3. Dr. Mercer was Curator of American and Prehistoric Archaeology at the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania and his book is considered “the standard and reliable work about woodworking tools” by professionals in material culture at the Winterthur Museum (vii–viii).

¹⁵ William E. Burns, *Science and Technology in Early America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), xiii; David O. Percy, “Ax or Plow?: Significant Colonial Landscape Alteration Rates in the Maryland and Virginia Tidewater,” *Agricultural History* 66, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 70; Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., “‘The Ravages of the Axe’: The Meaning of the Tree Stump in Nineteenth-Century American Art,” *The Art Bulletin* 61, no. 4 (1979): 613.

would then set piles of trunks afire, monitor the blaze closely, and douse it as a crucial preparatory task for use as lumber. Such burning also removed any remaining leaves or foliage. In addition to these drying methods, enslaved loggers also left some of the timbers on the forest floor for months or years to dry out naturally.¹⁶ Regardless of felling and clearing methods, slaves removed large limbs from the trunks and sometimes cut the trunks into sections when they were ready for moving. So steady, relentless, and successful was this initial work of deforestation that Peter Kalm, a Swedish naturalist who visited Old Saratoga in 1749, remarked, “The country is flat on both sides of the river near Saratoga... The wood round about was generally cut down.”¹⁷

Hauling timber was another tedious task for male slaves. The forest was densest away from the river, so deforestation proceeded from the ground closest to the river and then moved further inland. Slave loggers emptied the piles of felled trees as needed for a variety of purposes and as seasonal work routines permitted. They lifted some of the timber onto wooden drays or dray carts pulled by horses to the Schuylers’ sawmills and construction sites, sawmills, and/or to the riverside for floating downriver. If dispatched to work alongside a tenant for a logging day, the tenant might have supplied the horse- or oxen-driven team or cart onto which enslaved lumbermen heisted smaller branches and tree limbs.

Leveling and softening the ground through stump and boulder removal was yet another arduous assignment tackled separately and on different days from tree felling. Tree stumps needed to be removed for the planting of crops. This was springtime work for male slaves, requiring various grubbing tools and done after the ground thawed. Stumps left for several years deteriorated naturally and were relatively easier to excavate than newer ones, but the prized pine trees resisted decay for up to eight years, and prying any stump from its embedded root structure challenged the strength of a human body even with the aid of special tools. Equipped with picks as well as axes for this task, the enslaved would have guided a team of oxen to the stump. Once there, they would use tools to dig out and chop the tree roots in preparation for the extraction. A pick mattox would loosen the soil surrounding the roots for digging; a cutter mattox both chopped and dislodged the roots. Both grubbers weighed anywhere from three to seven pounds, and it could take a full day to remove a single oak stump.¹⁸ After the stump was loosened from the soil, a rope or chain attached to the ox cart was placed around the stump. Next, enslaved laborers either splin-

¹⁶ Primack, “Land Clearance,” 486.

¹⁷ Peter Kalm, *Travels into North America*, Volume 1 (London: T. Lowndes, 1773), 123.

¹⁸ Dr. Kim D. Coder, “Stump Removal in Landscapes,” *Arboriculture Series*, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of Georgia, (May 2014), 5–6. https://www.warnell.uga.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Stump%20Removal%20pub_14-8.pdf. Accessed June 1, 2021. For a description of mid-nineteenth century stump removal in frontier Minnesota, see Marilyn Salzl Brinkman, “For Pioneers, Farming Started with Stump Clearing,” *St. Cloud Times*, February 14, 2015, <https://www.sctimes.com/story/life/2015/02/14/pioneers-farming-started-stump-clearing/23418141>. Accessed June 3, 2021.

tered the stump into small pieces or lifted it whole along with dislodged boulders and stones onto the carts for later uses.¹⁹ In a cruel irony for enslaved workers legally bound to a master as human property, they also later arranged some of the stones into fences that further marked the master's property lines.

Exploiting their dense woodlands, stumps and all, the Schuylers found yet another tributary to their multiple streams of income and benefits. Once completely uprooted, stumps had many uses—firewood for the Schuyler house, of course, but also as staves for barrels and shingles for roofs. Those enslaved by Schuyler were not unlike their counterparts on the Florida plantation of naturalist William Barton who ordered his human property in 1766 to cut trees with staves as the end-product. As historian Brown noted, “Because trees could be cut down, processed, and sold at any point in the season, lumber production provided income between harvests. After tasks in the...fields, planters sent slaves to cut trees and saw wood. When agricultural activity slowed in winter, commercial lumber production drew laborers from field to forest.”²⁰

The paths along which the enslaved dragged the fallen forest were routes they helped cut through the woods. In the crudest form, these were routes of packed snow along which the logs were dragged. But since these quickly became uneven and rutted, slaves helped carve smoother, more efficient paths by grading them and icing the snow with water hauled from the Hudson or Fish Creek. Working in cold with snow, ice, and heavy loads was grueling labor.²¹

Land clearance was the necessary preliminary step for enslavers to capitalize on the yield from the forest.

In the first third of the eighteenth century, the demand for shipbuilding materials increased substantially throughout the British Atlantic, thus providing large landowners with another source of income. As maritime commerce expanded in this part of the world, England sought to replace its overdependence on the Baltic states and Sweden for the lumber, masts, cordage, sailcloth, turpentine (as a solvent for paints), tar (for waterproofing), and pitch (a thicker resin than tar used for caulking and waterproofing as well)—all needed for water vessels. From a mercantilist perspective, colonies in the New World served as a better, cheaper source for these items. From the settlers' perspective, British hunger for shipbuilding items guaranteed quicker profits from the woods than from farming.²² For this reason, they established sawmills first. Afterward, they built gristmills.

¹⁹ Cowan, *Timberrrr!*, 8–9, 12–13, 30.

²⁰ Edelson, “Clearing Swamps,” 391–392.

²¹ Alexander Michael Koroleff and Ralph C. Bryant, “The Transportation of Logs on Sleds,” *Yale University School of Forestry Bulletin*, no. 14 (1925): 6–19.

²² Justin Williams, “English Mercantilism and Carolina Naval Stores, 1705–1775,” *The Journal of Southern History* 1, no. 2 (May 1935): 170–174; David Kirby, “The Royal Navy's Quest for Pitch and Tar during the Reign of Queen Anne,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 22, no. 2 (1974), 97–107; Edelson, “Clearing Swamps.”

The English Bounty Act of 1705, which offered an incentive of £4 per ton to settlers for these naval stores to be sold to the Royal Navy, and the correspondence between colonial governors of New York Province and the Lords of Trade in London both attest to the fact that colonial authorities targeted the pine trees of the North American colonies for turpentine, tar, and pitch.²³ Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, was the governor of colonial New York at the time the Schuylers physically moved onto the Patent; he noted that “it is most certain that great quantities of Pitch and Tar and other Naval Stores may be brought from New York” and that “the Borders of Hudson’s River above Albany” were “well known to be the best places for Pines of all sorts both for numbers and largeness of Trees.”²⁴ The Royal Navy also prized pinewood for ship masts and spars. Oaks used for ship hulls were in good supply in England’s own forests but demand for North American supplies of this wood coming from private shipbuilders in New York and other British North American settlers increased throughout the colonial period—a maritime age.²⁵

In turning to its colonies for naval stores, the British government expressed concern about the quality of American tar and pitch. Ever vigilant about the process for procuring good tar, another governor of the province, Rob Hunter, provided a glimpse of this aspect of an enslaved forester by describing a worker’s seasonal rhythms of extracting turpentine and pine trees: “In the Spring when the sapp is up, hee barks the North quarter of the circumference [of the tree] about two foot in length, where the sun has least force to draw out the Turpentine; in the Fall before the sapp falls down, hee Barks the south quarter about two foot and four inches next spring, the East quarter for the former reason, about two foot and eight inches, and in that fall the remaining quarter near three foot, after which the part above what is bark’d being full of Turpentine is cut down splitt and put into kilns for Tarr.”²⁶

As for lumber itself, the huge felled timbers needed to be pared down and shaped into usable construction material. This could be done in two ways, by either splitting the trunks or sawing them. Using wedges and adzes, enslaved workers could hew the logs,

²³ Justin Williams, “English Mercantilism and Carolina Naval Stores, 1705–1775,” *The Journal of Southern History* 1, no. 2 (May 1935): 170–174; David Kirby, “The Royal Navy’s Quest for Pitch and Tar during the Reign of Queen Anne,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 22, no. 2 (1974): 97–107.

²⁴ Earl of Clarendon to Lord Dartmouth, March 8, 1710, in Edmund B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weeds, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1855), Vol. V, 196.

²⁵ G.D. Holmes, “History of Forestry and Forestry Management,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B. Biological Sciences* 271, no. 911 (July 10, 1975): 70, 73; Joseph A. Goldenberg, *Shipbuilding in Colonial America* (Newport News: University Press of Virginia for the Mariners Museum, 1976).

²⁶ Rob Hunter to the Lords of Trade, September 12, 1711, in O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. V, 264.

breaking them apart along long, vertical lines conforming to their fibers. These could be further split with the same tools into staves for wooden barrels, casks, and pails by coopers and carpenters.²⁷

The timbers could be refined at the Schuyler sawmill, too, and the enslaved were engaged in this work as well. The technological prowess of the Dutch along with the aggressive investment strategy of the Schuylers explains the early presence of sawmills on Schuyler Patent lands for this purpose. Sawpits were an unlikely alternative. An English innovation of the fifteenth century, sawpits became common in Britain by 1700. These subterranean operations requiring two workers at either end of a handsaw—one six feet underground and the other standing above him on level ground—could be found throughout colonial Albany.²⁸ But men of means, like the Schuylers, would have preferred the superior efficiency of the sawmills that mechanics in the Netherlands, Europe’s leading experts in the field, perfected and transported to the New World. Wind-powered sawmills produced twelve to fifteen times as much timber in a day than hand sawing. However, on properties abutting streams and rivers like the Schuylers’, mills were water-powered.²⁹ For instance, Robert Livingston, a fellow Hudson River Valley land patent owner who had direct connections to Holland, hired a “Dutchman” in 1701 to construct a mill that engaged twelve saws. This scale of operation was a model of industriousness, a goalpost for the Schuylers since, as New York’s colonial governor Richard Coote, Earl of Bellamont, noted at the time, “A few such mills will quickly destroy all the woods in the Province at a reasonable distance from them.”³⁰ Enslaved laborers assigned to such relentless sawmill work would have been kept busy loading the logs onto rollers for cutting on the mill’s framers, and removing them for later use, just as they had for decades some 160 miles

²⁷ A. R. Ennos and J.A. Ventura Oliveiros, “The Mechanics of Splitting Wood and the Design of Neolithic Woodworking Tools,” *EXARC Journal/Experimental Archeology*, Issue 4 (2017), <https://exarc.net/issue-2017-4/ea/mechanics-splitting-wood-and-design-neolithic-woodworking-tools>, Accessed June 2, 2021.

²⁸ E. W. Holden, “A Note on Sawpits,” *Archeological Journal* 132, no. 1 (1975): 231; Stefan Bielinski, “How a City Worked: Occupations in Colonial Albany,” *Selected Rensselaerswijck Seminar Papers, New Netherlands Institute*, 4 (1981): 125. <https://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/3713/5067/3662/4.4.pdf>. Accessed April 15, 2020.

²⁹ Merlijn Hurx, “The Most Expert in Europe: Patents and Innovation in the Building Trades in the Early Dutch Republic, (1580 to 1650),” *Architectural Histories* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–15; Karel Davids, “Patents and Patentees in the Dutch Republic Between c. 1580 and 1720,” *History and Technology* 16, no. 3 (2000): 263–283; Karel Davids, *The Rise and Decline of Dutch Technological Leadership: Technology, Economy and Culture in the Netherlands, 1350 to 1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 57–198; E. W. Cooney, “Eighteenth Century Britain’s Missing Sawmills: A Return Visit,” *Construction History* (1998): 85.

³⁰ The Earl of Belmont to the Lords of Trade, January 2, 1701, in Edmund B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. IV (Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1854), 825.

downriver; for example, so critical were slaves at the Saw-kill logging mill in Manhattan from the earliest years of New Amsterdam’s settlement that the area was noted on a map as “the quarters of the blacks, the [Dutch West India] company’s slaves.”³¹

Grist mills also were a focus for male slave laborers. The grains—wheat and corn mainly—needed to be ground by water-powered millstones for market. In the early eighteenth century, millstones were quarried locally throughout the nation. Quartzose sandstone, which made excellent stones for early mills, was in abundant supply in Albany County.³² Slaves undoubtedly helped dig up this material and haul it to the location where it was cemented by a skilled miller and mill picker into a pair of round stones with sickle-shaped furrows on one side, each weighing more than a ton, for the mill. The Schuyler mill probably had more than two millstones, however, in order to give local farmers a choice over which they preferred. They engaged slaves in the heavy lifting process. Early mills were vertical operations with three floors. Farmers arrived with sacks of grain which were hoisted to the top floor and poured onto the hopper and stone below on the middle floor. Gears and shafts took up the bottommost floor. Slaves were among the “several laborers” needed for “hoisting, shoveling grain, carrying sacks, and so on.”³³

Mills, barns, and houses needed protection from French and Indian attacks, so enslaved men undoubtedly helped build, repair, and maintain frontier fortifications at Saratoga. If White settlers were vulnerable on the Saratoga borderlands so, too, was their human chattel. Blockhouses were defensive wooden structures, made of thick timbers to prevent bullet penetration through the walls and having slit-like openings from which defenders inside could fire out against the enemy. In the late seventeenth century, the few colonists settled in New York’s northern perimeter secured themselves with a solitary blockhouse west of the Hudson and just south of Fish Creek. British Major General Winthrop rested his troops there in the summer of 1696 as he marched north against the French during King Williams’ War (1688–1697).³⁴ Reviewing a 1711 contract involving the Lords of Trade, British military volunteer Francis Nicholson, and several carpenters, we can see the blueprint for an ideal fort in the Mohawk Valley sections of Albany County—a far more elaborate structure than what stood at Saratoga during this time. Plans called for a 150-foot square stockade, twelve feet high and anchored at each corner with a blockhouse.

³¹ Orville W. Carroll, “Mr. Smart’s Circular Saw Mill ca. 1815,” *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 5, no. 1 (1973): 62–64 ; I.N.P. Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498–1909: Compiled from Original Sources and Illustrated by Photo-Intaglio Reproductions of Important Maps, Plans, Views and Documents in Public and Private Collections*, Vol. 6 (Union, NJ: Martino Fine Books, 1998, 1967), 132.

³² Thomas F. Gordon, *Gazetteer of New York*, Book I (Philadelphia: T.K. and F.G. Collins, 1836), 41.

³³ Martha and Murray Zimiles, *Early American Mills* (New York: Bramhall House, 1973), 31–32, 36.

³⁴ “Journal of Major General Winthrop’s March from Albany to Wood Creek, August, 1690 “(Received September 18, 1696),” Vol. IV, 25 [or *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol. IV, 194–195; Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County*, 36; John Henry Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga and History of Schuylerville* (Albany: Brandow Print, 1900), 18.

Each blockhouse was to be twenty-four square feet, two stories high—both stories with “loopholes” for doubling potential firepower. An enslaved worker’s labors to construct Saratoga’s lone blockhouse can be gleaned from these instructions along with other specifications: “the Undermost part or Ground room to be nine feet high the Upper Eight foot both well floured [sic] with Boards the logs of y^e blockhouse to be Nine Inches Square and Bedsteads and Benches in Each Blockhouse for twenty men and in each Block house a Chemney towards y^e inside of y^e said fort”³⁵ Under the watchful eyes of a master carpenter, the enslaved felled trees, carted logs from the forest to the sawmill, worked the mill, transported lumber to the site, and stacked the logs and boards upon each other to form the walls of the Saratoga blockhouse. They hammered nails into the wooden slabs to fashion furniture—the beds and benches—for overnight soldiers. They carted stones or limestone to the mason who supervised the layering and mortaring for the chimney.

Since Saratoga had few inhabitants in 1700, the consequent shortage of labor and the pressing need for protection meant that those enslaved by Schuyler had to contribute to the work of maintaining and manning improvements to the garrison there. On the eve of the next intercolonial war, Queen Anne’s War (1702–1713), colonial governor Lord Cornbury wrote to London, urging the construction of “a stockadoed [sic] fort at Saratoga a place Six and twenty miles above the Half Moon on Hudsons River and is the farthest settlement we have.” He reasoned that such a defense manned by a lieutenant and thirty soldiers would “not only secure our settlements there,” but for no more than £200, also serve as “a retreat for all our Rivers Indians” for all occasions. Cornbury made this proposal in 1702, the first year for which there is some evidence pointing to the Schuyler establishment on the Patent there.³⁶

During the next year, Cornbury voiced eerily prescient concerns about the need for a fort at Saratoga: “There is another [fort] to be built at Saractoga [sic], which is the Northernmost settlement we have. There are but few families there yet, and these will desert their habitation if they are not protected.”³⁷ To bolster his request, Cornbury instructed a Lieutenant Charles Congreve, to submit a detailed report on the status of defense fortifications throughout the province. Congreve’s bad news that three northern forts, including the one at Saratoga, were “not in order” was somewhat mitigated: “the Inhabitants on the frontier proposed to have them repaired against Winter.” Still, the problem remained that “the Country is not able to raise money (and men) sufficient for that and other services.” Congreve went on to complain that many of the British soldiers

³⁵ “Contract to Build Forts in the Mohawk and Onondaga Countries,” in O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. V, 280.

³⁶ Lord Cornbury, Letter to the Lords of Trade, September 24, 1702, in O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Related to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol. IV, 969.

³⁷ Lord Cornbury, Letter to the Lords of Trade, June 30, 1703, in O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Related to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol. IV, 1057.

assigned to the region were old, having served for decades and had become “unfit,” and too few in number. In other words, even with the combined existing colonists and royal resources of money and men, more British investment was necessary.³⁸

Finally in 1709, an outlay for Saratoga’s defense came that must have included some slaves: “three hundred men, with the pioneers and artificers...under the command of Colonel [Peter] Schuyler” from Albany who built stockaded forts twelve miles south of Saratoga in Stillwater (Fort Ingoldsby) and two miles north of Saratoga on the east side of the Hudson just below the Battenkill River. Functioning as a slightly outer perimeter around Old Saratoga, Peter’s forces also built a line of three additional stockaded forts on the east bank of the Hudson—one near Greenwich, another eleven miles north of Saratoga, first called Fort Nicolson (later, Fort Edward), and a third some twenty-two miles north of Saratoga, eventually called Fort Ann. Schuyler’s forces carved a military path through the “primeval forest” of thick, white pines on that side of the Hudson from Schuylerville to Fort Anne, effectively connecting the string of fortifications.³⁹ The colonel certainly called enslaved labor to assist with these tasks.

Because the life span of colonial wooden fortifications was roughly five years, the fort on the east side of the Hudson and closest to present-day Schuylerville was rebuilt during this period of Schuyler residency on Patent lands, not as often as needed but at least twice—in 1721 and 1745. The fact that wealthy slaveowner-patentees supervised these operations meant their enslaved property was again engaged in the work in one way or the other. For the 1721 renovations, Johannes Schuyler supplied the lumber from his mill and Philip Livingston oversaw the project which finally resulted in a sturdy, square-shaped, palisaded enclosure with blockhouses at the four corners and a wooden gallery high enough to permit a watchman to peer outward, over the top.⁴⁰ This structure, a half mile south of Philip Schuyler’s house, was rebuilt a second time during the first half of 1745, but was completely unmanned when the French and their Native allies attacked the settlement of twenty houses and ninety individuals around Schuyler’s mills on November 28, 1745.⁴¹

³⁸ Charles Congreve, Letter to the Lords of Trade, July 1704, in O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Related to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol. IV, 1128–1129); For a general summary of the inadequacy of seventeenth century forts in the Mohawk Valley area closest to Albany, see Nellis M. Crouse, “Forts and Block Houses in the Mohawk Valley,” *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association*, Vol. XIV (1915), 76. For more on Congreve and his lieutenancy, see E. M. Eutenbek and L.H. Clark and a Corps of Biographical Writers, *History of Orange County* (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1881), 809.

³⁹ Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County*, 38, 60; Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 24–25.

⁴⁰ Sylvester, 28–29. [or N.Y. Colonial MSS, Vol. LXIV, 39–40].

⁴¹ *Documents Related to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol. VI, 255; *Documents Related to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol. VI, 648; *The Story of Old Saratoga and History of Schuylerville*, 34; Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County*, 39.

Enslaved people were among those who unsuccessfully defended themselves while fighting against the surprise hit during King George's War (1744–1748), the third French and Indian War. They either died or were captured, as recorded in the journal of the French adjutant who participated in the assault:

We passed a very rapid river [Fish Creek], for which we were not prepared, and came to a sawmill, which two men (a negro and a Dutchman), were running, and in which there was a large fire. M. de St. Ours and M. Marin's son [two French soldiers; the older Marin was commander of the campaign] were disputing the possession of the negro with an Indian, although another Indian said that it was Marin who had captured him. His father, with whom I was, told him this was not the time to dispute about prisoners, and that it was necessary to go on and take others... We made some of the servants prisoners."⁴²

Since "negro," "slave," and "servant" were interchangeable terms used by colonial authorities and slaveowners at the time, we can conclude that Black enslaved people were among those taken prisoner.

In fact, one English report indicated that Africans and African Americans were the majority of those taken captive. The witness wrote that the French "took along with them such Booty as they thought fit & Kilt and took Captives 100 or 101 persons, Black and White. I guess the Black most prisoners, and the number of them exceeds the number of the white." So, if Blacks were the simple majority or just fifty and if most of these were attached to the Schuyler establishment, that number is an astonishingly large one considering that in the Tidewater region of the American South in the late eighteenth century, the majority of enslavers held fewer than five Blacks as property.⁴³ The adjutant's report further took note of the valiance of Philip in refusing to surrender his brick house, which was vainly intended to perform double-duty as a "guard house"—"pierced with loop-holes to the ground floor" and where gunpowder was stored. He was shot to death by a M. Beauvais, one of the French soldiers.⁴⁴

French colonial records of the 1745 attack at Saratoga also yield evidence of Philip Schuyler's reliance on enslaved labor but with more precise, smaller figures: Fifty Anglo-Dutch settlers were taken prisoner with seven of the eight Black people who suffered the raid being forcibly removed north of Saratoga by French troops to territory firmly under French control. Five enslaved females and three enslaved males were relocated to Montreal and other places in Canada where they joined an enslaved community in which First

⁴² Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 31, 36–37.

⁴³ Brandow, 40; Thad W. Tate, Jr, "The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation-Library Research Report Series-0121, April 1957, 28–29.

⁴⁴ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 35–37.

Nations people constituted a two-thirds majority of all those enslaved by the French. There were two enslaved couples represented, both with young daughters, one male separated from his Indian wife, and one pregnant woman.⁴⁵

Lewis Cook, aka Atiatoharongwen, the mulatto/biracial son of an African slave and Abenaki woman, escaped enslavement due to his mother’s interventions on his behalf. She successfully begged the Mohawks aiding the French to take him as their child rather than allow a French officer to claim him as his property. Atiatoharongwen’s daughter related this story and more details of her father’s later life to Franklin Hough through a French translator a little over one hundred years later in the mid-nineteenth century. While Atiatoharongwen’s father ended up “in the service of one of the government officials at Montreal,” both mother and son then joined the Mohawk community at Kahnawake where Atiatoharongwen learned French from the Jesuit priest assigned to the Catholic mission there.⁴⁶ The following table, adapted from historian David Preston’s work on this subject, which was gleaned from Marc Trudel’s *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français*, summarizes this information (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Documented Enslaved Blacks Taken by the French
in 1745 Attack on Saratoga**

Females	Males
Unknown female #1 – enslaved by French officer Luc Lacorne de St.-Luc; likely wife of adult male #1	Unknown male #1 – enslaved by French officer Luc Lacorne de St.-Luc; likely husband of adult female #1
Étienne or Marie-Etienne or Eskenne; daughter of female #1 and male #1; enslaved by Abenaki Pierre Nicholas and later sold to Joseph Gamelin in Montreal	Unknown male #2 – enslaved by French government official; father of Atiatoharongwen aka Lewis Cook.
Diané, female #3 – enslaved by Pierre Guy; likely wife of unknown male #3	Unknown male #3 – enslaved by Pierre Guy; likely husband of unknown male #3
Élisabeth, female #4 – daughter of Diané and unknown male #3; enslaved by Pierre Guy	
Unknown female #5 – pregnant at capture; enslaved by Louis Marie de la Chauvignerie	

Source: David L. Preston, *Colonial Saratoga: War and Peace on the Borderlands* (National Park Service, 2018), 59.

⁴⁵ Marc Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français*, (Dictionary of Slaves and Their Owners in French Canada) (Quebec: Editions Hurtubise, 1990); David L. Preston, *Colonial Saratoga: War and Peace on the Borderlands* (National Park Service, 2018), 50–59.

⁴⁶ Franklin Benjamin Hough. *A History of Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties, New York* (Albany: Little and Company, 1853), 182–183; Preston, *Colonial Saratoga*, 56–57.

The discrepancy between English and French accounts regarding total slaves captured—the English figure is twice the French number—reflects a characteristic of colonial American captivity narratives as a literary genre and type of ritualized commemorative practice: in the face of Native American conquest, English colonists’ remembered such battles in ways that emphasized the cultural distance between themselves and their “savage,” “barbarous” abductors. In journals and newspaper reports, dominant Whites likened captivity by “heathen” Indians in the frontier wilderness to heightened Christian travail in a fallen world. The memory of such struggles only confirmed to the settlers the cultural distance between themselves and a pagan Indian population prone to violent pillaging and kidnapping. Such tales recounted descriptions of brutal conquest and suffering at the hands of Native Americans with intense, graphic detail. Memory also worked here to lionize the American dead, like Philip Schuyler, as heroes, heroines, and martyrs.⁴⁷ Although the story of Schuyler’s murder was not printed and circulated widely as were such bestselling captivity narratives as *The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), it nonetheless lived in popular, local memory through the nineteenth century. Ironically and in a complex way, the White memory embodied in the tale of devastation suffered at the colonial borderland brought enslaved people who were normally background features into sharper relief. The story doubly highlights Black bondspersons involved in the killings at the Schuylers’ first Saratoga homestead and the subsequent Montreal imprisonment as both material losses and victims. This notice was no more than ancillary, however. This memory crystalized only because the Black captives figured both as property and as representations of Philip and all the other vulnerable White settlers in the surrounding territory. But for any first-generation, newly imported Africans among the prisoners taken to Canada in 1745, the seizure must have been an especially cruel experience. Once torn from their native lands, they were again forcibly snatched to yet another new environment by a second adversary, speaking yet another foreign tongue and with even newer claims on their personhood.

The military violence visited upon Old Saratoga destroyed the community—disrupting the work rhythms of all, including Black workers like the “likely Negro” at the mill. The French found “the barns, the granaries, and the cellars...full to repletion; many goodly stacks of hay and grain nestled close to the buildings. Herds of sleek cattle and plump sheep were feeding in their stalls; great piles of lumber were awaiting shipment to the markets below, and the mills were grinding and sawing night and day, seemingly rushed with orders.”⁴⁸ By the time the pillaging was done, however, almost everything had been burned down including “more than 10,000 planks and joists, four fine mills, and all the barns and

⁴⁷ Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1–14, 177–205; Richard Vanderbeets, “The Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual,” *American Literature* 43, no. 4 (January 1972): 548–562.

⁴⁸ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 34–35.

stables, some of which were filled with animals.”⁴⁹ Stopping overnight in June four years later, Peter Kalm noted the ruin of property and income, “This night we lodged with a farmer, who had returned to his farm after the war was over. All his buildings, except the great barn, were burnt....Several saw-mills were built here before the war, which were very profitable to the inhabitants, on account of the abundance of wood which grows here. The boards were easily brought to Albany and thence to New York in rafts every spring with the high water; but all the mills were burnt at present.”⁵⁰

This carnage represented more than the Schuyler’s financial losses. It was also the destruction of the physical imprint upon the local landscape made by Black laborers held in bondage. For the French, the raid was a rousing victory, glorious vengeance against an earlier defeat by their arch rivals. For British colonial authorities and colonists, it was an instance of enemy treachery and pioneer bravery. But surely the enslaved had other thoughts. The fight was for life itself, life alone, and perhaps for loved ones in the area. It was not for mills, houses, or land. Part of the cruelty of slavery was the inescapable linking of the fortunes of those held against their will with those of the enslavers. When enslavers experienced economic reversals and downturns, they often sold the people they enslaved, for example. In this case, Philip Schuyler’s slaves suffered captivity and loss of life as a consequence of their owner’s dogged, risk-taking ambition.

⁴⁹ Brandow, 37.

⁵⁰ Peter Kalm, *Travels into North America, Vol. 2* (London: The Editor, 1771), 286–291.

CHAPTER THREE

Laboring on “Excellent and Well Improved” Land: Second Imprint, 1763–1777

Enslaved labor substantially enriched Colonel Philip Schuyler’s nephew and namesake, Philip John Schuyler, after he moved onto Saratoga Patent lands in 1763 and rebuilt operations. Taking advantage of the peace after the end of the Seven Years’ War, Schuyler set about restoring and expanding the ravaged farm and mills south of Fish Creek that he inherited from his uncle. He built a “large house” there where he began spending six to eight months of the year. The young Schuyler constructed new mills, erected “smithies,” renewed grain cultivation, and built two sloops and a schooner to transport his lumber and foodstuffs to market.¹

During this period and beyond, enslaved laborers continued to clear forests and work the mills—including a new saw mill—as they had for his grandfather, Johannes Schuyler, and his uncle Philip Schuyler. The late fall-early winter tree felling in the woodlands carried on as when Schuyler made the following journal entry in mid-November of 1769: “Finished with the White pine Logs 15th & Came home Patrick & Jacob the Negroes staid ther the 16 Day and then Came home they maid the Road.”² A few days later, “Patrick & Jacob and the Negroes Came out of the bush... at Night... and [T]om and [H]ar sawed two Oak Logs into square timber that Day.”³ Schuyler’s overseer, Philip Lansingh, similarly reported in late December 1771 that Lisbon, Dick, and Bob cut “thirty Four pieces of pitch pine timber” and “twenty Large pitch pine Logs” which they hauled on horse-drawn sleds to the mill. Later the same week, Lansingh wrote Schuyler that “the Negroes have Ridden

¹ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 237–238, 270; Bayard Tuckerman, *The Life of General Philip Schuyler, 1733–1804* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1904), 72–73; Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *A History of Saratoga County* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 260–261. Sylvester states that after the 1745 burning of the Schuyler homestead, the resumption of European settlement at Old Saratoga did not begin until 1763.

² Diary Entry of Philip Schuyler, November 15, 1769, Diary 1802, Philip Schuyler Collection (PSC), New-York Historical Society (N-YHS).

³ Philip Schuyler, Daybook, ca. November 22, 1769, PSC, N-YHS.

twenty Logs to the Mill at Bats Kill they had to make the Road so as to git the Logs out.”⁴ This work was completed in the cold of winter during the Christmas and New Year festive season. In 1772, Philip Schuyler signed a contract with New York City merchant Gerard DePeyster to deliver “White and Pitch pine Boards and Plank of Different Dimensions” on an annual basis.⁵ For the enslaved men Schuyler assigned to lumber duty at Saratoga, this business agreement guaranteed a future of year-end holidays spent away from family, logging in the snowy woods and carving icy roads.

Carters, batteauxmen, and coachmen—Schuyler’s transport workers—were critical for his businesses and for family who alternated time at Albany Mansion with stays at Saratoga House. Saratoga House overseer Dan Hale sent Lisbon down to Albany with “3 yds of fine Bath Coating with what trimmings I had” so the General could have an overcoat made for himself.⁶ Charles toted “the Stoves in his Ox Team” requested by Mr. Lansingh for Saratoga.⁷ Tom, Peter, Cuff, and Anthony regularly ran errands between the two residences.⁸ Despite “the late Night Winds” that threatened to “prove fatal to his Vessel” and imperil his life one late November, Patrick was dispatched by river to “Livingstons Lower Manor & Rhynbeck for Apples & Cyder.” He returned, mission accomplished. Varick, who had sent Patrick down on behalf of the Schuylers with full knowledge of the dangerous weather conditions he would face, offered no comment on any harm or suffering Patrick may have endured on the trip.⁹ Perhaps because the enslaved people he owned were occupied, Schuyler paid “three Negroes” owned by John Lansing, Jr. to chauffeur him and his family from Albany to Stillwater one early spring day in 1778.¹⁰ This kind of transportation labor performed by enslaved men in the colonial Hudson Valley is documented by a New Deal-era mural (see Figure 5) of the Olin Dows series (described on the following page).

⁴ Philip Lansingh, Letter to Philip Schuyler, December 27, 1771, Philip Schuyler Papers (PSP), New York Public Library (NYPL); Philip Lansingh, Letter to Philip Schuyler, January 2, 1772, PSP, NYPL.

⁵ Philip Schuyler, Letter to Gerard DePeyster, March 16, 1772, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, NY.

⁶ Dan Hale, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 11, 1776, PSP, NYPL.

⁷ Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 16, 1777, PSP, NYPL.

⁸ Examples: Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 8, 1777, PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Dear Child, December 6, 1787, PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Dear Child, December 27, 1787, PSP, NYPL.

⁹ Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 12, 1777, PSP, NYPL.

¹⁰ John Jackson, Receipt to Philip Schuyler, March 27, 1778, PSP, NYPL.



Figure 5. Enslaved Colonial Coachman in Dutchess County, NY.
Source: Olin Dows, Murals in the Rhinebeck, NY Post Office, 1940

Schuyler’s main commercial food crops were wheat, corn, and potatoes, along with a wide assortment of other produce, including rhubarb, strawberries, turnips, peas, oats, beans, squash, apples, nuts, grapes, buckwheat, parsnips, and clover.¹¹ For wheat, Schuyler employed traditional and new European techniques. Much of the wheat grown on his lands was, in fact, produced by tenants who leased farms from him and worked with their family members. But Schuyler’s enslaved workers might sometimes assist tenant farmers and of course, Schuyler used those he enslaved for his own grain cultivation as well. Each spring, they and other farm hands guided horse- or oxen-drawn plows over hard ground to turn and loosen it for seed. After shoveling horse or cow manure from the barn onto wheelbarrows or carts, they hauled the dung to the plowed fields and added it to the soil as an enriching agent. The scale of Schuyler’s farm suggests he employed the latest tools in his agricultural pursuits. This meant that slaves probably planted wheat seeds by using a drilling machine.¹² They planted winter wheat from September to November, harvesting it the following late spring and early summer. They planted spring wheat in early spring and harvested it in late summer or early fall. Especially during busy and heavy harvest seasons, enslaved women could be called on to wield sickles alongside enslaved men equipped with both sickles and scythes.

Slaves were involved in the very laborious and necessary job of threshing, separating the edible part of the wheat plant from the straw to prepare the grain for milling. Patrick and Jacob, enslaved by Schuyler, “threshed Wheat [on the] 16th Day” of November 1769, for example. They “and the Negroes” began the process when “they Cleard out [the] barn” of its usual operations.¹³ The slaves lifted the wheat sheaves onto carts for transportation inside. The large size of the Schuyler harvest, twenty to thirty bushels per acre, meant most of the cut wheat would have to be temporarily stooked—gathered in even, vertical bunches

¹¹ See James Hogeboom and Ephraim Van Veghten, “Accounts-Military 1775–1782,” PSP, NYPL.

¹² Harold B. Gill, Jr., “Wheat Culture in Colonial Virginia,” *Agricultural History* 52, no. 3 (July 1978), 383–385.

¹³ Philip Schuyler, Daybook, ca. November 22, 1769, PSC, N-YHS.

arranged on end in an A-shape and tied together near the top—and left standing in the field until the threshers were ready for them. Once under the barn roof, enslaved workers laid the sheaves onto a special wooden threshing floor, about two inches thick on average. This was a large structure, sometimes octagonal and twenty feet long on each edge or circular in shape with a twelve-foot diameter. Enslaved laborers removed any weeds from the sheaves and used a flail to beat the grain and then raked the straw away. Sometimes horses or cows substituted for a flail, in which case the enslaved workers directed the animals to trample over the wheat to separate it from the chaff. At other times, enslaved workers threshed outdoors on level, hard-packed ground, again using a flail. Given his commitment to substantial capital investments in his farm, Schuyler may have purchased a new device toward the end of this period—a horse-drawn threshing machine invented by John Hobday in 1774. The machine would have lightened the burden of threshing for the slaves—increasing the number of threshed bushels from only a few a day to forty.¹⁴ The final threshing step was called “cleaning.” At this stage, chaff—remaining debris, bits of straw, and husks—was removed by winnowing: The doors on both ends of the barn were opened. Standing nearest the side from which the wind blew, enslaved workers flung the wheat into the air in a circular motion, letting the breeze hit the grain. The heaviest, good part fell farthest away while the lighter refuse fell nearest the tosser or else was blown away. Another cleaning method involved the use of a “Dutch fan,” a machine used for wheat threshing in colonial America as early as the 1740s.¹⁵ Its name alone, as well as its efficiency in producing unbruised, cleaner grain (as explained below) suggests that Schuyler would have purchased one and required his enslaved workers to use it at the time:

[A Dutch fan] allowed the farmer to clean his grain at any time whether or not there was wind, created a steady wind by the rotation of a fan housed in a case. The grain was fed through a hopper into the case between the fan and an opening in the case. The motion of the air created by the fan carried the chaff, light and rotten grain, dirt, etc. out of the case. The good, heavier grain fell into a box. Later some wheat fans incorporated sieves for finer cleaning.¹⁶

Rotation of the fan was achieved when slaves manually turned the wheel attached to the fan on the outside of the fan case. Dutch fans were so much more effective than traditional threshing methods that by the late eighteenth century, George Washington found these devices only needed “Womn [sic] or boys of 12 or 14 years of age” to manage them; these

¹⁴ “Agriculture in the Middle Colonies,” *American Husbandry* (London 1775): 1, 98–103, reprinted in Ernest Ludlow Bogart and Charles Manfred Thompson, eds., *Readings in the Economic History of the United States* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1927), 32–34; Gill, “Wheat Culture,” 390–392; Robert Doares, “A Field Spacious and Untrodden: The Virginian Society for the Promotion of Usefull Knowledge,” *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Autumn 2003), <https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/Foundation/journal/Autumn03/society.cfm>. Accessed June 11, 2021.

¹⁵ Gill, “Wheat Culture,” 392. See also footnote 70 in Gill. Dutch fans were invented by the Dutch in the seventeenth or eighteenth century.

¹⁶ Gill, “Wheat Culture,” 392.

were those he enslaved, of course.¹⁷ Following these last considerable exertions of threshing, Schuyler’s enslaved laborers moved the grain over to the grist mill where their co-workers (also held in bondage)—some friends, some family—attended operations.

The visual record also memorializes the status of enslaved workers as essential producers of the Hudson Valley corn that Philip Schuyler and his fellow gentleman farmers sold to the West Indies for a profit, just as his uncle had done. The segmented, twelve-panel New Deal-era murals in the Rhinebeck (Dutchess County), New York, post office are public art works of historical preservation in which the artist, Olin Dows (1904–1981), wistfully recalls “the landscape [and] our rural activities” of past centuries. Writing about the piece, he lamented the environmental changes of modernity in the small villages and towns of the Hudson Valley—concrete roads, commercial traffic, disappearing mom-and-pop stores. The paintings were created in 1939–1940 by Dows through the Federal Arts Project, a subdivision within the Works Project Administration under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.¹⁸ Like the Schuylers, Dows was raised in the Hudson Valley. On his mother’s side, he was a descendant of the colonial Livingstons whose genealogical reach backwards included peers, relatives, and neighbors of the Schuylers on Saratoga Patent lands; on his father’s side, he was a grandson of a successful New York grains merchant. Roosevelt, too, had a Dutch-descended, Hudson Valley American ancestry that dated back to colonial-era riches acquired through regional landholding and trade and wider mercantile activity, intercolonial and cross-Atlantic. Both Dows and Roosevelt had connections to the Dutchess County Historical Society—Dows through his father’s active membership and Roosevelt as an engaged founding member. Both men therefore clearly had a personal interest in the region’s past and in its preservation. During the New Deal, the president used his political position to influence the construction materials, architecture, and interior of the postal building. He insisted on Hudson Valley fieldstone for the exterior, favored a Dutch colonial architectural style, and conversed about the interior mural scenes with Dows, his distant cousin.¹⁹ For these reasons, this particular art can be viewed as an expression of a certain history—the collective memory of historical elites in the Valley who were the long progeny of colonial enslavers.

¹⁷ Washington, George. *The Diaries of George Washington*, vol. 6, *1 January 1790–13 December 1799*, ed. Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979, 12–13. *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/01-06-02-0001-0001-0022>. Accessed June 12, 2021. Also see William W. Reynolds, “Thomas Jefferson’s First Threshing Machine,” *The Chronicle of the Early American Industries Association* 58, no. 2 (June 2005): 54–65.

¹⁸ Emily Warner, “‘Shall Our Walls Remain Blank?’: Museums, Murals, and the Creation of a Public Art Culture in New Deal America,” in Cher Crause Knight, Harriet F. Senie, ed., *Museums and Public Art* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 44.

¹⁹ Cynthia Owen Philip, “Owen Dows, Painter,” *The Hudson Valley Regional Review* 16, no. 1 (1999): 35, 40–42; Jim Blackburn, “The Architect and the Artist: FDR, Olin Dows, and the New Deal Post Office Program,” *New York History Review* (2013); *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, May 5, 1927; *Poughkeepsie Journal*, December 19, 1924; *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, December 31, 1928.

One scene in the mural depicts a colonial-era corn husking and the place of enslaved workers in it (see Figure 6). The painting includes five men at work in a field; freshly picked ears of corn lie on the soil in the foreground. Two barefoot young White males wearing loose, unbuckled breeches and flowing white shirts perform manual labor; they bend over an empty basket they are about to lift, perhaps to collect the corn. To the right and behind the youths at a short distance two older White men stand facing each other amid corn stooks. One, wearing a white shirt and a longish vest appears to be the overseer; his work is supervisory and nonmanual. His stance presents his front to the viewer, and with his arm and hand he gives instructions to a second adult White man. Vestless in unbuckled breeches and carrying a bundle of loose sheaves, he is standing with mostly his backside to the viewer. Between the two sets of White males, one youthful Black male kneels over a large pile of cut corn sheaves he is trying to gather from the ground. Like the White boys, he is shoeless but only he is shirtless as well. Toiling and undoubtedly perspiring with the others under a hot, late summer sun, his torso is naked. Perhaps he was sweating the most from the relative amount of physical labor expected of him and therefore chose to cool himself off by shedding his top. The painting confirms both the historical role of the enslaved as agricultural workers, and slaves’ rank as the most subservient of such laborers. The enslaved boy works alone, is the most poorly dressed, and is positioned closest to the earth. He is literally and figuratively the lowliest laborer.



Figure 6. Hudson Valley Colonial Period Corn Husking

Source: Olin Dows, Murals in the Rhinebeck, NY Post Office, 1940

Since corn husking festivals were annual events in American farming regions by the late-eighteenth-century, north and south, they may be viewed as rituals. As such, they provided opportunities for affirmation of community through shared commitment to a certain kind of agrarian work, games of friendly group competition, flirtatious sexual encounters, dancing, and musical entertainment. Significantly, the mural panel depicting this ritual festivity also captures a collective memory of social relations between unfree Blacks and free Whites. Viewed nostalgically from the perspective of free White participants, rich and poor, the harvest celebrated cooperation and nature’s bounty.²⁰ But by folding enslaved Blacks as compliant participants into this visual memory of yearly local events, scenes like these reveal just how normalized, naturalized, and romanticized African American subjugation was in regional spaces similar to Schuyler’s Saratoga farmland.

²⁰ Bartow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 256; Nicholas P. Hardeman, *Shucks, Shocks, and Hominy Blocks: Corn as a Way of Life in Pioneer America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 20, 35–44; Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790–1840* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989), 240, 266–268, 270–271, 298.

Cultivating corn, like wheat and other grains, for home and market involved both enslaved males and females. Because it could be grown around stumps and dead trees and in almost any soil, corn was a relatively easy crop to cultivate. Learning from Native Americans, Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam took up the practice early in the seventeenth century, setting themselves and those they enslaved to the task. In the spring, late April to be precise, Schuyler would have sent male slaves to the fields—Tom, Harre, Dick, and Nicholas among them since they were skilled corn growers (see Table 4)—to seed them with corn kernels. Rather than plant the maize in hills or mounds, Schuyler’s ample acreage and his market orientation certainly must have led him to prefer rows. Stopping by the barn to collect their tools, the enslaved marched to a clearing they had made where they then used the corners of hoes to reshape the soil into furrows. Next, they would have used their pickaxes to dig one-to-two-inch holes six feet apart from each other and dropped seeds into the openings. According to Indian custom—which European colonists adopted in the seventeenth century—enslaved laborers along with other farm hands placed raw fish atop the seeds (as fertilizer) before covering them with soil. Herring were abundant in Schuyler’s fisheries, and so slaves sometimes placed these in the seedholes along with the seed.²¹ Similar plantings were done in May and June. With a two-to-three-month growing period, harvest took place throughout the summer.²² Besides serving as a food crop for home and market, corn was cattle fodder (and fed to the cattle by slaves).²³

²¹ G. Browne Goode, “The Use of Agricultural Fertilizers by the American Indians and the Early English Colonists,” *The American Naturalist* 14, no. 7 (July 1880): 474. The names of Tom, Harre, Dick, and Bob appear in Schuyler’s store ledger as enslaved customers who bartered with corn they had grown; on this, see Philip Schuyler Ledger, 1767–1770, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

²² Adrian Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008, 1655); Richard Middleton and Anne Lombard, *Colonial America: A History to 1763* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture*, 22; Nicholas P. Hardeman, *Shucks, Shocks and Hominy: Corn as a Way of Life in Colonial America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 14–19, 21.

²³ “Agriculture in the Middle Colonies,” *American Husbandry* (London 1775),

Table 4. Store Transactions between Philip Schuyler and His Slaves

Date	Transaction on Schuyler's End	Counted by Schuyler as	Enslaved Customer Involved
1767, Feb. 28	Received corn	Store credit	Tom
1767, June 3	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1767, July 2	Received boards	Store credit	Tom
1767, Aug. 20	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1767, Aug. 20	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1767, Oct. 12	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1767, Oct. 12	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1767, Nov. 19	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1767, Nov. 19	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1767, Nov. 19	Received potatoes	Store credit	Tom
1768, Jan. 1	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1768, Jan. 1	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1768, Aug. 25	Received logs	Store credit	Tom
1768, Aug. 25	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1768, Nov. 12	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1768, Dec. 14	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1768, Dec. 14	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1768, Dec. 25	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1768, Dec. 25	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1768, Dec. 25	Received corn	Store credit	Tom
1768, Dec. 31	Gave sugar	Store debit	Tom
1768, Dec. 31	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Tom
1769, Jan. 4	Received corn	Store credit	Tom
1769, Mar. 1	Gave stroud cloth	Store debit	Tom
1769, Mar. 17	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1769, Mar. 17	Cash credit paid Henry for Tom's hat	Store credit	Henry/Tom
1769, Mar. 18	Received two hogs	Store credit	Tom
1769, Mar. 24	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Tom
1769, Mar. 24	Cash received	Store credit	Tom
1769, July 21	Gave sugar	Store debit	Tom
1769, Dec. 25	Gave rum	Store debit	Tom
1769, Dec. 30	Gave sugar	Store debit	Tom
1769, Dec. 30	Received corn	Store credit	Tom
1770, Feb. 3	Gave sugar	Store debit	Tom
1770, Feb. 19	Gave sugar	Store debit	Tom

Table 4. continued

Date	Transaction on Schuyler's End	Counted by Schuyler as	Enslaved Customer Involved
1767, June 3	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1767, July 2	Received boards	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1767, July 2	Cash subtracted for silk handkerchief	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1767, Nov. 19	Received potatoes	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1767, Nov. 19	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1767, Nov. 19	Cash paid	-----	Harre/Har/Hara
1768, Nov. 19	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1768, Nov. 19	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1768, Dec. 25	Received corn	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1768, Dec. 31	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1768, Dec. 31	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1768, Dec. 31	Gave tea and sugar	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1769, Jan. 6	Gave sugar	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1769, Jan. 16	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1769, Jan. 16	Cash credit	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1769, July 21	Gave sugar	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1769, July 21	Received fish	Store credit	Harre/Har/Hara
1770, Feb. 2	Gave sugar	Store debit	Harre/Har/Hara
1767, June 3	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Coleman
1767, June 3	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Coleman
1767, Aug. 20	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Coleman
1767, Aug. 20	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Coleman
1767, Oct. 24	Gave tape (cloth)	Store debit	Coleman
1767, Nov. 19	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Coleman
1767, Nov. 19	Cash paid	-----	Coleman
1767, Dec. 21	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Coleman
1767, Dec. 21	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Coleman
1768, Jan. 1	Cash subtracted	Store debit	Coleman
1768, Jan. 1	Cash credit paid	Store credit	Coleman
1768, Mar. 24	Received tobacco	Store credit	Dick
1769, Jan.23	Cash paid for sugar and nails	Store credit	Dick
1769, Jan. 23	Cash paid for corn received	Store credit	Dick

Table 4. continued

Date	Transaction on Schuyler’s End	Counted by Schuyler as	Enslaved Customer Involved
1769, Jan. 6	Cash credit for corn received	Store credit	Bob
1770, Feb. 3	Gave sugar	Store debit	Bob
1768, Feb. 28	Cash credit for corn	Store credit	Class/Nicholas
1769, Jan. 6	Cash credit for corn	Store credit	Class/Nicholas
	Cash subtracted for sugar and stroud	Store debit	Class/Nicholas
1769, Jan. 6	Gave sugar and cash	Store debit	Juba/Jube
1769, Aug. 18	Gave tea, sugar, and rum	Store debit	Juba/Jube

Source: Philip Schuyler Account Book, 1764–1770, Philip Schuyler Collection, New-York Historical Society.

Rye (for food or hay), barley (for beer), oats (for food), and clover (for hay) were also grown with the aid of enslaved labor on the Schuyler Patent lands Philip inherited. It is not clear whether the slaves were instructed to rotate these crops according to the Norfolk system widely adopted in England after 1750 to ensure a nutrient-rich soil. If they did, enslaved farm hands sequentially planted wheat, a root crop (turnips, potatoes, beets, radishes), barley, rye or clover over a four-year period.²⁴

Back when Johannes Schuyler oversaw Patent land in the early eighteenth century, Lord Cornbury accurately predicted that “if [New York planters like the Schuylers] had a sure market for hemp and flax in England, they would greedily fall to the planting of hemp and flax because they want commodities to make returns to England for the goods they take from thence.”²⁵ Some sixty years later, Philip grew both flax and hemp—devoting four Saratoga farm acres to flax and two to hemp. Both products served the shipbuilding industry. Flax, once processed, became the linen used in sails. Hemp, either alone or combined with linen threads, became the fiber used for ropemaking. Additionally, coarse linen fabric was made into clothing for enslaved workers and others as every day wear, while hemp was made into gunnysacks to carry flour and other milled goods, potatoes, or sugar. Flax also yielded linseed oil (an ingredient for paint). Another factor contributing to Schuyler’s decision to enter the flax and hemp industries was that German immigrants began arriving in New York and Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century as skilled flax cultivators and traders. Some of these, Palatines, settled in the Hudson Valley and the Mohawk Valley, thus bringing their craft and business acumen on this score to the attention of the likes of Philip Schuyler. The processing of flax was especially labor intensive, involving some twenty-two

²⁴ Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture*, 23–24.

²⁵ Lord Cornbury, Letter to Mr. Secretary Hedges, July 15, 1705 in Edmund B. O’Callagan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. IV (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1854), 1151.

steps; women as well as men were called to do this work. Schuyler opened a linen mill and his 1767 ledgers show that he paid local White women as flax spinners. Enslaved Blacks plowed and manured soil for the flax crop; they harvested, cured, and, by separating its seed from its fiber, scutched the flax, too.²⁶ In late November 1769, for example, “Patrick & Jacob & Cob[,] Jube[, and] Lisbon Cleaned flax.”²⁷

News of Schuyler’s healthy hemp yields prompted a request to purchase a supply of his seed from a farmer in New Jersey “intent [on] sowing twenty acres of Hemp the next Spring” on his New Brunswick land. Hemp became an especially profitable crop for Schuyler during the Revolution, because of its value as both army tent material when spun and potential cordage for the revolutionaries’ naval vessels, but its processing involved very tedious labor as well for the enslaved at Schuyler’s Saratoga spread. Soil preparation for seeds required “two autumnal plowings; and similar plowings with harrowings the next spring.” Mature plants had to be pulled from the soil and retted (wet by rain or immersion in water) to loosen the strands on the stalk. Once dried, workers used a wooden, claw-like tool with teeth called a brake to isolate the desirable fibers. Then these had to be beaten, scraped, and combed to remove all refuse before the material was ready for spinning, twisting, or weaving. Thomas Jefferson, who infamously enslaved over 600 human beings over his lifetime and ran similar operations, commented on the painstaking, wearisome nature of hemp processing: “[It] is so slow, so laborious, and so much complained of by our laborers.”²⁸ Schuyler’s human chattel certainly had similar experiences.

Running the various mills involved long hours for Black laborers, late night or early morning, often in cold rooms. Mill houses were generally unheated, “for fireplaces were rare.”²⁹ Schuyler’s means and seriousness of purpose may have led him to make sure his

²⁶ Kenneth W. Keller, “From the Rhineland to the Virginia Frontier: Flax Production as a Commercial Enterprise,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98, no. 3 (July 1990): 487–511; Wolcott Webster Ellsworth, “The Palatines in the Mohawk Valley,” *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 15 (1915): 295–311; Hood, Adrienne D. “Flax and Wool: Fiber Production and Processing.” In *The Weaver’s Craft* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 40; Account Book, August 1, 1777, Philip Schuyler Collection (PSC), New-York Historical Society (N-YHS); Account Book, July 1, 1779, PSC, N-YHS; Account Books, July 13, 1779, PSC, N-YHS. After these crops were destroyed by the American army during the fighting that took place on those lands during the War for Independence, the General submitted a damage claim to the federal government for reimbursement based on 1777 prices.

²⁷ Philip Schuyler, Daybook, ca. November 22, 1769, PSC, N-YHS.

²⁸ John Cochrane, Letter to Philip Schuyler, July 23, 1765, PSP, NYPL; Ben Swenson, “Colonial Hemp and Flax,” *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Winter 2015), <https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/foundation/journal/Winter15/hemp.cfm>, accessed August 5, 2022; “Bartholomew Kindred: A Hired White Weaver,” Monticello, <https://www.monticello.org/slavery/landscape-of-slavery-mulberry-row-at-monticello/meet-people/bartholomew-kindred/>, accessed August 5, 2022. See Tuckerman, *The Life of General Philip Schuyler*, 72–73 for Rev. Cotton Mather Smith’s report on the manufacturing he witnessed at Schuyler’s Saratoga Farm in 1775 during the Revolution.

²⁹ Martha Zimiles and Murray Zimiles, *Early American Mills* (New York: Bramhull House, 1973), 40.

mill houses were heated. But nothing would have prevented the invasion of pests—the “birds, rats, and mice” that plagued all mills.³⁰ Enslaved workers would have combatted these bothers while contending with flour dust as both health and fire hazard.³¹

Schuyler’s enslaved laborers were a vital element of the income he received from a fishery he established. Fish Creek (or Fish Kill) flowed through his land and owed its name to the abundant quantity of fish that once swarmed in it and other nearby Upper Hudson River waters. Historical writer William Stone, Jr. elaborated, “Before the mills and dams were erected at Schuylerville by Gen. P. Schuyler in 1760, herring and shad in immense schools were in the habit of running up the Hudson in the spring into Fish Creek.”³² Recollections by Scottish-born Anne MacVicar Grant (1755–1838) of her visits during the 1760s to The Flatts, the stately residence of Philip’s aunt, Margarita Schuyler (1701–1782), on the east bank of the Hudson, describe the river’s sturgeon that appeared “in great quantities” each summer, and that fishermen caught, pickled, and dried “for future use or exportation.” According to historical ecological studies, five million pounds of bluefish herring might have passed through the Hudson River system in colonial times, most abundantly from March through June, but sometimes as late as October. Schuyler apparently specialized in this fish.³³ Manhattan merchants advertised their stock of Saratoga herring supplied by Schuyler.³⁴ Schuyler’s brother-in-law in New Jersey, John Cochrane, wrote to him in December 1763 to thank him for a gift of herring and complimented their taste: “We received your Favour, the Herrings and find them the most delicious of the kind we ever saw.”³⁵ Schuyler began a herring trade with Jamaica as early as 1764, near the start of his commercialization of Patent lands, and entrusted fellow native Albany resident and merchant Philip Livingston (1716–1778) to act as his agent there. From Kingston, Jamaica Livingston reported success in negotiating “a beneficial Branch of Commerce” for Schuyler’s pickled fish.³⁶

³⁰ Zimiles and Zimiles.

³¹ Zimiles and Zimiles.

³² William Leete Stone, Jr., *Reminiscences of Old Saratoga and Ballston* (New York: Virtue and Yorston, 1875), 114; Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County*, 19.

³³ Hetty Jo Brumbach and Susan Bender, “Woodland Period Settlement and Subsistence Change in the Upper Hudson River Valley,” in John P. Hart and Christina B. Reith, eds., *Northeast Subsistence-Settlement Change A.D. 700–1300* (Albany: New York State Education Department, 2002), 233.

³⁴ *New York Mercury*, May 7, 1764; *New-York Gazette*, April 15, 1765.

³⁵ Anne MacVicar Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady with Sketches of Manners and Scenery In America as They Existed Prior to the Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1846, 1808), 51; John Cochrane, Letter to Philip Schuyler, December 10, 1763, Philip Schuyler Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7667ac40-42d7-0134-ea2e-00505686a51c>, accessed June 14, 2021.

³⁶ Philip Livingston, Letter to Philip Schuyler, May 7, 1764, Philip Schuyler Papers, NYPL.

The variety of teeming fish were relatively easy to catch in nets and weirs set down in the waters or by spearing jumping sturgeon. This, too, was a work assigned to enslaved laborers, as documented in the nostalgic painting by William Sidney Mount (1807–1868), *Eel Spearing at Setauket*. Although completed in 1845, Mount recalled a scene from his Long Island boyhood when slavery was still legal in New York State and enslaved women were expert eel catchers (see Figure 7).³⁷ Harre, one of the enslaved men assigned to Schuyler’s Saratoga establishment, was a skilled fisherman.³⁸



Figure 7. Enslaved Woman Fishing for Eels in New York

Source: *Eel Spearing at Setauket*, 1845, William Sidney Mount (1807–1866), oil on canvas, H: 28.5 x W 36 in. Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0395. 1955.
Photograph by Richard Walker

³⁷ *Eel Spearing at Setauket*, Fenimore Art Museum, <http://collections.fenimoreartmuseum.org/eel-spearing-at-setauket>. Accessed June 14, 2021. See also Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 236; John Wilmerding, “An American Classic,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 2007.

³⁸ Philip Schuyler Saratoga Ledger, 1765–1770, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Black human chattel was central to these reinvigorated and new enterprises, which conformed to the regional model of the extended Schuyler family and fellow landowners in their social and political circles. Anne MacVicar Grant remembered that The Flatts used enslaved labor as well. Philip’s widowed Aunt Margarita inherited this estate about thirty miles south of Old Saratoga. She had been married to Philip’s deceased uncle, Phillip Schuyler (1696–1758), usually called The Colonel. In a pattern duplicated by his nephew Philip, the Colonel had owned “a number of negroes [bequeathed to his widow], well acquainted with felling of trees and managing of saw mills, of which he erected several; and while these were employed in carrying on a very advantageous trade of deals and lumber, which were floated down on rafts to New York, they were at the same time clearing the ground for the colony the Colonel was preparing to establish.”³⁹ In Philip Schuyler of Old Saratoga, the proverbial apple certainly did not fall far from the extended family tree so far as enslaved labor was concerned. Figure 8, another of the Olin Dows mural sections, captures typical dockside activity along the Hudson River, with enslaved laborers loading sacks and barrels of farm produce and other goods onto a waiting sloop while White supervisors direct the work. The busy riverside near Schuyler’s Saratoga establishments duplicated this sight.

³⁹ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 228.



Figure 8. Colonial-era Enslaved Workers at A Rural Hudson River Loading Dock
Source: Olin Dows, Murals in the Rhinebeck, NY Post Office, 1940

Philip’s personal fortune amplified greatly during this period.⁴⁰ Visitors commented favorably on his home and enterprises. Lord Adam Gordon, a British military officer who surveyed military fortifications in America from 1764 through 1765, passed through the Albany region and wrote admirably about what he saw in Old Saratoga: “The land along the Banks of the [Hudson] river, is excellent and well improved.—One Mr. P. Schuyler has a good house near it, lately built in a better Stile, than I have generally seen in America.”⁴¹ Another sojourner, Reverend Cotton Mather Smith, similarly admired Schuyler’s bustling establishment a decade later. Charles Carroll, Maryland delegate to the Continental

⁴⁰ Philip’s herring trade with Jamaica dates as early as 1764, near the start of Philip’s commercialization of his patent lands. He entrusted Philip Livingston who was in Kingston, Jamaica to act as an agent negotiating “a beneficial Branch of Commerce” for the pickled fish. See Philip Livingston, Letter to Philip Schuyler, May 7, 1764.

⁴¹ Lord Adam Gordon, “Journal of an Officer Who Traveled in America and the West Indies in 1764 and 1765,” in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed., Newton D. Mereness (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1916), 417.

Congress visited the Schuylers at Saratoga in April of 1776 on his way to Montreal for a diplomatic mission. As the wealthiest man in the colonies at the time, he was impressed by Schuyler’s undertakings and prosperity.⁴² He recorded the following observations:

We arrived in the evening, a little before sunset, at Saratoga, the seat of General Schuyler, distant from Albany thirty-two miles....The lands about Saratoga are very good, particularly the bottom lands. Hudson’s river runs within a quarter of a mile of the house, and you have a pleasing view of it for two or three miles above and below. A stream called Fishkill, which rises out of Lake Saratoga, about six miles from the general’s house, runs close by it, and turns several mills; one, a grist mill, two saw mills (one of them carrying fourteen saws) and a hemp and flax mill. This mill is a new construction, and answers equally well in breaking hemp or flax.⁴³

Again, it must be emphasized that enslaved labor was essential in all these operations, underscoring historian Ira Berlin’s finding that slaves were the most important source of rural labor in the colonial Hudson Valley and econometrician Gavin Wright’s argument that the use of enslaved people for diversified farms in the North was as efficient as it was on southern plantations devoted to single, staple crop production.⁴⁴ Black laborers were not alone in these duties. Catharine Schuyler oversaw much. Specialized White laborers were hired to assist, too: grape cutters, grass mowers, wagon makers, blacksmiths (to shoe horses, repair damaged wheel axles, and hoes), crews of “French people” (to turn the ground), and more. But the permanent, year-round labor force charged with day-to-day, ongoing duties was enslaved.⁴⁵

Enslaved women were especially important in domestic work, although the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* makes it clear that female slaves in the Hudson Valley “routinely worked in the fields,” too, even as they also “milked, spun, and wove” as their task-masters needed.⁴⁶ The left and center details of the Van Bergen Overmantel (see Figure 4)

⁴² Tuckerman, *The Life of Philip Schuyler*, 72–73; Brion McClanahan, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Founding Fathers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 199–201, 203–204, 207; James Hagerty, “Charles Carroll of Carrollton.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 3. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03379c.htm>, accessed June 6, 2021.

⁴³ Brantz Mayer, ed., *Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, During His Visit to Canada in 1776* (Baltimore, Maryland Historical Society, 1876), 55–57.

⁴⁴ Ira C. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 179, 181; Gavin Wright, “Slavery and American Agricultural History,” *Agricultural History* 77, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 527–552; Willard Wesley Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 29.

⁴⁵ Stuart W. Lehman, “A Well Cultivated Domain: A Documentary Study of Farming on the Schuyler Estates,” Albany, New York, February 1986, <http://npshistory.com/publications/sara/schuyler-est-farming.pdf>. Accessed January 15, 2022; Tucker, *Life of Philip Schuyler*, 73; John Graham, Letter to Philip Schuyler, July 6, 1777, PSP, NYPL.

⁴⁶ Margaret Washington, ed., *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 17, 19–20, 25, 27. See also Martin Bruegel, “Gender and Authority on the Farm: The Hudson Valley Countryside, 1790s–1850s,” *Agricultural History* 76, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 1–5; the quotation is from p. 5.

includes two female slaves carrying buckets heading toward cattle; one has passed a pair of granaries and a barn. The two figures signal the essential role of enslaved women in food processing and preparation for the Schuylers. Following these two milkmaids in particular, we can begin to trace their role in dairy processing. Enslaved women milked cows, churned butter, and made cheese. Cows were milked at least twice a day—morning and evening and sometimes at noon—and on the Schuyler farm at Saratoga, enslaved Mary evidently supervised these tasks. When the entire herd went missing one day, it was Mary who suggested that the group’s pasture grounds be moved closer to Schuyler House itself. She was distressed while performing her regular duties on one occasion to find that “a Rascal,” a thief, had got to the cows and stolen their milk.⁴⁷

The use of milk and dairy products was well established in the diets of European settlers for centuries when, in 1629, the Dutch began transporting cattle (a species not indigenous to North America) and incorporating the use of their by-products in their settlements in the New World. By the eighteenth century, for settlers of middling and upper-class status, milk was a primary ingredient of breakfasts and suppers consisting of “bread and butter,” “bread and milk,” or “butter-milk and bread.” When Peter Kalm visited the Albany area at mid-century, he remarked that locals “sometimes eat cheese at breakfast, and sometimes at dinner.” Other common dishes requiring the bovine liquid were “milk and hasty pudding, milk and stewed pumpkin, milk and baked apples, milk and berries.”⁴⁸

But one wonders about the association of enslaved Africans with cow milk. Historian Alfred Crosby was first to chronicle the introduction of cows, sheep, goats, and other domesticated animals to the New World as Spanish explorers and sailors “seeded” the lands they discovered in ways that resulted in Neo-European Anthropocenes.⁴⁹ Others have been less neutral about this process. Mathilde Cohen is deeply critical of the adoption of cow’s milk into non-European diets as a “colonial project”; Virginia Anderson includes cattle in a list of “creatures of empire”; Kelly Montford elaborates that “animal agriculture—including dairy...is a colonial method, entangled in whiteness, able-bodiedness, and human superiority”; and Heather Davis and Zoe Todd write that “the damming of rivers, the clear-cutting of forests, and the importation of plants and animals remade the worlds of

⁴⁷ John Lansing, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 31, 1778; Elinor F. Oakes, “A Ticklish Business: Dairying in New England Pennsylvania, 1750–1812,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (July 1980), 202.

⁴⁸ Alice Morse Earle, *Home Life in Colonial Days* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 148; Peter Kalm, 110–111.

⁴⁹ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 1986), 171–196.

North America into a vision of a displaced Europe, fundamentally altering the climate and ecosystems.”⁵⁰ Enslaved labor was forced to participate in this massively transformative ecological project.

At the same time, lactose intolerance may have been a problem for many of the enslaved. Milk contains lactose, which requires human lactase to break down properly within the body; lactase is normally present in nursing infants but they cease producing it once weaned. The human capacity to digest cow’s milk beyond infancy on an ongoing basis developed alongside the domestication of cattle because of human genetic adaptations occurring over time with the inclusion of milk in post-infancy human diets; this is called lactase persistence. While cattle-raising and the consumption of cattle by-products were an integral part of northern and western European everyday life for centuries BCE, having traveled from a Middle Eastern point of origin over cross-Saharan routes from the north and east, cattle entered West Africa, the source of the vast majority of captives to be enslaved for emerging American economies, much later.⁵¹ The impact of this later exposure to cattle on African captives in America and their descendants is disturbing. Several studies from the 1970s show that American slaves in 1860, African Americans in 1970, and the Igbo and Yoruba populations in Nigeria (ancestors of many North American Blacks) exhibited high levels of lactose intolerance when compared to White populations in 1972.⁵² A 2005 Cornell University study found that up to 75 percent of African Americans experienced lactose intolerance.⁵³ Where lactase persistence is most prominent among Africans and their descendants, it is in East African populations, especially pastoralists, where the ability to tolerate cows’ and animal milk “co-evolved” with the domestication of cattle and other

⁵⁰ See Mathilde Cohen, “Animal Colonialism: The Case of Milk,” *American Journal of International Law Unbound*, Vol. 111 (2017), 267–271 ; Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, “On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene,” *ACME* 16, no. 4 (January 2017), 761–780; Kelly Struthers Montford, “Milk and Law in the Anthropocene,” *Journal of Food Law & Policy* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 48–54.

⁵¹ Okeyo Mwai, Olivier Hanotte, Young-Jun Kwon, and Seoae Cho, “African Indigenous Cattle: Unique Resources in a Rapidly Changing World,” *Asian-Australasian Journal of Animal Sciences* 28, no. 7 (July 2015): 913; Walter Dethler, “Cattle in Africa: Distribution, Types, and Problems,” *Geographical Review* 53, no. 1 (January 1963): 52; Louise Sarant, “African Cattle Originated in the Middle East,” *Genome Medicine*, April 10, 2014, [https://www.natureasia.com/en/nmiddleeast/article/10.1038/nmiddleeast.2014.89#:~:text=African%20cattle%20genomes%20were%20very,with%20African%20wild%20cattle%2C%20aurochs.](https://www.natureasia.com/en/nmiddleeast/article/10.1038/nmiddleeast.2014.89#:~:text=African%20cattle%20genomes%20were%20very,with%20African%20wild%20cattle%2C%20aurochs.,), Accessed June 30, 2021.

⁵² Nicholas Scott Cardell and Mark Myron Hopkins, “The Effect of Milk Intolerance on the Consumption of Milk by Slaves in 1860,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 8, no. 3 (Winter 1978): 507–513; Norman Kretschmer, “Lactose and Lactase,” *Scientific American*, 227 (1972): 76–78. Comparative data is provided for various ethnic and racial groups in 1972 by Tuvia Gilat, Ralph Kuhn, Enny Gelman, and Odette Mizrahy, “Lactase Deficiency in Jewish Communities in Israel,” *American Journal of Digestive Diseases* 15 (1970): 895–904.

⁵³ Susan S. Lang, “Lactose Intolerance Seems Linked to Ancestral Struggles with Harsh Climate and Cattle Diseases, Cornell Study Finds,” *Cornell Chronicle*, June 1, 2005.

livestock.⁵⁴ What this means is that for many or perhaps most of Schuyler’s enslaved children and adults, a breakfast with milk could have been followed some two hours later by a range of discomfiting symptoms ranging on the mild side from bloating, flatulence, and belching to more severe cramping and “a watery, explosive diarrhea.”⁵⁵ In time, Schuyler’s enslaved workers learned to associate the usual breakfast with illness and adjusted their food intake during the morning. Otherwise, they learned to push through persistent, regular digestive irritations while performing the day’s work—a condition that probably affected any first-generation, newly enslaved Blacks recently arrived from West Africa on Schuyler’s Patent lands.

We can speculate that African lactose intolerance may even have contributed to the way tea was taken for breakfast in the Schuyler household. In his travels through the Upper Hudson Valley in the mid-eighteenth century, Peter Kalm made two relevant observations: In the Albany area, “the servants in the town are chiefly negroes,” and Albany residents drank “tea commonly without milk” for breakfast.⁵⁶ Might these two notations have been related? The Dutch were the first to introduce tea consumption to Europe at the turn of the eighteenth century, but once the British took to the drink and rapidly spread its everyday consumption throughout their American colonies by 1750 it was slaves who were entrusted with its preparation.⁵⁷ Perhaps milk appeared sparingly in the popular breakfast beverage partly because slaves had learned to correlate stomach pain with the buckets of creamy cow fluid their women collected each morning. Taking advantage of the growing taste everywhere for sugar as an additive, enslaved Black women, when left to themselves, may have decided not to infuse perfectly good tea with yet another flavoring—the sickening cow’s milk.

Then again, there was the option of beer (a breakfast beverage choice in colonial Dutch households), an alternative without the lactose absorption challenges. Peter Kalm noted that Albany residents in the mid-eighteenth century “commonly drink very small

⁵⁴ Alessia Ronciaro, Michael C. Campbell, Jibril B. Hirbo, Thomas Nyambo, Sabah A. Omar, and Sarah A. Tishkoff, “Genetic Origins of Lactase Persistence and the Spread of Pastoralism in Africa,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 94, no. 4 (April 2014): 496–510.

⁵⁵ These symptoms are described in Kretchmer, “Lactose and Lactase,” 72.

⁵⁶ Peter Kalm, *Travels into North America*, Volume 2 (London: T. Lowndes, 1773), 105.

⁵⁷ On the spread of tea drinking in the British empire during the eighteenth century, see Mary Lou Heiss and Robert J. Heiss, *The Story of Tea: A Cultural History and Drinking Guide* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2007), 4–31; Woodruff D. Smith, “Complications of the Commonplace: Tea, Sugar, and Imperialism,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 2 (1992): 259–278; Laura C. Martin, *A History of Tea: The Life and Times of the World’s Favorite Beverage* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2018), 97–122; Mark Ellis, Richard Coulton, and Matthew Mauger, *Empire of Tea: The Asian Tea that Conquered the World* (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 2015). The introduction of the use of milk with tea to Europe is credited either to Jean Nieuhoff, the Dutch ambassador to China, or to the French salonnière Madame de la Sablière in 1660 or 1680, respectively; see Mary Hossain, “Culinary Cooperation: Food and Drink in the *Mémoires* of the Chevalier d’Arvieux,” *Dalhousie French Studies* 11 (Fall/Winter 1986): 60 and John J. Conley, *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 203, fn 38.

beer” (low alcohol beer) with breakfast and dinner.⁵⁸ In fact, the first known brewery in British colonial America had appeared in Albany in 1633.⁵⁹ Such beer-making operations were small-scale, local, and mostly for household ale (low alcohol beer).⁶⁰ Cider (also with low alcohol content) and beer increased in frequency as the beverage to be drunk with meals after 1750. On the Schuyler spread, enslaved women would have helped make beer as well as use it, like ale and cider throughout the colonies, as a substitute for water with meals.⁶¹ They first malted grain, usually barley, by soaking it in water until it began to sprout, stopping the germination process by drying the grain with hot air in a kiln. Then the resulting malt was soaked in a tub of water; the resulting grain mash was strained, with the heavier part later fed to the livestock, and the fermenting liquid, called “wort,” then mixed with hops. A recipe left by George Washington for “small beer” maps the various steps servants took to produce the brew:

To make Small Beer Take a larger Siffer [Sifter] full of Bran Hops to your taste
– Boil these 3 hours. Then strain out 30 Gallons into a Cooler[.] put in 3
Gall[ons] molasses while the Beer is scalding hot or rather draw the molasses
into the Cooler & strain the Beer on it while boiling Hot[.] let this stand till it is
little more than Blood warm then put in a quart of Ye[a]st[.] if the Weather is
very Cold cover it over with a Blank[et] & let it Work in the Cooler 24 hours
then put it into the Cask – leave the Bung open till it is almost done working
– Bottle it that day week it was Brewed[.]⁶²

This type of beer was for consumption by enslaved workers, children, and paid servants. Stronger beer with longer brewing time, also made by enslaved people, would have been reserved for the Schuyler family and its guests along with rum and Madeira wine. Given the hospitality and standing of the Schuylers, the Saratoga homestead would have also had a malt house where brewing and storing took place or a malt cellar for brewing that was separate from a storehouse for beer-filled barrels. This may have been the cellar in an

⁵⁸ Kalm, *Travels*, Vol. 2, 106.

⁵⁹ Glenn R. Carroll and Anand Swaminathan, “Density Dependent Organizational Evolution in the American Brewing Industry from 1633 to 1988,” *Acta Sociologica* 34, no. 3 (1991): 156.

⁶⁰ Kalm, *Travels*, Vol. 2, 106.

⁶¹ David G. Moyer, *American Breweries of the Past* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2009), 2–3; Amy Mittelman, *Brewing Battles: A History of American Beer* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008), 9.

⁶² “Recipe for Small Beer,” Center for Digital History, The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/recipe-for-small-beer/>, accessed July 10, 2021. This is a transcription from an entry in the George Washington Notebook as a Virginia Colonel, 1757, Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

outbuilding located by archaeologists at the site and upon which Schuyler later built the present Schuyler House, although there is no definite proof of this. There may also have been a horse-powered malt mill on grounds owned by Schuyler at Old Saratoga.⁶³

Enslaved women made butter and cheese for their enslavers at Saratoga House, too. Yet the General probably did not enter the dairying business on a large scale. Dairy products were among the food provisions sent to the West Indies from North America during the colonial period and by 1750 some northern farmers began developing relatively large-scale commercial dairying operations, supplying growing North American urban, coastal markets with milk, cheese, and butter. These later enterprises were chiefly based in New England and Pennsylvania with Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore serving as both receptors of these farm goods from their surrounding hinterlands and sending butter to the West Indies. New York, to which Schuyler might have sent dairy by-products and from which he might have exported them, does not appear as such in extant sources for the late eighteenth century.⁶⁴ The cheese, butter-milk, and butter that enslaved Black girls and women processed at Old Saratoga for the Schuylers were probably for household and local consumption. However, there are some small indications that the ambitious General might have joined the late eighteenth century trend toward expansion into market-oriented dairying by devoting more people to the task. John Lansing, Jr., Schuyler’s overseer, wrote to Schuyler about the previously mentioned milk stolen from “the Milch Cows, which are daily milked” by “the Men [that enslaved Mary] sends for that purpose.” The use of several men to milk cows suggests that milk production exceeded the levels of family use. Additionally, the 400 wagon loads of hay appearing in a 1777 ledger hint that the clover, rye-wheat, and buckwheat grown on the farm—hay components—fattened a substantial number of cattle.⁶⁵

From one of Schuyler’s account books, it is clear that during this period he engaged in a number of commercial exchanges with those he enslaved at Old Saratoga. Philip owned a store on Patent lands that supplied everyday buyers with a wide assortment of goods. Between February 28, 1767 and February 19, 1770, Schuyler conducted seventy-three transactions directly with enslaved customers at the store, involving seven individuals (see Table 4). Since we do not know exactly how many people Schuyler owned during this time or the number in the small village, these seven may have represented about half to two-thirds of his total human chattel at any moment on average, based mainly on the eleven to thirteen he is known to have held some twenty years later. This group, all male,

⁶³ “Recipe for Small Beer”; Mittelman, 8–9; See John G. Waite Associates, Architects, General Philip Schuyler House Historic Structure Report Addendum: Kitchen and Kitchen Passage –100% Draft, Saratoga National Historical Park, November 2022, 19 for mention of the cellar ruins.

⁶⁴ Oates, “A Ticklish Business,” 195–212.

⁶⁵ John Lansing, Jr., Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 31, 1778, PSP, NYPL; Oates, “A Ticklish Business,” 198. Lansing served as Schuyler’s military secretary from 1777–1778 before beginning a political career in the New York Assembly in 1780.

had a bartering arrangement at the store like that of free farmers up and down rural parts of the Hudson Valley in the eighteenth century—men who drove their carts to mercantile establishments near sloop landings to exchange their goods for supplies from proprietors they knew personally.⁶⁶ Schuyler received boards, logs, potatoes, hogs, and corn from “our Tom,” which he traded for sugar, rum, and stroud (wool cloth). Harre offered Schuyler boards, corn, fish, and potatoes, which allowed the bondsman to receive tea, sugar, and a silk handkerchief. Dick, on one occasion, received store credit for tobacco he brought to the store; on another, he was able to acquire nails in exchange for the corn he offered Schuyler.⁶⁷ What are we to make of these dealings?

Marketplace participation by a few of Schuyler’s slaves during the eighteenth century was hardly unique. Enslavers permitted their human property to engage in limited private enterprise in other parts of the country as well. Perhaps most famous of these was New Orleans’ Congo Square, where French slave owners began encouraging commercial activity among their slaves to offset the costs of slave maintenance and upkeep following economic uncertainties caused by the reorganization of the French Company of the Indies (*Compagnie des Indes*) in 1721; Louisiana’s enslavers allowed their slaves to have small parcels of land on which to grow foodstuffs that they sold at Sunday public markets.⁶⁸ Similar practices were found in the South Carolina Low Country. Justine Hill Edwards provides a persuasive explanation for the activity of slave vendors from the earliest days of that colony:

Slaveholders, in an effort to control enslaved peoples’ investment of time and labor, protected slaves’ economic ventures because they realized that these commercial practices helped to safeguard their investments in slavery. The economic interests of enslaved people, enslavers, and even nonpropertied white colonists were not always mutually exclusive. While enslavers relieved themselves of the financial burden of providing slaves with subsistence, and while nonpropertied whites had access to relatively affordable foodstuff, enslaved Africans worked to make their lives better materially.⁶⁹

Allowing for some enslaved independent economic activity, in other words, made good business sense for both enslaved and enslaver.

⁶⁶ See Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780–1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 1–40; Philip Schuyler Account Book, 1764–1770, Philip Schuyler Collection (PSC), New-York Historical Society (N-YHS). New-York Historical Society; US Census, 1790.

⁶⁷ See Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing*, 1–40.

⁶⁸ Jerah Johnson, “New Orleans’ Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Cultural Formation,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 32, no. 2 (1991): 121–124.

⁶⁹ Justine Hill Edwards, *Unfree Markets: The Slaves’ Economy and the Rise of Capitalism in South Carolina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 17.

Mrs. Grant, the mid-eighteenth Scottish visitor, provides clues as to why these southern patterns replicated themselves in Old Saratoga in the portion of her narrative on how General Schuyler rose to national prominence.⁷⁰ Grant explained how Schuyler drew to his Saratoga establishment the various free, White workers needed to grow his wealth: unskilled workers, ordinary craftsmen, artisans, and mechanics, and farmers (including tenants). During cold winter months when casual labor (outdoor work on rivers, streets, docks) was suspended because of snow, ice, and cold weather, Schuyler provided these needy ones with lodging in barracks he shrewdly had built in Saratoga on the public dole, through a county allotment for winter relief. Schuyler then offered paid work to these otherwise unemployed folks there as well. Grant elaborated,

The new settlement was an asylum for everyone who wanted bread and a home. From the variety of employments regularly distributed, every artisan and every laborer found here distributed lodging and occupation; some hundreds of people, indeed, were employed at once... He paid them liberally... Every mechanic ended in being a farmer, that is a profitable tenant to the owner of the soil, and new recruits of artisans... supplied their place.⁷¹

The tremendous financial success of Philip Schuyler’s ventures in Saratoga before the Revolution was largely in consequence of his shrewdness: he gave his laborers, enslaved as well as free, some opportunity—however slight—to improve their lives. Their exertions enhanced his own fortunes exponentially. A showcase capitalist, Schuyler secured his position ever more firmly by allowing some of those he enslaved to have a turn entering the consumer marketplace. Their small purchases—sugar, tea, or rum—may not have enhanced their material existence much, but the transactions offered bondspeople psychological and spiritual affirmation as human actors capable of independent choice. Some may have even nurtured dreams of accumulating enough store credit to bargain successfully for their freedom. These allowances translated into greater docility, agreeableness, and “likely”-ness among “the negroes”—ultimately solidifying far greater gains for Schuyler.

One then wonders how these same Black captive laborers reacted when they watched Philip’s wife, Catherine, order the burning of the family’s wheat fields in anticipation of British General Burgoyne’s 1777 advance to Saratoga during the Revolutionary War, as her husband instructed. Schuyler’s most scholarly biographer, Don Gerlach, doubts this ever occurred; there is no evidence in the General’s correspondence that his wife destroyed crops or that he gave such orders.⁷² But suppose we look to other possible evidence. The narratives that swell this event may not have been apocryphal. Katherine Schuyler Baxter, the granddaughter of Catharine “Caty” Schuyler (1781–1856), General Schuyler’s youngest

⁷⁰ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 228–229.

⁷¹ Grant.

⁷² Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*, 281–283.

daughter, related the theatrical episode in her nationalistic family history by quoting Caty’s supposed 1846 account as well as that of Civil War General John Watts De Peyster (1821–1907) who wrote many accounts of the Battle of Saratoga.⁷³ True, Caty was not yet born at the time of the supposed event. True, Schuyler was relieved of his high military post after the fall of Fort Ticonderoga and Katherine had a personal interest in burnishing her great grandfather’s name to undo any lingering damage to his honor after this public humiliation.⁷⁴ But these considerations do not automatically invalidate her story. There is significant documentation of British predations against colonists’ food stores, stealing them for the Crown’s troops during the Revolutionary War. For instance, the Schuylers would have known about the British seizure of wheat, oat, and corn in April 1777 during the Redcoats’ raid on Danbury, Connecticut—despite the resistance of a force led by Benedict Arnold, who later assisted the Continental Army in the September–October Battles of Saratoga. From nearby Fairfield, Mrs. Mary Silliman (1736–1818), wife of the officer heading the local Connecticut militia, General Gold Selleck Silliman, had watched closely and recorded the event in her journal. Philip and Catherine Schuyler would not have wanted a repeat occurrence at Saratoga from their ample supplies.⁷⁵

More to the point for this project, though, is not so much the literal historicity of the wheat burning as the meaning to be drawn from Mrs. Schuyler’s purported action—what the memorialized story signified, and the reasons to interrogate that message for clues about African American experiences. In other nineteenth century publications besides Katherine Schuyler’s, Mrs. Schuyler is ennobled for blocking a looting British army’s access to her family’s vast food supply. She is venerated for this act which displayed Philip’s “confidence in her spirit, firmness, and patriotism.”⁷⁶ The dramatic memory of the Schuylers’ self-sacrificing nationalism was further established by the visual record, Emanuel Leutze’s 1852 painting of this act which was also incorporated into the Saratoga Monument standing today within the Saratoga National Historical Park. The monument, a

⁷³ Katherine Schuyler Baxter, *A Godchild of Washington: A Picture of the Past* (New York: F. Tennyson Neely, 1897), 395–396. De Peyster was a military writer among whose works are included those about the Battle of Saratoga. One example is *Schuyler and Political Strategy* (1866), available at the New-York Historical Society.

⁷⁴ Baxter, *A Godchild of Washington*, 296–367 for a detailed account of Schuyler’s dismissal, request for a court-martial, and exoneration.

⁷⁵ James R. Case, *An Account of Tryon’s Raid on Danbury in April 1777, Also the Battle of Ridgefield and the Career of Gen. David Wooster from Written Sources on the Subject with Much Original Matter Hitherto Unpublished* (Danbury, CT: Danbury Print Company, 1927), 8, 23–28; Joy Day Buel and Richard Duel, Jr., *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 132. This biography of Mary Silliman is based on her wartime diary and correspondence.

⁷⁶ The torching of the Schuylers’ Saratoga wheat fields is mentioned in Elizabeth Ellet, *Women of the American Revolution*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co., 1900, 1849), 60; Anderson, *Our County and Its People*, 306; and Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 277–279.

155-foot granite obelisk, was completed in 1887 and dedicated in 1912, but it was first proposed in 1856 by the newly formed Saratoga Monument Association to commemorate the 1777 Battles of Saratoga.⁷⁷

In fact, both Leutze’s painting and the monument were part of the contribution of American artists to the process of antebellum “national self-creation”—the development of a national identity based on a common political culture.⁷⁸ After the divisive convulsions of the Civil War, however, that process became reconciliatory, proclaiming national healing and pride. Within the politically fractious decade before the War Between the States, Leutze’s original painting both recalls and ensconces a public memory of the torched wheat fields as an inclusive and unifying event. Folded into the Saratoga Monument as a reproduction in the immediate post-war Reconstruction period, the painting interprets the Schuylers as leaders of a public that is consenting and like-minded in their devotion to the struggle for independence. A barefoot, enslaved young man wearing a disheveled shirt crouches next to Mrs. Schuyler as he dutifully reaches to supply her with a lit candle. She looms above him holding a torch she is putting to the grain. Both enslaver and enslaved are dressed in muted shades of red, white, and/or blue, suggesting the pair’s patriotic union of mind and purpose. Mrs. Schuyler stands at the center of an ideal, imagined, national community of Black and White, female and male, young and adult, rich and poor (see Figure 9).

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Our County and Its People*, 305–309; “Saratoga Monument,” Saratoga National Historical Park, <https://www.nps.gov/sara/planyourvisit/saratoga-monument.htm>, accessed December 15, 2022. Leutze’s work was one of sixteen historical paintings depicting patriotic scenes that were included in the monument.

⁷⁸ Karsten Fitz, “The Düsseldorf Academy of Art, Emanuel Leutze, and German-American Transatlantic Exchange in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 52, no. 1 (2007): 21–26; Jochen Wierich, *Grand Themes: Emanuel Leutze, Washington Crossing the Delaware, and American History Painting* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 1–19, 123.



Figure 9. Torching the Schuyler Wheat Fields During the Battle at Saratoga

Source: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, *Mrs. Schuyler Burning Her Wheat Fields on the Approach of the British*, 1852, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Significantly, it is the enslaved boy who has the most direct access to the flame, but his use of it is mitigated. It is the candle in his lantern that supplies the fire to the torches used by Mrs. Schuyler and the older of two White girls, perhaps intended to reference a Schuyler daughter. While he has the potential of ignition, he does not use it. He does not set anything afire himself. Instead, the slave—in a crouching position and lowest to the ground of all the figures—is guided by a White man, probably representing one of the General’s overseers at Saratoga. Directive power rests with him. In this way, Leutze visually affirmed Black subservience to supervision by Whites, a comforting image for them particularly regarding the use of fire, which was universally feared by enslavers as a ready tool for protest in the hands of those they enslaved. Indeed, enslaved people used this weapon of vengeance in numerous instances throughout the Atlantic World from Brazil to the

Caribbean and North America.⁷⁹ Anxieties about violent slave resistance swelled in North America on the heels of the 1791 Haitian Revolution, leading Whites to increase their surveillance of enslaved people.⁸⁰ In Albany, for instance, a fire set by three slaves in November 1793 resulted in the destruction of twenty-six buildings and prompted legislation restricting the free movement of enslaved people in the city. In contrast, Leutze’s painting works to allay fears of Black insurrection, and instead aligns those in bondage with a different revolution—the American democratic revolution. The canvas memorializes a compliant, submissive servant taking orders from his enslaver’s agent, thus folding slave acquiescence into the nation’s revolutionary founding.

The visual narrative repeats the theme of the faithful, wartime Black servant in another popularized memory of the Revolutionary War at Old Saratoga. In this account, told by nineteenth century historian John Brandow, an enslaved housekeeper detected a hostile Indian hidden on the second floor of the Schuyler residence with the intent of murdering the General with a knife. The unnamed female slave saved Schuyler’s life by whispering the danger to him, allowing him time to arm himself and shout to an imaginary guard as she quickly exited the room, deliberately tramping heavily on creaky floorboards that gave the impression of several men rushing to the defense. Tricked by the enslaved woman’s smart deception, the alarmed would-be assassin dashed out of the house but was captured in the attempted escape and taken prisoner.⁸¹ Again, the actions of Schuyler’s enslaved workers seem to synchronize perfectly and almost naturally with those of their enslaver.

But consider the perspective of the enslaved youth who might have been helping destroy crops that Tom and others among Schuyler’s enslaved workers had grown for Schuyler or themselves for their own personal dividends. In this light, the figure in his askew, red shirt functions as no more than an appendage—a less than enthusiastic assistant to Catharine’s patriotic act.⁸² According to published chronicles of this episode, Mrs. Schuyler turned her attention to saving her Saratoga grain crop from the oncoming Redcoats “with her own hands, *to the astonishment of her negro servants*” [emphasis added].⁸³ In these accounts, the slaves’ surprise serves as a foil for the Schuylers’ bravery, patriotism, and sacrifices; the servants’ shocked reaction effectively underscores the

⁷⁹ Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., *Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellion*, Vol. 2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 12–14, 26–28, 76, 98, 203, 347–349, 434; G.S. Boritt and S. Hancock, eds., *Slavery, Resistance, Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 29; James Oakes, “The Political Significance of Slave Resistance,” *History Workshop Journal* 22, no. 1 (October 1986): 89.

⁸⁰ Donald R. Hickey, “America’s Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791–1806,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 363–365; Robin Blackburn, “Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (October 2006): 644–645; Don R. Gerlach, “Black Arson in Albany, New York, November 1793,” *Journal of Black Studies* 7, no 3 (1977): 301–312.

⁸¹ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 276; Baxter, *A Godchild of Washington*.

⁸² Emanuel Leutze, “Mrs. Schuyler Burning her Wheat Fields on the Approach of the British,” 1852, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

⁸³ Baxter, *A Godchild of Washington*, 395–396; Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 277–279.

Schuylers’ selflessness. Yet, if the spotlight is turned away from the Schuylers and onto those they enslaved, the stunned response of bondspeople witnessing the torching may well have been gut-wrenching distress rather than speechless admiration. They may have watched with dismay as their investment of daily physical exertions disintegrated in the fires. As enslaved people, unlike their enslaver, they had no material means to rebuild their material lives or to feed their aspirations except what Philip Schuyler permitted. All of them must have worried about their own futures if the General were utterly ruined. Might they be sold? Tom, Harre, Dick, Bob, or Coleman might have thought of the grain, the fish, the potatoes, the hogs, the stashes of lumber—the fruits of their private labors which they were used to exchanging for cash and credit. Would such opportunities evaporate completely? What the Schuylers destroyed in the heat of battle and revolutionary fervor to achieve their political freedom (according to this memory), those they enslaved may have lamented as the disappearance of the nearest approximation of legal freedom they might experience in their constricted lives.

Dawn broke beautifully, ushering in a sunny and calm autumn morning on October 17, 1777—the day of General Burgoyne’s surrender at Saratoga. Brandow effused about nature’s auspicious signs of promise for the new American democracy: “Here and there were clusters of trees, decked with the glowing hues of crimson and scarlet and gold, that lighted up those ancient woods like pillars of fire.”⁸⁴ He elaborated, “This was a high day in liberty’s history, a red-letter date in the annals of humane progress.”⁸⁵ On that day, General Philip Schuyler—past member of the New York Committee of Correspondence, former representative to the Continental Congress, and once Commander of the Northern Department of the Continental Army—stood with General Horatio Gates and other high-ranking American officers to accept the formal British surrender to American forces, a hard-won victory for the exalted cause of freedom.⁸⁶

Yet Philip Schuyler was a “Conservative Patriot” whose commitment to enslavement and slaveholding held fast despite his and others’ cries for liberty throughout the Revolutionary era. In speeches and in writing, Schuyler espoused noble ideals similar to those of Philadelphian John Dickinson who famously declaimed, “*Those who are taxed without their own consent, expressed by themselves or their representatives, are slaves. We are taxed without our own consent, expressed by ourselves or our representatives. We are therefore—SLAVES.*”⁸⁷ Within a week after the Battles of Lexington and Concord,

⁸⁴ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 156; Don R. Gerlach, *Proud Patriot: Philip Schuyler and the War of Independence 1775–1783* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 319–321.

⁸⁵ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 156.

⁸⁶ Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*.

⁸⁷ John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*, 3rd. ed. (Philadelphia: William and Thomas Bradford, 1769), 53. On Schuyler’s measured movement toward the Patriot cause, see Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*, 4–7.

for example, Schuyler wrote to his friend, John Cruger, “My heart bleeds as I view the horrors of civil war, but we have only left us the choice between such evils and slavery.”⁸⁸ However, “slavery” for leaders like Schuyler and his peers was merely a metaphor signifying their victimization by the Crown’s agents who violated their English rights, their “English liberties.”⁸⁹ Patriots applied the term “slavery” to British taxation and quartering mandates to condemn these policies. They did not intend to convey a principled objection to the institution of slavery per se.

Schuyler’s political beliefs were in no way radical by contemporary standards. He did not mean to upset existing domestic social hierarchies. Nor did most of the Whiggish men whose opposition to British impositions after 1765 led them to support a break with the Crown. They felt forced into military action by the logic of their ideas and ideals.⁹⁰ For example, in another pro-independence statement, Schuyler explained, “America has recourse to Arms merely for her Safety and Defense....She wages no war of Ambition, Content if she can only retain the fair Inheritance of English Law and English Liberty. Such being the Purity of her intention, no stain must be suffered to disgrace our Arms.”⁹¹ To Schuyler and his peers, their motivations were modest, reasonable, and therefore unshakable even if they led to violent conflict. It was *political* slavery against which they fought. Chattel slavery was another matter entirely; it was a part of the English liberties they defended and naturalized in everyday dealings. A miniscule number of revolutionaries were in fact early abolitionists, but the common, mainstream American rebel was not and neither was Schuyler. In fact, in September 1767, as revolutionary fervor mounted, Schuyler sold “1 negro wench” named Sall to a Nicholas Clute and later recorded the deal as another transaction in his ledger—unremarkable business as usual for him. He did the same two years later, debiting Ashbell Moore’s account for his purchase of Chloe, a Schuyler slave; Schuyler accepted four oxen from Moore as down payment for the woman.⁹²

⁸⁸ Tuckerman, *Life of General Philip Schuyler*, 85.

⁸⁹ Peter A. Dorsey, “To Corroborate our Own Claims: Public Positioning and the Slavery Metaphor in Revolutionary America,” *American Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (September 2003): 353–386; Patricia Bradley, *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 1–24. On the British requirement that colonists provide lodging for British soldiers and Patriot opposition to this policy and to new taxes in the Albany area, see Elizabeth M. Covart, “The American Revolution Comes to Albany, New York 1756–1776,” *Journal of the American Revolution*, August 14, 2014, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/08/the-american-revolution-comes-to-albany-new-york-1756-1776>, accessed August 11, 2022.

⁹⁰ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1967), 41–161; Tuckerman, *Life of General Philip Schuyler*, 87–88.

⁹¹ Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*, 16.

⁹² Philip Schuyler, Account Book, November 7, 1767, PSC, NY-HS. In the ledger, Ashbell Moore appears as “Ashibill More.” The buyer may have been Nicholas Clute (1725–1812), born in Albany. See Hon. John Sanders, *Centennial Address Relating to the Early History of Schenectady and Its Inhabitants* (Albany: Van Benthuysen Printing House, 1879), 107 and “Nicholas Clute,” <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Clute-106>, accessed August 14, 2022.

At the same time, though, historians F. Nwabueze Okoye and Patricia Bradley have argued that slavery as a metaphor and anti-British rallying call among free White colonists received its potency precisely because of the literal presence of chattel slavery in their midst. They knew only too well the legal, political, and economic subjugation of unfree African Americans and associated that condition with shame and humiliation.⁹³ In a figurative sense, chattel slavery represented the nightmarish end of the steep, slippery, downward slope upon which the colonists felt they were sliding because of British policies.

All of this must be considered to understand Schuyler’s frustrations during and after the failed fight to defend Fort Ticonderoga in early July of 1777—a defeat he partially blamed on the use of Black troops he deemed unsuitable. The General was not at all happy about the inclusion of enslaved soldiers. Later that same month, with deep skepticism, he rhetorically asked General William Heath, commander of the Continental Army’s Eastern District, “Is it consistent with the Sons of Freedom to trust their all to be defended by slaves?”⁹⁴ This was not a lofty expression of high, antislavery ideals on Schuyler’s part—no acknowledgement of the inherent contradiction of a war for liberty fought by a slaveholding population. Rather, this was a reflection of exasperation and indignation from having to rely on untrained arms, unworthy soldiers. In the same letter to Heath, the general aired his disgust at the “shameful Tardiness” of the militias in New England for failing to provide him with adequate reinforcements. He objected to the supply of “Boys, aged men and Negroes, who disgrace our arms.”⁹⁵ Writing to George Washington in July about such ragtag demographics in his view, Schuyler lamented, “I wish one third of them had not been Little Boys and Negroes. perhaps the Disaster we have experienced would not have happened.”⁹⁶ In light of Schuyler’s emphasis on the “Purity” of the rebels’ struggle and his desire that it avoid “stain” and “disgrace,” his communication to Washington takes on racist connotations. One can understand how inexperienced, impetuous youths and fragile old men would not make effective soldiers. But Schuyler’s disqualification of all “Negroes” as a category reveals that he shared his contemporaries’ view of the innate inferiority of Black people.

Regardless of Schuyler’s assessment of them, the fact remains that “Negroes” who were enslaved fought as forced revolutionaries, servants of their enslavers, at Fort Ticonderoga when many free Whites were deserting. It should be acknowledged that the composition of the Continental Army was complex. There were ideologically motivated

⁹³ F. Nwabueze Okoye, “Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolutionaries,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (January 1980), 28, 12; Bradley, *Slavery*, 1–24.

⁹⁴ Philip Schuyler, Letter to William Heath, July 28, 1777, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, NY.

⁹⁵ Schuyler, Letter to Heath, July 28, 1777.

⁹⁶ Philip Schuyler, Letter to George Washington, July 18, 1777, *Letterbook of Philip John Schuyler, 1777, June 4–August 13*, mssHM 649, The Huntington Digital Library, San Marino, California, <https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p15150coll7/id/23505>, accessed December 27, 2022.

elites and middling sorts among the volunteers. But Blacks and Whites comprising the rank-and-file were heavily drawn from free men who were unpropertied (or those with very small landholdings), poor, unskilled, immigrant, young, unemployed, out-of-towners (those from areas other than the ones in which they enlisted), and paid substitutes for the wealthy. These were not so much eager rebels as lower ranked individuals whose need for compensation made them willing to serve the republican cause temporarily.⁹⁷ But we are concerned here with the *enslaved* men who served, the precise number of which is unknown. Schuyler explained to Heath during the battle to save the fort for the colonial insurgents, “[A]t present we have not Three thousand Continental Troops and not thirteen hundred militia, which are daily decreasing with an alarming rapidity—Most of these from your State [Massachusetts] are gone home, and not a Man from Connecticut is left on the ground.”⁹⁸ Despite these serious manpower issues, Schuyler categorically objected to the presence of Blacks performing any military service whether as slaves, free men, combatants, or non-combatants attending to fatigue duty—military tasks such as bringing in provisions from nearby Lake George Landing, cutting logs to repair sinking piers at the lake, attending to the personal needs of the military families and personnel at the fort by whom they were enslaved, and/or perhaps some scouting. There were daily fatigue duties to which any serviceman, Black or White, might be assigned.⁹⁹ However, Major General Arthur St. Clair reported that at Fort Ticonderoga, “Besides these, Colonel Hay, the Quarter-Master General, had a party of Negroes, taken from the different regiments, as a constant fatigue, independent of the daily detail.”¹⁰⁰ Although the number of enslaved persons among them is undetermined, they were all offensive to Schuyler.

Schuyler’s low opinion of African Americans during the Revolutionary War is revealed in another way. Like his sale of the “1 Negro wench,” the fate of at least one enslaved woman who became currency for Schuyler in a Canadian transaction during the war supports the conclusion that he was morally unmoved by the commodification of Black bodies at that time. Back in March of 1776, Fort Ticonderoga was in American hands after Schuyler ousted the British from their initial stronghold there in 1775. This victory had secured Americans clear and safe access to Canada through the northern woods above

⁹⁷ On free, black soldiers in the American revolutionary army, see John Rees, *“They Were Good Soldiers”: African Americans Serving in the Continental Army, 1775–1783* (Warwick, UK: Helion and Company, Ltd., 2019). On the social origins of the ordinary revolutionary American soldier, as opposed to the officers, see Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 15–26.

⁹⁸ Schuyler to Heath, July 23, 1777.

⁹⁹ The trial of Major General St. Clair mentions various fatigue duty tasks at Fort Ticonderoga to which anyone serving in the Continental Army might have been assigned. See, as examples: *Proceedings of a General Court-Martial, Held at White Plains, in the State of New-York, by Order of His Excellency General Washington, Commander in Chief of the Army of the United States of America, For the Trial of Major General St. Clair* (Philadelphia: Hall and Sellers: 1778), 8–9, 13, 21, 29, 35.

¹⁰⁰ *Proceedings of a General Court-Martial*, 35.

Saratoga for a time. Apparently, Schuyler directed his functionaries to take advantage of this opportunity to make some expensive clothing and furnishing purchases in Montreal during this interlude. The Clothier General to the United States Army, John Tayler, described the transactions in a 1776 letter, most of which were for luxury items:

I send per Mr. Vanschaick the Gauze, Catgut & Lace. The Cloth Trimmings and Epelets are not to be Had in this City. The Garlix are too Low priced and poor. No Lutestring, nor Der cape [woman’s apron cloth] of the Colour I was to Get. I send some patterns of Silks with their prices. Should any of them suit they may be had at this place. I suppose Mr. Vanvegthen had Delivered the Two Carpets. The one Cost 22[,] the other 14 Dollars.¹⁰¹

Then, Tayler casually inserted information on his decision to sell an enslaved woman to pay for an additional, irresistible third carpet in the haul: “I Sent another with the Green Tea, Stockings, and Gloves By James Pettitt. I came across this one after I Bought the other two. It Being an Extraordinary Fine one Together with a necessity I was under to take it *in Exchange for the wench* [emphasis added], will I hope apologize for my Exceeding my orders In buying three.”¹⁰² In this deal, the woman was valued at sixty-eight dollars.¹⁰³

Who was this bondswoman? Who had been her owner? Was she a prisoner of war, captured from a Royalist family by the Americans in some earlier battle? Was she enslaved by Schuyler personally? With the exception of the gauze, catgut, and epaulets, Tayler’s purchases fit those of the households of well-off elites—the patterned silks, garlic, lutestring (for ribbons), carpets—not the commissary of an army needing shoes and food. In fact, even the gauze may not have been for the soldiers. In her survey of women’s dress during the Revolutionary War, Alice Earle Morse found that “[w]omen seemed absolutely lost without gauze. A high head-dress was a poor thing without it....Those years were the season of gauze. Gauze caps, bonnets, aprons, ribbons, and kerchiefs” and even gauze petticoats.¹⁰⁴ Although Congress had appointed Walter Livingston deputy commissary in charge of stores and provisions in the New York Department, he was subject to the “orders and directions” from “any other Superior officer,” and the clear indication in this instance is that Schuyler, head of the Northern Department of the US Army and therefore Livingston’s senior, did not object to Tayler’s sale or trade of an enslaved women for luxury items, including fine fabrics and woven floor coverings, at a time when Americans were

¹⁰¹ John Taylor, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 8, 1776. In this letter, Taylor is spelled with an “o”, but his last name is otherwise spelled with an “e.” On Tayler’s appointment as clothier general, see the biographical note on the John Tayler Papers at the New York State Library. <https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/msscfa/sc20183.htm>, accessed July 10, 2021.

¹⁰² John Taylor, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 8, 1776.

¹⁰³ John Taylor, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 8, 1776. This is the equivalent of \$1,960.00 in 2019 dollars.

¹⁰⁴ Alice Earle Morse, *Two Centuries of Costume in America 1620–1820*, Vol. II (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co, 1971, 1903), 715–716.

making homespun and Continental soldiers were starving for lack of provisions.¹⁰⁵ It was to Schuyler, not Livingston, that Tayler directed his letter concerning the deal and it was to Schuyler that Tayler expressed an apology of sorts for overspending.

Morse noted the “vast incongruities” in consumption patterns throughout the colonies during the war between ordinary people and the gentry regardless of devotion to a shared revolutionary cause. It was not that Schuyler was unmindful of the army’s needs; he made sure Tayler sent down medical supplies for the wounded (gauze, perhaps, and catgut) and several casks of nails for maintaining garrisons at Fort George in Lake George.¹⁰⁶ Rather, it was that Schuyler’s wartime loyalties in no way disturbed his self-understanding. One of Schuyler’s biographers, Don Gerlach, detailed the General’s high standard of living. At a time when a minimum wealth of £300 a year placed one in the ranks of the well-to-do, Schuyler was among only three percent of the population with wealth totaling £5,000 per year; Gerlach, in fact, states that the value of Schuyler’s estate in the 1770s was “probably much more.”¹⁰⁷ As General, Schuyler would ensure that he and perhaps other high-ranking officers from privileged backgrounds maintained the trappings of their social status—in this case, by the sale of a Black human being.

Fewer than two weeks after profitably ridding himself of a female slave in Canada, in an exchange demonstrating the ability of both enslaved and enslaver to bargain to their respective advantage, Philip Schuyler purchased a “likely” Black male from Montreal named Prince. Prince had been enslaved to Alexander McCullough, Deputy Quartermaster General for the British, who was taken as a prisoner of war during General Richard Montgomery’s initial victory there for the Continental Army. Prince labored as either McCullough’s valet or general man-servant and consequently shared the quartermaster’s fate as a captured enemy forced by American troops during the winter of 1776 to trek south to Albany under close guard. Understanding the desperation of his state, Prince took matters into his own hands by relaying the following appeal to Catherine Schuyler:

The Humble Petition of Prince the Negro belonging to Mr. MacCulough [sic]-Most Humbly showeth that as your Petitioner is in the greatest distress . . . & has quite lost the use of my limbs with cold for want of Cloaths [sic] or Blanket-so to inform your ladyship that I wrote to his Excellency the General received no intelligence of My Being Released from my long & miserable confinement. I am very willing to go to work for his Excellency the General at

¹⁰⁵ A technically uncalendared letter in the Philip Schuyler Papers at the New York Public Library (although it is dated July 17, 1775) in which John Hancock as president of the Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia appoints Walter Livingston “Deputy Commissary General of Stores and Provisions in the New York Department during the present campaign in the army of the United Colonies.” See Uncalendared Letters, The Philip Schuyler Papers, Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5d144f00-84e2-0134-bce2-00505686a51c>, accessed December 27, 2022.

¹⁰⁶ Tayler to Schuyler, March 8, 1776; Morse, *Two Centuries of Costume in America*, Vol. II, 705.

¹⁰⁷ Don R. Gerlach, *Philip Schuyler and the American Revolution in New York 1733–1777* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 4.

any sort of employ or any of the Inhabitants in the Town for my vituals [sic] & Cloaths [sic]. Therefore I Humbly Beg your Ladyship would be so Good as to intercede with His Excellency for me and Get me Released as I am Informed My Master Mr. McCullough is in Remedy and for your Great & Bountious [sic] Goodness I Shall be as in duty Bound ever Pray.

Prince the Negro¹⁰⁸

Perhaps using another’s hand to write the letter (although he was probably not totally illiterate), Prince recognized that McCullough was no longer able to provide for him, and took it upon himself to offer his services as a slave to a far better positioned military man, General Philip Schuyler. Prince was almost certainly bilingual in English and French to some degree as someone assigned duties to a British officer stationed in Quebec. Out of desperation, he bargained that his qualifications and experience could be leveraged to improve his material circumstances even if he remained enslaved. Seeing that McCullough was in no position to object, Schuyler seized the opportunity to buy Prince. The British Commissary provided the receipt: “Mr. MacCulloch’s best respects waits on General Schuyler, he has sent him the Negro man Prince together with the Bill of Sale. The General will be so kind as to make it known to the Negro that he is now his property.”¹⁰⁹ Still, Schuyler proved how shrewd a business man he could be in a buyer’s market for this particular human body. Three months after the sale, McCullough, still a prisoner of war but now in Vermont, wrote to Schuyler to address the latter’s criticisms about a recent slave purchase. The subject was probably Prince although no name is mentioned. The General apparently was finding a less than “likely” attitude from him, so McCullough responded:

I am Extremely Sorry to find that the negro man does not now answer the Character I entertained of him for I flattered myself that having no Complaints during my stay at Albany nor any since ‘till now that he was the General’s properly agreeable to his Bill of Sale to all Intents and what particular answer you may require, or I can make since in my present Situation is to me a little

¹⁰⁸ See “The Humble Petition of Prince: Navigating Agency within Enslavement,” Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, February 26, 2021, <http://schuylermansion.blogspot.com/2021/02/the-humble-petition-of-prince.html>, accessed July 31, 2022. The Schuyler Mansion’s staff referred me to the Albany Hall of Records for the original manuscript of Prince’s letter, but the staff there could not locate this document.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander McCullough, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 20, 1776, PSP, NYPL.

Difficult. But in the meantime, Let General Schuyler keep the Negro until my Releasement, which I hope will be soon, [and I] shall make him an abatement in his price or take the Negro to myself if the General Still persists.¹¹⁰

In the end, the General gained the advantage because Prince remained in Schuyler’s service while Schuyler apparently received a rebate on the deal.

The mulatto (African-Abenaki) Atiatoharongwen, taken as a child in the 1745 raid on Saratoga (see Table 3 for his listing as Louis/Lewis), reappeared as an adult in the settlement during the Revolutionary War as an ally of the American cause after siding with the French during the final French and Indian War (ending in 1763). Since enslaved status derived from the condition of one’s mother rather than one’s father and his mother was Abenaki, it is not clear whether Atiatoharongwen was ever legally enslaved at all or owned by Schuyler. New York’s slave codes from 1664 to 1788 certainly noted the existence of “Indian slaves,” and Indian enslavement in New York rose over the course of the eighteenth century even though historian Edwin Vernon Morgan concluded that the number of enslaved Native Americans in colonial New York was “few” when “compared to the body of negro and mulatto slaves.” If his mother was an enslaved Abenaki woman, then Atiatoharongwen was a slave at birth. He would have been considered mixed-race and called either “mulatto” or “mustee” by colonial authorities regardless of his mother’s legal status, and even freeborn Indian children in New York province were vulnerable to enslavement by traders who sometimes stole them from Christian missionary schools.¹¹¹

After 1745, though, Atiatoharongwen was unmistakably free. In fact, it was probably to ensure his future freedom that his mother had pleaded successfully with his French and Indian captors during that year’s raid to allow the Indians rather than the French to take her son. Consequently, he was raised among the St. Regis-Mohawk after his capture on the Schuylers’ first Saratoga homestead during King George’s War (1744–1748).¹¹²

Atiatoharongwen began visiting Schuyler at the second Saratoga residence in the early stages of British-American tensions, probably in the early 1770s, to learn the details of the conflict and to try to woo the Mohawk chiefs at Canaughwaga into siding with the

¹¹⁰ Alexander McCullough, Letter to Philip Schuyler, June 22, 1776, PSP, NYPL. McCullough penned this letter from Burlington, Vermont. His communication with Schuyler is an indication of the relatively lenient American policy of prisoner exchanges shown to those taken as prisoners-of-war—especially but not exclusively officers—prior to 1777, as discussed in Larry G. Bowman, “The Pennsylvania Prisoner Exchange Conferences, 1778,” 258–259. Americans hardened in their approach to British POWS after the 1777 Battle of Saratoga. On this see Robert C. Doyle, *The Enemy in our Hands: America’s Treatment of Prisoners of War from the Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 11–31 and William M. Dabney, *After Saratoga: The Story of the Convention Army* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1954).

¹¹¹ Edwin Vernon Morgan, *Slavery in New York* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1898), 23–25; Christian Ayne Crouch, “The Black City: African and Indian Exchanges in Pontiac’s Upper Country,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 294; Jack D. Forbes, “Mustees, Half-Breeds, and Zambos in Anglo-North America: Aspects of Black-Indian Relations,” *American Indian Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1983): 57–63.

¹¹² Crouch, “The Black City,” 289, 293–295, 297; Jeremy Green, “Kanyen’kéha: Mohawk Language,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/kanyenkeha-mohawk-language>, accessed August 15, 2022.

colonists. In the tradition of several of his male ancestors, Schuyler had acquired an extensive background in negotiating with Indians on the frontier in his youth. On this basis, he was one of several Commissioners of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department appointed by Congress during the Revolutionary War. Atiatoharongwen provided George Washington with intelligence concerning the efforts of the British in Canada to mobilize First Nations peoples against the Continentals in 1775. By January 1776, Atiatoharongwen’s political maneuvers were successful among “a small number” of Indians who he persuaded to back the colonists. Washington and Schuyler were at first hesitant to accept Atiatoharongwen’s offer in January 1776 to raise 400 to 500 soldiers; the two generals initially distrusted Native American engagement in the war and preferred their neutrality.¹¹³ Schuyler shared his opinion with Washington in February 1776:

It is extremely difficult to determine what should be done in what you mention respecting the Offer made by the Caghnawaga [Mohawk] Indians, but if we can get decently rid of their Offer, I would prefer it to employing them—The Expence we are at in the Indian Department is now amazing; it will be more so, when they consider themselves as in our Service, nor would their Intervention be of much Consequence, unless we could procure that of the other Nations—The hauteur of the Indians is much diminished since the taking of Montreal, they evidently see that they cannot get any Supplies but thro’ us.¹¹⁴

But by 1777, Atiatoharongwen commanded a group of Oneidas and Tuscaroras attached to the 1st New York Regiment that helped defeat Burgoyne. Atiatoharongwen ultimately received a commission from the Second Continental Congress as Colonel Louis Cook.¹¹⁵

Schuyler apparently considered the biracial Atiatoharongwen only a Mohawk, not Black in any way. Indeed, the multilingual Atiatoharongwen (he spoke English, French, Kanyen’kéha, and other Indian languages) himself embraced a Mohawk identity. Schuyler’s personal experiences as representative of settler interests to Native Americans on the northern American frontier, his family memory of the 1745 attack in which his uncle was

¹¹³ Worthington C. Ford et al, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904–1937), Vol. II, July 13, 1775, 183, [https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DATE+17750713\)::#0020178](https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DATE+17750713)::#0020178), accessed December 28, 2022; George Washington, Letter to Philip Schuyler, January 27, 1776, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-03-02-0145>, accessed July 31, 2022; Hough, *The History of Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties*, 188; Philip Schuyler, Letter to George Washington, February 13, 1776, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-03-02-0224>, accessed December 27, 2022; Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*, 50–55, 86–87.

¹¹⁴ Schuyler to Washington, February 13, 1776.

¹¹⁵ Barbara Graymont, “Atiatoharongwen,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 5 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1983), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/atiatoharongwen_5E.html, accessed August 16, 2022; Hough, *The History of Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties*, 183–191; Crouch, “The Black City,” 293, 297; Gerlach, *Philip Schuyler*, 10–11; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Colonel Hinman, June 28, 1775, “Letterbook 1,” PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler, Letter to the Continental Congress, June 29, 1775, “Letterbook 1,” PSP, NYPL; Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *“Forgotten Allies”: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 182–185. For references to help (intelligence, warriors) the Oneida and Tuscarora supplied the Americans, see T.W. Egly, *History of the First New York Regiment, 1775–1783* (Hampton, NH: P.E. Randall, 1981), 117, 129, 155, 158.

killed, the Albany County colonists’ collective memory of the French and Indian Wars, and Atiatoharongwen’s self-presentation all combined to de-Africanize the Native emissary in the minds of American leaders—if they ever even knew of his biracial heritage—and to convince both Schuyler and Washington of Atiatoharongwen’s usefulness in the war. So, unlike the Black soldiers at Fort Ticonderoga, Atiatoharongwen was appreciated as Colonel Louis Cook for the service he rendered to the American side as a spy, messenger, and adviser. Today, the memory of his patriotic service is marked by the Daughters of the American Revolution who accepted his daughter into membership.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ “Louis Cook,” DAR Pathway of the Patriots, <https://honoringourpatriots.dar.org/patriots/louis-cook/>, accessed December 28, 2022.

CHAPTER FOUR

Laboring at the “Commodious Box”: Third Imprint, 1787–1837

The British torched Schuyler’s properties at Saratoga on October 10, 1777 during Burgoyne’s campaign. Twenty-three buildings, including the Schuyler home, were destroyed. While Schuyler took refuge in his original Albany homestead, Colonel Richard Varick reported the extent of the wreckage: “No part of your buildings escaped their malice except a small outbuilding, and your upper sawmill, which is in the same situation we left it. Hardly a vestige of the fences is left except a few rails of the garden.”¹ Burgoyne apologized for having wreaked some £10,000 in damages (the equivalent of over \$1,900,000 in 2021, according to historical currency calculations supplied by the American Economic Association). Schuyler chalked the destruction up to the realities of war and in roughly thirty-seven days after the surrender, completed the erection of a new home, constructed west of the original structure over the stone cellar of a small building also destroyed by fire. According to archival, anecdotal, and published accounts, Schuyler accomplished this amazing feat with the help of army regulars, local artisans from Albany and Schenectady, and a couple of British prisoners-of-war who were skilled masons.² In popular memory, the speedy resurrection of Schuyler’s Saratoga residence underscores a theme of revolutionary resilience on the part of the General and his rebellious, free compatriots.

¹ Colonel Richard D. Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, October 12, 1777, PSP, NYPL, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/f0c1cfc0-697e-0134-6751-00505686a51c>, accessed December 12, 2022; October 29, 1777, PSP, NYPL; John Lansing, Letter to Philip Schuyler, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/643c1200-6984-0134-245e-00505686a51c>, accessed December 12, 2022; Bensing John Lossing, *The Life and Times of Philip Schuyler*, Vol. 2 (Middletown, DE: Forgotten Books, 2012, 1873), 372–373; Eric Schnitzer and Don Troiani, *Don Troiani’s Campaign to Saratoga—1777* (Lanham, MD: Stackpole Books, 2019), 245–264; George Baker Anderson, *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive and Biographical Record of Saratoga County, New York* (Boston: The Boston History Company, Publishers, 1899), 60; John Henry Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga* (Albany: Brandow Printing Company, 1900), 281–290.

² Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 162, 169; Anderson, *Our County and Its People*, 60 68–69; Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*, 322–329; Maureen K. Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler House: Schuyler National Historical Park, Schuylerville, NY, Vol 1*. (Lowell, MA: National Park Service, 2003), 62; *The Parliamentary Register*, Vol. 8 (London: J. Walker, R. Lea, and J. Nunn, 1802), 311–312. See the “Measuring Worth” historical currency converter at <https://measuringworth.com/calculators/exchange>. Accessed November 12, 2022.

Building the Commodious Box

But the crucial role that enslaved labor provided in the construction of Saratoga House must be emphasized as well. We have seen that enslaved men cut trees for lumber and assisted at the sawmill. While planning his new home, in the fall of 1777, Schuyler wrote to a friend, “Timber lay in my upper mill dam[,] the only building not destroyed out of four and twenty.” This store of lumber along with his ability to reactivate the lone mill attested that the human property Schuyler claimed was integral to the construction process—whether or not he recorded that fact explicitly.³ The staves for roofing, fieldstones for foundations, lumber for framing, floorboards, and erecting exterior walls all bore the physical touch of enslaved labor who helped shape them, quarry them, haul them, and place them on the structure that became Schuyler’s new residence.

There is no evidence of a brickworks on Schuyler’s Saratoga lands. However, the construction of the General’s new country home required bricks that were likely hauled from surrounding brickyards, either in Albany or in other nearby similar operations, some of which probably used Black chattel, as did Virginia’s plantations like Monticello and Carter’s Grove, where slaves, sometimes including children, worked as brickmakers.⁴ The clay-rich soil along the Hudson facilitated brickmaking—a tedious, multi-staged task. Compositional analysis of brick archives sourced in several areas—the Hudson River Valley generally, Albany, and a vicinity just south of Waterford—supports the existence of regional clays in the brick found in colonial-era and late-eighteenth-century structures from those locations.⁵ Not surprisingly then, New Netherlands was the first European settlement to introduce brickmaking to colonial North America, and Albany (then, Fort Orange) was the site of the Dutch colony’s first brickmaking operation in 1632. Many similar operations appeared in the ensuing century and a half. Between 1764 and 1800, for instance, one Perez Ripley ran a brickmaking enterprise in close-by Stillwater which might have supplied Schuyler with material.⁶ Those who assisted Ripley and other regional brickmakers are unrecorded in extant sources but historian Richard O’Connor has explained the reasons

³ Philip Schuyler, Letter to James Duane, Esq., November 22, 1777, PSP, NYPL; Phillips, *Schuyler House*, 62.

⁴ “Brickmakers,” Colonial Williamsburg, <https://www.slaveryandremembrance.org/Almanack/life/trades/tradebri.cfm?showSite=mobile-regular>, accessed July 24, 2021; J.C. Harrington, “Seventeenth Century Brickmaking and Tilemaking at Jamestown, Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 58, no. 1 (January 1950): 16–39.

⁵ Allan S. Gilbert, Garman Harbottle, and Daniel deNoyelles, “A Ceramic Chemistry Archive for New Netherland/New York,” *Historical Archeology* 27, no. 3 (1993): 17–56; Holly K. Norton and David Moyer, “Elemental Analysis of Bricks from the Peter McCutcheon House, Albany, NY,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology, Lancaster, PA, October 30, 2010, n.p.; Deborah Lev-Tov, “Inside the Long-Lost Brickyards that Built N.Y.C.,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2021.

⁶ Richard P. O’Connor, “A History of Brickmaking in the Hudson Valley,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1987, 43–53; Nathaniel Barlett Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 292; Gilbert, Harbottle, and deNoyelles, “A Ceramic Chemistry Archive,” 17–56.

that free workers tended to avoid such an occupation, regarding it as a last option for employment: It was seasonal, unskilled work consisting of “dirty and physically demanding tasks for day wages.” Moreover, while all building craft and trade laborers depended upon fluctuations in market demand, during the eighteenth century in rural parts of the Valley where residences were relatively widely dispersed in forested areas, the call for wood construction materials far exceeded those for brick; a free brick worker who relied entirely on such a market would have experienced many lean times. Thus, brickmaking was a lowly vocation performed by lowly laborers.⁷ Enslaved men fit this description, so Schuyler’s use of brick for Saratoga House may have made him complicit in the use of enslaved, regional brick workers.

The visual record provides evidence of contemporaneous enslaved brick workers elsewhere in the Hudson River Valley. One of the colonial work scenes in the WPA mural in the Rhinebeck post office (some eighty miles south of Old Saratoga) is of a slave kneeling before a kiln to make bricks (see Figures 10 and 11). Enslaved workers there excavated the clay from lands along the river banks in the late fall or early winter to begin the brickmaking process. To do this, the slaves had to remove the topsoil to get to the clay (if it was not at the surface) and then cart it to pits they had already carved out and prepared; these were usually five feet deep and six feet square, although board- or brick-lined circular rings could be dug deeper and wider for the same purpose. A few months after the exposed clay had cracked and broken apart from freezing and thawing in the cold, the slaves hauled water to pour over the clay to soften it; an even mix was achieved by the enslaved workers’ stomping on the clay with their feet down in the pit itself—a warm weather, usually late spring job. Tempering ingredients—sometimes a kind of sand, sometimes a coarse powder of burned clay called grog—were added to prevent the clay mixture from shrinking later in the process. The enslaved brick workers poured the final concoction into wooden brick molds for shaping, a procedure requiring “skill, teamwork, and efficiency” among a team consisting minimally of a master brickmaker, probably a hired local White artisan, and two assistants—“one to bring the tempered and mixed clay to the molding station, and one to stack the green bricks for drying.” The assistants were enslaved laborers. In this phase, the human chattel produced two thousand bricks each work day, which was fourteen to fifteen hours long.⁸ Next, to remove the remaining water from the newly formed bricks, slaves placed them either in an open field or drying shed for twenty-four hours. If rain was threatening (in the former case), the slaves scurried to cover the “green bricks” with thatch

⁷ O’Connor, “A History of Brickmaking,” 223.

⁸ Tanya M. Peres and Jessica Baine Connatser, “Brickmaking as a Local Industry in Antebellum Tennessee and Kentucky,” *Tennessee Archeology*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 2008), 105–108; Frederick J. H. Merrill and Heinrich Ries, “Clay Industries of New York,” *Bulletin of the New York State Museum* 3, no. 12 (March 1895): 155–173.

or lumber. The last stage was firing—placing the dried green bricks in a kiln for blasting, where the heat would be gradually increased to a maximum of 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit to produce the ceramic-like rectangular cubes or final bricks.⁹



Figure 10. Detail of Enslaved Brickmaker

Source: Olin Dows, Murals in the Rhinebeck, NY Post Office, 1940



Figure 11. Wider View of Enslaved Brickmaker

Source: Olin Dows, Murals in the Rhinebeck, NY Post Office, 1940

In the new Schuyler House, these kinds of unfired and fired bricks formed the bones of the structure, and in all likelihood the General’s Black servants probably assisted masons in their placement once these materials arrived at the building site, given the speed of the overall construction. Some of the unfired bricks were used as nogging, a kind of fill between the wood framing, for the exterior walls. Fired bricks formed the chimneys at the north and south ends of the house beneath the roof line; the bricks constituting the chimney portion above the roof line were fired as well. Even if they had not produced the bricks Black bondsmen helped apply nogging to the interior walls of the house, thereby deterring their use as runways by mice and rats. Bricks had also lined the southern end of the cellar

⁹ Merrill and Ries, 108–111.

of the existing fieldstone location upon which the 1777 house was built. In the new cellar kitchen, bricks were used at the top end of the east, south, and west walls. The window recesses in the cellar kitchen were similarly brick-faced, and the cellar flooring to the east of the hearth used bricks.¹⁰

There is no documentation that Schuyler used enslaved workers as masons. Bayard Tuckerman, one of his nineteenth century hagiographic biographers, praised the fact that Schuyler “sought to . . . teach y^e manufacture of those things which y^e colonies most need.”¹¹ It might have been advantageous for Schuyler to have one or two of the men he enslaved be taught masonry, but the record does not provide evidence of slaves with such skills at Old Saratoga.

Architecturally, Philip Schuyler’s new commodious box imitated similar structures being built by men of the General’s standing throughout the British Atlantic world in several ways. This was also probably true of the first residence Schuyler had built during the 1760s, based on historian Stephen Hague’s description of the conventions that arose among the transatlantic set of rising gentry—large landowners, substantial merchants, and major public officeholders who also commanded authority over enslaved people, other servants, and tenants in the eighteenth century. As early as the 1720s, men of such stature in England, the British Caribbean, and British North America had established the custom of building “classical homes” as a testament to their rise in fortunes.¹² Hague found that the façades of these symmetrical, rectangular structures typically “measured between forty-five and seventy feet wide, with five or occasionally seven bays of windows.”¹³ On the first floor, one would typically find, “a hall for entry, a space for a stair enabling vertical access, and at least three further rooms intended for various sociable or household functions.” Additional second-floor chambers included bedrooms, and garret spaces above the ground floor where servants slept. Kitchens, initially located in cellars—indicating the lowly social position of the enslaved servants toiling underground—were increasingly located in detached buildings as the eighteenth century moved forward. Removing kitchens from the main house elevated the owners’ status by segregating service functions; gentlemen enslavers, their families, and residents were spared the smells and sounds of food preparation this way.¹⁴ But one advantage of cellar kitchens for the enslaved was that the room temperature when cooking was cooler during warm weather months.

¹⁰ Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler House*, 65–69, 71–72, 247–248; John G. Waite Associates, Architects, General Philip Schuyler House Historic Structure Report Addendum: Kitchen and Kitchen Passage–100% Draft, Saratoga National Historical Park, November 2022.

¹¹ Tuckerman, *Life of Philip Schuyler*, 73.

¹² Stephen Hague, *The Gentleman’s House in the British Atlantic World 1680–1780* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015),

¹³ Hague, 4.

¹⁴ Hague, 8, 42, 84, 86–87.

The Georgian edifice Schuyler constructed in fewer than six weeks in 1777 more or less fit this general pattern of British Atlantic genteel residences: Schuyler first imagined a house forty-two feet wide in some early notes, but ended with one “60 [or 61] feet long . . . and two stories high” not including the attic and cellar. The new house had seven windows in the second story on its front façade, and six on the first-floor façade. The first floor, as described in his correspondence, included two back-to-back rooms to the right of the entry with a combined depth equaling the depth of the parlor and a single room to the left, for a total of three rooms. A second floor contained several rooms, and an attic that probably functioned as sleeping quarters for the house slaves as evidence by the hatch door in the second-floor ceiling.¹⁵ This was in keeping with the assertion about eighteenth century Albany by Katharine Schuyler Baxter that “[e]very house of pretension had its cock-loft in the steep roof, where the house slaves slept, and where there was ample room for storage.”¹⁶ Historian Andrea Mosterman’s work underscores the racial segregation of lodging in colonial homes of the Hudson Valley.¹⁷

British Atlantic gentry in the eighteenth century further established their status by frequently refurbishing, renovating, and adding onto their original residences. Expansion and differentiation of space increasingly marked a social hierarchy topped by an emergent gentry.¹⁸ Schuyler again followed this pattern. The residence continued to be the center of a farming, logging, milling, and fishing business compound, but it was also the country homestead of a venerated war hero, founding father, statesman, and wealthy entrepreneur. At forty-four years of age in 1777, Schuyler was in the prime of his life, and he displayed his accomplishments with certain features of his Saratoga property. The first of these occurred around 1777–1778, about the same time the commodious box went up according to recent historical dendrological analysis, when Schuyler built a square, attached kitchen wing close to the northeast corner of the main house. The garret above this kitchen served as new sleeping quarters for those he enslaved, physically highlighting the social divide between enslaver and enslaved. The rooms above the kitchen would have been a steaming sauna in the summer. With no fireplace and the only known heat being supplied by the hearth below on the east wall, the garret was frigid in the winter.¹⁹

¹⁵ Hague, 73; Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 288.

¹⁶ Baxter, *A Godchild of Washington*, 56. On page 203, she describes similar sleeping quarters for slaves in the Schuyler Mansion in Albany. See also Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 288 for a reference to second floor sleeping spaces for the enslaved.

¹⁷ Andrea C. Mosterman, *Spaces of Enslavement: A History of Slavery and Resistance in Dutch New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021), 80–89.

¹⁸ Hague, *The Gentleman’s House*, 121.

¹⁹ Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler’s House*, 81–86; Mosterman, *Spaces of Enslavement*, 96. Waite Associates, Historic Structure Report Addendum: 19, 24. This dendrochronological analysis from the Waite architectural firm indicates that the timbers for the 1777 main structure and for the new kitchen were felled at the same.

The new mansion in which Schuyler passed a decade until he retired to his Albany home in 1787 provides a window onto the labor routines of the enslaved workers in his household as they moved across the home’s interior geographies in the performance of daily, non-market, domestic chores. The kitchen, dining room, storerooms, attics, and hallways defined their main work spaces within the 1777 house, with the bedchambers and parlor receiving their attention as well for a variety of purposes. Nursing, hospitality service, dressing, toilette assistance, and valet duties, message delivery, and cleaning were additional daily tasks they performed before falling into blessed sleep. In fact, it was probably in the course of one of these routines that the Black bondswoman already mentioned may have saved Schuyler’s life in 1777. Whether this event is true or apocryphal is not as important here as is the context upon which it draws—the presence of an African American enslaved servant in the house going about a normal domestic routine—in this case, placing items on a mantelpiece.²⁰

Schuyler’s enslaved workers traveled in and out of the homestead’s kitchens, both the cellar kitchen made in 1777 as part of the house itself and the newer attached one built around the same time. Archaeological evidence of a hatch opening through the west wall of the 1777 cellar suggests that slaves might have used this aperture to hand groceries, firewood, the Madeira the General liked, and other provisions or culinary utensils down to the kitchen and its storerooms. Using the main exterior cellar door, they carried foodstuffs and culinary supplies through the bulkhead on the east wall to and from the two, subterranean storage rooms to the north and west of the cellar hallway. Early twentieth century historian, Alice Earle Morse, a great-granddaughter of an Albany County resident, described the contents of Dutch colonial storerooms:

In the cellar were great bins of apples, potatoes, turnips, beets, and parsnips. There were hogsheads of corned beef, barrels of salt pork, tubs of hams being salted in brine, tonnekins of salt shad and mackerel, firkins of butter, kegs of pigs’ feet, tubs of souse, kilderkins of lard. On a long swing-shelf were tumblers of spiced fruits, and “rolliches,” head-cheese, and strings of sausages—all Dutch delicacies.²¹

In strong racks were barrels of cider and vinegar, and often of beer. Many contained barrels of rum and a pipe of Madeira. . . In the attic by the chimney was the smoke-House, filled with hams, bacons, smoked beef, and sausages.²²

²⁰ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 276.

²¹ Alice Earle Morse, *Home Life in Colonial Days* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), 10.

²² Morse, *Home Life in Colonial Days*, 11.

All these foods were prepared with the help of enslaved Black people working in “slave-kitchens,” typical among Dutch New York homesteads. While enslaved humans prepared and ate their own meals there, they also prepared food there to be eaten elsewhere (in dining parlors) by their enslavers.²³

Through the areaway behind the bulkhead, Black human chattel carried kindling down to the kitchen hearth and oven. Slaves who were cooks, waiters, and servers transported prepared meals up to the ground-level in one of two ways: a ceiling hatchway from the cellar hallway into the dining room pantry allowed the passage of cooked meals to the main floor. They could also walk from the cellar hallway into the areaway and up the steps leading to the bulkhead, which they would have to open; once outdoors, they would then have to scurry, eventually completing a semi-circular, 180-degree turn to the rear door on the east wall of the house.²⁴

Enslaved kitchen and dining room servants hustled back and forth between the new building for preparing foods and a rear door opening directly into the dining room. After scurrying down from the garret through the stairwell on the west end to begin their day, they could leave and re-enter the kitchen and receive garden produce and other food-stuffs through doorways on both the north and west sides of the kitchen. If their errand took them to the main house, however, they used the heavily trafficked south doorway.²⁵

Managing the colonial hearth and fireplace, a task usually assigned to an adult female, required great skill. Once begun, the fires needed to be kept burning continuously, for as long as a building’s occupants were present. The colonial kitchen hearth always had embers burning—day and night, summer and winter. Rather than a single fire, several fires operated concurrently within a single, cavernous hearth, inside of which the kitchen maid moved about. Such fireplaces at Schuyler House were tended by an enslaved servant who piled logs on the andirons and used the bellows to stoke the glowing tinder to various temperatures operating simultaneously, yet separately depending on what was needed—a blaze for warmth in the room, heat to boil a pot of stew, fire to roast meat on a hand-turned spit.²⁶ For baking, she tended a recessed, dome-shaped brick oven built into the interior back wall of the fireplace. Additionally, the 1777 attached kitchen structure at Schuyler House, the slave-kitchen, had two outside ovens built into the exterior chimney, “probably used for baking goods for Schuyler’s servants and slaves.”²⁷

²³ Morse, *Home Life in Colonial Days*, 54.

²⁴ Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler House*, 67, 70, 72, 74; Hague, *The Gentleman’s House*, 102.

²⁵ Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler House*, 83, 267.

²⁶ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650–1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 20.

²⁷ Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler House*, 83; Mary Harrod Northend, *Colonial Homes and their Furnishings* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1917), 63–78.

The construction and plan of the 1777 house, along with the multiplicity of food production service tasks it housed, signaled these were very important to General Philip Schuyler. The relocation of kitchen operations to another structure in the commodious box reflected that he, like others constituting the eighteenth century English-speaking gentry of the Atlantic World, had become more than a highly successful businessman. Schuyler was a man of social and political consequence in America as well, and he now wished to project this message to the world by his considerable means. He could afford a substantial table—the finest of tables—prepared and attended by able, skilled Black servants. In his own eyes and in the eyes of the emerging new republic, he had exceeded his prewar status as a member of the regional, provincial, and state elite to become a national hero and leader of great means.

At the same time, the commodious box and its specialized spaces reinforced a racial hierarchy. The geography of the new and improved structure expanded the segregation of common activities—cooking, eating, sleeping—along racial lines in ways that could be physically measured by the increased distance between them and the main house. Andrea Mosterman has called the rooms reserved for Black laborers “spaces of enslavement.”²⁸ There is a direct relationship between the expansion of these spaces, the expansion of Schuyler’s wealth, and the expansion of the stature of the General and his family. Spaces of enslavement thus indexed the way racial capitalism worked in the new American republic.

Successive Family Heads, 1787–1837

When Schuyler decided to hand over management of his Saratoga home to his son, John Bradstreet Schuyler (1765–1795), the work rhythms of the family’s enslaved servants there continued as before. After inheriting part of the Saratoga Patent in 1783, John had married Elizabeth Van Renssalaer in 1787 and the couple moved onto the property that same year. The elder Schuyler apparently wanted to see his oldest son well started toward his future by initiating house renovations with extended features on the east side of the main building. These included an office near the center of the east wall that one could enter from the former rear door and a covered or enclosed pathway or porch from the office to the south end of the kitchen. With this structural change, in inclement weather it now became easier for the enslaved servants to move between the kitchen and the new office and the main house—a benefit of sorts for them, given their labors as lumber millers, nailers and carpentry crew, masons’ assistants, and painters for the house makeover.²⁹

²⁸ Mosterman, *Spaces of Enslavement*.

²⁹ Stefan Bielinski, “John Bradstreet Schuyler,” <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/s/jobrschuyler.html>, accessed August 9, 2021; Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler House*, 89–92; Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 294–295.

With his grant to son John, the General transferred about a third of his Black servants at Schuyler House to his Albany mansion, adding help to the older home already equipped with its own enslaved staff. So, those in Saratoga stayed put for the most part. Schuyler explicitly detailed his gift of enslaved servants along with other property, animate and inanimate, in a letter to John in December of 1787: “Directly on my return to Albany I shall make you out a Deed of Gift for all the Blacks belonging to the farm except Jacob, Peter, Cuff and Bett, and for the Stock and Cattle, Horses, &c., &c., with a very few exceptions. For all the farming utensils, household furniture, &c., &c.”³⁰ Thus, to the very end of his management of Saratoga House, Schuyler viewed those he enslaved as transferrable chattel along with the livestock and interior furnishings. That amounted to about a dozen human beings.³¹

These individuals kept up the same labors at Saratoga as before. Culinary knowledge continued to be essential for adult enslaved women at Saratoga House and in the Albany area. Without it, the Schuylers and his peers considered them useless, as revealed in an attempt to procure additional kitchen help for the General’s son at Saratoga through a family agent and friend, Thomas Witbeck. After examining one unlikely candidate, Witbeck wrote, “Mr. Van Den Bergh brought his other Wench to Me on Tuesday[.] I have Returned Her yesterday[.] She Would By No Means answer you[.] She Did Not Understand anything about cooking[.] Nor could she Wash any Fine close [sic]– I Will Make Inquiry [illegible] to Find a good one for you.”³²

Several additional types of work assigned to enslaved labor should be noted as well. Slaves with special gardening skills performed horticultural tasks—tending ornamental plantings like Schuyler’s tuberose flowers and willow trees. Nursing was important, too. When enslavers were ill or bedridden for any reason, their Black servants attended them around the clock, supplementing physicians’ visits. During this period of Schuyler occupancy of the Saratoga estate, Philip experienced debilitating episodes of gout and Catharine Schuyler bore her last two children—Cortlandt (1778), who died in infancy, and Catharine Van Rensselaer Schuyler, born in 1781. At least one or two enslaved servants undoubtedly accompanied Catharine to Ticonderoga to help her care for her sick husband or to drive her carriage. Similarly, they were by her side during childbirth and by the side of her sick and/or dying children, too. They held bedpans, wiped fevered brows, fed sips of water or soup, and washed blood, stool, and vomit from stained bodies according to the

³⁰ Cited as “MSS in possession of Miss Fanny Schuyler of Pelham-on-Sound” in Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 297; also cited in Katherine S. Baxter, *A Godchild of Washington*, 193–194; “Accounts,” January 3, 1787 to December 19, 1787, PSP, NYPL.

³¹ Bielinski, “John Bradstreet Schuyler; US Census, 1790. Bielinski states that J. B. Schuyler owned fourteen slaves in 1790 but I have not found corroborating census evidence for this. Philip Schuyler is listed on the 1790 census with thirteen slaves in his household.

³² Thomas L. Witbeck, Letter to John Bradstreet Schuyler, July 6, 1789, Philip Schuyler Collection, New-York Historical Society.

medical conventions of the day.³³ Besides the cash crops grown on the farm, enslaved laborers planted, weeded, watered, and harvested produce for immediate household consumption. Watermelon, squash, turnips, beans, and apples were among the crops cultivated in addition to the wheat and corn sold overseas. Perhaps some of the women were wet-nurses to the Schuyler babies.³⁴ Enslaved drivers were entrusted to carry items, messages, and instructions back and forth between the Saratoga and Albany Schuyler households. In early December 1787, for example, coachman Anthony was crucial as a conduit between the General and John. Philip wrote,

Dear Child,

Anthony is charged with some wine, West India rum, salt fish, a knife to cut straw, a lock, two corn baskets, your saddle and bridle & 2 ¼ yards of cloath for mittens . . . I sent you some measures for shoes for my servants which please to have made.

If the weather continues favorable, send down Anthony on Monday with five bags of Indian meal, the boxes, bands, bolts, and tire of the Old Wheels, the Pennsylvania collars and [harness], with the whipple and Triangle trus, I believe they are in the waggon house garret.

Your Mama desires when It is convenient that you should send her the old Silver handled knives and forks, the two silver cups and the table spoons but not the Teaspoons. do not forget to have the axle tree put to Cuff’s cart that when I send for him and his oxen he bring down a load.³⁵

Here, the presence and reliable use of enslaved labor are assumptions as natural and predictable as the rising morning sun, and more dependable than the weather for Schuyler. Anthony and Cuff (probably a shortened form of Cuffee, an Akan-derived day-name meaning Friday), both enslaved men, are key functionaries here in the normal operations of Schuyler’s Saratoga and/or Albany estates. Driver Anthony is clearly the most trusted and bilocal, indicating perhaps a hierarchy among the slaves determined by their enslavers. Schuyler confidently tasks him with bringing John assorted items needed in the Saratoga home and industrial compound: food and drink for the larder, fabric, personal riding equipment, written measurements for slaves’ shoes, and an important work tool. He is to return with several similar types of things, including fine dining ware and more horse and carriage equipage. While Anthony clearly is usually assigned to Albany, Cuff performs a similar transporter’s role from his base in Saratoga. Unnamed “servants”—all

³³ Herbert C. Covey, *African American Slave Medicine: Herbal and Non-Herbal Treatments*.

³⁴ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 236.

³⁵ Philip Schuyler, Letter to John Bradstreet Schuyler, December 6, 1787, PSP, NYPL.

enslaved—would soon be outfitted with new shoes. Schuyler’s faith in Anthony was not mislaid, a matter to be addressed in the next chapter. Dutifully, delayed only by a wagon breakdown, the enslaved Black driver returned to Albany, mission accomplished.³⁶

This father-to-son correspondence between Philip and John represents a passing down of an enslavement regime from one generation to the next, to ensure the prosperity of the latter. By December of 1787, John was a new husband, living at and running the Saratoga site. Philip mentored his son: “I would not advise you to build a new saw mill. The upper one will answer all your purposes after next year. The Lower one should be so far repaired as that It may work next year. Do not forget to have the cart and all your sleds put into repair. I send you the measure for Cornelia & Caty & Thom. Let Mr. Satterly make two pair for each.”³⁷ With this counsel, the Revolutionary War general who had gained national acclaim for his steadfastly honorable leadership during a lengthy, bloody contest for republican liberty nonetheless assumed the continuation of a political economy erected on the exploitation of disempowered human chattel. Enslaved Blacks would run the Saratoga mills for John after their repair just as they had for Philip. These workers would continue to drive the family’s carriages, carts, and sleds. And Philip expected John to furnish the household’s enslaved laborers at Saratoga with required footwear.

The correspondence also implicitly conveys to John the direct connection between the Schuyler family’s comfort and joys, on the one hand, and the labors of those enslaved within their household, on the other. During the holiday season a few weeks later, Schuyler wrote to invite John and his wife down to Albany. Again, the family’s anticipated festivities required the work of Schuyler’s enslaved:

If you are not ready to come on Friday, send Tom and Peter down with each a load of porrage either corn or oats. Let Cuff come too as soon as you can send him, let him bring a covered Sled, and It will be as well to let him bring corn in the ear,—he must stop at Mr. Bacons and get his oxen shod, By Cuff I wish to send the white faced horse which I have in the Sulky, - if no oats are thrashed then let some be prepared to come with the next sleds.³⁸

Schuyler’s bonded laborers at Saratoga prepared porridges, carted corn and sleds, shoed oxen, delivered horses, and possibly even threshed oats to enable the Christmas week celebrations of their enslavers.

There is no census record of slaves under Schuyler ownership at Saratoga House after 1790. After John B. Schuyler’s death in 1795, his father, General Philip Schuyler, entered into a thirteen-year lease with Richard Davis, Jr., to manage the property until John B.’s underage son, Philip II (1788-1865), turned twenty-one and inherited his grandfather’s

³⁶ Philip Schuyler, Letter to John Bradstreet Schuyler, December 12, 1787, PSP, NYPL.

³⁷ Philip Schuyler, Letter to John Bradstreet Schuyler, December 12, 1787.

³⁸ Philip Schuyler, Letter to John Bradstreet Schuyler, December 12, 1787.

estate. The 1800 federal census shows that there were two enslaved people living and working on Schuyler’s Saratoga property leased to Richard Davis, Jr., at that time. While not listed under a Schuyler owner, the continuation of enslavement on the land mirrored the General’s own persistence as a slaveholder in Albany that year. Later, in October 1809, when General Schuyler’s grandson (John B. Schuyler’s son) Philip Schuyler II came to own the Saratoga property at age twenty-one, he employed a number of servants to help manage the farm and house, though none were enslaved. There is no evidence in the 1810 federal census of enslaved persons at Schuyler’s Saratoga estate. Thus, slaveholding at the Old Saratoga farm ended as part of the trend toward gradual manumission in the state, but only after the General’s death in 1804.³⁹

Philip II relocated to Saratoga House with his new wife in 1811 to occupy the commodious box. The couple bore nine children and remained there until the 1839 sale of the homestead to George Strover, after Philip went bankrupt because of losses suffered in the national Panic of 1837. The 1815 renovation, which included a gutting and reworking of the kitchen wing, was an investment in the preservation of the kind of domestic service and servants to which the family had grown accustomed over the previous century. Still, it is striking that, unlike the case of other Hudson Valley gentry, Philip seems not to have kept the family’s Black servants there as recently freed workers for him. Just as the federal census includes no enslaved persons in Philip’s Saratoga household in 1820, there are no free Blacks listed under his management for that year either.⁴⁰

This may be an indication of Philip’s antislavery leanings after the passage of New York State’s 1799 gradual manumission law. But if Philip harbored abolitionist convictions, they were of a peculiar brand of northern, antislavery capitalist thought; because it favored free over enslaved labor in new industrial pursuits, it remained untroubled by the morality question concerning the sourcing of raw materials for cotton manufacturing. Philip built the second cotton mill in New York State which stood as “a monument to his enterprise,” even as he, this grandson of the General, remained undisturbed by the injustice of enslaved cotton planters and pickers supplying his factory. The failure of the 1820 and 1830 census manuscripts to capture any Black people there, free or servant, suggests the rapidity with which they exited the Schuyler home to pursue independent living before and after the 1827 date stipulated in state’s manumission law.⁴¹

³⁹ US Census, 1790; US Census, 1800; US Census, 1810; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Richard Davis, December 19, 1795, PSP, NYPL.

⁴⁰ Phillips, *General Philip Schuyler House*, 40–41, 100–109; US Census, 1820; Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 244, 285, 302–311; *North America Family Histories, 1500–2000 for Philip Schuyler*, https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/61157/images/46155_b289725-00036?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=XQs371&_phstart=successSource&pId=737816, accessed January 2, 2023.

⁴¹ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 304. See Myron O. Stachiw, “‘For the Sake of Commerce:’ Slavery, Antislavery, and Northern Industry” in David Roediger and David H. Blatt, eds., *The Meaning of Slavery in the North* (London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 33–44; US Census, 1820; US Census 1830.

Deconstructing “Gentle Treatment”

Supervision of the enslaved by enslavers is a strange subfield within slave historiography. It studies questions of relative cruelty and leniency in the practice of chattel slavery, a fundamentally inhumane institution by definition. But exploring this matter can reveal particularities about slaveowners’ estimation of Africans and their descendants, how such evaluations may have changed over time, and the impact of such assessments on the life outcomes of those they enslaved. With these considerations in mind then, it is reasonable to ask: What kind of taskmaster was Philip Schuyler as a slaveowner? How did he instruct his overseers to direct his enslaved workers?

The legal power Schuyler wielded over the Black people he owned combined with his dependency on them to determine his relationship with them, his understanding of them, his attention to their physical health, and the extent of his indulgence of their wishes. In Mrs. Grant’s memory, Philip Schuyler was a kind taskmaster toward his human chattel. Drawing on her observations of enslaver-enslaved relations in the household of Margarita Schuyler, Grant described “gentle treatment” of slaves in the Albany area of the Upper Hudson Valley, generalizing to include those within Margarita’s larger social set of local gentry. According to Grant, “slavery was softened with a smile” in this region; “tranquility and comfort” characterized the peculiar institution, “which distinguished this society from all others . . . owing to the relation between master and servant being better understood here than in any other place.”⁴²

These claims are oxymoronic. Grant’s memoir was first published in 1808, as the abolitionist movement had risen to prominence and influence in Britain. Both England and the United States had passed statutes outlawing overseas slave trafficking, and her book appeared nine years after New York State passed its Gradual Manumission Act. By then, the business men driving capitalism above the Mason-Dixon line embraced the notion of the free labor contract, and abandoned chattel slavery as a legal form of work. Looking back to the mid-eighteenth century, it would have been easy for Grant to cast a forgiving, sentimental eye on former days; since the North seemed more enlightened concerning slavery than the South in her literary present, she might have reckoned backwards that it always had been—even in the past. As a British subject, Grant’s explicit point of contrast was European servitude; she lamented the low status assigned to free servants in Europe as a situation that engendered bitterness in them, making them deceitful and “dishonest.” Moreover, Grant’s opinion might have been informed by practices in the West Indies

⁴² Anne MacVicar Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 3, 35.

where the precariousness of enslaved life and the brutality of slaveholding on sugar plantations were notoriously severe. She proclaimed her own opposition to the practice: “Let me not be detested as an advocate for slavery.”⁴³

Regardless of the comparative frame, Grant’s recollections could never authentically speak for the experience of the enslaved. They were mediated by her position as a privileged outsider who observed a system seemingly unmarked by corporal punishment. Although harsh physical reprimands were hardly unknown in the Upper Hudson Valley, Schuyler’s overseers and others in that region apparently mostly used forms of discipline other than whippings.⁴⁴ For example, in his role as army lieutenant-colonel and muster-master stationed at Albany under the General, Varick reported his solution for a lethargic slave: “As Charles has little to do with Cart I shall send him to Saratoga, especially as his every look & actions evinces him to be too lazy to remain here without a master.”⁴⁵ At the time, November 1777, Schuyler was preoccupied with building the commodious box and the busy construction site provided plenty of jobs to fill up a worker’s time. Charles’ new assignment was a polite way of teaching him his purpose as a subjugated and unfree laborer for life. The system was genteel, but not gentle. It knew what it could not allow and cleverly found methods to sustain itself.

For Schuyler, Africans and African-descended people were capital investments which could lead to riches if properly maintained and managed, like other investments. Unhealthy, sick slaves in a slave society meant no work done and no profits earned. John Graham, Schuyler’s overseer, experienced this in the summer of 1777 when weeks-long illnesses struck the enslaved community at the Saratoga estate:

We this Day begin to mow grass: & would have begun before but Did not finish plowing teel Saturday Last & as Several of our negroes are Sick & has been this three weeks past & not yete able fore Service the general will please to order us 4 or 5 of the Batteamen other ways I am afraid the business will suffer. The Garden is ever Run with weeds in such a manner that I should be Sorry the Genl or madam Should See it teel Such times as we have it in better order. [W]e have our Corn & potates on hand & a fence to make round the turnips ground which must all be Done before harvest.⁴⁶

In this case, mowing, plowing, weeding, and fencing all lagged in completion. So did the critical work of river shipments, since the malady also laid low Schuyler’s enslaved Black boatmen. The substitute batteaux men Graham so urgently requested might have been

⁴³ Grant, 35.

⁴⁴ For a look at punishments in the early republican period of New York history, see Shane White, “Slavery in New York State in the Early Republic,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 1995): 9–11.

⁴⁵ Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 8, 1777, PSP, NYPL.

⁴⁶ John Graham, Letter to Philip Schuyler, July 6, 1777, PSP, NYPL.

gotten through hire from Schuyler’s neighboring relatives, friends, or business associates. These replacements might have been free Blacks, free Whites, or enslaved workers who performed such labors for other substantial farms in the vicinity. In such an arrangement, Schuyler would have hired the workers for pay with money either going directly to them or their enslavers. Their kind of river transportation work during the late eighteenth century often fell to African Americans. This was true of those who were free as well as those who were enslaved and attached to extensive estates like the General’s, as indicated both by Graham’s lament and this image of Black boatmen in Virginia (see Figure 12).⁴⁷



Figure 12. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Three Slaves Steering a Bateau*, 1798.

Source: *Steering a Bateau*, Watercolor, 1798, Document Bank of Virginia, accessed August 11, 2022, <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/items/show/105>.

The main point here is that Schuyler’s own sick, enslaved batteaux men and other Black servants, needed and received his attention because they were critical elements in some part of his operations. Illnesses threatened to interrupt their contribution to his income-generating enterprise, and to forestall such work stoppages and slowdowns, Schuyler provided them with necessary medical care, shoes and clothing, and kept accounts of the monies he expended for this type of business expense. In a single year, 1787 for instance, the Schuyler family doctor, Samuel Stringer, attended enslaved household members on at least twenty-six occasions. The list of arcane medicines prescribed (“Bottled Turlington,” gut pecter, gum camphor, lavender soap, castor oil) indicates an

⁴⁷ Tyler Wilson, “Lynchburg’s African American Batteauxmen and Packet Boatmen,” February 14, 2019, Lynchburg Museum Website, <https://www.lyncburgmuseum.org/blog/2019/2/14/lynchburgs-african-american-batteauxmen-and-packet-boatmen>, accessed August 11, 2022; Edward Salo, “They Can Run the Boat, But Not Ride: Slavery, Segregation, and Ferries,” *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* 12, no. 1 (March 2009): 1–6; David C. Cecelski, *Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3–5.

assortment of complaints among the slaves—respiratory infections, joint pain, skin problems (possibly related to smallpox), and digestive ills—any of which would have kept them in bed. Enslaved women received medical attention for their reproductive value: When “Hannah the wench” went into labor, Schuyler called on elderly “grany” [Granny] Miss Vanderwerken and compensated her for her midwifery skills.⁴⁸

Schuyler always made sure that the people he enslaved were properly shod. Throughout the fall months of 1767, local artisan Michael Reack cobbled shoes for Dick, Con, Brit, Coleman, Jupiter, Harre, Libea, Pol, and Peter. Schuyler paid Peter Jordan to craft “6 pair of Ingin shoes for Negroes”; these were moccasins. Shoemaker Patrick Carney mended and made footwear for fourteen of Schuyler’s enslaved workers, probably the whole lot, in December 1771. Likewise, in early January 1776, Jacob Hendrick, a leather craftsman and shoemaker operating near or at Saratoga settled accounts with the General for fashioning new shoes, repairing old shoes, and fixing boot straps for Schuyler’s Black laborers. Varick sent up leather from Albany for Schuyler’s Black servants in Saratoga. Schuyler paid for footgear for Cato, Britt, Bett, and Phecab in 1785.⁴⁹

The General saw to it that the Black workers he held in bondage were protected against the elements with appropriate clothing. Since Tone (Anthony) worked outside as a coachman, he especially needed warm vestments while driving through the frosty air and snow of upstate New York during the late fall and winter seasons. It made good business sense then for Schuyler to pay Miss Pattit, a local White seamstress, to sew a coat, jacket, and breeches for Tone. With similar logic, he engaged the wife of “Mr. Rose,” apparently another free (White) local Saratogian, to knit stockings for Tone and Dick. Just as Thomas Jefferson hired a weaver to spin coarse hemp linen for slaves’ clothing, some of the flax spun into linen cloth at Schuyler’s enterprises was probably used to fashion clothing for the human beings he owned. His ledgers show payment to local flax and cotton spinners and weavers from 1767 to 1770.⁵⁰

Schuyler’s attentiveness to the shoes and clothing of those he enslaved not only reflected his personal predilections, as a manager of unfree people, to supply basic necessities; it was also mandated by colonial law in New York province. Legislation censured slaveowners who practiced “cruel abuse” against their human property. If they were

⁴⁸ Accounts, January 3–December 19, 1887, PSP, NYPL; Philip Schuyler Saratoga Ledger, 1765–1770, N-YHS; Olive R. Jones and Allen Vegotsky, “Turlington’s Balsam of Life,” *Northeast Historical Archeology* 45, no. 1 (2016): 1–61; Sara Stidstone Gronim, “Imagining Inoculation: Smallpox, the Body, and Social Relations of Healing in the Eighteenth Century,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 80, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 247–268.

⁴⁹ Philip Schuyler Saratoga Ledger 1764–1770, PSC, N-YHS; Patrick Carney, Account of Shoes to Philip Schuyler, December 16, 1771, PSC, N-YPL; Jacob Henrick, Account of Work Done to General Schuyler Esqr., January 4–6, 1776, PSP, NYPL; Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 16, 1777, PSP, NYPL; Mr. Kinear, Account of Shoes, October 8, 1785, PSP, NYPL.

⁵⁰ Philip Schuyler Account Ledger, 1767 to 1770, New-York Historical Society; Philip Schuyler to John Schuyler, December 12, 1787; “Slave Clothing and Adornment in Virginia,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, <https://encyclopedia.virginia.org/entries/slave-clothing-and-adornment-in-virginia/>, accessed July 30, 2022.

convicted of denying proper “Provisions or apparel” to those they enslaved, they must post a bond.⁵¹ After 1773, any slaveholder with Black servants found begging for something to eat or wear was fined ten pounds.⁵² Such measures checking neglect stemmed from authorities’ fears that enslaved people exploited in these ways might become public charges.⁵³ As a public official, Schuyler was mindful of such concerns.

Schuyler also knew when and how to accommodate those he enslaved, as his willingness to let them engage as consumers at his store proves, as did his capitulation to some of their work-related claims. When Mary was asked to give up the “one white wash Brush” she was using for another need in Saratoga, Varick noted that “she is averse to parting with [it],” so he resigned himself “to procure two in Town as also the brooms.”⁵⁴ On another occasion when Saratoga House needed a new kettle, Mary refused to relinquish any of those at Saratoga Mansion even temporarily while the local blacksmith forged another. Varick chronicled this: “Mr. Shepherd has not done the Saratoga Kettle Nor will Mary part with any of hers upon any Terms. She says she dare not do It. Shepherd had promised to do It to Morrow provided he can get tools. I shall press him to do it & when done, I shall send it in your Baggage Waggon.”⁵⁵ Schuyler apparently endorsed Varick’s decisions with good reason. Mary was hardly a recalcitrant, difficult servant. Quite the opposite. This is the same Mary who kept close watch over Schuyler’s milking cows. By her actions, she had demonstrated that she was attentive to assigned tasks. If anything, her attachment to the large pot attested to her dedication to her culinary duties. For Schuyler, Mary’s insistence on keeping the cauldron she regularly used to prepare meals affirmed that she was “a likely wench.” Schuyler approved and promoted such “likeliness” in the people he bought and maintained. He unloaded those who consistently demonstrated unwilling attitudes.

Similarly, he sold rum to Tom one Christmas Day despite a New York slave regulation forbidding the sale of alcohol to a slave.⁵⁶ Enslavers generally feared anything that might cause unruly, boisterous behavior in Black servants. The 1709 law was clear “That no retailer of Strong Liquors within this Colony shall sell any Strong Liquors whatsoever to any negro.”⁵⁷ But Schuyler winked at the prohibition in order to maintain a “likely” performance from an effective worker by allowing Tom to celebrate the holiday; this license

⁵¹ *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*, Vol. I (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1894), 157.

⁵² *The Colonial Laws of New York*, Vol. V, 533.

⁵³ Edwin Olson, “The Slave Code in Colonial New York,” *The Journal of Negro History* 29, no. 2 (April 1944): 155–156.

⁵⁴ Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 12, 1777, PSP, NYPL.

⁵⁵ Richard Varick, Letter to Philip Schuyler, November 16, 1777, PSP, NYPL.

⁵⁶ December 25, 1769 entry, Philip Schuyler Saratoga Ledger 1764–1770, New-York Historical Society.

⁵⁷ *Colonial Laws of New York*, Vol. 1, 666.

mirrored the more generous, sometimes week-long, holiday breaks that southern plantation owners permitted their servants. These forbearances were successful management tools handled by an astute owner of human property.⁵⁸ Within the strictures of the institutionalized enslavement of Black people, Schuyler elicited a complex sort of worker satisfaction to fulfill his economic goals. A businessman’s sense always defined Schuyler’s approach to those he enslaved.

This same sense defined Schuyler’s exit from slaveholding. The New York State Assembly began taking steps toward gradual manumission in 1785, but Schuyler was not a leading proponent of the movement. He approached these developments with caution and moderation in much the same way as he did the Revolution itself. Schuyler was from one of the “Hudson River Counties” which opposed an abolition proposal put before the first State Constitutional Convention in 1777. While his son-in-law, Alexander Hamilton, was a founding member of the New York Manumission Society in 1785, Schuyler himself never joined. As momentum toward gradual manumission slowly grew in the 1790s among New York City, western, and far northern (above Saratoga) constituencies in the state, opponents sought to attach conditions to the possible adoption of such a policy. Concerned about the economic effects of the policy, they (unsuccessfully) suggested compromise bills providing financial compensation for slaveholders forced to give up their human chattel. They hammered out various mechanisms to limit or cover the maintenance costs of the indigent (children or the elderly and physically broken-down) among the liberated Black population requiring public assistance.⁵⁹ As a New York State Senator through 1797, Schuyler was among this cautious, self-interested group. Just before he resigned his seat to join the US Senate, Schuyler wrote to Samuel Jones, widely esteemed legal craftsman and state senator representing Queens: “Inclose your draft of the bill for Abolishing Slavery—and if you think proper you may either add the Inclosed properly corrected by you, or to offer it as a Substitute, I believe it would be more Agreeable to the owners of slaves, that It should be a Substitute for the whole bill.”⁶⁰ Here Schuyler revealed his primary focus regarding abolition debates and related legislative proposals. Rather than engage ideological arguments for the liberation of Black servants, he preoccupied himself with enslavers and the impact of manumission on them.

⁵⁸ Shauna Bigham and Robert E. May, “The Time O’ All Times?: Masters, Slaves, and Christmas in the Old South,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 263–265.

⁵⁹ Leo H. Hirsch, Jr., “The Slave in New York,” *The Journal of Negro History* 16, no. 4 (October 1931): 386; David N. Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom 1777–1827* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 58, 154, 165–167, 170–179. *Journals of the Provincial Congress Provincial Convention, Committee of Safety and Council of Safety of the State of New York 1775–1776–1777*, Vol. 1 (Albany: Thurlow Weed, 1842), 887, 889.

⁶⁰ Philip Schuyler, Letter to Samuel Jones, Esqr., March 4, 1797, Schuyler Family Collection, SC19811, Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library; Samuel Seabury, “Samuel Jones, New York’s First Comptroller,” *New York History*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (October 1947), 400–402.

Nor did Schuyler unshackle any of those he enslaved until quite late in his life; it was only in his last four years that he relinquished slaveholding. As late as July 1797, he paid £195 for four more Black people—a woman named Sylvia, her two children, and a man named Toby. Within the next three years, he appears to have become convinced of the inevitability of statewide gradual manumission; between 1801 and 1804 he freed Hanover, Phoebe, Silva, Stephen, Tally ho, young Tom, and Tone. Those seven individuals represented just over half of those Schuyler owned in 1800. In his will, made after the death of his wife and his oldest son, John Bradstreet Schuyler, he divided his holdings on the Saratoga Patent among his several surviving children. By giving the largest portions of his estate to his grandson, Philip Schuyler (son of John Bradstreet Schuyler), and sons, Phillip Jeremiah Schuyler (1768–1835) and Rensselaer Schuyler, Schuyler kept wealth in and from human chattel within his family as long as he could.⁶¹

Both Phillip Jeremiah and Rensselaer inherited Patent lands in Washington County from the General, and both retained ownership of enslaved people into the early nineteenth century. Written records do not capture the number of slaves Philip Jeremiah probably owned. He received his father’s farmlands and two mills on the Battenkill River on Lots 32, 33, and 34—the northeastern portion of the Patent, which surely used enslaved labor for mill work at least. But since Philip Jeremiah managed this property from afar after he relocated to Rhinebeck, New York in 1796, census records only note the slaves in his residence there. That number was five in 1800—nearly half of his dozen-person household. Interestingly, it was Philip Jeremiah who manumitted Chalk—a biracial son of an unidentified Schuyler and a Black woman—in 1811. Chalk’s story will be taken up in the next chapter but for now it is enough to say that Chalk would have been elderly when he was freed; most of his working days were probably spent. As late as 1810, Rensselaer held seven individuals in bondage—fully half of those under his roof—on Lot 41 in Easton. A Schuyler farm there, along with leased farms (both in Easton), constituted the General’s gift to this son and a grandchild.⁶² As slaveholding among Schuyler family Saratoga Patent landlords attenuated in the early nineteenth century, it did so at the plodding, measured pace of the state’s Gradual Manumission Law.

⁶¹ Will of Philip Schuyler, Albany County Surrogate’s Court, Will, Vol. 3, 149; Receipt for Negroes Purchased, July 21, 1797, PSP, NYPL.

⁶² Will of Philip Schuyler; US Census, 1800; US Census, 1810; Chrisfield Johnson, *History of Washington Co., New York: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 292; Howard Holdridge Morse, *Historical Old Rhinebeck, Echoes of Two Centuries: A Hudson River Post Road and Colonial Town* (Rhinebeck: Howard Holdridge Morse, 1908), 29, 87, 94, 120, 140.

CHAPTER FIVE

Living

As labor systems, American slavery and slaveholding were also domestic institutions in which Black and White people lived with each other as family and community members. But “family” was never a straightforward matter for enslaved people, because of the forced nature of their connection to their enslavers. Family had multiple definitions and dimensions. It could be biological, fictive, legal, or “illegitimate.” It could be a deeply affective network or a strictly economic arrangement.

Three types of families concern us here: a) *enslaved*, consisting of unfree Black workers; b) *enslaver*, consisting of free, White slaveowners, their free children and relatives; and c) *household*, consisting of a head person along with free and unfree people who resided with that head. In a technically legal sense, the enslaved family did not exist; it had no legal meaning since enslaved people, as property, could not formally marry for most of the duration of the peculiar institution in New York. Marital unions between enslaved people in the state were not sanctioned by law until 1809. Yet such unions were formed and sometimes unofficially recognized by both enslaved and enslaver.¹

The Schuylers’ Saratoga estate was a site of social reproduction for Black and White families. It consistently cloned its residents in ways that replicated the social hierarchy of a racially binary slave society. It generated one wealthy, privileged Schuyler family unit after another. Capital and social prominence passed from Johannes Schuyler to Philip Johannes Schuyler to Philip Schuyler to John Bradstreet Schuyler to his son, their wives, and their children despite periodic losses and setbacks. Enslaver begat enslaver begat enslaver. Enslaved begat enslaved begat enslaved until slavery itself died in New York State.

Government practices adopted the notion that Black human chattel had White families and vice versa. Censuses recognized this by counting enslaved people as members of the several Schuyler households at the Saratoga estate. In 1790, the US Congress instructed the first federal census enumerators to tally the nation’s inhabitants, “distinguishing the several *families* [emphasis added] by the names of their master, mistress, steward, overseer, or other principal person therein.”² Accordingly, thirteen, unfree Blacks were included in the household headed by General Philip Schuyler in that inaugural,

¹ Edwin Olson, “The Slave Code in Colonial New York,” *The Journal of Negro History* 29, no. 2 (April 1944): 151.

² *Annals of Congress* 1790, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., 2nd ch. 101.

official count. In 1800, the federal census taker listed eleven slaves within the household.³ Using census definitions then, the General's family included on average a dozen enslaved people in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

Official designations aside, slave owners themselves considered the people they enslaved a part of their households. Historians debate the nature of this Black-White familial relationship. Certainly enslavers embraced the prevailing notion of a graded social order within the domestic realm. As family patriarchs, free men stood at the top of the ladder as heads of families—a position that defaulted to widows sometimes upon the death of their husbands. Patriarchy engendered paternalism, which may be loosely defined as a paterfamilias's protective attitude and behavior toward those within his household. But what exactly constituted paternalism toward enslaved people? Was it merely a sense of obligation to keep a dependent person clothed, fed, and housed? Or was it more? An affectionate, emotional attachment toward one's dependents? Enslavers in the South sometimes spoke of those they held in chattel bondage as "my family," but how did they view such family members? How should we understand claims that the "negroes in every respectable family [in the region of colonial Albany]" were "not only treated with humanity, but cherished with parental kindness"?⁴ Did the enslaved reciprocate those feelings?

Schuyler certainly distinguished between the enslaved and free members of his household—his "family." In April of 1778, the General wrote to New York's Governor Clinton, "Some Time ago I carried all my Family to Saratoga." Considering the fact that at the time of this correspondence, Catherine Schuyler was over eight months pregnant—expecting "to lay in the first week of May"—Schuyler's reference to family implicitly included the Black servants brought along to care for his wife during and after delivery, as well as others with various duties, since he was "intending to have resided there altogether" after his military duties ended.⁵ In the same letter to Clinton, Schuyler explained that his relocation plans had been formulated on the assumption that the northern frontier at Saratoga would be reinforced by Continentals. But after finding that the border remained unprotected, he changed his mind. The letter announced that he would bring his biological family, the enslaver family, back to Albany if troops did not arrive within the month. Schuyler had no problem, though, with leaving his Black "family" in Saratoga as vulnerable, exposed sentries in the dangerous terrain: "I do not however mean to bring away my Servants as I shall erect a picket Fort round my House and let them, if possible, keep it."⁶ As

³ US Census, 1790; US Census 1800.

⁴ Anne MacVicar Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady: With Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America, As They Existed Previous to the Revolution* (New-York: George Dearborn, 1836), 66.

⁵ Philip Schuyler, Letter to Governor Clinton, April 17, 1778, PSP, NYPL.

⁶ Philip Schuyler, Letter to Governor Clinton, April 17, 1778.

wide as the idea of family was in plantation societies like those in Albany County then, there were clearly racial distinctions made regarding safeguarding and defense within the household and these were linked to free and unfree status.

Anne MacVicar Grant recognized these particularities in her memoir when she discussed “the kitchen family”—a distinct, precise term that is helpful to our analysis here—which she applied to the enslaved family even as she romantically underscored the unity of Blacks and Whites within the Schuylers’ households by citing instances of the slaves’ emotional bond with their owners.⁷ As a child between the ages of ten and thirteen, she lived with her Scottish parents as occupants of The Flatts, where Schuyler himself lived early in his marriage until 1761, before he and his wife had Schuyler Mansion built in Albany.⁸ Since the domestic routines and social life indexed by Grant at The Flatts were replicated at Schuyler Mansion and Schuyler House, they beg careful scrutiny. As an outsider observing the relationship between enslaved Blacks and enslaving Whites among the Schuylers and within the privileged households of Albany County, Grant ultimately concluded that interactions were amiable. She wrote that she had “never seen people so happy in servitude as the domestics of the Albanians,” and that “the strongest attachment subsisted between the domestic and the destined owner.”⁹ Grant elaborated:

I have no where met with instances of friendship more tender and generous, than that which here subsisted between the slaves and their masters and mistresses. Extraordinary proofs of them have been often given in the course of hunting or Indian trading, when a young man and his slave have gone to the trackless woods together, in the cases of fits of the ague, loss of a canoe, and other casualties happening near hostile Indians. The slave has been known, at the imminent risk of his life, to carry his disabled master through trackless woods with labour and fidelity scarce credible; and the master has been equally tender on similar occasions of the humble friend who stuck closer than a brother.¹⁰

All is affection, faithfulness, and harmony—enslaved servant happily obliging enslaver and slaveholder performing equally sacrificial acts out of love for his enslaved companion in this account of the Schuyler household. Grant suggests that the absence of large armies of “field negroes” and the relative small number of human chattel per White household in Albany County—“few of them” presumably in comparison to large, southern plantations

⁷ On kitchen family, see Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 36.

⁸ Cuyler Reynolds, ed., *Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1911), 35.

⁹ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 35.

¹⁰ Grant, 35–36.

with fifty or more Black servants—explain such felicity on the part of the region’s enslaved people.¹¹ But again, Grant’s judgements are simplistic; they fail to notice the sophistication underlying the decision making, behavior, and apparent loyalties of Black people.

Joining the Family

Newly enslaved African-born captives started from ground zero. Cut from their African homes and lineages, they needed to adjust to new understandings of family to survive in their subjugated positions. This was true for every Black forced laborer purchased or moved directly from Africa. In this case, the Schuylers set the terms because, in the perverse way captured by census enumerations, those the brothers enslaved became a part of the Schuyler household—the Schuyler “family.”

Johannes and Philip probably acquired the first generation of human chattel for use in developing their part of the Patent during the First Imprint. These came either directly from Africa or from the West Indies. There is no explicit evidence of this but it is very likely since other pioneer settler colonists in the same general vicinity did the same. For example, in the 1760s, British Major Philip Skene “joined an English expedition to the West Indies, from where he brought a number of negro slaves” to further his attempt to build a pioneer settlement—formerly Skenesborough, Whitehall today, in eastern Washington County (then known as Charlotte County).¹² Those imported from the Caribbean to New York were often African-born. British slavers from Africa typically headed directly to Jamaica, Barbados, or Antigua after first loading their ships with human and other cargo along the coasts of Upper Guinea, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, the Loango Coast, and the Congo. Any humans not purchased in the West Indies might be included in a trip north to New York, or picked up by special request of a New York buyer for a few “negroes”; the earlier example of the *Esther* typified this kind of trafficking. Alternatively, the professional slave merchants from New York dealt exclusively with captives, filling their holds with humans in Africa and heading straight to Manhattan.¹³

The historical record offers circumstantial evidence that after erecting a house and mill on his Saratoga acreage, Johannes Schuyler (1668–1747) might also have purchased “Negroes” in the 1720s and 1730s through his brother, Arent Schuyler (1662–1730), who

¹¹ Grant, 35.

¹² Chrisfield Johnson, *History of Washington Co., New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 473; Philip Skene, Andrew P. Skene, J. Burgoyne, Amherst, Thos. Gage, W. Howe, Wm. Mitford, Willm Pitt, J. Butler, John Aubry, and John Pell, “Philip Skene of Skenesborough,” *The Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association* 9, no. 1, (January 1928): 29–30, 40–41.

¹³ Jeanne Chase, “New York Slave Trade, 1698–1741: The Origins of a Displaced People,” *Histoire et Mesure* 118, nos. 1/2 (2003): 96; James G. Lydon “New York and the Slave Trade, 1700 to 1774,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (April 1978): 377, 380, 385–386, 390.

had relocated to northern New Jersey in 1710 and was an active slave merchant. “Ar’t” Schuyler co-owned the *Mary*, a seafaring vessel that arrived in New York harbor from the Madeira Islands and Jamaica with ten African captives in 1729. One year later, the family’s participation in slave trading jumped exponentially when three Schuylers—Adoniah (1717–1788, Arent’s son), Peter (1707–1762, another of Arent’s sons), and probably Arent himself (“Arnot” seems to be a mis-recording of his name)—pooled resources to invest in another ship, the *Catherine*. The ship arrived in Perth Amboy, just seventeen miles along the Arthur Kill from the Hudson River, with a whopping cargo of 257 shackled human beings from Loango. Twice more, in 1731 and 1733, Arent sent out the *Catherine* on repeat human trafficking journeys to Africa. These yielded a combined total of 230 more Black captives in those two years (see Figure 1).¹⁴ In March 1741, the same Schuyler co-owned a ship bearing his name, *Arent*, that landed in New York from Jamaica with one enslaved person aboard (see Table 1).¹⁵

Although we know nothing of the dispersal of this human property, it only makes sense for Johannes to prefer buying Black laborers for use in Saratoga from his brother Arent during the First Imprint. The same would have been true of Johannes’ son, Philip. Doing so would benefit family members financially, individually, and collectively, especially since Johannes and Philip could be assured that Arent would reserve for them the “likeliest” workers in the pool of captives. In the early eighteenth century, the relatively primitive homestead at a distance from Albany mostly needed burly, muscular men for use in deforestation, field, and mill work. Johannes would have also requested a few enslaved women for domestic chores and for reproduction of the forced labor pool. Sourcing enslaved labor

¹⁴ Andrew D. Mellick, Jr., *The Story of an Old Farm: Or, Life in New Jersey in the Eighteenth Century* (Somerville, NJ: The Unionist-Gazette, 1889), 477; Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to the Americas*, Volume 2, (Washington, D.C., Carnegie Institute, 1932), 492.

¹⁵ *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* – Database, Voyage ID 16633 and Voyage ID 25318, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>; 487, 492; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the ...Slave Trade*, v. 2, 495; Lydon “New York and the Slave Trade, 1700 to 1774,” 389. There are discrepancies between the tallies in Donnan’s work and the digitized database of slave voyages regarding the number of slaves imported by the Schuylers in 1733. Donnan’s figure for African captives is 100 and she indicates Africa as the source of cargo and Perth Amboy as the landing point while the database gives 230 slaves as the number aboard the *Catherine* and that they originated in Loango. On the relationship between Arent Schuyler and John Walter, see *Centennial History of Missouri (The Center State): One Hundred Years in the Union 1820–1921, Vol. III* (St. Louis: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921), 69. Slave voyage records list one “Arnot Schuyler” as a co-owner of the *Catharine* in both 1731 and 1733. On this, see *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* – Database, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>, Voyage ID 16633 and Voyage ID 25318. For several reasons, I believe that Arnot and Arent Schuyler are the same person, with Arnot being a misspelling of Arent: Besides John Walter, who was Arent’s brother-in-law, other co-owners of the *Catherine* listed on the voyage database with “Arnot” in 1733 were Peter Schuyler and “Adoniah” Schuyler; in fact, Peter Schuyler (1707–1762) and Adoniah Schuyler (1708–1763) were Arent’s sons. Researchers at ancestry.com refer to Arent Schuyler as “Captain Arent Philipse (Aaron) Schuyler” at <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/173626171/person/132286136495/facts>. Apparently they interpret “Arent” as a Dutch version of “Aaron” in English. If this is the case, “Aaron” is a kind of hybrid/blended misspelling of Arent and Arnot. Arent is listed as “Aaron Schuyler Merchant” in a 1695 roll of freemen in Manhattan found in “The Burghers of New Amsterdam and the Freemen of New York” in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1885* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1886), 58. Finally, although there is the Dutch male first name, “Arnout,” no such name can be found in any Schuyler genealogy for colonial North America.

from Arent saved Johannes a 190-mile trip downriver to the New York City auction site at the west end of Wall Street. Instead, a sloop could be sent directly up the Hudson with the precious, mostly adolescent, human cargo Arent had carefully set aside for his family. First, though, the imported captives bound for the Saratoga Patent would have eventually passed through a Manhattan scene at once familiar and new. The collection of chained Black bodies in which they found themselves, surrounded by men with White skins, would have reminded them of sights they had encountered in their homelands or, after months aboard a reeking, crowded ocean vessel, in the West Indies. The bustling New York waterfront would have resembled the busy slave trading markets of Kingston in Jamaica, Redcliffe Quay in St. John's, Antigua, and Loango in West Central Africa, where the Schuylers sourced the laborers for their enterprises (see Figure 13).¹⁶

¹⁶ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 128; Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, "The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655–1788," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 2001), 208–209, 218, 221–222. On St. John's, see Sara Louise Kras, *Antigua and Barbuda* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 20.



Figure 13. New York Slave Market, about 1730

Source: The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "New York Slave Market about 1730" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed August 23, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-4097-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

There is a logic possibly explaining the *Catherine's* 1730 haul from Loango of more than 200 people (see Figure 1). Loango in the eighteenth century included lands in present-day Gabon and the Republic of the Congo. The name "Loango" was applied simultaneously to a city, a region, and a political kingdom found in one geographical area of West Central Africa north of today's Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola (see Figures 14, 15, and 16). The people of Loango shared a general linguistic and cultural heritage with people from the neighboring Kongo and Tio kingdoms shown in Figure 16. In fact, Loango emerged as a kingdom in its own right in the first half of the seventeenth century only after siphoning off trade routes and political authority from the more powerful, more central, Kongo kingdom. The various ethnic groups within all three kingdoms were considered generically Kongolese during the period of the Atlantic slave trade, even though the kingdoms of Loango and Kongo were separate polities independent of each other and with differing governing systems. The city of Loango as shown on Figure 14 and the kingdom of Loango as shown on Figure 16 lay north of the Congo River. The narrow coastal region called Loango on Figure 15 lay both north and south of the Congo River, stretching

downward into the Kongo kingdom along the Atlantic as rulers and strongmen in that polity became increasingly willing to sell their own freeborn people to traders from Loango.¹⁷



Figure 14. City of Loango in the Seventeenth Century

Source: “The City of Loango,” *A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, accessed January 15, 2022, <http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/2115>

¹⁷ Christina Frances Mobley, “The Kongolese Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti,” Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 2015, 5–6, 23–24, 38; Linda M. Heywood, “Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491–1800,” *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009): 20; Anne Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo* (London: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1985), 210–211.



Figure 15. The Loango Coast

Source: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., accessed January 16, 2022.

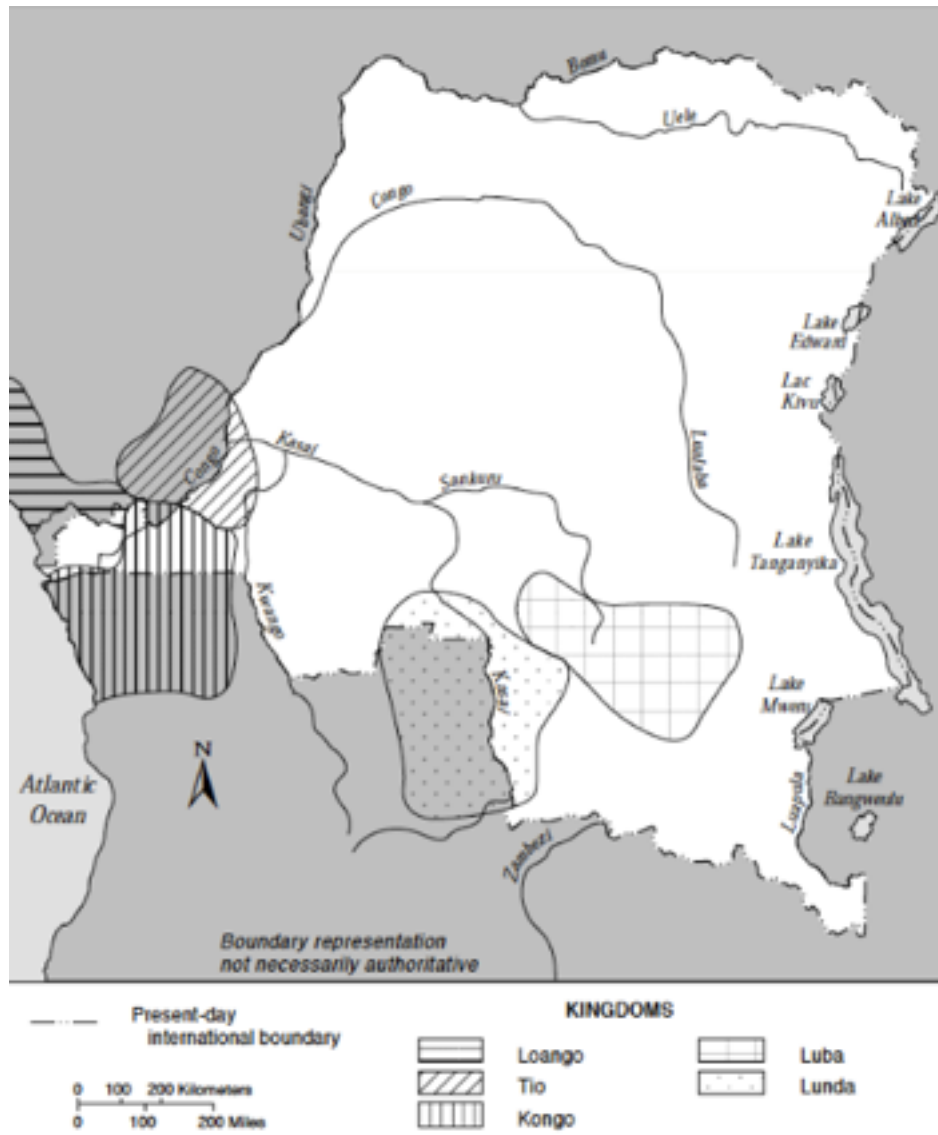


Figure 16. The Kingdom of Loango

Meditz, Sandra W, Tim Merrill, and Library Of Congress. Federal Research Division. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress: 1994. <https://www.loc.gov/item/94025092>.

It was in the late seventeenth century that Loango first entered the Atlantic slave trade to a significant degree. By the time the Schuyler family initiated slave trading activity there in the first half of the eighteenth century, Vili people—Loango’s traditional merchants—used established internal trade routes reaching east into the Mayombe rainforest to source captives and goods now wanted by Europeans. By the early eighteenth century, when

Schuyler-owned vessels crossed the sea in search of Black captives, Vili merchant caravans crossed kingdom borders and spilled below the Congo River along the Atlantic (see Figure 15).¹⁸

The enslaved captives had experience with many valuable skills, including mining, smelting, and smithing copper found within the Kouilou-Niari Valley of the Loangoan kingdom (see Figure 17).¹⁹

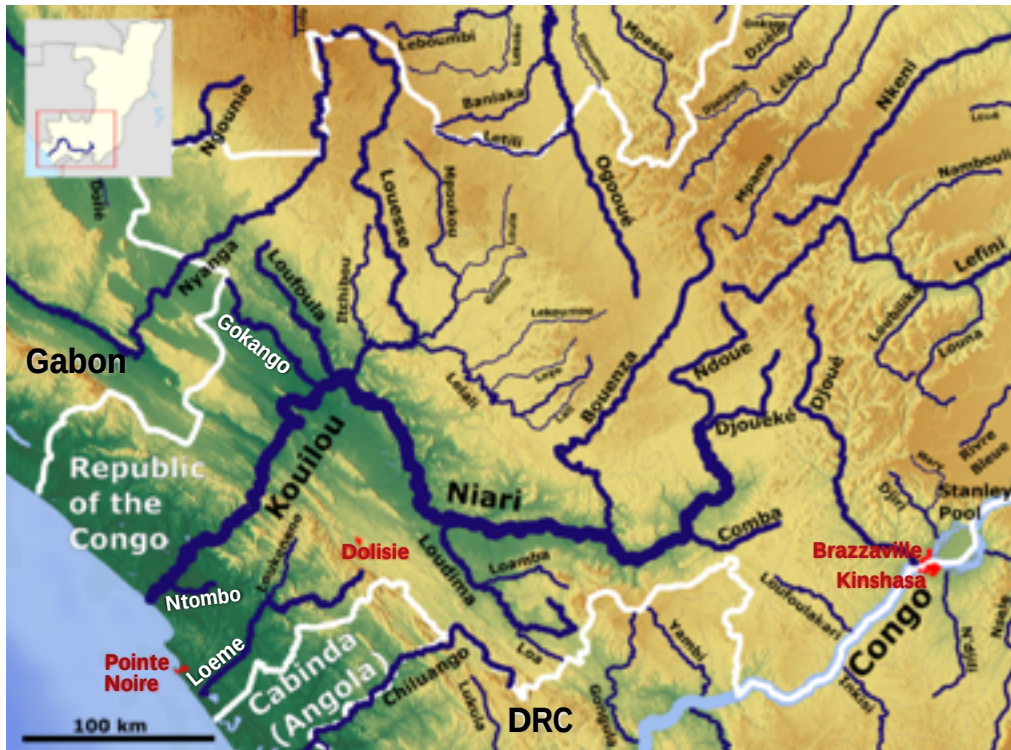


Figure 17. The Kouilou-Niara River Basin

Source: The Kouilou-Niara River Basin OSM,” Based on US Army Map SA33, December 10, 1918, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kouilou-Niara_River_OSM.png, accessed August 23, 2022.

One of Arent's enslaved workers found copper ore on his enslaver's New Jersey land along the Passaic River and that windfall soon made Arent the richest man in the province. The memory of this discovery in conventional accounts makes it out to be a fluke by an ignorant Black servant intrigued by the color of a rock:

¹⁸ Heywood, 4, 24, 26–28, 34–36, 49–51, 53, 56–58, 59–63, 70, 79–80, 97, 170, 178..

¹⁹ E.G. Ravenstein, ed., *The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell* (Weisbaden: The Hakluyt Society, 1901), 44; John Ogilby, *Africa: Being an Accurate Description of the Regions Of* (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), 502; Phyllis Martin, "The External Trade of the Loango Coast and Its Effects on the Vili," Ph.D. dissertation, The University of London, 1970, 76–78. Ogilby is an English translation of Dutchman Olfert Dapper's *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten* (Amsterdam, 1668); Stacey Jean Muriel Sommerdyk, "Trade and the Merchant Community of the Loango Coast in the Eighteenth Century," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hull, 2012, 200, 202, 207, 219; Mobley, "The Kongolese Atlantic," 27.

A negro slave belonging to him accidentally found a copper deposit while he was plowing. He had turned up a peculiarly, greenish and very heavy sort of stone. He took it to his master and it was sent to England to be analyzed. The reply was that it contained 80 per cent. of copper, and this opened a means for Arent Schuyler to obtain wealth. Desiring to reward the slave, he told him that he might make three requests, to which the fellow replied; first, that he might remain with his master so long as he lived; second, that he might have all the tobacco he could smoke; third, that he might be given a dressing-gown, with big, brass buttons, like his master's. Schuyler told him to consider and ask for something less trifling, and the answer was that for the fourth request he might have "a little more tobacco."²⁰

The historical record does not indicate whether the perceptive slave was Vili or from some other ethnic group within Loango, but it only made sense that he was from a part of Africa known for its copper trade and was already familiar with digging for or spotting the ore. As a first-generation slave, the man would have realized that his enslaver owned copper-rich land well before the arrival of results from the metallurgical analysis Arent ordered—good results that inspired a copper boom within his own family and among his landowning peers in the Middle Atlantic and northeastern colonies. After 1719, suddenly everyone was prospecting for copper, hoping to emulate Arent's spectacular success. The slave might have anticipated such an outcome based on his *knowledgeable*—not uninformed—find, and then *intentionally* sought to leverage it.²¹ Taking in his new circumstances of enslavement, he may have concluded that his best lot was to stay put rather than face the prospect of a possible future removal over which he had no control—always a terrifying threat for an enslaved person. While the slave's plea to stay with Arent in this narrative, if that did in fact happen, puffs the slaveowner's reputation as a "good master," from the unnamed slave's perspective, this was an astute move to guarantee stability with a small perk thrown in—a lifetime's supply of tobacco to feed a New World habit he clearly had acquired, a small pleasure to relieve a toiling existence. A Loangoan-Kongolese background therefore proved advantageous to enslaved and enslaver, and Loango may have been especially targeted by Arent's slave trading ships because of the region's acquaintance with copper mining.

²⁰ Wayne Bodle, "'Such a Noise in the World': Copper Mines and an American Colonial Echo to the South Sea Bubble," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127, no. 2 (April 2003): 131, 139; "Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs: Schuyler," Schenectady Digital History Archive, <http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/families/hmgfm/schuyler-1.html>, accessed March 15, 2020.

²¹ George Washington Schuyler, *Colonial New York: Philip Schuyler and His Family*, Vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 192; "End of Famous Copper Mine," *New York Times*, July 24, 1904; Bodle, "'Such a Noise in the World,'" 131–165; Herbert P. Woodward, *Copper Mines and Mining in New Jersey* (Trenton, NJ: Department of Conservation and Development State of New Jersey, 1944), 39–53. The demand for copper on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean (where Arent Schuyler had commercial ties) is explained in Nuala Zahedieh, "Colonies, Copper, and the Market for Inventive Activity in England and Wales," *The Economic History Review* 66, no. 3 (August 2013): 810–813.

Additionally, English and Dutch slavers preferred to extract captives along the Loango Coast because this region lay north of the Congo River in a section of West Central Africa not subject to Portuguese domination of the slave trade. When the Schuyler family dealt with Vili merchants, Loango was an “open trade zone” for Europeans in the slave trafficking business who were interested in “the lower prices, faster loading times, larger cargos, and shorter middle passages available to slave trading voyages” setting sail for the Americas from there.²² Loango was so popular with slave traffickers that one British captain from Bristol passing there in May 1737 reported seeing a French vessel expecting to load 700 captives, “a large Pink” (a ship with a round stern) expecting 500, and “a Snow” (a square-rigger with two masts) expecting 300—all at the same time.²³

Imagine then the journey for these enslaved people. The voyage up the Hudson River to Old Saratoga had to be a melancholy passage, calling up memories of ancient rivers they might have known in their homeland—the Nyanga, the Kouilou, the Chiloango—for those directly snatched from Loango in West Central Africa, as indicated on the *Catherine’s* log.²⁴ They had trudged on foot in caravans from the interior to Loango Bay where they were loaded onto slave ships at the rate of roughly four per day. If they were the first to be squeezed onto the wooden shelves that served as their barracks after the long trek, they waited an average of four months in such arrangements until the ship’s hold was filled to capacity with 391 fellow sufferers on average.²⁵

Every forced step taken by the captives toward full entry into the Schuyler household invited comparisons with their former lives and introduced a new future set of “familial” routines. For instance, social hierarchies and slavery itself were centuries-old features of Loangoan society. This meant that the verticality of the European power system they encountered was not completely novel to African-born newcomers arriving at the Schuyler Saratoga outpost directly from the continent in the 1730s. The Loangoan political structure they had known was headed by a *Maloango* or paramount chief who resided near the coast in the capital city of Buwali. Several smaller communities within Loango were led by lesser chiefs who owed allegiance to the Maloango as vassal chiefdoms. Slavery existed in Loango if one uses historian J.D. Fage’s basic definition of a slave: “a man or woman who was owned

²² Sommerdyk, “Trade and the Merchant Community,” 8, 33; Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango,” 128, 149. See also Johannes M. Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade 1600–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); David W. Galenson, *Traders, Planters, and Slaves: Market Behavior in Early English America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Kenneth Gordon Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Routledge, 1999); and, Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²³ Reported in *The Virginia Gazette*, November 4, 1737; William Avery Baker, “Vessel Types of Colonial Massachusetts,” in *Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts* (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980), 18, 21.

²⁴ *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Database*, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>,

²⁵ Sommerdyk, *Trade and the Merchant Community*, 126–128, 133; Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango Coast,” 26, 158; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic*, 142, 255.

by some other person, whose labour was regarded as having economic value, and whose person had a commercial value.”²⁶ Because his kingdom was very decentralized and religious tradition forbade the Maloango’s direct engagement in the slave trade and other business transactions with Europeans, a pyramid of intermediaries operated under him in the slave procurement process—*Mafouks*, *Mangoves*, *Mapoutous*, *Manibanzis*, *Maquimbés*, *Manibeles*, *Matientes*.²⁷ Slave initiates from Loango therefore were accustomed to a top-down flow of power between aristocratic rulers and ordinary people. They witnessed such operations at various levels in Africa both in everyday political life and in the conduct of the slave trade. Coming to America, the Hudson Valley, and the Saratoga Patent, Loangoan captives surely mapped this knowledge onto their observations about the social standing of European ship captains, crew members, Manhattan port officials, Schuyler agents, Schuyler employees, Schuyler tenants, Schuyler business associates, and ultimately Schuyler household heads at the mansion. Schuyler’s captives from Loango carried an internalized matrix of social deference across the Atlantic and used it to interpret their new roles as enslaved members of the Schuyler family. In the 1730s, they may have concluded that Johannes and his male relatives were lesser sorts of functionaries like those beneath the Maloango.

The new captives would have noted the distinctive dress of their White captors. Europeans certainly noticed Vili dress and frequently commented on it with admiration.²⁸ Vili clothing was beautifully fashioned from the leaves of palm trees (see Figure 18). One early seventeenth century traveler who visited Loango related that from “their palm trees which they keep watering and cutting every year, they make velvets, satins, taffetas, damasks, sarsenets and such like; out of the leaves, cleansed and purged, drawing long threads and even, for that purpose.”²⁹ Weaving the raffia cloth was the work of highly skilled men. The resulting fabric varied in type and value according to the tautness of the weave, color, imagery, and tree source (wine palms versus fan palms). The wearing of raffia material indicated one’s level of prestige, with nobility donning dyed, decorated, velvety fabric in

²⁶ Mobley, “The Kongoles Atlantic,” 37–45, 61; Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 54–57; J. D. Fage, “Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History,” *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 394.

²⁷ Mobley, “The Kongoles Atlantic,” 24, 31, 43–44, 50–51; Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 168–179. *Mafouks* were royal appointees by the Maloanga; residing in the villages along Loango Bay, they set initial prices of slaves for European traders, decided whether to deal with European seeking slaves, made sure the Maloanga received proper payment for slaves, and appointed other lesser African middlemen. *Mangoves* along with their assistants, *Mapoutous*, arranged audiences for European slave traders with the Maloanga. *Manibanzis* were royal treasurers who traveled about the kingdom collecting taxes and paying debts, the latter increasingly paid for with the profits from slave sales. *Maquimbés* managed provisioning details for foreign traders like supplying canoes to transport European goods to be traded for slaves from their ships in the harbor to on-shore storage houses. *Manibeles* were royal messengers; in the internal slave trade, they might request or deliver information regarding the need for or availability of slaves. *Matientes* were the *Mafouks*’ representatives to trade organizations.

²⁸ Ogilby, *Africa*, 495, 502.

²⁹ Phyllis M. Martin, “Power, Cloth, and Currency on the Loango Coast,” *African Economic History* 15 (1986): 1–3; Ogilby, *Africa*, 495–497.

contrast to the coarser, looser, unadorned weave assigned to commoners.³⁰ Familiar with the politics of dress in their native land, captive Loangoans brought to the Saratoga estate would have quickly grasped the stature of the Schuylers' wardrobe in comparison to the simple clothing distributed to them. Here again, the Van Bergen Overmantel is instructive: The ruffles and embellishments of the Van Bergens as they walk toward a waiting carriage differ markedly from the plain fabrics worn by the Black enslaved servants. Among other things, this visual reminder alerted the Loangoan arrivals that not all members of their new Hudson Valley household were equal.



Figure 18. Traditional Dress in Loango

Source : "Untitled Images (Clothing Styles, Loango Coast Region)", *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, accessed August 25, 2022, <http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1723>³¹

Ship provisioning for the Middle Passage allotted slaves a diet of rice, pulses (various beans and peas), Indian corn, stockfish, and sometimes preserved meat while they waited to set sail and during the average length of the crossing, about forty-seven days.³²

³⁰ Ogilby, 495–497; Martin, "Power, Cloth, and Currency," 1–2; Martin, "The External Trade of the Loango Coast," 191; Mobley, "The Kongolese Atlantic," 56, 59.

³¹ This image first appeared in D. O. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique... Traduite du Flamand* (Amsterdam, 1686; 1st ed., Wolfgang, Waesberge, Boom & van Someren, 1668), 324, <https://books.google.com/books?id=YZDAAAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>, accessed January 13, 2022. Olfert Dapper was a seventeenth century Dutch geography writer. See Adam Jones, "Decompiling Dapper: A Preliminary Search for Evidence," *History in Africa*, Vol. 17 (1990), 171–209 for an in-depth analysis of the accuracy of illustrations in Dapper's text.

³² Sommerdyk, *Trade and the Merchant Community*, 128; Stephen D. Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles, and Profits: Merchant Decision Making in the British Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 2001), 179.

These foods were mostly known to them, but at the table in their new upper Hudson River Valley homes they would miss regular access to familiar sweet potatoes, yams, groundnuts, bananas, pineapples, plantains, citrus fruit, cassava, palm oil, and palm wine.³³

First-generation enslaved people from Loango would have noted other similarities and differences between their homeland's unfree persons and themselves in the British colonies. Before its encounters with Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Loango had experienced the development of an internal slave trade. Africanist J. D. Fage argues for a direct relationship between the emergence of an enslaved class of people throughout West and West Central African societies and the rise of a sophisticated internal trading economy that created a noble, enriched cadre whose status was marked by servants—free and unfree.³⁴ This had happened in Loango before the advent of the Atlantic slave trade. Before seventeenth and eighteenth century contact with European coastal traders, Loango had developed its own strong internal commerce that supported a variety of artisans and traders. Writing in 1670, John Ogilby listed hemp makers and “Weavers, Smiths, Cap-makers, Potters, Bead-makers, Carpenters, Vintners, or Tapsters, Fisher-men, *Canoo*-makers [sic], Merchants, and other Traders” there.³⁵ He also noted a wide variety of crops farmed in the area, including potatoes, pumpkins, manioc, corn and other grains, sugar cane, Benin pepper, many fruits, and several sorts of beans—to name a few. There was even a brisk trade in timber, specifically in red-wood.³⁶ Such diverse economic activity supported indigenous use of slaves as porters and personal attendants.³⁷ In fact, seventeenth century Scottish geographer John Ogilby wrote, “Most of the riches of the Inhabitants consists in Slaves.”³⁸ With such a background, Loangoans would not have found the range of tasks they performed as enslaved people on the Schuyler estate strange. They would have understood the diversity of economic activity there.

As enslaved people, they would have also recognized the critical role that gender played in determining the status of their descendants in British North America. In Loango, as in the New World, slaves inherited their condition from their mothers. According to Olfert Dapper, a seventeenth century armchair Dutch geographer, and Ogilby, his contemporary translator, “The Child follows the Mother, and is a Slave if she be so, though the Father be a Free-man; but if the Mother be free, and the Father a Slave, yet the Child is free.”³⁹

³³ Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango Coast,” no. 16 (1986): 45.

³⁴ Fage, “Slavery and the Slave Trade,” 396–397.

³⁵ Ogilby, *Africa*, 501; David Hackett Fischer, *African Founders: How Enslaved People Expanded American Ideals* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022), 116.

³⁶ Ogilby, 492–495, 501; Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango Coast,” 31; Mobley, “The Kongolese Atlantic,” 51, 53. The African redwood is an ornamental tree that produces leaves used for medicinal purposes.

³⁷ Ogilby, 499, 502.

³⁸ Ogilby, 502.

³⁹ Ogilby, *Africa*, 499.

However, the assignment of duties along gender lines on the Schuyler property surely provoked startled reactions among newly imported enslaved people from Loango. In their West Central African communities, it was only the women who farmed; they used hoes and mattocks.⁴⁰ Ogilby recorded, “The Women do all the servile works, for they break the Ground, Sowe and Reap, pluck up the *Mille*, beat it into Meal, boyl it, and give it to their Husbands to eat.”⁴¹ He elaborated on the planting work, “All the Wives of the Subjects of this Realm must yearly, from the first to the fourth of *January*, being the Seed-time, break his Land to be sown; for the space of about two hours going in length, and one hour in breadth: but the Men are then most of them in Arms, and in their best Habits, going constantly to and fro, to warn the Women to work.”⁴² Women also harvested crops.⁴³ For male Loangoan captives to be set to labor in the fields alongside women for their new household at the Schuyler farm was an entirely novel experience for them.

The sex ratio would have presented another discontinuity between Loango and Saratoga. With a few exceptions, the overseas slave trade from the African continent procured male captives over female captives at a ratio of two to one. Because of the vital role women played in African agriculture, Loango’s human traffickers preferred to keep female slaves for domestic use and reproduction. The interests of slave traders in Africa and the Americas therefore converged: Females (and children) were preferred within the African domestic trade while American slavers preferred males.⁴⁴ The result of such bargaining would have been unsettling to Loango’s young male captives freshly arriving on the Schuyler estate: an undersupply of women available to them when they wanted to start a family or looked for a sexual partner. Traditionally in Loango, most men had multiple wives. Ogilby reported, “Every Noble-man may have as many Wives as he hath ability to Cloathe, and can procure Fish and Wine for their moderate Maintenance; so that some have ten or twelve; but every ordinary person hath commonly two or three.”⁴⁵ Clearly, any male novices among the enslaved Loangoans taken by Johannes for use at Old Saratoga would have had to adjust their conceptions of family and household to a very different demographic reality.

Liaisons between enslaved African men and Indigenous women may be partially explained within this context of a relative shortage of enslaved African women on Patent lands. The parentage of Louis Cook, one of the Black captives taken as a small child to

⁴⁰ Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango Coast,” 30.

⁴¹ Martin, 500.

⁴² Martin, 509.

⁴³ G. Ugo Nwokeji, “African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 54–55, 60.

⁴⁴ Nwokeji, 51–52.

⁴⁵ Ogilby, *Africa*, 499–500.

Canada in the 1745 raid on Saratoga during King George's War, is a case in point. Cook was born in the early 1740s of an Abenaki mother and a Black father.⁴⁶ It is not surprising that an enslaved Black man who probably spent many hours in the vast wooded areas felling trees in and around Saratoga would find a sexual partner among a local Indigenous woman.

Extracting from Anne Grant's information, the kitchen families at Saratoga only required a couple of fertile, first-generation enslaved women to begin lineages of Black bondspeople. To understand the start of the system at The Flatts—"the principal roots from whence the many branches then flourishing, sprang, yet remained"—she pointed to "two women, who had come originally from Africa while very young: they were most excellent servants, and the mothers or grandmothers of the whole set."⁴⁷ With the exception of those captives the Schuyler purchased after the First Imprint then, a surplus of African men over a few African women newly arrived in the first half of the eighteenth century probably sired two or three generations of Schuyler's enslaved workers.

The biggest adjustment for new Loangoans was an encounter with race—the behemoth social construct that had become the critical, distinctive, defining characteristic of slavery in British America. Enslavement in Loango was different from what they encountered in America, although slaves constituted an individual's greatest source of wealth in their homeland. Outside of the transatlantic trade, there were several routes to enslavement in Africa, depending on the ethnic group and particular circumstances. Sometimes a group would sell orphaned children who would otherwise have been left destitute and abandoned. Sometimes, when certain children were believed to be cursed or in possession of evil powers, they were bought and enslaved by noble families in a neighboring group. During famines, some groups traded children and adults for grain needed by the larger community. Some were war captives. Some enslaved Africans had been kidnapped by a rival group. Individuals offered themselves as slaves to a group other than their own to escape personal trouble with family members or to escape crimes they had committed.⁴⁸ In fact, in late-eighteenth-century Loango, an increasing number of those sold into transatlantic slavery were being punished for being disloyal to an indigenous master or for having committed a crime (murder, theft, robbery, debt, adultery).⁴⁹ These various preconditions

⁴⁶ "Biography of Lewis Cook," as related by Eleazer Williams, in Franklin B. Hough, *Papers, 1840–1885*, New York State Library; William Beauchamp, "Lewis Cook," in "St. Regis Indians and Five of the Six Nations," Beauchamp MSS, item 344, p. 62, New York State Library, Albany; Christian Ayne Crouch, "The Black City: African and Indian Exchanges in Pontiac's Upper Country," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 291–294; William Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens' and the Mutability of 'Race,' Status, and Identity on New York's Pre-Revolutionary Frontier," in Andrew R. L. Cayton and Frederika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 88–113.

⁴⁷ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 167.

⁴⁸ Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery and Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 12–13.

⁴⁹ Martin, "The External Trade of the Loango Coast," 54–55, 270–271.

or reasons determined whether one entered the category “slave.” Moreover, except for criminals or those deemed disloyal by a chief, no one born in Loango proper could be sold as a slave to Europeans.⁵⁰ Only if the enslaved person was female did her progeny become slaves, and since slaves could marry free people, the children of male slaves who had married free women were therefore equally free.⁵¹

Clearly then, race as it came to be defined in the Americas did not reflect traditional African enslavement practices. Blackness as an identity marker did not exist among Loangoans, so it could not and did not function as a prerequisite characteristic of slave status as it did in America. Loangoans arriving fresh off the boat as captives at the Schuyler estate would first have to absorb the harsh reality of the unique and exclusive racialization of slavery in this New World. They would have to learn new codes about who was an acceptable sexual partner. And they would have to learn new practices concerning the social status and prospects of their children in household and family settings ruled by White people.

Preserving Family

For the enslaved, family stability was always desirable, but not guaranteed if it was inconvenient or unprofitable for slaveholders. Still, once kitchen families were formed at Saratoga, it could be mutually beneficial to both enslaved and enslavers for the units to remain fixed and generationally fruitful. Among the enslaved, such family stability ensured that kinship ties would not be broken. Family members would not be torn from their loved ones. Kitchen family continuity spared the Schuylers the expense of buying new slaves and the uncertainties of breaking in recent captives. It helped ensure an ongoing, uninterrupted work force. Generational continuity incubated worker compliance and docility, assuring the Schuylers that the servants they entrusted with knives, axes, and sharpened garden equipment would handle them according to instruction and not as deadly tools against their owners. As examples, Harre and Anthony (sometimes called Tony or Tone) can be traced as long-time persisters in the Schuyler household, present both before and after the construction of the commodious box. Notably, in his account books, Philip referred to Tom as “our Tom” and to Harre as “our Har,” signifying his confidence in them and an approval built over years of their interactions within the household.⁵²

⁵⁰ Martin, 270.

⁵¹ Ogilby, *Africa*, 499

⁵² Philip John Schuyler Account Book, 1763–1770, Mss Collection BV Schuyler, Philip John, New-York Historical Society. See entries for November 19, 1767, January 1, 1768, November 19, 1768.

The multilayered dimensions of family—enslaved or kitchen, enslaver, and household—found their greatest expression on the Schuyler’s Patent after Philip, the future general, took over and built operations to new heights of industry and profit in the mid- to late-eighteenth-century. The intricacies of enslaved-enslaver family relations waned only after Philip Schuyler’s death when his heirs slowly manumitted the people he and they owned.

The Ritual of Family Attachment

Mrs. Grant recalled key details of a family system linking enslaver and enslaved in the homes of wealthy households in the Albany area: every child of the household head received an enslaved child of similar age and sex as a personal servant and companion. The two were reared together with little apparent distinction during early childhood:

They [the enslaved] would remind one of Abraham’s servants, who were all born in the house; this was exactly their case. They were baptized too, and shared the same religious instruction with the children of the family; and, for the first years, there was little or no difference with regard to food or clothing between their children and those of their masters.⁵³

So close was this relationship that every new bride brought to her marriage this “one well- brought-up female slave” along with “the furniture from the best bedchamber” of her father’s house.⁵⁴ Born and reared in the same house. Similarly baptized. Likewise catechized. Conjoined partakers in new nuptial arrangements. These characteristics functioned as mechanisms bolstering the enslavers’ idea that all in their household, Black and White, constituted one “family.”

Baptism and a later formal gift-exchange cemented the enslaved child’s place within this family of free and unfree people. First, baptism marked the Black infant’s entry into the circle of Christian believers. Enslavers embraced the egalitarian character of baptism insofar as it facilitated the cultural assimilation of African and African American children. Indeed, New York’s 1706 law encouraged the baptism of “Negro, Indian, and Mulatto slaves.”⁵⁵ In the colonial Dutch Reformed churches to which the Schuylers belonged, the ceremony occurred within a baby’s first week outside the womb. One can imagine the formalities taking place in the Dutch Reformed Church south of Fish Creek in Old Saratoga that Philip Schuyler, acting as the area’s chief patron, had built for the surrounding community on four acres of Patent land. All children, Black and White, born in his first house

⁵³ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 41.

⁵⁴ Grant, 52.

⁵⁵ Olson, “The Slave Code in Colonial New York,” 148–149.

at Old Saratoga or in the later commodious box would have been sprinkled with water from the church font on a Sunday morning by Pastor Drummond or Pastor Smith.⁵⁶ The performance before an ecclesiastical public denoted the equality of all participants—Black infants, White infants, parents and family, godparents, witnesses or sponsors, and all the attending congregation—in a single society, a divine family with one heavenly Father whose members shared similar standing before God. This was a sacred covenant declaring infants “heirs of the kingdom of God.” Strengthening this construct, and in contrast to the racially segregated seating arrangements that characterized antebellum nineteenth century churches, was the fact that colonial and late-eighteenth-century congregations, like the Dutch Reformed Church in Saratoga, allowed mixed seating, though mainly in order for servants to attend to the needs of their owners. When the Revolutionary War caused an interruption of regular religious meetings at the Saratoga church between 1777 and 1789, baptismal services for those in Schuyler’s household probably took place under Pastors Westerlo and Bassett at the Schuyler family’s church in Albany, the First Reformed Church in that city. Those born on the Patent lands across the river in Easton (inherited by Rensselaer) would have been baptized by Pastor Duryea at the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Easton organized in 1803.⁵⁷

However, some proportion of the first generation of enslaved parents of infant inductees probably read baptism differently than the Schuylers and their peers. These Black mothers and fathers approached baptism through a somewhat altered lens when compared to that of their enslavers. Portuguese influence had established Christianity in parts of Africa’s Kongo region starting in the fifteenth century. The syncretic form of Catholicism that emerged there transformed traditional Kongolese *ngangas*, or healers, into priests after they converted and were ordained. For African Catholic parents then, unbeknownst to their enslavers, baptism was not about assimilation of European beliefs. Instead, it was a confirmation of their preexisting notion that the priest was administering a Kongolese rite calling the child and all those in attendance to a life of “all righteousness,” a life dedicated to fighting “the devil and his whole dominion,” a life avoiding the practice of antisocial behavior or harm in any form against others and significantly, a life protected

⁵⁶ Brandow, *The Story of Old Saratoga*, 323, 338.

⁵⁷ “Liturgical Forms: The Administration of Baptism,” Protestant Reformed Churches in America, <http://www.prc.org/about/official-standards/liturgical-forms/administration-of-baptism>, accessed August 27, 2022; Edwin Tanjore Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America 1628–1902*, 4th edition (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Church of America, 1902), 935, 959, 1028; “A Brief History: Old Saratoga Reformed Church,” http://old-saratoga.rcachurches.org/?page_id=100, accessed August 27, 2022; Chrisfield Johnson, Chrisfield Johnson, *History of Washington Co., New York: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 295; Andrea C. Mosterman, *Spaces of Enslavement: A History of Slavery and Resistance in Dutch New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 39–43, 107, 112–113, 119–121.

from evil directed toward them by others.⁵⁸ So while European and Kongolese understandings of baptism converged, they differed on the last two points in particular. The Kongolese expected that baptism conjoined them to co-religionists who should care for their welfare.

But baptism implied divine approval of enslavement and slaveholding, as neither baptism nor conversion provided exemptions for Christian slaves. A 1664 British law held that no Christian could be held in slavery, but a 1706 law reversed that by encouraging enslavers to provide Christian religious instruction while relieving them of any obligation to free their human property. Thus, the very same law promoting religious education of “Negroes” explicitly allayed fears among slaveholders that they would be required to manumit slaves.⁵⁹ Grant expounded that Whites in the area, including the Schuylers and their contemporary White Albanians, believed that “nature had placed between them [Blacks and Whites] a barrier, which it was in a high degree criminal and disgraceful to pass.”⁶⁰ They believed God had destined Blacks rather than Whites to serve Whites as slaves, thus confirming a racial binary that forbade interracial sexual unions. In the Upper Hudson Valley, Whites generally regarded “a mixture of such distinct races with abhorrence, as a violation of [nature’s] laws.” Observance of nature’s purported laws in this instance facilitated family contentment. Avoidance of mixed relationships “greatly conduced to the preservation of family happiness and happiness.”⁶¹ Whites and properly taught slaves understood these rules without questioning their ideological foundations. Anyone who engaged in mixed-race sex operated outside the boundaries of proper society; like the lecherous British soldiers Grant cites who routinely passed through the area, they were morally deficient. The evidences of their heedless behavior, mulatto children, were burdensome; their visibility violated the prescribed racial binary. Grant supplied the example of an unnamed, lazy, ne’er-do-well Schuyler who fathered a mulatto boy. The guilty father, an unnamed relative of Colonel Schuyler, one-time owner of The Flatts, was “so weak in character, that he never was entrusted with any thing of his own, and lived an idle bachelor about the family.” Taking up with “a favourite negro woman,” he produced a biracial son called Chalk—no doubt a derisive reference to the child’s color. Out of pity and mindful of the disapproval he faced, the Schuylers gave their “illegitimate” relative an education and when he came of age, they provided him with a stocked farm from which he might make a living. But the place sat “two miles back from the family seat”—in other words, out of sight somewhere in the woods. Grant described the White woman who

⁵⁸ John Henrik Clarke, “The Old Congo,” *Phylon* 23, no. 1 (1962): 61, 64; John Thornton, “The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491–1750” *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 2 (1984): 148, 156–158, 164–165.

⁵⁹ Leo H. Hirsch, Jr., “Chapter I: The Slave in New York,” *The Journal of Negro History* 16, no. 4 (October 1931): 383; New-York Historical Society, “Laws Affecting Blacks in Manhattan,” *Slavery in New York*, http://www.slaveryinnewyork.org/PDFs/Laws_Affecting_Blacks_in_Manhattan.pdf, accessed December 2, 2022.

⁶⁰ Anne MacVicar Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady* (New York: George Dearborn, 1836), 45.

⁶¹ Grant.

married him as a “destitute” person “from the older colonies,” signifying that only a desperate White woman—a poor, immiserated, single female trying to make ends meet with no established connections in the area—“could be induced to marry him.”⁶² The cautionary tale of Chalk underscored Whites’ beliefs in a natural distinction between Blacks and Whites that dictated the proper place of Blacks as enslaved people in their society. Their baptism as slaves sanctified this inferior status.

The divide between Black and White children in the homes of Hudson River Valley elites was further sharpened by a gifting ceremony on the first day of January after the enslaved child’s third birthday. Grant described the ritual:

When a negro-woman’s child attained the age of three years, the first New Year’s day after it was solemnly presented to a son or daughter, or other young relative of the family, who was of the same sex with the child so presented. The child to whom the young negro was given, immediately presented it with some piece of money and a pair of shoes.⁶³

Grant simply interpreted the custom as a seal of “the strongest attachment [that] grew between the domestic and the destined owner” from that day forward.⁶⁴ But this ceremony was not about an exchange of warm, fuzzy feelings despite appearances; it was more than a touching social custom. In a very direct way, the transaction marked Black bodies for a lifetime of involuntary labor and rewarded them for submission to White authority. The supposed congeniality of these pairings belied the racialized set of distinctions that characterized enslavement. Through these couplings, the life of one Black child was sealed in permanent subservience to a White peer.

The performance enacted stability and maintenance of a particular segmented racial order—a binary racial caste structure. The ritualized matching of enslaved child to free child probably took place either at Schuyler House or Schuyler Mansion each January, depending on where the General’s family gathered for the holidays, and buttressed the racialized codes within the baptism rite. This second ceremony was a reminder that regardless of the “Gentle treatment of Slaves among the Albanians,” the racial distinctions that defined enslavement and its social consequences were strict and unbending. The giving was unilateral, from enslaver to enslaved, highlighting the power of the one over the other. Giving was a sweetened form of domination over entrapped children whose acquiescence was thus bought, even as that of an African ancestor had been bought. Although it appeared

⁶² Grant, 45–46. This Colonel Schuyler was Philip Schuyler (1695–1758) inheritor of The Flatts and deceased husband of Margarita Schuyler (1701–1782)—the widow “Madame Schuyler” discussed in Grant’s memoir and earlier in this HRS.

⁶³ Grant, 41.

⁶⁴ Grant, 41.

sentimental, the exchange was material in substance and expectation. The giving and receiving of gifts sealed a social covenant that bound Black three-year-olds to a lifetime of racialized submission of their labors to their White twins.

Reexamining Grant's emphasis on the emotional aspect of the January ritual, the transaction was simultaneously gratifying and worrisome for enslaved parents. The shoes and money represented a lifetime of material provision promised by the household head(s)—in the case of the Saratoga Schuylers, first Philip and Catherine and then John Bradstreet Schuyler and his wife Elizabeth. Given slavery's apparent inescapability, Black parents were assured through the pairing that their children's lifelong forced labor would be moderated by relatively stable patterns of slave ownership.

To guarantee the protection implied by the ceremony, enslaved parents embarked on a strict socialization program for their children. Indeed, to have their offspring attain "dexterity, diligence, and obedience," they often competed with other kitchen family units within the Schuyler household. Those mothers expert in cooking carefully taught that skill. Expert seamstresses made sure their daughters duplicated that craft. Enslaved fathers likewise trained their sons carefully to become ace tree-fellers or top wheat-thrashers.⁶⁵

Grant supplied these details without fully unpacking the rationale and backgrounds of enslaved mothers. She was unaware that the original matriarchs, the first-generation progenitors of kitchen families, carried with them across the Atlantic a Kongolesse cultural tradition of "Big Mamas, senior women whose pathways to power and leadership flowed through the household, family, and commerce."⁶⁶ Of the various matrilineal Kongolesse kingdoms, Loango was extensively matrilineal. Historian Christina Mobley writes, "Loango was the only kingdom with a formalized succession structure based entirely on matrilineal clans."⁶⁷ Barred from market participation in the Schuyler household, senior women whose heritage was Loangoan funneled their traditional influence into concerns for kin. Grant wrote: "These negro-women piqued themselves on teaching their children to be excellent servants, well knowing servitude to be their lot for life, and that it could only be sweetened by making themselves particularly useful, and excelling in their department."⁶⁸ Grant emphasizes the cultural capital enslaved mothers gained toward White children as a result of their diligence, but what Grant neglects to say is the fact that for this particular role in the social reproduction of the household, enslaved mothers also gained a voice in their own children's future should they be sold. As Grant explained, although "rarely withdrawn," the "gifts of [Black enslaved] domestics to the younger members of the [White] family were not

⁶⁵ Grant, 167–168.

⁶⁶ Fischer, *African Founders*, 116.

⁶⁷ Christina Mobley, "The Kongolesse Atlantic: Central African Slavery from Mayombe to Haiti," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 2015, 40.

⁶⁸ Mobley, 42.

irrevocable.” Sometimes the kitchen family in a White household did not increase at the same rate as the ruling family, leaving too few enslaved three-year-olds to partner with their White age mates. In such cases, White household heads acquired enslaved children from another slave-owning household with a surplus of such little ones. A mother in the kitchen family losing one of her children had some influence on the fate of her sons and daughters, though, because of her stature as an expert slave trainer. The White household heads consulted her, and she “would not allow her children to go into any family with whose [enslaved] domestics she was not acquainted.”⁶⁹ In this way, a Black mother sought to allay her fears about disturbances in the securities promised during the January pairing of toddlers. She strove to ensure the physical proximity of her children and to eliminate ambiguities about their futures. As much as it was within her power, she made certain that any offspring separated from her direct supervision at least received instruction in the ways that might win them permanency within their new households as “likely Negroes.”

Effective, enslaved Black mothers within a Schuyler household therefore needed to be well connected with other Black mothers within their vicinity. The specter of relocation of one of her children always loomed before an enslaved mother. The Black people owned by the Schuylers’ nearby friends offered some relief against this grim possibility from a kitchen mother’s vantage point. Such households, featuring familiar routines and expectations, might therefore best shelter and incubate her children both psychologically and practically. It therefore behooved Schuyler’s slaves to cultivate social linkages and friendships with the enslaved females of those in the Schuylers’ circles because these women might serve as ideal future surrogate mothers for their offspring should things come to that. Additionally, these same leading White households probably yielded the most eligible mates for Schuyler’s chattel from their perspective. Enslaved fathers and mothers would stand the best chance for regular communication and physical contact with each other and their adult children through such households. The Schuylers’ kitchen families were well aware of how their enslavers’ families intermarried within similarly prominent families up and down the Hudson River, taking with them their personal slaves or passing them on to others within their circles.⁷⁰ A day of joy for the free White half of toddler twins could be a day of painful separation for the unfree Black half and her parents.⁷¹ Catherine Schuyler, for instance, was given “a Negro” by her father Johannes Van Rensselaer (1708–1783), a child who may have been raised on family property in Claverick and later relocated twice – first, to her childhood home in Crailo/Greenbush and later, to Albany and Saratoga as

⁶⁹ Mobley, 42. The term “kitchen family” is Grant’s. I’ve adopted it and versions of it as a useful distinction between the enslaved and enslaver families within the same household or “family.”

⁷⁰ On this, see Nicole Saffold Maskiell’s *Bound by Bondage: Slavery and the Creation of a Northern Gentry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022) in its entirety.

⁷¹ Nicole Saffold Maskiell, “Bound by Bondage: Slavery Among Elites in Colonial Massachusetts and New York,” Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, May 2013, 2–3, 148.

part of her marriage to Philip.⁷² Catherine's marriage took her enslaved servant away from her kitchen family and circle of friends to new environments. On her wedding day, while Catherine was brightened by the prospect of a sure mate she had chosen, her enslaved twin experienced the pangs of separation from kitchen kin. It made sense then for those the Schuylers enslaved to anticipate that their children's immediate "mistress" or "master" would relocate because of marriage or other new circumstances, and to prepare for that day by plotting and evaluating possible scenarios.

One can then infer the physical and material safety zones or mental maps parents in kitchen families constructed for their children's potential placements. Albany County alone claimed a number of branches of the Schuylers, Livingstons, and Van Rensselaers—to name a few of the leading clans. Through intermarriage, these formed a powerful interlocking directorate of politically dominant, economically successful slaveholding families. Enslaved mothers and fathers contemplated this reality as the shadow of possible separation from their children, moved from one household "family" to another, especially darkened their minds before the 1799 manumission law. Using this knowledge, they fashioned an ideal geography of relative familial safety. Such a scheme for Schuylers' slaves at Saratoga is pictured in Figure 19. On this map, places along the southbound corridor between the Schuyler home and the Albany terminus—Stillwater, Watervliet, Rennselaerswyck—and within a one-county radius of Old Saratoga, contained members of the extended Schuyler family beyond Saratoga House and the estate itself, households Schuyler's kitchen families would probably have considered ideal placement sites for their children. In 1790, Abraham Schuyler of Albany's Ward 3 included nine enslaved persons in his household; Hermanus Schuyler of Stillwater had six; Philip P. Schuyler and Stephen Schuyler, both of Watervliet, owned five and sixteen Black people, respectively; and a Stephen Schuyler (perhaps the same one owning a Watervliet residence) enslaved a full dozen Blacks in Rennselaerswyck.⁷³ Within this corridor, enslaved children removed from the household of their birth and placed with another Schuyler would still be close by, only half a day's horse ride from home. A kitchen mother in the General's household would wisely approve the transfer of her child to a kitchen family of one of these other Schuyler homes.

⁷² The Will of Johannes Van Rennselaer; Susan L. May, Unpublished paper on Catherine Schuyler, Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, Albany, NY, April 1983, n.p., <http://npshistory.com/publications/sara/catherine-schuyler.pdf>, accessed December 21, 2022.

⁷³ US Census 1790.



Figure 19. Imagined Zones of Familial Safety for the Schuyler Kitchen Family

Beyond this innermost zone of preferred family placements and at first remove, a second set of descendants of patentees and manor lords would serve as a next tier of approved placements for Schuyler's kitchen family in Greene, Columbia, Ulster, and Dutchess counties. The reassignment of kitchen children there was less desirable because of the increased distance of the White households (see Figure 19). But these were somewhat tolerable by virtue of the acquaintance between the enslaver families, ensuring possible visits no more than a full day's ride away.⁷⁴ The undesirability of relocations increased as placements moved further distances away to Zones 2 and 3.

Working to train the children as successors in domestic and outdoor duties, cultivating ties with the kitchen help on neighboring estates, and vocalizing objections to undesirable placements were strategies kitchen matriarchs used to guarantee the best possible situations they could imagine for their offspring within the limitations of enslavement. In this way, they managed the viselike effect of the two rituals—baptism and coupling—that solemnified the different stations of enslaved child and enslaver's child, unfree child and free child, Black child and White child.

⁷⁴ See George W. Schuyler, *Colonial New York: Philip Schuyler and his Family*, Vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 426–427 for a succinct description of the geographical reach of these families.

The Pinkster Ritual

Reunions could happen at annual Pinkster celebrations, which offered Schuyler's kitchen family the opportunity to connect with absent relatives, the wider African American community of the region, and with local whites as well. The holiday was an African-infused, secularized frolic adapted from the springtime feast of Pentecost (*Pinksteren* in Dutch), called Whitsuntide or Whit-Sunday in the English Christian tradition. A week-long festival in the Hudson Valley, it was observed throughout the colonial period through the mid-nineteenth century in the hamlets, villages, and cities where Dutch people settled. Various chronicles of Pinkster during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries are presented in the historical record in the form of eyewitness reports, letters, newspaper articles, memoiristic accounts, period novels, and the like. Using these sources, historians explore and debate the details of what actually transpired during the holiday; levels of racial and class inclusiveness at the event; its differing Dutch, English and African roots; and its various expressions across the colonized Americas in the larger Atlantic World.⁷⁵ Here, however, we explore the meaning of Pinkster in the context of family, kinship, and household among those enslaved at the Schuyler's Saratoga estate, especially in light of evidence which suggests a growing Black influence at the festival after the Revolutionary War.⁷⁶ The reasons enslavers permitted this fête will be addressed briefly in the next chapter.

It was customary for enslavers to allow their Black servants to attend Pinkster, and the Schuyler household at Saratoga would not have been an exception. Some historians even believe that a field described by Grant in her memoir of Albany life in the 1760s as a playground for Madame Schuyler's African American slaves served as the site of Albany's annual Pinkster activities. She described an area on the hills to the west of Albany where the Schuylers had summer cottages built for their Black enslaved workers who "cultivated the grounds around them." This spot functioned "as a place of joyful liberty to the children of the family on holidays, and a nursery for the young negroes."⁷⁷ An 1803 eyewitness corroborates by reporting on preparations on "the hill" for an "incampment" "along the

⁷⁵ Jeroen Dewulf, *The Pinkster King and the King of Kongo: The Forgotten History of America's Dutch-Owned Slaves* (University of Mississippi Press, 2016), 58; Andrea Mosterman, *Spaces of Enslavement: A History of Slavery and Resistance in Dutch New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 67–77; Claire Sponsler, *Ritual Imports: Performing Medieval Drama in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 42–67; Brad Verter, "Interracial Festivity and Power in Antebellum New York: The Case of Pinkster," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 4 (2002): 398–428; Shane White, "Pinkster: Afro-Dutch Syncretization in New York City and the Hudson Valley," *The Journal of American Folklore* 102, no. 403 (January–March 1989): 68–75; Shane White, "Pinkster in Albany 1803: A Contemporary Description," *New York History* 70, no. 2 (April 1989): 191–199.

⁷⁶ Dewulf, *The Pinkster King*, 58.

⁷⁷ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 39–40.

great western road” to become “the *theater of action*” for Pinkster.⁷⁸ Historian Jereon Dewulf suggests that this is the same place Grant mentioned.⁷⁹ Those enslaved on Saratoga Patent lands probably attended Pinkster in Albany, since Philip’s mansion was there. This “Pinkster Hill” is the site of the present New York State Capitol building.⁸⁰

Pinkster provided Schuyler’s Black kitchen family the chance to reconnect in person with members living at a distance from one another. James Fenimore Cooper’s novel *Satanstoe* (1845) described opening day of a fictionalized Pinkster in Manhattan in 1757 in which “nine-tenths of the blacks of the city, and of the whole country within thirty or forty miles, indeed, were collected in thousands in those fields.”⁸¹ The narrator in the novel is himself from a town in Westchester County roughly “five-and-twenty miles from New York.”⁸² Similarly, a detailed newspaper account of the holiday as celebrated in Albany in 1803 described the crowd as “collected from every part of the city and from the adjacent country from many miles around forming in the whole a motley group of thousands.”⁸³ In 1867, James Coventry published his reminiscences of Albany’s Pinkster ca. 1815 and described the holiday as “the gathering-place of all the colored people of the city and country for miles around.”⁸⁴ Sojourner Truth, still called Isabella Van Wagenen and living in rural Ulster County at the time, recalled her great anticipation of the 1827 Pinkster season, probably held in Kingston some seven miles away. She told her biographer that she hoped to see “all her former companions enjoying. . . all their wonted convivialities, and in her heart she longed to be with them.”⁸⁵ It was at Pinkster that she may have met Robert, the man she loved.⁸⁶ Pinkster was a huge draw that permitted enslaved Blacks to catch up with sons and daughters from near and far, embrace old friends, make new friends, and find lovers and future mates. Black family ties were reaffirmed and if “love-making, to their heart’s content” was as visible at Pinkster as Joel Munsell, Albany printer and antiquarian, claimed, then new Black families were begun every May as well.⁸⁷

⁷⁸ *Albany Centinel*, June 1803.

⁷⁹ Dewulf, *The Pinkster King*, 59.

⁸⁰ *Collections on the History of Albany*, Vol. 2 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1867), 13, 56, 324.

⁸¹ James Fenimore Cooper, *Satanstoe* (New York: R. F. Fenno, 1900), 61. In the novel, the narrator states his birth year as 1737 (p. 6) and his age as twenty (pp. 46, 77, 79).

⁸² Cooper, 46.

⁸³ *Albany Centinel*, June 1803.

⁸⁴ Joel Munsell, *Collections on the History of Albany*, Vol. 2 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1867), 13.

⁸⁵ Olive Gilbert, ed., *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Boston: J.B. Yerrinton and Son, Printers: 1850), 64–65

⁸⁶ Gilbert, 34–36; Myra B. Young Armstead, *Mighty Change, Tall Within: Black Identity in the Hudson Valley* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 83–84.

⁸⁷ Munsell, *Collections on the History of Albany*, 13; *Albany Centinel*, June 1803

Pinkster allowed for transatlantic cultural reconnections as Black attendees reached back to enact the performance traditions of their homeland. Observers nearly always noted two of Pinkster's highlights: the presence of a Black "king" with authority for the three- to four-day duration of the festival to engage the crowd in prescribed protocols, including paying him monies upon demand, and the ubiquitous "African" music and dancing. Multiple sources recount a spry older African man named King Charles who more or less presided over events at Albany Pinksters for several successive years in the first years of the nineteenth century. The crowd of Blacks greeted his arrival with great deference and excitement and he led other slaves in a "double-shuffle-heel-and-toe" dance to start things on the opening Monday.⁸⁸ Dancing on the hill lasted from morning until night. A White writer to the *Albany Centinel* reported on the "Guinea dance":

There was kind of an Ampitheater allotted for that purpose. On the one side of which is the royal tent fronting the dancing ground, where the parties perform and spectators are assembled.—Just at the entrance of this tent sits their chief musician . . . malling with both hands upon the hollow sounding Guinea drum . . . In the meantime the dance in the approved African style, and free from the formalities and reserves with which the squeamish modesty of civilized life has invested the gyrations of the ball room.⁸⁹

Satanstoe's narrator related,

The features that distinguish a Pinkster frolic from the other usual scenes at fairs . . . were of African origin. . . the traditions and usages of their original country were so far preserved as to produce a marked difference between this festival and one of European origin. Among other things, some were making music; by beating on skins drawn over the ends of hollow logs while others were dancing to it. . . This, in particular, was said to be a usage.⁹⁰

Munsell elaborated on the "original Congo dances, as danced in their native Africa" to music produced by "a kind of drum, or instrument constructed out of a box with sheep skin heads" and accompanied "by singing some queer African air." James Eight recalled of his Albany boyhood that Pinkster drumming was done on an "eel-pot," a woven basket with a net for catching eels over which a sheep skin was stretched.⁹¹

While Jeroen Dewulf, Andrea Mosterman, and others trace the origins of these arts to the general area of West Central Africa, I argue that the ship logs of Arent Schuyler's *Catherine* pinpoint Loango more precisely as a possible source of the Africanized aspects of Pinkster, contributed by enslaved members of General Schuyler's overlapping Saratoga

⁸⁸ *Albany Centinel*, June 1803; Munsell, *Collections on the History of Albany*, 56, 325–327.

⁸⁹ *Albany Centinel*, June 1803.

⁹⁰ Cooper, *Satanstoe*, 61.

⁹¹ Munsell, *Collections on the History of Albany*, 56.

and Albany households.⁹² Grant recalled that in the 1760s at The Flatts, the home of General Schuyler's Aunt Margarita, there were two enslaved women who stood out from the rest of the servants: "These were two women, who had come originally from Africa while very young; they were most excellent servants, and the mothers or grandmothers of the whole set."⁹³ The thirty-three years or so between the *Catherine's* arrival and Grant's years at The Flatts make it entirely conceivable that these matrons were among Arent's Loangoan captives possibly purchased for use by his brothers or other Schuyler family members at Old Saratoga. As these first-generation enslaved workers adapted to domestic routines in a strange land and became skilled in their duties, they nonetheless would have retained and passed on memories of their youth to their descendants in America and other enslaved children in the kitchen family. One of these women might have taken under her wing a newly purchased child named Harre, listed in Table 2 and born in 1768, after he entered the kitchen family. It is easy to imagine this enslaved woman frequently regaling the child with tales of her former family and loved ones across the ocean. The stories would have comforted her during bouts of nostalgia and thrilled the boy as she urged him to sleep at bedtime in their attic housing. In 1804, the year of General Schuyler's death, Harre was still alive—an old man of sixty-six years still venerated as "our Har" by Schuyler's adult children and grandchildren but especially loved by the kitchen family for his storytelling as their fictive Uncle Harre. Phoebe and Tallyho, Silva's children, would have stored Harre's rich tales, faithfully recounted from his adopted mother, in their minds. On Pinkster Day that year, six months before Philip's passing and still held in bondage, they would have eagerly raced to join "the joyous groups of children," "under the careful guidance of some trusty slave," "gayly decorated with ribbons and flowers of every description," "blithely wending their way along the different avenues that led to the far-famed Pinkster hill."⁹⁴

In a similar series of seemingly unlikely connections, anthropologist Joseph Opala was able to discover the roots of a recorded African-language tune sung in the 1930s by a female African American Gullah descendant of slaves brought to work in the rice fields of the South Carolina sea coast island. Knowing that many Gullah people were captured for enslavement on the Senegambian Coast because of their existing knowledge of rice and millet cultivation, Opala worked in the 1980s with an ethnomusicologist and a linguist in that region to locate the then-deceased woman's ancestors through the words of this ancient Mende song passed on by the woman to her daughter. The lyrics to the American

⁹² *Albany Centinel*, June 1803. See Jeroen Dewulf, *The Pinkster King and the King of Kongo: The Forgotten History of America's Dutch-Owned Slaves* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 94–153 for a well researched argument that Pinkster was a transplantation of the Afro-Catholic tradition of black brotherhoods among Kongolese people. It is not clear that the Loangoan-Kongolese brought to New York by Arent Schuyler were at all familiar with this tradition or the number who might have been. See also Mosterman, *Spaces of Enslavement*, 74–77.

⁹³ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 167.

⁹⁴ *Albany Centinel*, June 1803.

version of the song had been much altered over the generations but a key phrase unique to a particular remote area of Sierra Leone had remained intact, thus linking a diasporic people with their homeland.⁹⁵

Like this peculiar Gullah melody that persisted into the mid-twentieth century, the sights and sounds of Pinkster days, so incomprehensible and amusing to Whites, probably had Loangoan-Kongolesé antecedents fully recognizable to the first generation of Schuyler slaves, despite the likelihood that they were diluted and transformed in the American context. This charter generation delighted in the celebration of its heritage in choruses of “Hi-a-bomba-bomba-bomba” to the beat of an eel-pot drum. They relished the liberty to shuffle, gyrate, and move their bodies to the driving rhythms. They embraced the opportunity to honor their chief by re-enacting rituals of fealty.

The similarities between the Maloanga and King Charles are striking as supported by documentation from Dapper and his English translator, Ogilby:

The King never comes abroad but upon a remarkable Day, that is, when an Ambassador addresses from some Foreign Prince, or some strange accident has happen’d; or when a Leopard is taken in the Countrey, or else lodg’d about *Lovango*, ready for the chase and slaughter; or lastly, upon the Day on which his Land is Till’d, and his chieftest Nobility bound to bring him Tribute. For this his Appearance there is a place appointed opposite to his Court, being an even and great Plain, in the midst of the City [emphasis added].⁹⁶

By this account, the special public appearance of Loango’s king, a grand occasion, is associated with tilling (preparing the land for cultivation); a spacious, accessible, outdoor venue; and the paying of tribute. Likewise, King Charles appeared only at Pinkster in the spring when grounds were turned over for planting; the festival took place on a wide hill or commons; and King Charles exacted monetary tribute from all booth tenders and on the last day of the celebration, from everyone else in attendance. To complete this parallel spectacle, the Pinkster king promenaded in striking dress as outstandingly regal in its intent as the Maloanga’s fine raffia garb. King Charles’ colorful outfit conveyed his authority by using both American symbols familiar to their African American born children—a military jacket—and Loangoan symbols recognizable to themselves such as the bare-legged robe described by one witness.

Celebrated in this form, Pinkster in Albany County directly transmitted the message of a Loangoan heritage forged from the cultural and material resources available to Schuyler’s enslaved workers from that part of the world. The reason this message was so pronounced in the late eighteenth century, leading scholars to concur that an

⁹⁵ The remarkable story of this historical recovery is documented in the acclaimed 1989 California Newsreel film, “The Language You Cry In.” See <http://newsreel.org/video/THE-LANGUAGE-YOU-CRY-IN>, accessed January 24, 2022.

⁹⁶ Ogilby, *Africa*, 506–507. On pp. 492–493, Ogilby provides additional instances of tribute paid to the *Maloanga*.

Africanization of the original Dutch festival occurred during this time, is that slave trafficking to North America peaked then. This period coincided with the General's tenure on the Saratoga Patent.⁹⁷ Historian Ira Berlin has argued that after the United States outlawed its international slave trade in 1807, African memory faded among Black people in this country. Without new infusions of what he called "charter generations" and what historian Jeanne Chase calls the "African born" and "African reared," a true native African American population emerged for the first time. In addition to the Albany Council's 1811 law outlawing Pinkster, this demographic shift must be emphasized in any explanation for the disappearance of Pinkster in the Upper Hudson Valley.⁹⁸ Seen in this light then, Pinkster for Schuyler's slaves represents the way in which a torch of Loangoan memories, fueled by the longing and pain of rupture, was lit among those Albany County enslaved workers torn from kin in their homeland and passed on through kitchen family networks to those born on American shores to find expression in the larger community. The kitchen family at Saratoga served the Schuyler family while protecting the integrity of its own traditions.

With the exception of Pinkster, racially segregated spaces ironically allowed the kitchen family its fullest expression. In the cellar kitchen of Schuyler's first Saratoga home and in the later kitchen outbuilding, enslaved workers assigned domestic duties were left alone with their chores and each other. There they were free to pass on a range of performance skills—know-how related to both deportment and task completion that was needed to survive under the constraints of enslavement. There they could review their days, cry, laugh, and display all emotions between those two extremes. Kitchens became spaces of confirmation of their humanity. So, too, did the sleeping quarters for kitchen family. Forensic interior design specialists recently uncovered a faded wallpaper covering the brick walls of the cheerless, windowless bedroom garret Schuyler built to house his Black servants ca. 1777.⁹⁹ One can easily imagine Pol, Hannah, Chloe, or another of the domestics noticing the decorative scraps somewhere in the course of a workday, collecting them, and then by candlelight during several evenings after work, taking great care to enliven their plain surroundings with the cast-off paper. Whether by the training curriculum of sorts they fashioned for their youngsters, negotiations when possible with their enslavers about their children's placements, attending Pinkster, or sprucing up their bedrooms, Schuyler's Black servants found ways to live that lightened the burden of their enslavement.

⁹⁷ Munsell, *Collections on the History of Albany*, 326.

⁹⁸ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1998), 251; Chase, "The New York Slave Trade," *Histoire et Mesure*, 2, 5–9, 14; Munsell, *Collections of the History of Albany*, 323.

⁹⁹ John G. Waite Associates, Architects, "General Schuyler House Kitchen and Kitchen Passageway Historic Structure Report Addendum – 100% Draft," November 2022, 165. This report did not find similarly patterned wallpaper in Schuyler House itself.

CHAPTER SIX

Leaving

Freedom. Possession of the ability that naturally inheres in all human beings to choose their own thoughts, words, and actions, and to do so without fear. This is what every enslaved person desired and naturally sought to actualize. This is what every enslaver by definition had to check. The literature of resistance among enslaved people in the New World is vast and points to a diversity of methods along a continuum. On one end were everyday acts of insubordination and sabotage: moving slowly to complete a task, sneaking out at night to see a forbidden lover or attend a clandestine religious gathering, talking back, or mildly contaminating a stew. These fit under a category that anthropologist James Scott dubbed “weapons of the weak.”¹ On the other end were acts of complete defiance in which the enslaver-enslaved relationship itself was broken by enslaved people who ran away to liberate themselves, attempted to kill their enslavers through arson or intentional poisoning, and violently attacked their enslavers by individual or collective armed rebellion. In between these two poles of resistance were pragmatic strategies that worked toward legal manumission with or without the cooperation of the enslaver. These strategies might include negotiation with the enslaver toward a manumission plan and were themselves “legal” in the sense that there was no law against them. We can examine how various kinds of resistance were deployed by enslaved people attached to Schuyler’s house in Old Saratoga.

Weapons of the “Weak” and Defiant

Desultory behavior worked as a resistance tool by some of the enslaved, as can be seen in the account of the “useless” “wench” rejected by an agent of the Schuyler family. After John Bradstreet Schuyler took over Saratoga House, Thomas Witbeck (an estate manager for Stephen Van Rensselaer) informed the General’s son of the trouble he was having finding a suitable female servant for the residence. He lamented that one enslaved woman he had tried displayed complete ignorance of housework.² But how could this Black woman know nothing about cooking or washing? It is possible she was an African-born woman—a captive

¹ See James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

² Thomas Witbeck, Letter to John Bradstreet Schuyler, July 1789, PSP, NYPL.

recently arrived in the Albany region, unfamiliar with European cuisine and clothes-cleaning techniques. It is possible she was a poor cook and someone unacquainted with laundering anything except coarse fabrics. But it is also entirely plausible that she did not wish to be removed from her former station to a new household and by feigning ineptitude, she made sure this did not happen. It is also not far-fetched to think that her incompetence was her calculated, deliberate, and *usual* modus operandi—her permanent posture of noncompliance with the often unexpected, seemingly arbitrary demands of involuntary servitude. She may have perfected the application of such recalcitrance in measured amounts.

Pinkster must be reconsidered from a slightly different angle to see it as a site of resistance. Whites of all ranks, from lower-class to elite, attended along with Blacks, enslaved and free. Why did enslavers, authorities, and colonial elites like the Schuylers—people concerned with preserving a hierarchical and racially segmented social order—permit such an unruly, polyglot celebration, and why did the tradition end?

A number of analytical frameworks help interpret the multicultural dimension of the celebration. It can be understood in a positive light by adopting Mary Ryan's view of antebellum civic life. In her classic study of the uses of urban public spaces (streets, theaters, squares, parks), she argues that these geographies hosted a "kaleidoscope" of jostling interest groups who worked out their differences through outdoor democratic processes like parades and political rallies. Occasionally such events turned violent but ultimately the grievances of marginalized groups were heard by their enfranchised allies through the struggles and exhibitions in these places. She concludes that such public displays strengthened an emergent national political democracy.³ Applying Ryan's perspective to Pinkster, its multiculturalism and *mélange* of scenes—frolicking Black and White children, petty merchants tending fair booths featuring crafts and wares for sale, games, Black drumming and dancing, drunken brawls among poor Whites, strolling White visitors—mirrored the theoretical democratic inclusiveness of the young American republic in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was the sprawling, accepting embrace of Pinkster that explains the tacit endorsement of the holiday by authorities.

Historian Brad Verter recognizes both the prominence of Pinkster's African features and the diversity of the week's crowd, but in a different way. He stresses that latent social tensions contributed to the termination of the festival. He writes, "By the turn of the nineteenth century, then, three volatile elements in the urban population threatened the political and economic hegemony of the ruling elite: poor and working-class whites, free blacks, and slaves."⁴ Verter argues that the multicultural character of Pinkster itself led to its demise. Powerful authorities quashed the holiday because the heterogeneity of its

³ Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 19–132.

⁴ Brad Verter, "Interracial Festivity and Power in Antebellum New York," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 4 (May 2002): 398–428.

participants reminded elites of the social discontents that their economic hegemony had set in motion—strife between rural White tenants and leaseholding landowners like the Schuylers; struggles between traditional craftsman and immigrant laborers, on the one hand, and rising factory owners and early industrial investors, on the other; and strains between poor Whites and newly freed Blacks competing for the same jobs.⁵ In 1811, the Albany Common Council voted to outlaw booths, tents, and stalls that sold food and alcohol and to eliminate all parades and music associated with “the days commonly called pinxter.”⁶ This shut down Pinkster in the state capital and signaled the attenuation of the celebration elsewhere in the state in ensuing years. A recently formed association of local free Blacks called the Albany African Society petitioned the city that same year (1811) to provide a lot from city corporation lands upon which the Society could establish a church and a school for Black children. Interestingly, several of the members of the African Society—Benjamin Lattimore, Sr., Prince Schermerhorn, and Francis March—had purchased individual lots from Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (1757–1854), the General’s daughter; she had sold to them portions of her inheritance of lands near Schuyler Mansion. In its initial approval of the Society’s petition, the Council inserted a provision in December 1811: “The [Land] Committee are however of the opinion that a covenant be inserted in the said deed that the said lot shall revert back to the corporation whenever the same shall be appropriated to any other use than that set forth in the said provision.”⁷ By this codicil, the Council demonstrated its fear that the Society would resurrect Pinkster on public lands.

In fact, the Council went even further two months later in February 1812 to reverse its cession to the African Society altogether. Its minutes read: “Resolved that the resolution of the 9th of December last approving of a report of the Land Committee granting a lot of land for certain Africans and people of Color for religious purposes be revoked and that the said report of the Land Committee be rejected.”⁸ With this resolution, the Council revealed its lingering anxieties concerning a return of the yearly saturnalia called Pinkster, and moved to extinguish it under any circumstance. The new measure disallowed Albany’s Black community ownership and possible use of public land for the festival even under future Black religious sponsorship. White authorities in the city perceived that the week of destabilizing play had racially threatening undertones, and eliminated this danger.

⁵ Verter, 410–416.

⁶ See A. J. Williams-Myers, “Pinkster Carnival: Africanisms in the Hudson River Valley,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1985), 7–17 and Shane White, “Pinkster in Albany, 1803,” *New York History* 70, no. 2 (April 1989): 192; “An Injustice Undone After 200 Year,” *Albany Times-Union*, May 17, 2011.

⁷ Minutes of the Common Council of Albany, 1808–1812, Vol. 10, p. 536, Albany Hall of Records; Friends of Albany History, “Against All Odds – Building Albany’s Free Black Community in the Early 1800s,” February 4, 2022, <https://friendsofalbanyhistory.wordpress.com/2022/02/04/against-all-odds-building-albanys-free-black-community-the-early-1800s/>, accessed December 17, 2022.

⁸ Minutes of the Common Council of Albany, 1808–1812, Vol. 10, p. 536, Albany Hall of Records, p. 558.

Several scholars read Pinkster as a classic ritual of inversion in the European medievalist tradition whereby rulers allowed normally disempowered segments of society to take charge as a kind of social arsis and safety valve. The temporary role reversals released pent-up dissatisfactions on a grand scale precisely because they involved the willing participation of ruling elites. Such events have been called “festivals of misrule.”⁹ Jeroen Dewulf argues that Pinkster, and the Pinkster king in particular, were transplanted expressions of Black brotherhoods that developed among Afro-Catholic converts in the Portuguese-African worlds of the late fifteenth to seventeenth centuries among people of Kongolese descent.¹⁰

Additionally, I would argue that Pinkster exemplified resistance because by default Black participation in the holiday created a yearly archive of the emotions of the region’s enslaved people for their White contemporaries, not just for later researchers such as myself. None of the Schuylers’ Black servants left journals or letters about their interior lives. Schuyler family documents supply no direct window onto the general psychological state of the household’s slaves. The “55 boxes, 17 volumes, [and] 15 oversized folders” constituting the Philip Schuyler papers contain almost no references to Blacks except as “negroes” or as servants—as capital. Moreover, enslavement itself generally forced the suppression of enslaved people’s inner thoughts except those that were conducive to the proper execution of their duties. However, Pinkster celebrations prompted the production of a record, admittedly slim, of Black sentiment. It memorialized the feelings of slaves released from their unnatural obligations. Jonathan Eights (1773–1848), an Albany native who became a physician, left an account of the holiday that is peppered with references to the feelings of enslaved participants: “unalloyed joy,” “merry, gleesome mirth,” “boisterous mirth and jollity.”¹¹ In his quasi-autobiographical work, James Fenimore Cooper conjures up “infinite delight,” “happy, ‘shining’ faces” and the exhilaration of Black people “laughing in a way that seemed to set their very hearts rattling within their ribs.”¹² Even the dour, disapproving and mysterious “A.B.,” author of the 1803 newspaper account of the fête, notes their cheerful abandonment to “folly . . . and fun.”¹³ African Americans came to life through this festival with no holds barred. This articulation of Black emotional freedom flowing from their exemption from forced, regular work routines—an articulation per-

⁹ Jacob Pandian, “Symbolic Inversions: An Interpretation of Contrary Behavior in Ritual,” *Anthropos* 96, no. 2 (2001): 557–562; Claire Sponsler, *Ritual Imports: Performing Medieval Drama in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 54, 60–61; Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Jeroen Dewulf, *The Pinkster King and the King of Kongo: The Forgotten History of America’s Dutch-Owned Slaves* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 97–132.

¹¹ Munsell, *Collections on the History of Albany*, 56, 323–325.

¹² Cooper, *Satanstoe*, 61, 65–66.

¹³ *Albany Centinel*, June 1803, as reproduced in Shane White, “Pinkster in Albany, 1803,” *New York History* 70, no. 2 (April 1989): 195.

formed before Whites—represented a kind of resistance. The relish, happiness, and rapturous pleasure of escaping the racialized restraints of enslavement—all communicated in the presence of enslavers—was a form of self-liberation that quite literally forced Whites to take note. For one week, the enslaved openly spoke the truth of their full humanity to power. Schuyler’s coerced Black workers participated in this self-liberating experience.

Insouciance and disobedience were forms of resistance as well. A repeatedly saucy servant or one who performed tasks indifferently, one who shirked duties, or one who habitually stole would be warned against such behaviors. Anne Grant recalled that this sort of defiance was a rarity among those the Schuylers enslaved at The Flatts because of the “gentle treatment” they received and because of the punishment they would suffer for it. She wrote,

There were some instances (but very few) of those who through levity of mind, or a love of liquor or finery, betrayed their trust, or habitually neglected their duty. In these cases, after every means had been used to reform them, no severe punishments were inflicted at home. But the terrible sentence, which they dreaded worse than death, when passed—they were sold to Jamaica.¹⁴

In more direct language, she explained that “when a member showed degeneracy, he was immediately expelled, or in other words more suitable to this case, sold.”¹⁵ The story of Pomp (or Pompey), an enslaved man in the household of Albany’s Matthew Visscher (1751–1793), a prominent local lawyer and politician, provides an example of the punishment awaiting the disruptive, transgressive Black servant. Pomp and two enslaved female co-conspirators were publicly hanged for deliberately starting the 1793 blaze that destroyed twenty-six houses in Albany—a crime that concerned the General in a letter he wrote to his son, John. According to Munsell, although reportedly an “honest, trustworthy, and a faithful servant” as a boy, [Pomp] became a womanizer and an “indolent,” “foppish” thief despite the patience and indulgence of the Visschers toward him.¹⁶ His downfall was a cautionary tale for all enslaved people in the region. Like the unnamed “wench” dumped in exchange for a new carpet in Schuyler’s Canadian trade, they might be sold off hundreds of miles away from those they knew or executed.

Yet the threat of sale or worse did not hinder another Black woman involuntarily under Philip Schuyler’s management from exhibiting insubordinate behavior. The unnamed woman was guilty of nothing more than consistently demonstrating her feelings about her enslaved status. As previously mentioned, during the Revolutionary War the

¹⁴ Amy MacVicar Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady* (New York: George Dearborn, 1836), 43.

¹⁵ Grant, 169.

¹⁶ Munsell, *Collections on the History of Albany*, 378–383; Verter, “Interracial Festivity and Power,” 409; Don R. Gerlach, “Black Arson in Albany, New York, 1793,” *Journal of Black Studies* 7, no. 3 (1977): 301–312. Gerlach claims on p. 306 the existence of this letter from Schuyler to John Bradstreet, although he admits in fn 5 that the letter has not been located.

General dispatched the army's clothier general in Quebec to make purchases of items that were hard to obtain in New York. In exchange for a costly carpet, the officer felt pressed to offer the seller a human being, one of Schuyler's "wenches" who had accompanied the commissary officer there. Once the transaction was successfully completed, Tayler confided to Schuyler the need to make a quick exit before the buyer fully grasped the temperament of his new property: "They begin to complain of her being Dirty, Independent, and Lazy. I hope to leave this place before she Establishes her character."¹⁷

Dirty. Independent. Lazy. One can begin to imagine any number of reasons for these attributes in an enslaved woman. These are marks of depression. They are signs that their bearer has lost interest in life so completely that she cannot bring herself to bathe, take in outside communications, or complete tasks. Perhaps she had lost a child to disease or suffered a late miscarriage. Maybe she had not healed psychologically from the trauma of seeing her toddler paired with a White child who lived too far away or witnessing a nearby lover sold to Jamaica, the worst solution to recalcitrance according to Grant.¹⁸ Perhaps against her will, perhaps like the "favourite Negro-woman" who bore Chalk by a Schuyler,¹⁹ she had been forced to sex with a powerful, White man and had become insoluble and unreachable as a consequence. These behaviors are also indicators of bitterness, a settled hardness. Any woman—enslaved or free, White or Black—who had experienced these imagined tragedies might exhibit her personality profile. The key point, though, is that whether depressed, bitter, or some combination of the two, the woman had ceased to perform as a proper slave. A non-working, i.e., "lazy" enslaved person was no slave at all. In essence, she had put herself on permanent strike. Schuyler and other enslavers recognized this reality and were forced to admit a liability in such cases. Selling the incorrigibles was an attempt to cut enslavers' losses. But through their intractability, Black enslaved women like the one in Quebec implicitly protested their circumstances to Schuyler and his fellow-travelers.

Running or Negotiating

In late fall of 1797, a twenty-five-year old enslaved Black man from the vicinity of Old Saratoga decided to liberate himself. Caesar knew he had picked a harsh time of year to be on the run so he was careful to layer himself against the cold.²⁰ Closest to his body he put on "a new, check'd shirt" and covered that with some worn overalls. Next came a kersey-

¹⁷ John Taylor, Letter to Philip Schuyler, March 8, 1776, PSP, NYPL.

¹⁸ On sale to Jamaica, see Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 43.

¹⁹ Grant, 45.

²⁰ The fugitive's name is the only illegible word on the scan of the runaway advertisement in which it appears. I have chosen "Caesar" because it was a common name assigned enslaved men by their captors.

mere vest, a garment of coarsely woven wool. He topped the vest with a blue sailor's jacket for extra protection. A good, thick pair of shoes, a bandanna around his neck, a fur hat, and a long overcoat completed his armor against wind and frost. Caesar was certain of his route—the shortest distance to freedom, which lay just fourteen miles east as the crow flies, closer than a trip to Albany. Vermont was a free state. On the night of December 7, Caesar took off in that direction, prompting Richard Davis, Jr., who was leasing Schuyler's estate at the time, to place an advertisement to recover him.²¹

Caesar's disappearance was undoubtedly noised among Schuyler's Black laborers. They would have heard the news in conversations between leaders in newly formed Saratoga County, including Davis and the General himself. John Bradstreet Schuyler and Davis had begun their tenures as Saratoga County Commissioners in 1794, a year before the former's death, and Davis was justice of the peace in Stillwater in 1797. With a house and farm in Halfmoon valued at 1,840 dollars, Davis would have been considered a fellow leader in the jurisdiction, only recently formed in 1791. General Schuyler was probably friendly with Davis as a local Revolutionary War veteran and corporal, too.²¹ For these reasons, whether or not the runaway had absconded from Halfmoon, Stillwater, or Schuyler House itself, Davis and the General would have discussed the missing servant with their friends and biological family within earshot of the kitchen family at the commodious box.

The General had his own several experiences with fugitive chattel. In 1768, the servant he called "our Har" had run away, as will be discussed below.²² Caesar's breakout probably prompted anxiety in Schuyler, who hoped to avoid the loss he experienced when Scipio escaped during the Revolutionary War. Scipio responded to Lord Dunmore's promise to free any slaves who soldiered with the Redcoats against the colonists. "Formerly the property of Philip Schuyler, Albany," Scipio made his escape to Tory forces in early 1780, served under Major William Potts, and was eventually evacuated by the British to Canada with other Loyalist Black soldiers in the fall of 1783. Sailing optimistically aboard the *Prosperous Amelia* for Port Roseway, Nova Scotia, Scipio proved his intention to live free or die. One year later, a six-week old infant boy named Christopher Scipio was born in Birchtown, Nova Scotia—the free Black settlement for Loyalists who had entered Canada through Port Roseway. It is easy to imagine that this was the son of Scipio—a man who

²¹ Arthur C. M. Kelly, "Saratoga Pioneers—pre-1860," *The Saratoga* 14, no. 2 (1997): 57; US Revolutionary War Rolls, June 29, 1777; New York, US Tax Assessment Rolls of Real and Personal Estates, 1799–1803; George Baker Anderson, *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive and Biographical Record of Saratoga County* (Boston: The Boston History Company, 1899), 455.

²² *New York Journal*, May 12, 1768, Princeton University Library.

would give his child his own name rather than that of a former enslaver—and that Scipio had found a way to become his own man, passing new memories in a new land to his new son.²³

It is clear from Scipio's example, and others, that Schuyler's human property seized the opportunities for self-liberation created by the unsettled conditions of the Revolutionary War. In 1779, Diana was jailed for fleeing Schuyler's household and hiding out "for a considerable time" with a neighboring "Scotchman" until apprehended. In late fall of 1782, Schuyler placed an advertisement that ran for three weeks for another "Runaway Negro." This time it was Nicholas ("Claas").²⁴ The examples of Diana, Scipio, Claas, and Caesar all expose the discontentment of those enslaved at Saratoga House and on the environs of Patent lands. They stood ready to bolt, and did when possible.

In the late 1790s, Caesar's escape would have prompted tight whispers about the prospect of freedom and abolition itself among the enslaved. Opinions against slavery in New York State sounded with increasing frequency in the Schuylers' social circles. Historian David Gellman argues that the tumultuous events in Haiti and debates about the Jay Treaty prompted New York enslavers to contemplate an orderly process toward eliminating slavery—one that would lessen the economic impact on them of the loss of involuntary, unpaid labor.²⁵ But the descendants of Loangoans had other considerations as they pondered their condition with their elders.

The legal rights of slaves in Loango had no analog at Saratoga. In Loango, four roads ran from four directions—north, south, east, and west—to the capital city of Bwali where the Maloango held court as the highest authority in the land. These roads were

²³ Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), *The Book of Negroes (Black Loyalist Directory)*, Book Two. "Black Loyalists: Our History, Our People," https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/ic/can_digital_collections/blackloyalists/documents/official/black_loyalist_directory_book_two.htm, accessed September 19, 2022; "Muster Roll Commissary General Department, Provisions Department, New York," Carleton Papers – Loyalists and British Soldiers, 1772–1784," Library and Archives of Canada, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/loyalists-british-soldiers-1722-1784/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=18106&>, accessed September 26, 2022; "Muster Book of Free, Black Settlement in Birchtown," Black Loyalist Refugees, 1782–1807 – Port Roseway Associates, Library and Archives of Canada, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/loyalist-port-roseway/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=351&>, accessed September 26, 2022. See Stuart Salmon, "The Loyalist Regiments of the American Revolutionary War 1775–1783," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Stirling, 2009, 312–338, 360–361, xviii for a discussion of the Ranger company eventually headed by Major Potts under which Scipio served; in 1782, Potts succeeded Captain Walter Butler in the British Army's Northern Department. For Dunmore's Proclamation as it appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* and the *Weekly Advertiser*, December 6, 1775, see <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/lord-dunmores-proclamation-1775>, accessed September 19, 2022.

²⁴ John Lansing, Letter to Philip Schuyler, February 3, 1779, PSP, NYPL; Printer's Bill, February 27, 1783, PSP, NYPL; Ian Mumpton, "Ran Away on the 28th Ultimo: Freedom Seekers and Self Manumission at Schuyler Mansion," Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, May 24, 2018, <http://schuylermansion.blogspot.com/2018/05/ran-away-on-28th-ultimo-freedom-seekers.html>, accessed January 6, 2023.

²⁵ David N. Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 135–151.

called “paths to God.” Enslaved people who felt abused or mistreated by their owners/ masters could make their way onto one of these roads and be assured of safe passage to their king for a hearing of their case.²⁶ Historian Phyllis Martin explained,

Anyone who wanted to appeal to the Maloango for justice, whether freeman or slave, innocent or criminal, citizen or foreigner, could make his way to one of these roads and be assured of a secure access to the capital. Where the roads came to rivers, the Maloango guaranteed a free and easy crossing through the ferrymen whom he appointed. These roads not only underlined the sovereignty of the ruler, they also encouraged stability in the kingdom. Local chiefs, who counted their power by the number of their followers, would hesitate to act in an arbitrary fashion, if the people to whom they denied justice could go to the Maloango.²⁷

Caesar was aggrieved with his situation in life as an enslaved person in Saratoga, yet in New York he had no court of appeals where he might seek justice. He resolved that the only recourse for someone as miserable as himself then was to break free from his chains by fleeing to a place of freedom. Schuyler’s kitchen family certainly prayed that Caesar’s run was indeed a path to God.

Martin specified that in Loango, “slaves were not necessarily worse off than free men” and summarized Loangoan slavery in this way: “Probably a good slave lived as a member of his master’s household, . . . sharing the same housing, wearing the same sort of clothes and eating the same food as free members. If he were energetic, he might rise in the household community to a position of responsibility.”²⁸ This is a more expansive understanding of slavery than existed in America. With such a heritage, would Schuyler’s kitchen family have sought to replicate Loangoan slavery within the Schuyler household? If so, how would they have accomplished this?

Answering these questions requires a revisiting of Grant’s account of slave training and education at The Flatts. Grant detailed her admiration for the compliant, cooperative set of Black servants for whom the highest reward was a limited voice in household affairs. A faithful enslaved woman might contribute her opinion on the placement of her children outside Madam Schuyler’s household. She might also reprimand the children of her enslavers for their own good. Grant recalled,

If they did their work well, it is astonishing, when I recollect it, what liberty of speech was allowed to those active and prudent mothers. They would chide, reprove, and expostulate in a manner we would not endure from our [European] hired servants; and sometimes exert fully as much authority over the children of the family as the parents, conscious that they were entirely in

²⁶ Martin, “The External Trade of the Loango Coast,” 45–46.

²⁷ Martin, 46.

²⁸ Martin, 56–57.

their power. They did not crush freedom of speech and opinion in those they knew they were beloved, and who watched with incessant care over their interest and comfort.²⁹

Translating the Schuyler system of rewards for enslaved servants into Loangoan terms then, an influencer in the Saratoga household held “a position of responsibility.” A Black servant with a position of responsibility also carried their enslaver’s exalted trust—a trust of the sort the General transmitted to Tom, Peter, and Cuff as delivery men during the Christmas holidays of 1787. The possibility of Cuff riding away to freedom on the “white faced horse” he was asked to convey to his son never crossed the elder Schuyler’s mind.³⁰

But farsighted Black servants also thought about leveraging their positions of responsibility to improve their material conditions beyond the normal bounds of enslavement. They would not have expected the equivalent of their counterparts in Loango. They might have eaten much of the same food, but they did not have the same housing as their enslavers. Except for those attending infants or the ill, they slept apart from the Schuylers. As for clothing, the visual evidence suggests that except for coachmen, butlers, valets, and personal attendants, enslavers dressed servants according to their lowly station. The bold flouting of hierarchies of dress is what made King Charles’ attire so outrageous to Whites, who tolerated such ostentatiousness for only one week a year. Grant reported that Schuyler’s kitchen mothers taught their daughters to make clothes for the slaves and that during her time with the family, “one white-wooled negro-man . . . sat by the chimney and made shoes for all the rest.”³¹ Schuyler’s account books and letters show outlays to shoemakers for his enslaved workers as well. These provisions were for modest, serviceable styles. However, if a Black man or woman wanted more than what was merely adequate or to exceed what was meted out to them for themselves or their families, they would have to act upon these desires innovatively.

From this perspective, enslaved Blacks who used their good standing to advance, improve, or enlarge their positions implicitly resisted the strictures of slavery from within. They pushed at the walls of the box. The exchanges of cash and goods between Philip Schuyler and his Black servants in Saratoga must be understood in this way as well. Entering the consumer economy was one form of resistance, since as chattel it was illegal for them to buy and sell, or enter contracts of their own volition.³² Yet, existing account books for 1764 through 1770 demonstrate that these commercial exchanges between Schuyler’s chattel and himself were regular; they occurred throughout the year for all

²⁹ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 42.

³⁰ Philip Schuyler, Letter to John Bradstreet Schuyler, December 12, 1787.

³¹ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*.

³² Edwin Olson, “The Slave Code in Colonial New York,” *The Journal of Negro History* 29, no. 2 (April 1944): 148.

seasons. During these years, in some of the winter months (December, January, and February), Schuyler received a schepel of corn (three-quarters of a bushel) from Harre, Tom, and Bob, and either paid them cash or credited the grain to their account in exchange for tea, sugar, and rum. During one fall (in November of 1767), Schuyler paid Harre cash for potatoes. In the spring of 1768, Tom sold two hogs and Dick was paid in cash for ten pounds of tobacco. In a couple of summer months (July and August), Harre collected cash for fish he had caught; Tom got money for selling logs.³³

Examining the provenance of the goods presented by these enslaved men attests to their entrepreneurship. In the case of the corn and potatoes, Harre and Tom would have negotiated with Schuyler for the use of some corner of his property for their own benefit, perhaps on the unleased lands just south of the house along the Hudson. In so doing, the bargain would have been made because of the favor they had won with Schuyler, and the desire they may have had to supplement their diets or to share the produce with family members. It is also interesting to realize that the corn might have already been ground into meal; the men obviously could take advantage of their access to the Schuyler mills to achieve this product. Tom was permitted to keep for his own profit some of the timber he had cut on Schuyler's lands. Harre probably cashed in a bonus of his catches on Fish Creek. The hogs might have once been Tom's pets. Anne Grant wrote of "the attachments of the animals": "Each negro was indulged with his racoon, his squirrel or muskrat, or perhaps his beaver, which he tamed and attached to himself, by daily feeding and caressing him in the farm-yard."³⁴ Whereas Grant only saw pets in these creatures, pets could be converted into capital for those servants who were ambitious for the material wellbeing of themselves and their loved ones, as Tom's decision showed. He and other traders who were also enslaved resisted bondage by widening the narrow definition of themselves as merely chattel.

Identifying the source of Dick's tobacco calls for some extra head scratching, though. That could have been acquired through another bartering route, possibly Dick's independent dealings with Indians in the area. Historians William Hart and Christian Crouch have examined a range of Indian-Black contacts in the frontier borderlands of

³³ Philip John Schuyler Account Book, 1763–1770, Mss Collection BV Schuyler, Philip John, New-York Historical Society, New-York Historical Society; Michael J. Douma, "A Schepel of Wheat in Dutch Currency New York," October 24, 2019, <https://michaeldouma.com/2019/10/24/a-schepel-of-wheat-as-currency-in-dutch-new-york/>, accessed December 8, 2022.

³⁴ Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 170–171.

western New York near Johnson Hall and Upper Canada (Detroit), respectively, and trade was one.³⁵ For an enterprising Black man like Dick, one benefit from an association with local Indigenous populations might have been access to tobacco.

Tobacco growing was well established in pre-contact times among the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, including all the Northeast Indians. The Tionontati of the Lake Huron area cultivated tobacco for trade. However, most Indigenous and First Nations groups used the plant for ceremonial or spiritual purposes. For instance, among the Stockbridge-Munsee, oral tradition has it that each year, their people gather to pray and offer tobacco to the four powerful beings in charge of the winds from the north, south, east, and west. Among the Seneca and Cayuga of western New York, tobacco was more or less self-propagating after the first seeds of the plant had taken root.³⁶ Perhaps Dick observed such tobacco growth on frequent trips into the forest, or perhaps he had learned about the plant directly from local Indians who taught him how to gather its leaves. Although tobacco was not one of the General's commercial crops at Saratoga, Anne Grant mentioned one enslaved "universal genius" at The Flatts who "reared hemp and tobacco and spun both"³⁷ (spinning tobacco involved rolling and binding together large clusters of its leaves³⁸). Here, it is important to recall that hemp processing, the weaving of both coarse and fine cloth from the plant, had been practiced among the people of Loango since at least the late seventeenth century.³⁹ Perhaps this "genius" had not first learned this skill in Schuyler's mills but had retained it from his homeland. Dick may have learned to generate tobacco from the experienced hands of this elderly enslaved Black man through social networks the Schuylers' slaves generated with each other. The timing of Dick's tobacco transaction with General Schuyler matches such a supposition: it was in November of 1768, only a year after Grant's teenage sojourn with Madam Schuyler. Dick's possible method of securing tobacco for trade with Schuyler then points to a transfer of knowledge from

³⁵ William Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens' and the Mutability of 'Race,' Status, and Identity on New York's Pre-Revolutionary Frontier," in Andrew R. L. Cayton and Frederika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 88–113; Christian Ayne Crouch, "The Black City: African and Indian Exchanges in Pontiac's Upper Country," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 291–294. Crouch discusses a range of opportunities for and uses of Africans in the colonial French North American borderland/frontier known as the Upper Country (*pays d'en haut*) in her article.

³⁶ Charles Garrad, *Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Sixteenth Century*. Canadian Museum of History, 2014; Mark Raymond Harrington, *Religion and Ceremonies of the Lenape* (New York: Museum of the American Indians, 1921), 99, 160, 163, 345, 384, 389, 394; Ralph Linton, *Use of Tobacco Among North American Indians* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1924), 1–4, 9–10, 12, 14, 22.

³⁷ Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 168. On failed attempts to develop tobacco in colonial New York, see Meyer Jacobstein, *The Tobacco Industry in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1907), 19, 21.

³⁸ Franciscus Philippus Florinus, "Rolling and Spinning Tobacco," Book engraving, 1722, National Library of Medicine, <https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/catalog/nlm:nlmuid-101448070-img>, accessed December 3, 2022.

³⁹ John Ogilby, *Africa: Being an Accurate Description of the Regions* (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), 501–502.

regional Indigenous peoples to enslaved Blacks who, in turn, passed the information among themselves with profit in mind.⁴⁰ The ingenuity required to gain these bargaining chips belied the notion of the passivity and inferiority of the enslaved.

Alternatively, newly imported Africans from West Africa, including the Loango and Kongo kingdoms, might have brought with them some knowledge of tobacco cultivation from their native lands. Portuguese transatlantic ships, the slave trade, internal trade, and human migrations facilitated the consumption, cultivation, and dispersal of commodified plants including tobacco (and cannabis) within Africa after 1500.⁴¹ Some of Schuyler's slaves might have found a way of continuing an already familiar custom by connecting with Indian suppliers near Patent lands.

Other patterns in ledger transactions demonstrate agency on the part of Schuyler's Black laborers in defiance of the legal fictions, "chattel in property and chattel in personal-ity." "Caty Betty" managed to receive cash "in full payment of days work" in 1786. Despite the fact that she could only sign the receipt with a mark instead of a signature, evidently this illiterate Black woman was astute enough to have arranged for cash compensation from Schuyler for at least some of her labor.⁴² Business as usual between enslaved and enslaver was not acceptable to her, so she acted on that conviction. Schuyler's enslaved store customers duplicated Caty's mindset by pursuing their interests, too. During the long winter holiday season, they purchased tea, sugar, and rum. One imagines that Harre, Tom, Juba, and Dick used these for special punches, beverages, and desserts enjoyed at Christmas and New Year festivities with family and friends. Additionally, since several transactions were monetary exchanges only—cash borrowed or cash paid—it appears that Schuyler's enslaved workers occasionally used him like a bank lending service. Harre, Tom, and Coleman were among these. With borrowed cash, they could, and apparently did, invest in exchanges elsewhere for returns to clear their balances. Dick purchased nails on credit. Perhaps he hired himself out as a carpenter for a neighboring farmer or shop owner in need.⁴³

In fact, Harre may have wrested access to Schuyler's store as a customer by such insistence. He acted on his hunger for freedom by escaping Philip Schuyler's grasp for a time. In April 1768, the General advertised a £3 reward plus expenses for a "Run away, a Negro man named Harre, about 30 or 35 years of age." Before taking off, Harre had seen many days of hard labor up and down the Hudson Valley, having "lived formerly in the

⁴⁰ Schuyler Account Book, N-YHS. See Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁴¹ John Edward Phillips, "African Smoking and Pipes," *The Journal of African History* 24, no. 3 (1983): 303–319; Chris S. Duvall, "Cannabis and Tobacco in Precolonial and Colonial Africa," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* [Online], <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.44>; Chris S. Duvall, "A Brief Agricultural History of Cannabis in Africa, from Prehistory to Canna-Colony," *EchoGéo* 48 (July 2019). Interestingly, the smoking of cannabis predated the introduction of tobacco in many places.

⁴² Philip Schuyler, Receipt for payment signed by Caty Betty, January 5, 1786, PSP, NYPL.

⁴³ Schuyler Account Book, N-YHS.

counties of Orange, Dutchess, and Albany” and acquiring the ability to speak low Dutch as well as English. Schuyler had acquired Harre through a connection with a Mr. Dingman, a Dutch-descended farmer with family roots in Kinderhook, Columbia County, New York dating back to the early seventeenth century. Harre walked with a limp from “having his toes frozen”—easily the result of days spent chopping and hauling trees and wood in unforgiving winter cold.⁴⁴ It is easy to imagine that years of painfully frigid winters spent dragging timber over snow-packed ground with inadequate foot covering or even with proper shoes had led to his permanently damaged extremities. He had experienced enough of frostbite when he hobbled away from Saratoga as fast as he could. The lame leg frustrated his escape, though, and Harre probably was caught fairly quickly in the dragnet cast by Schuyler’s ad. By November 1768, Harre’s name appears on Schuyler’s store ledger for the first time. Harre had turned the tables by forcing a tacit concession from his enslaver. Schuyler had to find a “gentle treatment.” For Harre, the box stretched because of his bold move.

Conceding commercial privileges to Harre did not alter the General’s ultimate view of the Black man as his property, as attested by the clinical, detached way in which he sketched the fugitive’s “broad shoulders, remarkable small legs, large feet,” and lameness. The details of description are in fact disturbingly dispassionate. Only the reference to Harre’s “flaring eyes” betrays any notice Schuyler may have taken of the servant’s humanity. Those eyes probably continued to reveal an ambition and independent spirit during transactions at the store, even if only flittingly. They harbored Harre’s secret hope for an exit, now translated into a strategy of careful savings. Even after his return, those eyes were probably memorable to his enslaver.⁴⁵

In noticeable contrast to similar trading during the 1750s Albany, Aileen Agnew noted that Black women rather than Black men dominated the commercial exchanges (fifteen of nineteen) at a store owned by a White woman, Elizabeth Sanders. Only men engaged in these commercial exchanges at Schuyler’s Saratoga property. This may be a reflection of the more rural location of Saratoga. While all of Albany County in the mid-seventeenth century was a northern frontier, this label more accurately reflected conditions at the settlement surrounding the intersection of Fish Creek and the Hudson River where the gender balance of frontier communities as a rule skewed to the male side. Furthermore, unlike Schuyler’s Black store customers in Saratoga, Albany’s Black traders mostly bought consumer items associated with their appearance, especially fabrics. For Agnew and historian Shane White, these preferences mirrored the desire of African Americans for

⁴⁴ *The New-York Journal; or the General Advertiser*, May 5, 1768; Edward Augustus Collier, *A History of Old Kinderhook from Aboriginal Days to the Present Time* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1914), 36, 78, 92, 94–95, 104, 106–107, 109, 114, 116, 274, 321.

⁴⁵ *The New-York Journal; or the General Advertiser*, May 5, 1768.

self-expression and to establish a proud social identity for themselves.⁴⁶ However, the rural enslaved men who showed up at Schuyler's post to do business mostly invested in enhancing their material circumstances. In this way, they exploded the legal fiction of "slave as property" and confounded the idea of "slave as personality." As consumers and through bartering, they insisted they were like the Schuylers—fully human actors.

Manumission

The pressure toward freedom mounted within the Black community of Albany County in the last decade of the eighteenth century, not only because of the post-Revolutionary War manumission movement but also because of the heightened surveillance and suppression they experienced during the Revolutionary War. The laws passed by Albany's Committee of Safety, to which Philip Schuyler belonged, attest to both the fears of slaveowners and the restlessness of the region's slaves in the shifting political context. The clash between the revolutionaries' and the enslaved community's understandings of liberty became apparent in new restrictions that revealed the vitality of slave resistance by their very harshness. The Committee resolved in 1776 that any "negroes" within Rennselaerwyck found at a distance from their owner's residences after eight o'clock at night without a written pass would receive corporal punishment. In March 1777, the Committee ordered the arrest of one Hugh Jolly and his son-in-law for "for harbouring Negroes and being Persons Inimical to the Cause of America." Committeemen were concerned that slaves might seek refuge with the British in Canada. After Philip Van Rennselaer informed the Committee one year later that "two Regular Soldiers and several Negroes" planned to slip away one night on a bateau for New York City, the legislative body ordered the apprehension of all suspects. These included one enslaved person owned by Van Rennselaer, Andrew. The others—among them Tone, Tom, Jem, Jeremy, and Jack—each had different owners, thus indicating a network of Black resisters across the county who had resolved to escape their chains. Indeed, one could say that the enslaved developed their own "committees of correspondence" by gathering perhaps to discuss opportunities in the changing landscape of escape caused by the war. Ultimately, the men hoped to abscond to Manhattan, which was under British control. There, they might join the British army and receive freedom as payment for

⁴⁶ Aileen Agnew, "Living in a Material World," in Myra B. Young Armstead, *Mighty Change, Tall Within: Black Identity in the Hudson Valley* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 48–52; Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770–1810* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 196–197.

their services. Not only were these men apprehended by the Committee, they were each punished for their dream by a public whipping of fifty lashes.⁴⁷ Their aborted plan reveals the depth of yearning for freedom among those enslaved by Schuyler and his social peers.

The ideologies of liberty that fired the American Revolution only haltingly fueled the antislavery sentiment that eventuated in New York's Gradual Manumission Law.⁴⁸ There was no straight line leading unswervingly from the ideals embodied in the Declaration of Independence to the adoption of a gradual manumission policy, as David Gellman documented, nor was the rationale for manumission chiefly philosophical. Humanitarian ideas jostled with powerful political and economic interests for thirteen years before a comprehensive legal protocol to end slavery was solidly established in 1799.⁴⁹

Manumission had different implications and meanings to both enslavers and the enslaved. This can be seen through the case of two members of the French nobility who became slaveholders in Albany County after relocating there in the late eighteenth century. Frédéric de la Tour du Pin Gouvernet was a *comte* and later became a marquis. His wife, Henriette, had served as an apprentice lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette and later became a marquise. Frédéric's and Henriette's fathers both died by guillotine during the French Revolution, prompting the couple to flee France for England in search of asylum. There, the two met Angelica Schuyler Church, General Philip Schuyler's daughter, who suggested the refugees could restart their lives well in the Upper Hudson Valley. Once the pair arrived in Albany, Schuyler advised them to purchase slaves and acquire a farm. The French newcomers listened and purchased four Black people as slaves—the number that roughly one third (35.3 percent) of slaveholding households in the Hudson Valley held. The General offered this guidance to the *comte* and his wife in 1794. New York State was then moving toward a general manumission law, and yet Schuyler clearly still saw slaveholding as a sure path to economic security. Although Philip Schuyler held office as New York State Senator (1780–1784, 1786–1790, 1792–1797) and US Senator (1789–1791, 1797–1798) in the new democratic republic, he viewed manumission as inimical to the economic success of aspiring agrarians.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ James Sullivan, *Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence 1775–1778*, Vol. 1 (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1923), 87, 698, 948, 952, 1585.

⁴⁸ John L. Rury, "Philanthropy, Self-Help, and Social Control: The New York Manumission Society and Free Blacks, 1785–1810," *Phylon* 46, no. 3 (1985): 232; Division of Archives and History, *The American Revolution in New York: Its Political, Social and Economic Significance* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1926), 237.

⁴⁹ Gellman, *Emancipating New York*.

⁵⁰ Madame de la Tour du Pin, *Recollections of the Revolution and the Empire* (New York: Brentano's, 1920), 1–208, 239; Shane White, "Slavery in New York State in the Early Republic," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 1995): 12; Amy Tikkanen, "Philip John Schuyler," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Philip-John-Schuyler>, accessed December 15, 2021; Philip Schuyler, Letter to Samuel Jones Esqr., March 4, 1797, PSP, NYPL.

As a state legislator, Schuyler and his friends also worried about the economic consequences of general manumission on the tax-paying public and took measures to address this issue. The fear was that manumitted people would land on relief rolls as paupers without a means of sustaining themselves. As a result, the 1788 slave code took a middle ground position: on the one hand, the law encouraged private manumissions by not requiring living enslavers to post a bond for any person they manumitted. At the same time, though, the law passed the responsibility of ascertaining whether a newly manumitted person was healthy, indigent, or in need of public funds onto the county overseer of the poor. Furthermore, slaveowners who manumitted their slaves in their wills would not have to post a bond. In such testamentary manumissions, the testator's (deceased person's) estate was liable for any charges the public incurred for an ill or needy freed person.⁵¹ With his usual eye to the bottom line, Schuyler chose the testamentary manumission route for himself in 1804.

The manumission process itself hinted at the economic challenges that enslaved candidates for freedom would face as free Blacks. Madame de la Tour du Pin and her husband decided to return to a somewhat restabilized France after two years. At the Madame's urging, the couple decided to manumit their slaves before leaving their farm. Sometime in the spring of 1796, the *comte*, his wife, and the four people they enslaved appeared at the court on the corner of Albany's Hudson Avenue and Broadway before the presiding Justice of the Peace, the steward of Stephen Van Rennselaer (the General's son-in-law).⁵² The court official was tough that day. De la Tour du Pin seemed somewhat surprised by his begrudging approach and described him as being "in bad humor." He demanded that one of the four applicants, Prime, produce proof of a pension of one hundred dollars since he appeared to be over fifty years old. Applying the state's 1788 manumission law, the justice apparently doubted Prime's eligibility for manumission on the basis of his age and believed he was to become a public charge as a poor, free, uneducated, elderly Black man. Fortunately, Prime came prepared with evidence that he was forty-nine. The justice's cautious, suspicious approach to manumission reflected the reticence of the Schuylers to endorse Black liberation for economic reasons.

The zeal with which the enslaved Black community embraced manumission could not have been more different than the reticent attitude of many in Schuyler's world. Madame de la Tour du Pin recalled the ecstatic reaction of those she enslaved at the announcement that she was setting them free: "Our good servants were so stupefied that they remained for several seconds without speech. Then all four threw themselves at my feet crying. . . Who can describe the poignant emotion of such a moment! . . . Those whom I

⁵¹ Edgar J. McManus, "Antislavery Legislation in New York State," *The Journal of Negro History* 46, no. 4 (October 1961): 211–212.

⁵² W. Dennis Duggan, *A History of the Bench and Bar of Albany County* (Historical Society of the New York Courts, 2021), 6; la Tour du Pin, *Recollections*, 240.

had just promised their liberty surrounded me in tears. They kissed my hands, my feet, my dress.”⁵³ Significantly, many African Americans in the area came to witness and celebrate this manumission event. Madame reported that “all the negroes of the city were present.”⁵⁴

The courtroom brimmed with the excitement of the local free Black community, welcoming others into their ranks. Because Philip Schuyler regularly moved those he enslaved back and forth between Saratoga and Albany, one can imagine that some of those who labored on Patent lands surely joined their people in the state capital to watch, rejoicing vicariously as the manumission law was operationalized for their alter egos. No doubt they were especially proud of Prime, who was undeterred by the proceedings. He came well prepared to shut down any legal barrier the court might throw against him. In the story recorded by Madame de la Tour du Pin, even she seems impressed that Prime was ready, armed with his baptismal record with his date of birth proving his eligibility for liberation. The man was poised to grab his freedom, as was the Black audience.

Prime’s legal planning revealed that enslaved populations within households like the Schuylers’ recognized and deployed the advantage of physical proximity to state political leaders in whose homes they lived in order to keep closely informed about the intricacies of legislative decisions concerning Black liberation. They passed hopeful news of events and developments related to manumission among themselves. African Americans were anxious to throw off the chains of enslavement and help others begin a life of freedom.

Madame de la Tour du Pin recalled the manumission of those she enslaved a “manumission ceremony” and indeed, the ritualistic aspects of it should be underscored. In manumission, the slave passed from bondage to freedom. She recorded, “They made the slaves kneel before my husband, and he placed his hand upon the head of each to sanction his liberation, exactly in the manner of ancient Rome.”⁵⁵ With this information, the marquise provided a doorway into the mental landscape of high-ranking enslavers in the Albany region—men like Schuyler and Van Rensselaer, with whom the French couple regularly socialized during their New York sojourn and who clearly valued and respected the refugee couple because of their aristocratic background. What then did this ritual signify?

The laying of the owner’s hand upon the kneeling slave’s head in the Albany court’s manumission ceremony is a distinctly American memory, recalling and combining practice from both the classical and late periods of Roman antiquity. In Roman society, manumission of slaves was simultaneously an expression of social control and generosity. Manumission *vindicta*, which extended freedom and citizenship rights to slaves, took place in the presence of a magistrate and was accompanied by a symbolic gesture: the slaveowner held a *festuca* or

⁵³ la Tour du Pin, 238.

⁵⁴ la Tour du Pin, 240.

⁵⁵ la Tour du Pin, *Recollections*, 240.

rod to connote his dominion over the slave, and then struck the slave with it as a final act of physical contact. After this, the slave sometimes spun around as a sign of change in legal status. By late antiquity, the *festuca* blow was replaced by the *alapa*, a hard slap (or two or three) by the slaveowner on the slave's cheek.⁵⁶ In ancient Rome, “mundane physical violence” was a defining feature of slavery, so that the *festuca* or *alapa* was an expression of the slave's submission. It emphasized that the power to set free belonged exclusively to the owner and the slave was merely a supplicant, a social inferior without citizenship rights. This is what Albanians chose to remember and commemorate during the manumission ceremony. What could have been a simple visit to a designated clerk's office where manumission forms were individually and privately submitted or a court procedure in which requisite forms and evidences were presented instead became something more. Always inspired by ancient Roman governance, leaders of the early national judiciary in Albany drew on that tradition to mark the transition from unfree to free status. The insertion of such a symbolically loaded ritual into what might have been a perfunctory clerical procedure shows just how racially charged the concept of citizenship was from the nation's beginnings.

This ritual of manumission played out in a public court had a double effect. Ironically, it demonstrated the power of enslavers as final authorities; it was *they* who decided the condition of Black people in New York. Yet, slaveholders ultimately performed the loosening of their control; through the ceremony, they enacted their public surrender. Perhaps it was also for this reason that Philip Schuyler bypassed this particular mode of liberating those he enslaved. Besides his economic concerns, psychologically he could not identify with a such a *public* relinquishing of authority over Black bodies—one in which he would have to endure cheering from Black onlookers.

Nonetheless, in his will Schuyler did at last manumit several of the people he held in bondage, one of whom may have leveraged memory in order to earn a living as a free woman. Schuyler purchased Silva and her two children in 1797. Researchers at Schuyler Mansion have traced her occupation and residence after emancipation through early nineteenth century city directories and census records to conclude that she earned wages as a free woman by fortune-telling.⁵⁷ Silva's various free names, “Sylva Zebe” and “Silva Zebra” suggest she might have spent time in Portugal or in lands in the Atlantic World under Portuguese influence—Brazil, São Tomé, the Cape Verde islands, Madagascar, or the Loango-Kongo coast. The name of another man Schuyler purchased, Lisbon, strongly indicates a Portuguese connection for him, too. The two may have been a couple. How Silva (and Lisbon) with such backgrounds ended up in Albany or Saratoga is a mystery. Significantly, the use of amulets called *bolsas de mandinga*—small pouches worn to bring

⁵⁶ R. G. Nibet, “The Festuca and the Alapa of Manumission,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 8 (1918), 1–14; Kyle Harper, *Rites of Manumission, Rites of the Freed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,), 465–470.

⁵⁷ Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, “Searching for Silva: Life After Manumission,” <http://schuylermansion.blogspot.com/2021/03/searching-for-silva-life-after.html>, accessed January 3, 2022.

good luck—emerged in the seventeenth century and became commonplace among Blacks in the Portuguese Atlantic by the eighteenth century as a way to impede the slave trade, guard themselves from physical attacks, and to win general supernatural favor.⁵⁸ The amulets could contain assorted items—Islamic elements (written prayers from the Koran), Christian elements (crosses), or elements from the natural world (rocks, bark, grass). As their circulation increased, Whites in the Portuguese Atlantic sought *bolsas* for help with fertility issues, to enable them in romantic affairs, and as a universal charm. Based on circumstantial evidence, Silva’s constructed biography illustrates the ways she and other African-born Blacks deployed stored knowledge as a resource within the kitchen family in its dealings with their enslavers, and once free, as a paid service.

A Tale of Two Toms

Picture this scenario: A federal census taker knocks on the door of a farmhouse in Easton, New York, in Washington County—just across the Hudson River from Stillwater. It is June 5, 1900. He is surprised when a Black man in overalls appears in the threshold of the open portal, but is happy to be invited inside. It’s an uncommonly blistering day and he is sweating.

The census man, slightly on edge, explains his purpose. He didn’t know what sort of response he would get.

“Sit down,” the host tells him. “I’ll get you some water.”

The short interview begins.

“Yes, I own this place. My name is James Schuyler. This is my wife. We have a daughter, Susan, but she is out working for a family now. The old man sitting in the corner is my father, Thomas. My mother died since the last time one of you came around so we moved here from Greenwich to live with him, especially since he’s practically blind now. He’ll probably outlive us all, though. He’s outlived two wives!”

The two share a laugh and the census man takes another long drink from his glass. He relaxes and puts his list of questions aside for a minute to enjoy the pleasant company and a few more minutes away from the heat. He can tell this man will share his family information

⁵⁸ James H. Sweet, “Slaves, Convicts, and Exiles: African Travellers in the Portuguese Atlantic World, 1720–1750,” In *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products, and Practices on the Move*, Caroline A. Williams, ed., (New York: Routledge, 2016), 197–200. Additionally, on Afro-Portuguese religious and cultural hybridity, see Cécile Fromont, “Paper, Ink, Vodun, and the Inquisition: Tracing Power, Slavery, and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Portuguese Atlantic,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 2 (June 2020), 460–504. Jeroen Dewulf, “Black Brotherhoods in North America: Afro-Iberian and West-Central Influences,” *African Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (June 2015): 19–38; Nicholas N. Bridges, “Loango Coast Ivories and the Legacies of Afro-Portuguese Art,” in Gitti Salami and Monica Blackmun Visoná, eds., *A Companion to Modern African Art* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2013), 51–73.

with little prompting. The Black man's reception, already friendlier than most, promised a more interesting visit than the run-of-the-mill questionnaire responses the surveyor had accumulated so far that day.

"My dad over there is about 94. Can't say for sure. If you ask him the year he was born, he might tell you 1804. Another day he'll say 1805. I've also heard him tell folks 1806." Both men chuckle. "Isn't that somethin'? 94. Unusual, right? Hope I live as long!"

The census man smiles, nods, takes up his pen, and starts filling in lines and boxes on one of the forms they gave him at the clerk's office.

The host waits until he stops writing. "My father, me and my wife and our children were all born around here. Right in New York State. But like I said, my father is unusual. His father was born in Africa. That's right! Africa! I own this farm but my father bought this farm. He's lived in Easton for at least forty years and he's owned this farm for at least thirty years."

Might James Schuyler's African-born father have been "young Tom"? Might his father have been the Black man that Philip Schuyler called "our Tom" in his late-eighteenth-century ledgers? While the above conversation is fictional, it is based on actual historical figures and information partly gleaned from the 1850, 1870, 1880, and 1900 federal censuses. Thomas Schuyler reported directly to census takers in 1880 when he was seventy-four and in 1900 through his son, James, that he was African-born.⁵⁹ This African-born man had to be living in New York between 1804 and 1806 to have sired Thomas, a native New Yorker according to three census reports. Furthermore, this African-born man would have had to enter the United States before the African slave trade was banned in this country in 1807. According to David Eltis, most African-born captives sent to the northern colonies arrived before 1750. In the case of New York, the Revolutionary War blocked imported human captives, especially since the British occupied Manhattan. After the war, America's slave imports climbed, skyrocketing to a peak in the last decade of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ Those Philip Schuyler enslaved had been a prolific lot. The General had made his fortune at Saratoga through them and he had handed over the wealth they helped generate to his progeny. Moreover, Anne Grant placed the charter generation of kitchen mothers for the Margarita Schuyler household perhaps in the 1740s or earlier; she attributed the bulk of the extended, enslaved Schuyler household to two great-grandmothers from whom all the rest descended. They had entered Madam Schuyler's household perhaps twenty to

⁵⁹ US Census, 1850; US Census, 1870; US Census, 1880; US Census, 1900.

⁶⁰ David Eltis, "The U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1644–1867: An Assessment," *Civil War History* 54, no. 4 (December 2008): 356–357, 360–361.

twenty-five years before Grant's extended visit to Albany in the 1760s. We also know that New York received the largest number of slave trafficking ships directly from Africa in years that overlapped with the Schuylers' First Imprint at Saratoga, 1702–1745.⁶¹

Putting all of this information together, it is conceivable that one of the enslaved traders who appeared on Schuyler's books from 1765 to 1777 had been a young male captive cruelly snatched from his home somewhere across the Atlantic Coast. His enslavers would call him "Tom." As he learned their language, he would discover the name the Whites assigned to all the villages, rivers, and lands where he once lived or had traversed before arriving in chains at the big sea: Africa. From Old Saratoga, they called everything on the other side of the sea "Africa." He would, too. He would find a woman among the people in this strange land who looked like him and who had to work like him, a woman with Black skin who helped him smile on cold, frosty nights after hauling logs to the mill that never stopped running at the busy, rural settlement along the Hudson River and who taught him how to cast seed. Apparently, this Tom quickly learned how to grow crops the way the White people did and became a good farmhand, logger, mill hand, and carter. The General noticed and was agreeable when Tom asked for a patch of uncultivated land perhaps beneath the Saratoga grain fields where he could grow potatoes and corn on the side for extra money. After some years of this routine, during the cold December that Caesar disappeared, African-born Tom would have inwardly cheered the escape. No, he would not risk the same act alone because of his attachment to his wife. But moving east across the river to farm as a free man would have had its attractions, especially since he had been saving for a number of years. Besides, by the 1790s Tom would have sensed, like other African Americans, that a change in their status was coming soon. He knew of many who had begun negotiating with their enslavers for their freedom.⁶² Perhaps that is what Tom and his wife did, too, to become free. Perhaps he asked to hire himself out and returned a portion of his wages to Schuyler.

Tom apparently moved down to a place on Liberty Street in Albany after the General died, and solemnified this passage by taking on a proper English name as a free man, Thomas Schuyler. A Thomas Schuyler worked as a laborer in the busy state capital in 1813.⁶³ It did not take him long to move to Easton after so many years of saving. By 1824, he was a "colored" member of the Dutch Reformed Church there—received by confession.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Lydon, "New York and the Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (April 1978): 375–394; Jeanne Chase, "New York Slave Trade, 1698–1741: The Geographical Origins of a Displaced People," *Histoire et Mesure*, 18, nos. 1/2 (2003): 1–11.

⁶² Michael E. Groth, *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 56–59. Here, Groth provides several instances of the agency of enslaved people to emancipate themselves.

⁶³ Albany Directory 1813 in J. Munsell, *Annals of Albany*, Vol. 5 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1852), 86.

⁶⁴ US Selected States Dutch Reformed Church Records, Easton, NY, August 1877.

Tom would have been relieved and optimistic for his future children when the 1799 manumission bill passed. When their son was born, Tom's wife, like other enslaved mothers in other parts of America, might have named one of their sons after him as a way to preserve their family identity should anything happen to separate them before the promised 1827 emancipation was realized.⁶⁵ Their son would know where he came from, in case he was assigned to some other household in the Schuyler's circle at some New Year's child pairing ceremony. Tom would have often told stories about Africa to young Thomas, and made sure to take him to each year's Pinkster. With such a background, the younger Thomas obviously was proud to name Africa as his father's birthplace whenever a census man came around. Tom, the African-turned-Thomas Schuyler made sure his African American son knew where he came from even as he navigated a separate course in nineteenth-century Saratoga County. The elder Thomas knew firsthand what a powerful asset this knowledge could be.

⁶⁵ Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1650–1925* (New York: Vintage Press, 1976), xxiii, 94–95, 119, 128, 178, 185–229.

Conclusion

One spring day in 1712 or 1719, depending on the source, an enslaved Black farmhand plowing a field in New Jersey's Bergen County turned up a familiar-looking stone. The greenish color was striking for its resemblance to similar rocks from the land of his birth. Curious, the man decided to examine his find. Bending down to cup it, he felt a heaviness that matched the weight of comparable nuggets he had seen and touched back home. The African realized that he was holding copper and standing on ground that was veined with these deposits. Certain men among his people knew how to work magic with these stones, using fire to turn them into bright rings worn on legs and arms. The plowman knew, too, that traders in his country used the transformed stones to get what they wanted. He decided to attempt such a trade. A person could exchange the shiny metal for cloth, beads, pots, or fish back home; surely, he would receive some sort of gift for this offering.¹ The Black man showed his discovery to the *Maloanga*, the White man he had been taught to call master and who led the community to which he was now involuntarily bound as servant, and explained that this stone could be turned into drums and the kind of pots found in the farm's kitchen.²

In this fabulation, one based on actual events, the African had been set to one task, yet made an auspicious discovery because he viewed the earth through a different lens from his enslaver, Arent Schuyler. Arent only saw a hardened soil that needed loosening and, perhaps in his mind 's eye, future fields of wheat or corn. But the African had looked at the same field and had seen an extraordinary rock based on what he remembered from his past. In time, the discovery would make Arent one of the wealthiest men in New Jersey and, so the story goes, the African was granted his supposed wish for this find—"all the tobacco he could smoke" and a promise that he would never be sold again.³ Discoveries require an uncommon gaze and are often rewarded.

Similarly, historical detection requires an appreciation for the underneath, the alongside, the parallel, the blurry and out of focus, the background, the silent, the invisible—those things obscured by the obvious. It scopes out more than what first meets the eye. In the case of enslavement and slaveholding at the Saratoga National Historical Site, the researcher must see beyond eighteenth-century military glories and defeats, and see more than the architectural displays of one of colonial America's most prominent families. Rather, the researcher must search for untold pasts in the few relics and signs of

¹ Ogilby, *Africa*, 494, 497, 502

² Based on information from Cuyler Reynolds, ed., *Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1911), 38.

³ Reynolds.

those prevented by their circumstances from leaving clear portraits of themselves like the ones that line the walls of the great old houses of the Hudson River Valley. A ledger showing an enslaved man receiving a cash payment for ten pounds of tobacco, a runaway ad, or a will mentioning the West African day-name of a Black servant can help enhance our vision and sharpen the final image.

There are several themes that emerged from this historical resource study. The kind of exploitation and subjugation enslaved people experienced at Schuyler House and on the Saratoga Patent was illustrative of the kind of racial capitalism that animated the economy of the Atlantic World in the Early Modern Period. Not only did new opportunities enable the rise of an enriched merchant class, those fortunes depended on the immiseration and debasement of a racialized group of workers. In colonial America and into the early nineteenth century, those workers were African or African American. The way in which the Schuylers at Old Saratoga used “negro” and “servant” interchangeably, participated in slave trafficking, punished noncompliant laborers, segregated housing and work spaces, and only passively supported manumission via bequest all testify to the totality of their embrace of racial difference. In that difference, Blacks were a permanent caste of subordinates meant to enhance the fortunes of Whites.

Secondly, enslaved Blacks played a major role in the transformation of the environment—the physical topography—of the Hudson River Valley. No provisioning trade from which the Schuylers derived huge profits could have taken place without first clearing the land for cultivation. Deforestation on large estates like the Schuylers’ Patent holdings was largely the work of enslaved laborers. Recent scholarship on the historical use of forced Black labor against natural ecologies has labeled the resulting changes in the physical environment the “Plantationocene.”⁴ The dynamics of this phenomenon as it took shape in the American North, and particularly the Hudson Valley, call for deeper investigation. Regarding the built environment, as the dominant work force at lumber-producing sawmills (the most remunerative enterprise at Saratoga for the Schuyler), regional brickmakers, and members of construction crews in the Hudson Valley, Black people shaped the architectural landscape as well.

The history of slavery and slaveholding at Saratoga is one of memory-inflected encounters between enslaved and enslaver. The European—English and Dutch—side of this is a well-chronicled narrative. For example, we can read about Dutch laws of inheritance and how they compared to English laws of primogeniture. Dutch Reformed tradition is contrasted with the liturgy of the Anglican Church. We know of Dutch foodways versus English culinary habits. In all these ways and more, we assume a cultural transfer happened

⁴ See Janae Davis, Alex A. Moulton, Levi Van Sant, and Brian Williams, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, . . . Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises,” *Geography Compass*, 13, no.5 (2019): 1–16 and Murphy, Warren Murphy, and Caitlin Schroering. “Refiguring the Plantationocene: Racial Capitalism, World-Systems Analysis, and Global Socioecological Transformation.” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 26, no. 2 (2020): 400–415.

when Europeans migrated to New York. In fact, the intermingling of the two cultures by the turn of the eighteenth century to form a new culture—an Anglo-Dutch culture—is textbook knowledge. What then about transplanted Africans? Uprooted by force and coerced into perpetual labor, they could not access the political resources needed to make their cultures hegemonic in America. But an African memory remained. I have argued here for a Loangoan memory, admittedly based on one arresting slaver's ship log. Undoubtedly, other African cultures were represented by the charter generation of Black captives brought up the Hudson to labor at Old Saratoga as well. The larger point is that the enslaved at Saratoga did not arrive empty-headed. They brought with them memories of their culture—their economy, political systems, religion, and family *morés*. These memories were deployed as resources in many ways—for self-encouragement and as references for survival and advancement strategies. Standing inside the subjectivities of the enslaved casts new light on the behaviors of the enslavers as well. The “gentle treatment” of the enslaved attributed to prominent enslavers like the Schuylers among Hudson Valley families was a negotiated, sensitively balanced settlement rather than a unilateral, top-down expression of their enslavers' benevolence. The resulting arrangements were forged by the active memory of Black people caught in the net of chattel slavery but maneuvering with all their might to extract autonomies and prerogatives or to break free entirely, even as their enslavers required compliance.

Finally, the concept of descendant communities of principals associated with historic houses and sites must be widened. The combined literary and, now, digital record contains numerous genealogical accounts of the Schuylers—the long generational White offspring of the Dutch immigrant brothers, Philip Pieterse and David Pieterse. This ancestry speaks of their prominence in colonial and early nineteenth century New York and New Jersey life. But there is also a long line of children whose forebears were once enslaved on Patent lands. What of the Toms and other Black people once enslaved by Schuyler who took on that namesake upon emancipation as a marker of that connection and passed it on to their children? George Schuyler, for instance, the quirky, twentieth century Black writer and journalist, is said to have descended from a Black soldier under General Philip Schuyler. What about the descendants of the Scipios, who actively sought to erase any such connection with the Schuyler household and name? What about mixed-race Schuyler descendants, the Chalks and their progeny? New work must be undertaken to locate the stories of these “other Schuylers”—those Black people and people of color with biological or associative ties to Saratoga Patent lands and the Saratoga National Historical Site. Their long-buried but extant family memories, stories, and oral histories are worth locating for the details they promise to yield about unknown dimensions of enslavement at Old Saratoga.

Through an exemplary published rubric, Montpelier, the home of former US president James Madison, provides guidelines for incorporating the voices of an inclusive descendant community in the interpretative work of the National Park Service and other

historical sites. The rubric advises “public historians to work alongside descendants to research the past and tell compelling stories about enslaved people, incorporating essential family oral histories, long dismissed as unreliable sources by many academic historians.”⁵ Oral histories and genealogies preserved by the families of formerly enslaved people at Old Saratoga and its surroundings are an untapped means of contributing to a more complete understanding of the past there and in similar locations. These must be unearthed and used in order to teach us the fuller, truer significance of the places we claim as national landmarks.

⁵ “Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites: A Rubric of Best Practices Established by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery,” October 25, 2018, <https://montpelier-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/Interpreting%20Slavery%2011-12-19.pdf>, accessed December 3, 2022.

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