

*From Albany to Freedom:  
An Underground Railroad Story*

Albany can boast of being unique in many ways: it is the capital of New York State (and first in alphabetical order of the state capitals), the longest continuously chartered city in the United States, the center of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dutch beaver trade, and today it is a major international port on the Hudson River. An unsung aspect of Albany's significance, however, is the role this city had as a critical link ushering escaped black slaves northward to freedom by means of the Underground Railroad.

With no actual train cars, tracks or stations, the Underground Railroad was more of a movement of slaves from house to house, church to church, farm to farm. This network of houses and paths began wherever and whenever a slave took flight from bondage and, guided by the North Star, headed northward toward freedom. Stops along the Underground Railroad in Albany included the Israel African Methodist Episcopal (Israel AME) Church and the African Baptist Church at opposite ends of Hamilton Street, as well as private homes in the city and boats along the Hudson's shore.

The Underground Railroad depended on the ingenuity and assistance of dedicated persons who risked their lives and liberty to help this movement of slaves toward freedom. The most noted agent at the Albany "station" was Stephen Myers, who himself was born a slave in Rensselaer County in 1800, but at age 18 was manumitted. Myers sheltered many fugitive slaves in his own home at 194 Lumber Street (now Livingston Avenue between North Swan and Lark Streets) in Albany and personally raised funds to sustain the Albany Vigilance Committee that helped finance this movement, providing escaped slaves with food, clothing, temporary shelter and other necessities. Joining this movement at different time periods were other people like the Rev. Nathaniel Paul, William H. Johnson, John Johnson, Abigail Mott and her community of Quakers, and many others, both black and white, whose names may never be known.

The Albany County Hall of Records has a collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century Chattel Mortgage transactions by Stephen Myers and the other supporters of the Underground Railroad. Inventories of possessions, or "chattel," provide a glimpse into the daily life of the times, telling us who these people were and about the kind of world in which they lived.

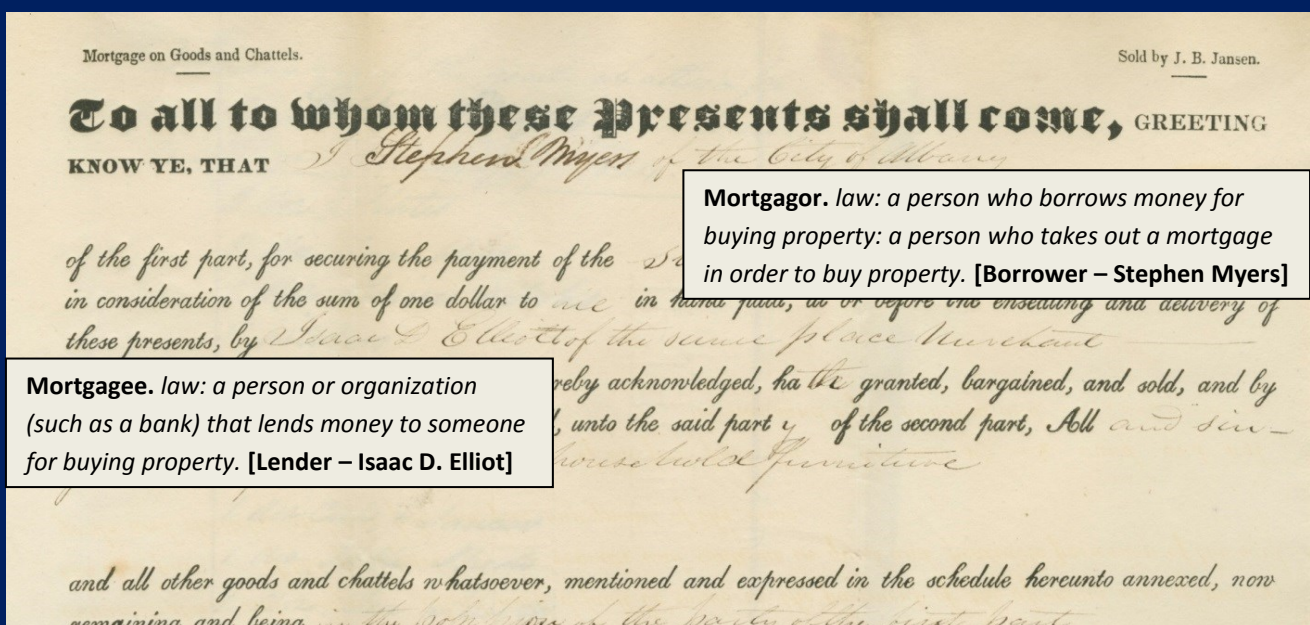
Feather beds, linen sheets, blankets and candles appear on most inventories, while other items reflect the person's trade or interest: theology books for Rev. Nathaniel Paul; a globe and several maps for Stephen Myers; barber shop furniture for William H. Johnson; a "sloop or vessel" for John and Abraham Johnson<sup>1</sup>; "good brass kettles" for Abigail Mott.<sup>2</sup>

Other kinds of records, like the Common Council petition and resolution concerning schools for "colored children," reveal a desire for the education and betterment of the lives of Black Americans. The Albany City Directories show the location of houses and churches that may have been stops on the Underground Railroad.

The movement of slaves through Albany by means of the Underground Railroad, at times secret, at times public, remains a tribute to the efforts and commitment put forth by some of the brave and principled citizens of 19<sup>th</sup> century Albany.

## What is a Chattel Mortgage?

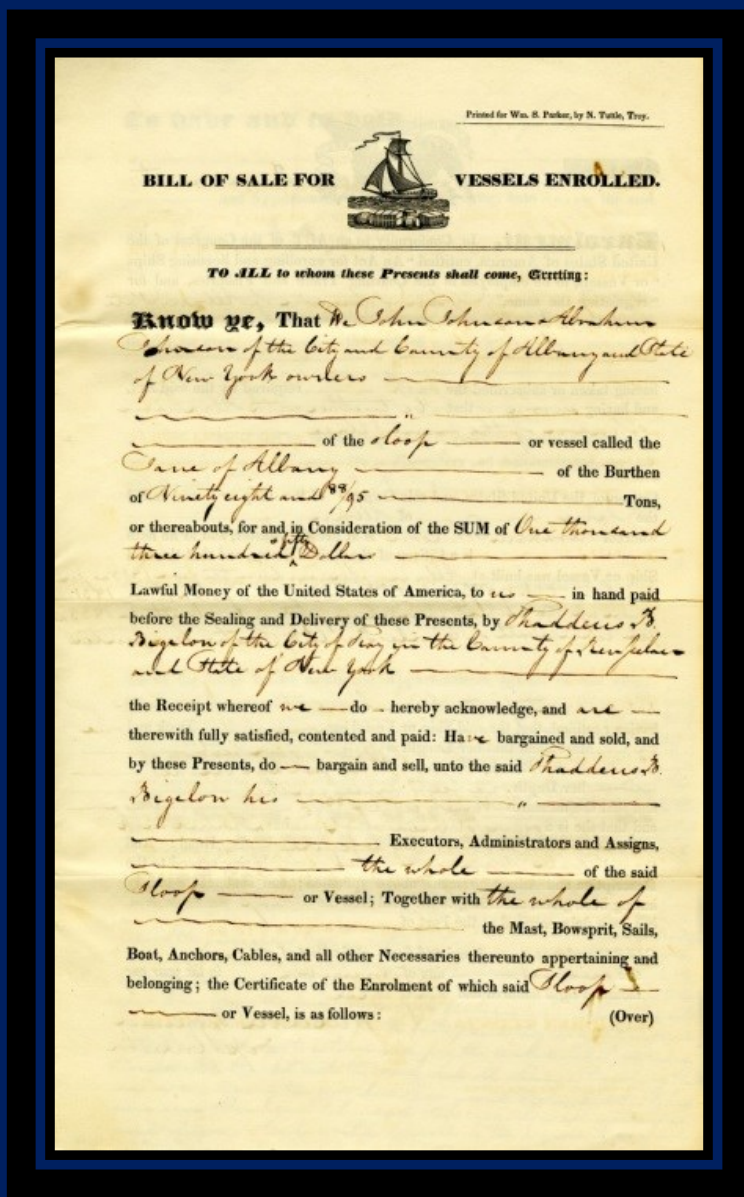
A chattel mortgage is a term used to describe a loan arrangement in which an item of movable personal property is used as security for the loan. A chattel mortgage is a loan that is secured by chattel rather than by real property. In a traditional mortgage, the loan is secured by the property itself. With a chattel mortgage, the lender holds a lien against the movable property (chattel) until the loan has been satisfied, at which point the borrower resumes full control of the chattel. <sup>3</sup>



# Abram Johnson and John Johnson

Father and Brother of Harriet Myers - In-Laws of Stephen Myers

*In 1827, Stephen married Harriet Johnson in Troy, New York. Harriet hailed from an African American family that may have had connections with New York City. Her family was involved in the shipping business and operated a sloop on the Hudson River called The Miriam. As operators of a sloop they no doubt had regular contact with New York City and many of the communities up and down the Hudson and would have had many opportunities to ferry passengers from New York City to Albany, some of whom may have been fugitives from slavery. The Johnson family is an important example of African-Americans in the river related trades in this period. River trade and the work of boatmen were important sources of employment for African-Americans.<sup>4</sup>*



Among Albany County Hall of Records holdings, there are four Chattel Mortgages in connection with the Johnson's shipping business. Two sloops/vessels are mentioned; the sloop *Jane of Albany* and the sloop or vessel the *Martling*. Payments ranged from \$650 dollars on the tackle apparel and furniture of the *Martling* to \$1500 dollars on the sloop *Jane of Albany*. At the time of the chattel mortgages Abram and John were residing at separate locations along Bassett Street in Albany, New York. The Johnson's chattel loan agreements were made with fellow New York residents; Charles Bartlett, shipbuilder, of Coxsackie, Greene County; Thaddeus B Bigelow of Troy, Rensselaer County; Vinson Sherwood from the Village of Sing Sing, Westchester County; and Lusher Gay from Troy, Rensselaer County.

16-01258. File 228. County Clerk, Chattel Mortgages, 1834. Mortgage of Personal Property, John Johnson and Abraham Johnson to Thaddeus B. Bigelow. Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.

Although plausible, historic documents have not been found connecting the Johnson's shipping business with the Underground Railroad movement. John Johnson is connected with the Underground Railroad by the property he purchased and the home he built on said property. In 1842 John Johnson bought land from Nicholas, Catherine and Gansevort Quackenbush. An 1847 assessment roll lists a 2 ½ story brick building on the property of John Johnson. At the time of construction, the location is known as 196 Lumber Street, although over the next three decades the address will alternately be known in public records as 194, 198, 200, and 202 Lumber Street. Between the years 1855 to 1858 John Johnson's house was home to the Myers and also served as an office and meeting place for the *Vigilance Committee*, a leading local abolitionist group of which Stephen Myers was General Agent and Superintendent.

Unfortunately, little else is known about Abram and John Johnson. Hopefully, as archival repositories continue to process records, new discoveries will be made and historic documentation can further the personal history of Abram Johnson and John Johnson as well as provide greater detail about their involvement in the Underground Railroad Movement.



Lot No. 9 Lumber Street, described in the succeeding document, eventually becomes the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, now 194 Livingston Avenue.

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**This Indenture** Made the first day of July in the Year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty two, **Between** Nicholas N Quackenbush Gansevort Quackenbush and Catherine N Quackenbush of the City of Albany of the first part and John Johnson Junior, of the Same City of the second part, **Witnesseth** that the said parties of the first part do and in consideration of the sum of Two hundred and fifty six dollars lawful Money of the United States of America, to them in hand paid by the said party of the second part the receipt whereof is hereby confessed and acknowledged, **have** granted aliened remiseed released effected and confirmed and by these presents **doth** grant alien remise release effect and confirm unto the said party of the second part and to his heirs and assigns forever; **All** that Certain lot of ground Situate lying and being in the Eight (formerly fifth ward of the City of Albany known and distinguished on a map of the subdivision of lot Number Fifty one, and lot Number Fifty two of the West Manor of Newfellowrych as Subdivision Lot Number (9) Nine and is bounded as follows to wit, on the North by Lumber Street on the West by ground belonging to Mrs Ann Pettit on the South by Lot Number (10) ten and on the East by lot Number (8) Eight being in front and rear each thirty two feet and in depth from front to rear one hundred and thirty feet **Together** with all and singular the hereditaments and appurtenances therunto belonging or in any wise appertaining and the reversion and reversions remainder and remainders rents issues and profits thereof

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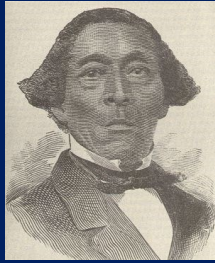
and all the estate right title interest claim and demand whatsoever of the said parties of the first part either in law or equity of in and to the above granted premises with the said hereditaments and appurtenances **to have and to hold** the above mentioned and described premises with the appurtenances and every part and parcel thereof to the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever. And the parties of the first part for themselves their heirs executors and administrators **doth** Covenant grant bargain promise and agree to and with the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns to warrant and forever to defend the above granted premises and every part and parcel thereof now being in the quiet and peaceable possession of the said party of the second part against the said parties of the first part their heirs executors administrators and assigns and against all and every other person or persons claiming or to claim the said premises or any part thereof.

**In Witness Whereof** the said parties of the first part have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and Year first above written Sealed and delivered in the presence of  
 Territ Satis  
 Nichl N Quackenbush S.S  
 G. Quackenbush S.S  
 C. N Quackenbush S.S

(City of Albany) If On this 17<sup>th</sup> day of February 1846 Nicholas N Quackenbush Gansevort Quackenbush and Catherine N Quackenbush to me known to be the same persons described in and who executed the within Indenture acknowledged the same to be their act and deed

Recorded January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1851 at 5 hours PM  
 R. H. Day  
 Territ Satis  
 Clerk of Deeds

## STEPHEN MYERS (1800- 1870)



Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, are some of the more prominent names that come to mind when reflecting on the Abolitionist movement in our nation's history. The Capital Region can claim Stephen Myers<sup>5</sup> as its own prominent leader in the emancipation of African American slaves. Born in Hoosick, New York in 1800 and freed from slavery at the age of eighteen, Stephen Myers was a critical actor in the abolitionist cause and Underground Railroad, providing a safe haven to many freedom-seekers through the use of his home in Albany, New York.

In 1827, Stephen married Harriet Johnson and together they raised a family of four children. Stephen Myers worked variously as a grocer and as a steward on steamboat vessels that sailed between Albany and New York City. Beginning in the 1830s, he and Harriet aided those seeking freedom with the use of their home as a stop along the Underground Railroad. The Myers' were also active in efforts to improve the Albany African American community, helping to found one of Albany's first black schools and in publishing the anti-slavery newspaper, *Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate*. Between the years 1855-1858, the Myers family lived at 194 Livingston Avenue (formerly Lumber Street). This residence also served as an office and meeting place for the *Vigilance Committee*, a leading local abolitionist group of which Stephen was General Agent and Superintendent. The home is now on the National Register of Historic Places and is the residence for the *Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region*.<sup>6</sup>

Until recently, no documentation regarding Myers had been found in ACHOR's holdings besides the *Petition of Stephen Myers for appropriation in aid of the Free School for Colored Children, June 15 1843*. In January 2016, while working on archival collections, Chattel Mortgages from the 1830s were found showing loan transactions between Stephen Myers and several Albany merchants. For what specific purpose these chattel mortgages were generated is not revealed in the documents, but they do contain an inventory of the contents of his home. Used as a form of collateral, the inventories give us insight into Myers' personal life.

In the 1833-34 City of Albany Directory, Stephen Myers is listed as a grocer. His chattel loan agreement at this time was for \$40 dollars from Isaac D. Elliott, a dealer in dry goods at 347 North Market Street. In 1837-1838, the Albany City Directories list Stephen Myers as living at 167 South Pearl Street. His chattel loan agreement at this time was for \$60 dollars from T.F. Bancroft, a grocer residing at 224-226 at the corner of Pearl and Schuyler streets. In 1837 Stephen was also indebted to Ebenezer Murdock, a dealer in Hygeian medicines, mustard &c. at 454 South Market Street, and residing at 42 Ferry Street. Stephen's chattel loan agreement was for \$400 dollars. We cannot say with any certainty what these loans were intended for, but some assumptions can be made based on what is known about Stephen's life. Money necessary to provide resources and aid to slaves on their journey to freedom as well as fundraising towards establishing a school for black children are both plausible.

In these inventories, we are provided a small snapshot of Stephen's home and even personal interests. Some of the more interesting and intriguing personal items listed in these inventories include: wall maps of London, New York and Washington, 8 pictures, 2 feather beds, 1 sow and 8 pigs, as well as a painting of Miss McCrea. We assume that the 'Miss McCrea' listed in this inventory is none other than Jane McCrea, a young woman who was slain by Native Americans allied with British forces during the American Revolutionary War. Her slaying led to expressions of outrage and incited patriotic sentiment throughout the colonies.<sup>7</sup> Over time, the story became legendary and contributed to popular ideals of freedom and equality. After the American Revolution, anti-slavery sentiment increased in part due to these same ideals of freedom and equality and the Gradual Emancipation Laws were passed in New York State to phase out slavery.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Chattel mortgages presented in this exhibit predate the years when Stephen and his family resided at 194 Livingston Avenue, they are a wonderful addition to the history of Stephen Myers' remarkable life.

A Schedule of goods

4	Dos Black Bottle	2/	\$2.00	amt brot up	\$ 67.29
2	do Champan de	2/	1	1 fruit table - 14	1.87
7	decanter	2/ 2/ 3/	1.25	1 case 2/	.25
1	Dos wine glass	of	.75		
4	Pitches	2/ 2/	.88		
1	tea Board	3/	.62		
1	Dresser	2/	.63		
1	Dos wine bottle	of	.75		
1	Reflecting lamp	8/	1.		
1	glass lamp	2/6	.31		
4	Dingy's	2/ 3/ 3/	2.50		
3	Stone lamps	3/	.75		
1	Globe do	8/	1.		
2	Candle Sticks	2/ 4/	.50		
2	Oyster knives	1/	.25		
1	Map of London	1/	.88		
1	do " New York	6/	.75		
1	do " Washington	1/6	.19		
4	Pictures	10/ 6/ 1/ 1/	2.62		
5	Spice jars	2/ 2/ 3/ 3/	1.25		
7	fruit Boxes	70s	.63		
2	Tables	10/	2.50		
2	Blinds & Screens	13/	3.25		
2	Tubs	2/6 1/6	.50		
1	Picture frame	3/	.37		
4	Maps	10/ 2/ 2/ 2/	5.75		
1	Painting of Miss Weera		5.00		
30	tumbles	18 10 5	3.47		
10	Champan glasses	2/	2.98		
3	Bowls	1/2	.57		
4	Carthen jars	2/	1.63		
2 1/2	Dos plates	15 2/	1.77		
3	Jugs	1/3	1.12		
1	Gold dish		3.03		
11	Bottles claret wine	2/3	2.		
8	do Port do	2/	3.75		
3	do Champan	10/	1.		
1	Sign (recd)		3.75		
2	Dos plates	1/3	3.25		
1	Bbl cider		\$ 67.29		

16-01260. Albany County Clerk. Chattel Mortgages. Box 3, File 816: Mortgage of personal property of Stephen Myers to T.F. Bancroft, 1836. Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.



To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting: KNOW YE, THAT

Stephen Myers party

of the first part, for securing the payment of the sum hereinafter mentioned, and in consideration of the sum of one dollar to him in hand paid, at or before the ensuing and delivery of these presents, by Ebenezer Murdock party of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, he has granted, bargained, and sold, and by these presents do grant, bargain, and sell, unto the said part of the second part, All the following articles of furniture to wit 1 bed room 12 Chairs 1 Cabinet 1 Cherry table 1 Mahogany table 3 looking glasses 1 pair stool and top 1 pair hand Iron 2 Stoves 8 pictures 1 Brad shoe 2 picture frames 2 sets of bedding 3 pin tables 2 dog plates 100 Knives 4000 Spins of Candlesticks 100 tea spoons 100 spoons 100 knives 100 Butter 3 large lamps 10 small lamps 1 water pichet 2 fruit tables 6 Cans of jam 3000 pairs 1 cow 1 pig 1 set of harness and all other goods and chattels whatsoever, mentioned and expressed in the schedule hereunto annexed, now remaining and being in premises situated in South Pearl Street known & distinguished as the shop

To have and to hold all and singular the goods and chattels above bargained and sold, or intended so to be, unto the said part of the second part his executors, administrators, and assigns for ever. And the said part of the first part, for himself his heirs, executors, and administrators, all and singular the said goods and chattels above bargained and sold unto the said part of the second part, his executors, administrators, and assigns, against the said part of the first part, and against all and every person and persons whomsoever, shall and will Warrant, and by these presents for ever Defend.

Upon Condition, that if the said part of the first part shall and do well and truly pay, or cause to be paid, unto the said part of the second part, his executors, administrators, or assigns, the sum of Four Hundred dollars in four equal quarters yearly payment, viz One Hundred dollars on the first day of April One Hundred dollars on the first day of July One Hundred dollars on the first day of October One Hundred dollars on the first day of January in the year 1837

then these presents, and every thing herein contained, shall cease and be void. And the said part of the first part, for himself his executors, administrators, and assigns, doth covenant and agree to and with the said part of the second part, his executors, administrators, and assigns, that in case default shall be made in payment of the said sum above mentioned, it shall and may be lawful for, and the said part of the first part doth hereby authorize and empower the said part of the second part his executors, administrators, and assigns, with the aid and assistance of any person or persons, to enter and come into and upon the dwelling-house and premises of the said part of the first part, and in such other place or places, as the said goods and chattels are or may be held or placed, and take and carry away the said goods and chattels, and to sell and dispose of the same for the best price they can obtain; and out of the money so retain and pay the said sum above mentioned, with the interest and all expenses thereon, rendering the overplus (if any) unto the said part of the first part, his executors, administrators, and assigns. And until default be made in the payment of the aforesaid sum of money, the said part of the first part to remain and continue in quiet and peaceable possession of the said goods and chattels, and the full and free enjoyment of the same, unless the said part of the second part his executors, administrators, or assigns, shall sooner choose to demand the same, and until such demand be made the possession of the said part of the first part, shall be deemed the possession of an agent or servant, for the sole benefit and advantage of his principal, the said part of the second part.

In Witness whereof, the said part of the first part hath hereunto set his hand and seal this 27th day of April one thousand eight hundred and thirty seven

SEAL AND DELIVERED IN THE PRESENCE OF

Stephen Myers Mark

16-01260. Albany County Clerk. Chattel Mortgages. Box 3, File 1044: Mortgage of personal property of Stephen Myers to Ebenezer Murdock, 1837. Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.

# Israel AME Church

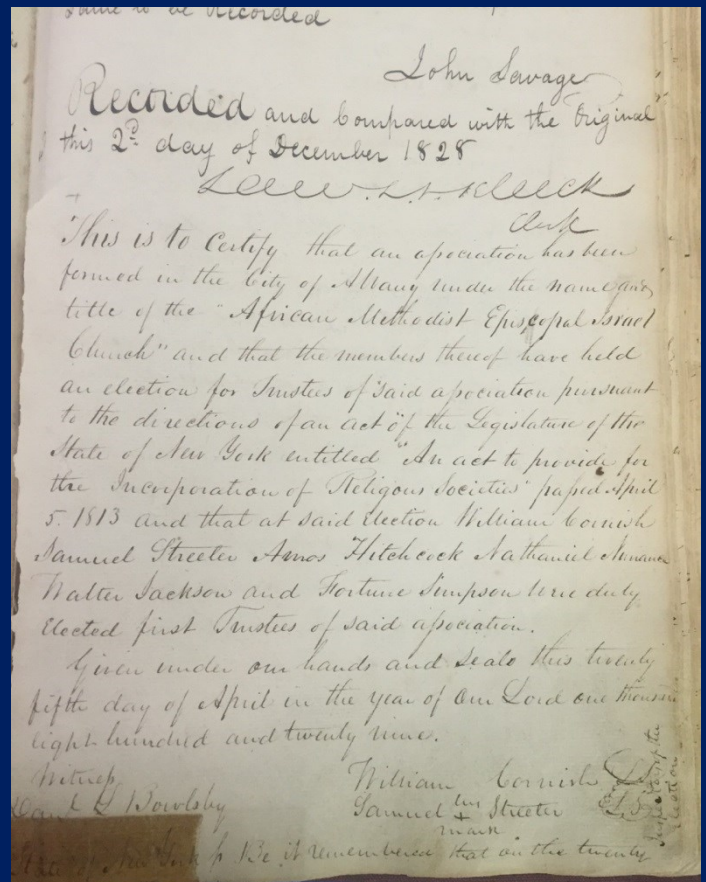
The Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1828 by Rev. William Cornish. Cornish had been designated to oversee and serve the church by Bishop Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, the first black church in the United States. The creation of the AME church came about as a result of displeasure felt by Allen and other black parishioners at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church over its racist and segregated practices; restricting Allen to early morning sermons and forcing blacks to worship and pray in separate areas.

On April 25, 1829, the Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church was officially incorporated: "This is to certify that an association has been formed in the city of Albany under the name and title of the "African Methodist Episcopal Israel Church" (County Clerk, Church Patents, 1784-1842, Volume 1, page 181).

Israel AME Church was first located in a school on State Street. In 1842 church trustees purchased a plot of land on Hamilton Street and built a church in 1844. The church burned down soon after it was built and in 1854 another church, designed by its pastor Thomas Jackson, was constructed in its place and is still in use by the congregation today, nearly 160 years later.

Beginning in 1829, the Israel AME Church served as a stop on the Underground Railroad and was visited by famous abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman. The church also housed the first school for black children, the Wilberforce School. In addition to serving as a stop on the Underground Railroad and as a school, Israel AME Church also held the first meeting of the Albany Chapter of the NAACP in February 1935.

In 1988 a state historic marker was erected in the church courtyard, recognizing it as the oldest Black church in the Capital District.



87-08878. Albany County Clerk. Church Patents Volume I, 1784-1842. Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.

## REVEREND NATHANIEL PAUL (1793?-1839)



**“The progress of emancipation, though slow, is nevertheless certain.”<sup>9</sup>**

**When the Rev. Nathaniel Paul delivered his address on the occasion of the Celebration of the Abolition of Slavery in the State of New York, July 5, 1827, he was very much aware of the struggle that this emancipation would present.**

**As pastor of the African Baptist Church since 1815, Rev. Nathaniel Paul had become a passionate advocate for the African-Americans in the Albany area and an outspoken opponent of slavery. His African Baptist Church was once the meeting place of a state convention of “Colored Citizens.” His Chattel Mortgage inventory, besides listing household goods, includes several treatises on religion, as well as anti-slavery volumes.**

**Rev. Paul was particularly active during the second period of the Underground Railroad movement, from 1825 to 1835.<sup>10</sup> A leader in the city’s Black community, Rev. Paul participated in a variety of projects designed to improve educational opportunities for African-Americans in Albany. Particularly notable was his role as a founder and leader of the Union Society of Albany for the Improvement of the Colored People in Morals, Education, and Mechanic Arts. Outside of Albany, Paul was instrumental as organizer of the Wilberforce School in Canada, the only school for black youth until 1873.<sup>11</sup>**

**Rev. Nathaniel Paul’s listing in the Albany City Directory can be found throughout the 1830’s until his death in 1839.**

Schedule referred to in the foregoing mortgage.

1 -	Mahogany Book Case -	\$ 30 - 00
1 -	do Dining Table - -	12 - 00
2 -	do writing desks - - -	6 - 00
8 -	Maple Chairs - - -	13 - 00
1 -	do work stand - - -	3 - 00
1 -	cook stove - - -	8 - 00
1 -	Cole Stove - - -	9 - 00
	15 pounds Stove pipe - - -	3 - 50
22	Yds. Floor Carpeting - -	22 - 00
4	Leather covered Trunks - -	12 - 00
1 -	Hair covered Trunk - -	1 - 50
1 -	work box - - -	1 - 50
1 -	Feather Bed - - -	7 - 00
4 -	Linen Table Cloths - - -	7 - 00
2 -	pair linen Sheets - - -	3 - 50
1 -	Maple Table - - -	3 - 00
	Dr Gills Commentary on the Bible	
	9 Volumes -	18 - 00
	Matt. Henry Commentary on the Bible	
	6 vol's -	18 - 00
	Commentary on the Bible 6 vol's -	10 - 00
	Scotts Theological Works 5 vol's -	4 - 00
	do - Calvinism 2 vol - -	1 - 50
	Jones Church history - -	1 - 00
	Cruden Concordance - -	2 - 00
	Anti Slavery Reporter 4 vol -	3 - 00
	Ivimey Whilton - - -	1 - 00
	Vaughan Christian warfare -	1 - 00

# Abigail Mott

Albany was a central stop for the Underground Railroad; it allowed fugitive slaves to travel from New York City to Syracuse and Rochester, the eastern New England states, and finally into Canada. In the 1780s, the Quakers began the anti-slavery movement and, after the 1830s, abolitionists and other sympathizers joined this growing movement to help runaways reach freedom via the Underground Railroad.

“Conductors” on the railroad were vital, as they were the ones who guided fugitive slaves to safety and freedom. Harriet Beecher Stow, Frederick Douglass, Thomas Garrett, and Samuel Burris were (and still are) some of the more famous conductors, but others, although generally less well-known, were equally vital and resided in Albany. Included among their numbers were Stephen Myers, Edward C. Delavan, and the Mott sisters, Abigail and Lydia.<sup>12</sup>

Very little is documented about Abigail Mott and her life and activities as an abolitionist in Albany. She is often confused with her cousin, Abigail Lydia Mott Moore, or even with her more famous cousin by marriage, Lucretia Mott. Abigail Mott was born in Hempstead, New York on January 29, 1803, the eighth of ten children by Daniel and Amy Mott.<sup>13</sup> Like Abigail Lydia Mott Moore and Lucretia Mott, Abigail was a Quaker abolitionist. Early records have her living in Albany in the mid-1820s and in the 1848-1849 Albany City Directory; she is listed as living with her sister Lydia at 37 Maiden Lane.

The chattel mortgage on display dated March 30, 1847, lists Abigail as the Mortgagor (Borrower) and Julius R. Ames as the Mortgagee (Lender). The amount borrowed was two hundred and fifty dollars, due in “four quarterly payments from the 1st day of May Next, being the rent for one year on the house and lot No. 37 Maiden Lane belonging to Hugh Humphry and the ordinary taxes and water tax on said premises or if said quarterly payments be made to said Humphrey and taxes to tax-gathers.” Listed as collateral, Abigail secured the loan with various houseware and furniture such as “the china ware, silver ware, the bookcase, tables, chairs, stoves, lamps, beds, bureaus, carpets, bedding.”

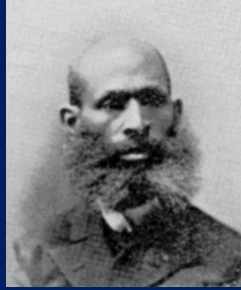
In Susan B. Anthony’s personal collection of books donated to the Library of Congress, there are two volumes of poems by Alfred Tennyson. These volumes were initially sent to Abigail from Frederick Douglass. In the volumes are inscriptions to “Abigail Mott, From her Sincere and grateful Friend, Frederick Douglass. Manchester, Eng. 3d Dec. 1846”. After Abigail’s death, her sister Lydia sent them along to Susan B. Anthony, who further inscribed volume 2 to say “These volumes were sent to Abigail Mott when Frederick Douglas was for the first time visiting England. The Misses Mott-Abigail and Lydia had earned his gratitude by teaching him to read & talk correctly and being all that mortals could be to him as friends...”<sup>14</sup>

In 1850, Abigail Mott passed away at the age of 47 while living in Battle Creek, Michigan.

A China Dinner & Tea set  
Some Silver Ware  
1 Book Case & 2 Mahogany Tables.  
2 Rocking Chairs  
6 Mahogany Chairs  
12 Cane seated do -  
4 Stoves  
3 Astral Lamps  
3 Feather Beds  
2 Bureaus  
3 Carpets  
10 pair Linen Sheets  
6 pair Blankets  
6 pair Pillow Cases  
4 Bed Quilts  
and 2 Good Brass Kettles

16-01265. Albany County Clerk. Chattel Mortgages, 1848. Box 8, File 3054.  
Mortgage of personal property of Abigail Mott to Julius R. Ames.  
Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.

## WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON (1833-1918)



William Henry Johnson was a man of many accomplishments: newspaper publisher, war correspondent, orator, Republican Convention delegate, and Grand Master in the Masons were some of the “titles” he achieved. Born near Alexandria, Virginia in 1833 of free parents, William Henry Johnson’s connection to Albany began in 1851. Shortly after his arrival in Albany, he met Stephen Myers, a man whose work inspired W.H. Johnson to become involved in the Underground Railroad movement. In Irvine Garland Penn’s *The Afro-American Press and its Editors*, Johnson states,

I remember vividly, with profound satisfaction, the grand pioneer work in the anti-slavery crusade performed by such publications as *The Ram’s Horn*, *The North Star*, and a paper edited by Stephen Myers and his gifted wife Harriet, in this city, away back in the “forties”. It was from the teachings and precepts of these advanced journalists, that I received my first inspiration for public work.<sup>15</sup>

Johnson’s participation in the movement was a single step in a long lifetime journey of social and political activism. Johnson was a member of the New York State Equal Rights Committee and served as its Chairman from 1866-1873. He also drafted an amendment to the military code of New York State removing the word “white” from the document. This change was accepted in 1872.<sup>16</sup>

William Henry Johnson left Albany around 1855 and returned in 1864. An 1864 Albany City Directory lists Johnson as a hairdresser whose shop was located at 27 Maiden Lane and whose home was at 3 Knox Street. W.H. Johnson had learned the barber’s trade in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, his adopted home after leaving Virginia at the age of 12. The chattel mortgage on display is from that same year. This chattel loan agreement was made with Peter M. Morange, a business man in portable wardrobes at 502 Broadway and residing at 187 Lydius Street. The document lists shears, shaving cups and brushes and razors, barber poles, robes, one show case and one picture in frame, among other hairdresser’s tools in Johnson’s barber shop in Maiden Lane.

A collection of letters and other correspondence is included in William Henry Johnson's autobiography that he published in 1900. <sup>17</sup>Many letters were mailed from and received with the address of 27 Maiden Lane. In 1918, William Henry Johnson passed away. <sup>18</sup>

CHATEL MORTGAGE. [Sold by W. C. LITTLE, Law Bookseller, 535 Broadway, Albany.]

**To all to whom these Presents shall Come,**

**GREETING:**

Know Ye That *Wm H Johnson* of the City and County of Albany State of New York Am. indebted unto *Peter M Morange* of the same place in the sum of *One Hundred and Sixty* Dollars ~~and~~ Cents, being for *Rent of Barber Shop in Maiden Lane lately occupied by Francis You*

Now, for Securing the Payment of the said debt, and the interest from the date hereof, to the said *P. M. Morange* I do hereby SELL, ASSIGN and TRANSFER to the said *P. M. Morange* all the Goods, Chattels and Property described in the following **SCHEDULE, viz:**

<i>3 Mahogany shaving chairs &amp; stools</i>	<i>2 Mahogany Stands</i>
<i>3 Marble Slabs, 1 Marble Table</i>	<i>10 Office Chairs</i>
<i>2 Large Gilt Looking Glasses</i>	<i>1 Hair Cutting Chair</i>
<i>2 Mahogany framed Glases</i>	<i>1 Marble Wash Stand</i>
<i>1 Work Stand &amp; Cup Rack</i>	<i>Iron Rods &amp; Awnings</i>
<i>1 Show Case &amp; Pictures in frames</i>	<i>6 Razors, Towels, Rincey Bottles</i>
<i>2 Chamber Cooks</i>	<i>3 Barber's Tubs</i>
<i>6 Shaving Cups &amp; Brushes</i>	<i>Hair Cutting Robes</i>
<i>2 Cutting Shears, &amp; Stone Files</i>	<i>6 Hair Brushes</i>

*And all other articles belonging to me and*

That said property now remaining and being in my possession in my Barber shop in Maiden Lane between Broadway and James Street

Provided Always, and this Mortgage is on the express condition, that if the said *Wm H Johnson* shall pay to the said *Peter M Morange* the sum of *One Hundred and Sixty* Dollars with interest, as follows, viz: *In equal monthly instalments of Fifteen \$15.00 Dollars each payable on or before the first day of each and every month next ensuing. This mortgage being intended as a collateral security for the payments of the rent of said premises, the monthly payments to be made as above during my occupancy of the premises first above referred to under my present lease or a new one.*

then this transfer to be void and of no effect; but in case of non-payment of the said sum at the time above-mentioned, together with interest, then the said *P. M. Morange* shall have full power and authority to enter upon the premises of the said party of the first part, or any other place or places where the Goods and Chattels aforesaid may be, to take possession of said property, to sell the same, and the avails (after deducting all expenses of the sale and keeping of the said property) to apply in payment of the above debt; and in case the said *P. M. Morange* shall at any time deem *the property* unsafe, it shall be lawful for *him* to take possession of such property, and to sell the same at public or private sale, previous to the time above-mentioned, for the payment of said debt, applying the proceeds as aforesaid, after deducting all expenses of the sale and keeping of the said property. If from any cause said property shall fail to satisfy said debt, interest, costs and charges I covenant and agree to pay the deficiency.

In Witness Whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the *18<sup>th</sup>* day of *March* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *Sixty four*

SEALED AND DELIVERED IN PRESENCE OF

*Francis You* *Wm H Johnson*

16-01273. Albany County Clerk. Chattel Mortgages, 1864. Box 16, File 5646. Mortgage of personal property of William H. Johnson to Peter M. Morange. Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.



## Sources Cited:

<sup>1</sup> Chattel Mortgage of John and Abraham Johnson to Charles Bartlett, 4, June 1834, Box 16-01258, Folder 165, County Clerk, Chattel Mortgages, 1834-1864, Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Chattel Mortgage of Abigail Mott to Julius R Ames, 23, February 1848, Box 8, Folder 3054, County Clerk, Chattel Mortgages, 1834-1864, Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/chattelmortgage.asp>

<sup>4</sup> Excerpted from the *Stephen & Harriet Myers Residence Historic Structure Report*, 8, accessed 10/11/16. The full report can be found online at <http://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/hsr.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> (Photo) Blackpast.org: <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/myers-stephen-1800-1870>

<sup>6</sup> Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region <http://www.undergroundrailroadhistory.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane\\_McCrea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_McCrea)

<sup>8</sup> Slaveryinnewyork.org [http://www.slaveryinnewyork.org/PDFs/Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.slaveryinnewyork.org/PDFs/Fact_Sheet.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Nathaniel Paul, "An Address, Delivered on the Celebration of the Abolition of Slavery, in the State of New York, July 5, 1827. Albany, N.Y.: John B. Steenbergh, 1827, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Excerpted from the *Stephen & Harriet Myers Residence Historic Structure Report*, 7, accessed 10/11/16. The full report can be found online at <http://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/hsr.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> "Paul, Nathaniel," Blackpast.org, accessed 10/11/16, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/paul-nathaniel-1793-1839>.

<sup>12</sup> Wilbur Henry Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: McMillan Company, 1898), 414.

<sup>13</sup> "Long Island Genealogies MOTT FAMILY," accessed September 20, 2016, <http://longislandgenealogy.com/ligmott.html>.

<sup>14</sup> "Susan B. Anthony Collection - Bibliography of Inscriptions," National Archives, accessed September 28, 2016, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook/catalog/Anthony/AnthonyBib.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Irvine Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and its Editors* (Springfield, MA.: Willey & Co., 1891), 439-440.

<sup>16</sup> William Henry Johnson, *Autobiography of William Henry Johnson* (Albany, N.Y.: The Argus Company, 1900), 17-18.

<sup>17</sup> The original manuscript is held in the collections of the Albany Institute of History and Art.

<sup>18</sup> "Abolitionist William H. Johnson Born," African American Registry, accessed 10/6/2016, [http://aaregistry.org/historic\\_events/view/abolitionist-william-h-johnson-born.html](http://aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/abolitionist-william-h-johnson-born.html).