

**Born Enslaved: Freed African Americans in Ashtabula County
A Self-Guided Pilgrimage**

**Presented by Andy Pochatko and
The Hubbard House Underground Railroad Museum**

Saturday, October 2, 2021

Please note that owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, this pilgrimage is self-guided and designed to be no contact. This year's tour consists of a cemetery tour to visit the graves and honor the lives and stories of the very people who lived in enslavement. Details of their lives are set against larger themes in African American history. Please look for the orange signs stating HH TOUR in each cemetery to guide you. Participants are encouraged to use caution throughout the tour, especially in the cemeteries as the ground is often uneven.

Introduction (Track One)

Born enslaved, Frederick Douglass understood the tenuous nature of freedom for African Americans. After his escape and as his fame grew, Douglass realized the danger he faced in being returned to slavery. This is why in 1846—eight years after he left enslavement—he accepted the offer of English supporters to purchase his freedom for \$711.66. Such a move cemented his break with abolitionist newspaper editor William Lloyd Garrison, with whom Douglass had been associated since his self-emancipation. The rift had been growing for years as Garrison and Douglass debated the nature of the abolitionist movement. For Garrison, manumission needed to be immediate, worked through the framework of Christian moral suasion. Douglass argued for practicality, noting that paying for freedom was better than having no freedom at all.

Indeed, the differences between Garrison and Douglass is illustrative of differences in the views between white and black abolitionists. Many white abolitionists viewed abolition as a simple dichotomy, with enslavement and freedom on opposite ends of a spectrum. African Americans understood that this spectrum was non-existent and that realities were blurred throughout the United States. Moreover, many Northern states—Ohio included—passed “black laws” that limited the settlement of African Americans within their borders. Further, most Northern states failed to give African Americans voting rights, the right to sit on juries, or even the right to serve in state and local militias. To be sure, much of this history is all but overlooked except for by historians.

This year's Hubbard House Underground Railroad Museum pilgrimage attempts to address that unbalance. This tour features the stories of seven African-American persons against different themes in African and African-American history. For some persons, only scant information is known; for others, such as Charles Garlick, we know quite a bit. What these people share, however, is a shared history and trauma of being enslaved and, whether through self-emancipation or the Emancipation Proclamation, made their way to Ashtabula County in freedom.

Martha Gohegan and the African Diaspora (Track Two)

When Martha Gohegan died, she was buried in a pauper's grave here in Edgewood Cemetery. Her stone, measuring less than a foot tall, tells us nothing of her life, not even her name. We see only the number three, indicating her block, tying her to an absent record. When Martha Gohegan died, the *Ashtabula Beacon-Record* carried an obituary noting her life of “more than a century.” Most significantly, the obituary said that Martha Gohegan was born enslaved. We know from this obituary that she was born in Carroll County, Kentucky, and that the documents that detailed her life were lost in a fire. Without this obituary, Martha's story would have been lost to time. Yet, it was preserved and we are able to remember her and the horrors of slavery that she survived. Martha's story is similar to many formerly enslaved persons after the Civil War. Once freed, these persons left the south, perhaps looking to invent new lives for themselves. In this, they became part of a larger theme of African history: that of diaspora.

Diaspora is defined as the movement of persons or societies from their native areas either by migration or by exile. On the surface, diaspora implies a one-way movement of the African peoples from their homeland. Yet, recent research has shown the movements to be complex, consisting of “a dynamic and continuous movement of people that forged the many different reinventions and reinterpretations of a combination of cultures of Africans and peoples of African descent.” It should be emphasized, however, that diaspora is more often connoted with force. Indeed, “the process of becoming a slave has always been marked by resistance and sometimes by open rebellion.”

Many people, upon hearing the word diaspora, will associate it with the Jewish diaspora, beginning with the Assyrian captivity in 733 BCE. The African diaspora, however, dates even further back in history, to the Old and Middle Kingdoms in Ancient Egypt. In their quest for gold and power, the Egyptians began invading the Nubian kingdom to their south. The Egyptians sought out Nubians to fight in their military and also as laborers. A small percentage were enslaved. As historian Michael C. Gomez has noted, however, “with the possible exception of the Hebrews, Egypt's enslaved

population was never very large, with slaves from Europe and Asia Minor often more numerous than Nubians or other Africans.” Despite its small number, this enslavement set in motion several centuries of African exploitation.

This exploitation would find its first impetus in the spread of Islam. As the Islamic faith spread outward from Arabia, Muslims, who often traveled for trade, brought with them the Arabian practices of slavery which had roots dating before the advent of Islam. Unlike as it came to be in the Atlantic Slave Trade, slavery was not limited to race alone. Slav and Caucasian people were the most numerous among those enslaved by Muslims. This is not to say, however, that Arabs were without prejudice towards Africans. Indeed, areas south of Muslim-occupied North Africa were known as *Dar al-Kufr*, abode of unbelief, and was further associated with *bilad as-Sudan*, “the land of the blacks.” Further, it is estimated that in the roughly thousand year period lasting from 650 through 1600, 12 million Africans were removed from Africa via the trans-Saharan, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean slave trades.

This number would be matched—and perhaps even surpassed—with the Atlantic Slave Trade. In a four hundred year period lasting approximately from 1400 to 1800, at least 12 million Africans were enslaved and sent across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World. At its peak between 1701 and 1810, 5,737,600 persons were enslaved and sent to the Americas. Of these persons, most enslaved Africans were sent to Brazil, followed by the Caribbean Islands. By comparison, the number of enslaved Africans sent to North America was small, numbering only 339,000. This number is misleading as it does not account for the number of enslaved Africans transported on North American ships. Nor does it account for the internal slave trade in the United States, buoyed by generational enslavement. In 1810—two years after the legal end to the Atlantic Slave Trade—1.2 million persons were enslaved in the United States. On the cusp of the American Civil War, this number had grown threefold to 3.9 million persons. Somewhere in this growth, Martha Gohegan was born enslaved and raised her children in slavery, only being freed at the end of the Civil War.

Richard M. Johnson and Black Activism (Track Three)

“That's my aunt—that's my sister!” exclaimed Richard Johnson as his coworker read the newspaper aloud about a slave trial in New York. Johnson had immediately recognized the name when his coworker uttered it: Jonathan Lemmon. Only ten years earlier, Johnson—then known as Levi—had been enslaved by Lemmon's sister-in-law, Mary. When Mary married, however, both Levi and his brother James were sold. Just as quickly as they were sold, though, both men escaped captivity and headed north. Levi, changing his name to Richard Johnson, eventually made his way to Cleveland, Ohio, where he was working at the American Hotel, saving money to purchase land in Canada. It was here that Johnson learned about his relatives.

Jonathan Lemmon had decided to move to Texas in 1852. And with him he wished to take his eight slaves. Starting by steamboat from their home in Virginia, the Lemmons and their enslaved persons landed at Richmond, only to learn that they had to take a circuitous route to New York City then onto their destination of New Orleans. Seemingly, everything was in order when the party reached New York City. The Lemmons rented quarters for themselves, expecting to depart soon for New Orleans

Their plans were thwarted when Judge Elijah Paine issued a writ of habeus corpus at the petition of Louis Napoleon, an African American activist and Underground Railroad operator. It only took Judge Paine a week to weigh the evidence. In the end, he ruled that, “The laws of the State of New York render it impossible that such property should exist within these limits.” The lawyers for the Lemmon's quickly filed an appeal, but the local antislavery societies moved even faster. Provisions were made to move the eight persons formerly enslaved by the Lemmons to Buxton, a communal African-American community in Ontario, close to the Michigan border. They were not to make the trip alone, however. Richard Johnson had left Cleveland and made his way to New York when he had heard about the trial. Now he had been selected to help move his family to freedom in Canada.

African Americans like Richard Johnson and his family often had to act as their own advocates in the face of white abolitionist paternalism and the racism that pervaded

the United States. For sure, the roots of African American activism lay in Africa itself for no person willingly went into slavery. History books are filled with many examples of newly-enslaved peoples who fought back, whether by overpowering their captors or, more tragically, by committing suicide or filicide. This resistance continued from the coastal barracoons onto the slave ships sailing for the Americas. At least 500 revolts are known to have occurred on slave ships during the Atlantic Slave Trade, with scores more lost to history. This resistance carried onto the North American mainland where one historian has identified nearly 250 revolts of enslaved persons in the 245-year existence of African-American enslavement in the United States.

Not all resistance involved violence, however. African American activism also included pushes for political change. Even though largely disenfranchised from voting in the early American republic, African Americans invoked the right to petition as a medium to make their views known. As early as January 1773—over three years before the War for American Independence commenced—a group of African American slaves petitioned to colonial Massachusetts governor that they could not “possess or enjoy any Thing, no not even Life itself, but in a Manner as the Beasts that perish.” In Ashtabula County, we find that freedom seeker Charles Garlick signed his name along with other Ashtabula County residents in a petition drive organized by the American Anti-Slavery Society. Thus, even in antebellum Ashtabula County, a freedom seeker was able to contribute to the larger political agitation happening nationally.

The African American population in Ashtabula County never numbered over 100 before the Civil War. This made larger efforts of organizing nearly impossible, especially as their population was scattered among Ashtabula County's rural settlements. In urban areas, however, African Americans were able to organize their own cultural institutions and organizations without the encroachment from whites (though not free from the effects of racism). At the forefront of African American activism were black vigilance committees which watched for freedom seekers from the south or kidnap victims from within their own communities. In fact, it was through the works of Louis Napoleon and the New York State Vigilance Committee that Richard Johnson's family gained their freedom. The New York State Vigilance Committee had several agents working for them

throughout the city, especially at the city wharves where freedom seekers or enslaved persons were likely to be disembarking from the boats. If passengers turned out to be freedom seekers, they would be given aid and directions to safe houses within the city. If the passengers were enslaved, these informants would pass the information on to someone like Louis Napoleon, who would then file a writ of habeus corpus in the local court. Outside of larger cities, vigilance committees were largely dominated by whites and were more often used as tools to capture freedom seekers. In Ashtabula County, we know of one antislavery vigilance committee at South Ridge, a small community south of Conneaut.

George Garlick and the Kidnapping of Free Blacks (Track Four)

(N.B.: George Garlick is not buried here; his story is currently unknown after 1852. This is the grave of Anson Garlick, with whom George Garlick lived for several years.)

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In early fall, 1852, two strangers appeared in Cherry Valley, inquiring of the whereabouts of George Garlick. This immediately caused concern among the citizens as George Garlick was a person of color living with the abolitionist Anson Garlick. Word quickly spread to George and Anson, and George was hidden for his safety. Rumors spread that the two strangers were kidnappers looking to re-enslave George and send him back south. In the end, the two strangers left the area without incident. Later it was revealed that the pair were abolitionists passing through on their way to an antislavery convention in Linesville, Pennsylvania. But why the inquiries of George Garlick? A case of lapsed memory, in this case, as the abolitionists could not remember Anson's name.

Not all cases were as humorous or harmless as the case involving George Garlick. In fact, when Anson Garlick died in October 1852—about a month after the incident—both George and Charles Garlick, another freedom seeker staying with Anson Garlick, decided they were no longer safe. Both Charles and George decided to go to Canada. Charles, as we will find out, would return to the United States. George Garlick, however, disappeared from the historical record.

“It has often been said both in public and private that no slaveholder would ever attempt the rendition of a slave from [Joshua R.] Giddings' district.” So boasted the opening lines of the newspaper article about the George Garlick mix-up. Yet, George and Charles knew better. Only ten years prior, slave catchers had attempted to return freedom seeker Milton Clarke back to enslavement. He was only freed when an Ashtabula County judge issued a writ of habeas corpus and a crowd was able to force the carriage carrying Clarke between Lake and Ashtabula Counties back onto the Ashtabula side. Perhaps the second line of the newspaper article was more accurate, noting: “And if it were attempted it could never be accomplished, for there were

hundreds of men, to say nothing of women, who would rather die, than see one of their own number dragged from their midst to the hell of Slavery.”

Kidnapping is just now receiving more scholarly attention within the studies of the abolitionist movement. Yet, more work is needed. Indeed, kidnapping has been an integral part of the slave trade from its inception. In the United States, concerns over the kidnapping of free African Americans emerged during the Revolutionary era and by the turn of the 19th century, had become a catalyst for organizing abolitionist organizations. Several factors combined to make kidnapping a viable trade for slave traders. The major impetus in kidnapping came in 1808 when Britain banned the Atlantic Slave Trade. This closure coincided with the expansion of cotton cultivation westward.

With the international supply now closed and the interstate slave trade unable to keep up with demand, prices for enslaved persons steadily rose. It also coincided with the beginning of the transportation revolution in America, with the building of roads and improving waterways. River improvements and the invention of the steamboat meant that kidnap victims could be moved quickly. Immediately, kidnappers had new channels to funnel their victims. This was especially true in the borderlands separating the free and slave states. State borders in these areas remained largely fluid, allowing both freedom seekers and slave catchers to move freely. These movements caused much friction between the states, straining the definitions of citizenship and civil rights.

In some areas, gangs had kidnapping networks throughout the north and south. Gangs relied on trickery to seize their victims. Often times, kidnappers would dangle job offers, transportation agreements, and promises of seeing relatives in front of their victim. Other times, kidnappers would exploit victim's illiteracy and trick them into signing exploitative agreements. Most tragically, children were the easiest targets. At this time, most African Americans were assumed to be enslaved until proven otherwise. To prove their freedom, African Americans were required to carry free papers which described their physical appearance in minute details. Even with free papers, it was hard for a free African American to prove their status. For children, where traits changed often, these papers would be worthless. Once sold, unscrupulous slave traders falsified records, ensuring the erasure of a person's free past.

Charles Garlick and the Underground Railroad (Track Five)

Just hours before his death in August 1843, Richard Boggess dictated his last will and testament, unable to write it on his own. In the will, Boggess freed the people he enslaved, namely Phebe and her children. Boggess made further provisions for the family that, once his estate was settled, sold, and debts satisfied, the remaining money be invested in Western Pennsylvania land for the benefit of Phebe and her children. Richard's brothers, Caleb and Albertus, thought otherwise.

The enslaved Boggess family feared the will would be contested. Rather than await their fates, Phebe gathered her children and began to journey north. Together they traveled fifteen miles, reaching the home of an old neighbor. There, a relative and acquaintance found them and advised Phebe that it was safe to return, that the will would like stand in probate. It would not be until September 1844 that Richard Boggess's will was affirmed and Phebe and her children were given their freedom.

Yet, by this time, at least two of Phebe's children were already living in northern states. Rawley Boggess Johnson had sought his freedom along with his wife and children in Fayette County, Pennsylvania. Abel Boggess traveled even farther. When Phebe and her children were staying at their old neighbor's house, it was decided that Abel, then around sixteen years of age, should continue northward. It would be forty years before he saw his family again.

From the time Abel Boggess left Richard Boggess's home near Shinnston, Virginia, to when he stopped at West Andover, Ohio, he traveled at least 250 miles, many on foot, to preserve his freedom. Boggess's experience was unusual for many freedom seekers. While most freedom seekers traveled large portions of the journey without the aid of the Underground Railroad, Boggess connected with the abolitionist underground soon after his journey began. From Blacksville, Virginia, onward into Pennsylvania to Uniontown, Greensburg, Pittsburgh, Cranberry Township, Beaver Falls, New Castle; onward into Ohio at Brookfield, Harford, Gustavus, and finally to West Andover. In all these places, Abel Boggess was met by the help of abolitionists.

At West Andover, Abel was directed to the home of Anson Kirby Garlick. Garlick

was no stranger to the abolitionist movement. Only about five years earlier, he and several other Ashtabula County abolitionists—William Hubbard included—had been sued in the Seventh Circuit Court under the 1839 Fugitive Slave Law by a Virginia slaveholder. Under this law—passed with the prodding of the Kentucky General Assembly—any person who knowingly aided a freedom seeker was to be “fined in any sum not exceeding five hundred dollars, or be imprisoned in the jail of the county not exceeding sixty days, at the discretion of the court; and shall moreover be liable in an action at the suit of the person claiming such labor or service.” Despite these risks, Garlick persisted in the abolitionist underground. When Abel Boggess told Garlick that he intended to move onto Canada, Garlick instead asked Boggess to stay. Surprised, Boggess accepted Garlick's offer. And in time, two other African Americans would join Boggess at Anson Garlick's home, as seen by their enumeration in the 1850 U.S. Federal Census.

Garlick took to calling Boggess “Charley,” a name that Boggess adopted. Thus, Abel Boggess threw off the name from his enslavement and from then after was known as Charles Garlick. In his time with Anson Garlick, Charles learned to drive oxen and clear land for farming. During the winter, Charles was able to attend a local school, which allowed him to later attend Oberlin for a year until ill health forced his withdrawal. Charles Garlick stayed with Anson Garlick on and off until the latter's death in 1852. With life uncertain with Anson's death, Charles and George Garlick left for Windsor in Canada West. Charles Garlick returned to the United States soon after, residing with Anson Garlick's brother-in-law. Charles Garlick also fought in the Civil War for the 3rd U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery, Company G., before being discharged on account of disability. After the war, Garlick lived much of the remainder of his life with the Giddings family, occupying the former law office of the antislavery statesman, Joshua R. Giddings.

Charles Garlick's narrative of the Underground Railroad is relatively straightforward: Once he located the right person, he was lead from station to station until safe in the North. Indeed, this is many people's perception of the Underground Railroad. And in many places throughout the north, this is the way the Underground

Railroad operated. In this operation, it consisted of a loosely organized structure, not the highly-organized national network that it is sometimes portrayed. As Eric Foner has shown, where money was infused, it was possible to have a larger network, such as in the Underground Railroad operating between Philadelphia, New York City, and New Bedford, Massachusetts. Yet, many parts of the Underground Railroad are as much folklore as they are history. Much of the mythos of the Underground Railroad surrounds its effectiveness as propaganda, in the hands of the north and the south alike. To be sure, the act of running away and seeking freedom is much more complex than originally thought. The reality of the Underground Railroad is this: many freedom seekers escaped without the aid of the abolitionist underground. Or, if they had aid, many freedom seekers had already traveled significant distances. Too often in the historical narratives, the freedom seeker is simply a passive actor, sent along by the noble (usually white and male) conductors and stationmasters. More recent scholarship has returned the freedom seekers as the main actor in their freedom. To complicate matters, not all who left their place of enslavement were necessarily seeking freedom in the north. In a now-classic study, John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger note that running away, even for short periods of time, was a common occurrence and served as a way for the enslaved to be “rebels on the plantation.” Indeed, this act of rebellion was more common than seeking freedom in the north.

William H. Jones, the Civil War, and Reconstruction (Track Six)

We do not know when, but some time before June 1860, Jordan and Louisa Jones, along with their son, William Henry, left Georgia and made their way north. They left the south before the war started and the divided nation was consumed by its presence. We do not know whether they were freed or freedom seekers. But what we can ascertain is that by then, Jordan Jones had set up a small farm in Jefferson, worth a modest \$225. Louisa worked as a “tailoress.” And William Henry was attending school. Yet, some of the information is incorrect: William is listed as twelve years old. He was likely older, however, by two years. Thus, in 1863, when Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and made African Americans eligible to fight in the Union army, William was only seventeen years old. This did not keep him from enlisting in December of 1863, reporting his age as eighteen when he joined Company M of the 11th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery in Providence, Rhode Island. After training, Jones's battalion was sent to New Orleans, where they were later assigned to Camp Parapet, a fort on the Mississippi River initially started by Confederate forces but abandoned after the Union capture of New Orleans. The camp itself, once finished by the Union Army, averaged around 3,500 troops. Its position on the Mississippi also made it a strategic location to guard against a Confederate attempt to recapture New Orleans. More significantly, the fort became the site of a contraband camp. Contraband was a term used by military officials to describe self-emancipated African Americans who made their way to Union lines. It was at this camp that William Henry Jones spent the duration of his enlistment until he mustered out with the rest of his unit on October 2, 1865.

Jones was one of nearly 188,000 black men who served in the Union forces in the Civil War. Their service, however, did not come until nearly two years into the war. This was not because African Americans did not want to volunteer. It was because they were told that it was “a white man's war.” In Ohio, for example, all non-whites had been barred from state military service in 1803. The racism of the time meant that many persons did not want African Americans to possess arms. Yet, as the war raged on,

African Americans were used in other areas. As one historian has written, “[Blacks] were employed in such capacities as laborers, teamsters, cooks, and mechanics with the Union army. . . . During the first year of war, [blacks] were used by the Union armies in the South as laborers and servants and as stewards and pilots on board boats and ship on the rivers and along the coasts.” This was further bolstered when in July 1862, Congress authorized President Lincoln for the use of black labor in Union camps for whatever purposes of which they were capable. By September 1862, Lincoln had already drafted in his Preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation that along with freeing enslaved persons in rebel states, that African Americans would be accepted into the armed forces. In response, African Americans would mobilize units in Kansas, Louisiana, and Massachusetts. Of these, Massachusetts would be the first to be authorized by the war department to see service. Thus, the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment was formed, with soldiers recruited from all over the Union. It was not until June 1863 that Ohio governor Tod received permission from the war department to form their own African American regiments. Ohio African Americans would end of being the fourth largest number of recruits to the United States Colored Troops, numbering 5,092 soldiers. In the end, nearly 40,000 African Americans would die in the Civil War; 30,000 would die from infection or disease.

After the Civil War, the United States entered into the era of Reconstruction and William Henry Jones disappeared from the historical record for nearly a decade. In that decade, much happened in American history that still has ramifications for today. Reconstruction is a period in United States history that runs from 1865 until roughly 1877. During this time, Congress was attempting to reform the Union to its antebellum state. There were those in Congress, lead by the Radical Republicans like Benjamin Wade of Ashtabula County, who wished to punish the south for their role in the Civil War. Lincoln's assassination ended any chance of that happening. With Lincoln's death, the presidency passed to Andrew Johnson, a Tennessee Democrat whose loyalty to the Union was rewarded by the Republican party when they chose him as Lincoln's running mate for the 1864 election. Although Johnson was sympathetic to the Union, he was not sympathetic to the plight of newly freed African Americans. Johnson's plans for African

Americans was to let the southern states decide individually how to deal with the newly-freed people. Many of the states quickly adopted black laws which sought to relegate them back to their enslaved status. Thus, the roots of the Jim Crow South were being laid.

Before this took hold in the south, however, African Americans were able to hold political office and have voting rights. In several states, black-majority legislatures were seated. And in 1874, William Henry Jones was elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives as the representative for Issaquena County. Jones quickly got to work and throughout his term, variously served in the ways and means, public health and quarantine, engrossed bills, and state library committees. Only a year in to his term, though, Jones was witness to a push back from white Democrats eager to seize back power from Republicans and African Americans. American interest in Reconstruction was waning and Andrew Johnson's successor, Ulysses S. Grant, was growing weary of using federal force to quash southern violence against blacks. This became even more clear in 1875 with the implementation of the "Mississippi Plan." Under this plan, Mississippi Democrats exploited a "color-line" strategy where African Americans were threatened with violence for voting. This plan originated in Vicksburg and successfully allowed for the white supremacist People's Party to gain power. Other areas of Mississippi quickly followed and the Democrats were able to retake control of the house. Once back in power, they moved to undo much of the Reconstruction legislation, going as far as to impeach the government-appointed Mississippi governor Adelbert Ames on false charges. In the vote for impeachment, William Henry Jones cast his "nay" vote, but to no avail. The house voted to impeach Ames and he resigned rather than face a politicized trial. Jones continued in the legislature until 1877. It is unclear if he sought reelection or was voted out. After his term ended, Jones and his family returned to Jefferson. Jones never regained the status that he once held in Mississippi. He spent the rest of his working years as a custodian for the Jefferson school district.

Levi Johnson and the Black Church (Track Seven)

Levi Johnson was thirty-nine when he died of stomach cancer in 1892. His obituary noted that he was born enslaved in Virginia and escaped to Canada with his parents. Afterwards, he would settle in Ashtabula County where he was the village barber in Andover for eighteen years. No mention was given of his burial. Yet, he was buried here in Union Cemetery behind the old Andover Congregational Church. For residents of the Connecticut Western Reserve—now encompassing most of northern north-east Ohio—the Congregational Church was synonymous with community since it was often the first church to appear in Western Reserve communities. This was owing to an agreement between Connecticut Presbyterian churches and Congregational churches. In 1800, they formed a Plan of Union to proselytize under a single polity in present-day Ohio. Enough of a difference between the two denominations existed, despite their Calvinist foundations, however, that within a generation the Union plan was largely abandoned. The major dividing point? Slavery. Presbyterians tended to hold that enslaved persons were property and that one should not interfere with property rights. Congregationalists largely rejected this argument, reasoning that slavery should not exist (these distinctions do not always hold true). For all we know about the Christian communities on the Western Reserve, we do not know the religious practices of the freed African Americans like Levi Johnson who settled in Ashtabula County.

African American religion, like the peoples themselves, has a complex origin. Indeed, there is not one central point of origin, but several pointing back to the African continent where a variety of beliefs were practiced across the continent. One can say simplistically that there existed in Africa religious beliefs in supernatural beings and forces and a belief in the efficacy of magic (Magic and the supernatural here are used in the anthropological sense, though they are often seen as opposites of “religion.” Most religions, even present-day Western beliefs, share these traits at a certain level). When the enslaved persons left Africa, these beliefs did not initially cease. For many, they sustained them through the horrors of the Atlantic Slave Trade. And even as the memories of Africa faded with each generation, the memories of worship remained and

even intermixed with new religions. Indeed, this is a theme that permeates African American religion, argues Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in his documentary and book, *The Black Church*.

By the time the Atlantic Slave Trade was reaching its apex in the 17th and 18th centuries, African religion had already taken a synchronic nature, blending indigenous beliefs first with Islam—beginning in the early eight century—and later with Catholic Christianity—beginning in the Kongo kingdom in the late 15th century. Depending on the region from which enslaved persons were transported, different traditions would be emphasized. Once in North America, religion became an invisible institution on the plantations. Slaveholders resisted most gatherings of the enslaved as they saw these as sites to ferment rebellion. Where religious services were allowed, the services were constantly monitored by white overseers.

White slaveholders also fought the introduction of Christianity to enslaved African Americans. For the first 120 years of African enslavement in North America, Christian teachings were largely suppressed. Aside from the aforementioned fears of insurrection, slaveholders also felt it would give African Americans an undeserved sense of self-worth, undermining the enslaved persons' acceptance of their condition. The Great Awakening changed all this. In the fervor and ferment of religious revival, race barriers broke down and enslaved and enslaver worshiped together. By this time, though, Christian apologists for slavery argued that African American Christians made better slaves: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ” (Ephesians 6:5 KJV). Even as slaveholders and their allies used Christianity to justify their tyranny, enslaved African Americans were finding messages of hope. Identifying themselves with the Hebrews of Exodus, African Americans began to create a theology on the promise of a future freedom, free from racism and enslavement. As an enslaved person once said, “My body may belong to the master but my soul belongs to Jesus.”

The first independent black churches appear in the later half of the 18th century in the south. The earliest known independent church was the African Baptist Church founded in 1758 on the William Byrd Plantation in Mecklenburg, Virginia. A few other

churches followed in South Carolina and Georgia. Yet as slavery ended in the north after the American Revolution, many more black churches sprang up. African Americans were initially drawn to the Methodist and Baptist congregations for their condemnation of slavery. Even in these denominations, however, blacks found the same prejudice as elsewhere in American society. Most notably, in many churches, blacks were not permitted to worship alongside white congregants. They, instead, had separate pews, often located in a back gallery. African Americans thus left white churches to form their own, resulting in the two largest black churches in the 19th century: the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1798) and the African Baptist Church (1808). Historian Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., summarizes the significance of the black church at length:

The institutions they created not only provided space for worship but also constituted the beginnings of black civil society. Schools, mutual aid societies, athletic clubs, libraries, insurance companies, and general social events would eventually be housed in black churches. Moreover, these churches became the principal sites for black political life. Within their walls, African Americans addressed the economic realities of their communities and the continued scourge of slavery. Here pastors and worshippers articulated an idea of freedom as they grappled with the pressing implication of slavery in the South. Indeed, the very insistence on the independence of black churches gave content to the idea of freedom insofar as a degraded people took hold of their faith for their own aims and purposes. Black Christians, even among those free African Americans in the North, understood that their witness as Christians was bound up with their status as a “captured people.” They did not have a choice but to express their commitment to Christ in terms of a demand for freedom, and this demand for liberation distinguished their understanding of Christianity from that of their white fellows.

Leonard Mabane and African American Education (Track Eight)

In each of the U.S. Federal Censuses from 1870 until 1910, Leonard Mabane's last name was spelled differently every time he was enumerated by the census taker. One decade he is listed as Mabin, the next Maben. After that, Mabyn, and finally, in 1910 (two years before his death), Maban. The reasons for the variation is simple: Leonard was non-literate, so the enumerator had to guess the spelling based on the information at hand. Even on Leonard's tombstone there is a name variation, Mabane, perhaps his birthplace in North Carolina. According to one newspaper article, Mabane was a storyteller. Several people in Pierpoint were able to remember many of the stories Mabane told years later. But by then, they were not just Leonard Mabane's stories. The stories he told had been transformed in time. The audience was now the author of Mabane's life. Indeed, it is difficult to know if the inscription on Leonard Mabane's tombstone is accurate or the whimsy of a life acquaintance. Leonard Mabane was able to make do on his little farm on Caine Road without formal education and literacy. For many other African Americans, though, it was a necessary step in the fight for freedom and human rights.

The history of African American education varies from location to location, so presently only generalities will be discussed. Historians generally agree that educating enslaved persons was tolerated in the early era of the colonies. In New England, it was especially important for all persons, regardless of race, to be literate enough to read the Bible. This ability was tied with warding off the evil of the “old deluder Satan.” Rather than believing education as a deterrent to slavery, New Englanders believed that knowing the Bible would help enslaved persons socialize to their new surroundings and acquire the “obedience, virtue, and temperance” required at their social status. The south, by contrast, had from the beginning questioned the educating of enslaved persons, although what little education enslaved persons received continued. That is until the Stono Rebellion of 1740. Thus began a ninety-year paranoia about the connections between literacy and insurrection, with slaveholders noting that many insurrection leaders were literate. To be non-literate was to be content in enslavement,

so they thought. The peak of the anti-education hysteria occurred in the late-1820s and early-1830s. In 1829, a free black, used clothes merchant named David Walker published his *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, in which he advocated the use of violence to end enslavement of blacks. Many persons recognized its incendiary nature and moved to suppress it. In the south, slaveholders moved to ensure that no one could come to possess it, let alone read the contents. Legislature after legislature passed laws prohibiting the teaching of reading and writing to enslaved persons. Less than two years later, a literate enslaved preacher named Nat Turner would confirm their worst fears.

But the time of Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, African American enslavement had largely ended in the north. Still, even free African Americans did not have equal rights in their access to public education. Ohio is illustrative of this point. Ohio's 1802 constitution denied the right of citizenship to African Americans, regardless of their status. This was followed in 1804 and 1807 with black laws which limited black settlement within the state. Further, in 1829 an Ohio state law banned African American children from receiving services from asylums, poor houses, and schools. Despite these laws, some Ohio communities allowed African American children to attend the local public schools. This, however, did not become a permanent legal right until after 1849 when provisions were made to tax African Americans families to support the education of their children.

In Ashtabula County, education prospects for African American children were better than elsewhere in the state. According to the 1850 U.S. Federal Census—the first census that tracked the school attendance of children and young adults—African American children attended school in Dorset, Austinburg, Ashtabula, Conneaut, and Pierpont. The rest of the census shows, too, that a sizable portion of Ashtabula County African American residents were literate. One cannot but notice, however, the entry for Caroline M. Lee, a 29-year old black woman living with the Chaffee family in Jefferson. In the box noting “unable to read or write,” a hash mark noting her non-literacy. A few columns before, the census enumerator noted her birthplace: “Slave State.”