

Behind the Mansions: The Political, Economic, and Social Life of a New Bedford Neighborhood

Introduction:

The Study Area and Scope

This study examines the largely residential area lying immediately east of the mansions on County Street in New Bedford, Massachusetts, as it existed before the Civil War. Within the boundaries of this area—from Union Street on the north, Wing Street on the south, County Street on the west, and South Sixth Street on the east—lived wealthy white whaling and shoreside merchants as well as skilled craftspeople, shop owners, and a full range of service workers, laborers, and mariners of both Caucasian and African descent. In architectural terms the area includes Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and some early Italianate homes ranging from high to vernacular styles. In these respects the area may be viewed as a cross-section of the city's antebellum built environment and population.

Whether the area may properly be termed a neighborhood—in the sense of being an urban subsection that people then perceived to have its own set of social connections and physical boundaries—is not possible to establish.¹ Certainly Union Street, as New Bedford's main commercial artery before the War, was a real and psychic boundary, and in this section County Street formed for all intents and purposes the western edge of the city up to the Civil War. Moreover, the area between County and South Sixth Streets was a distinctly different physical space than what existed to its east, roughly between Fifth (now Pleasant) Street and the Acushnet River waterfront. South Sixth was the eastern edge of the prewar mansion district in the city south

of Union Street. Although a few older large homes were east of South Sixth Street, maps and other sources document that population here was much denser, structures were on the whole much smaller and more vernacular, and a greater mix of uses—industrial, commercial, and residential—prevailed. Scarcely any shops or workshops, and no factories, existed between South Sixth and County Street, but east of Fifth were many of the city’s early industries, commercial venues, tradesmen’s shops, boardinghouses, and a great mass of what may be called tenements for a renting population. Finally, the remarkable number and complexity of social, political, and economic connections between white and black residents between County, South Sixth, Union, and Wing Streets suggest a strong “neighborhood” character in the antebellum decades.

This study examines in particular three aspects of neighborhood life before the Civil War—the extent of involvement in whaling among residents of all economic classes, the degree and nature of interaction between the area’s white and black residents, and the presence of fugitives from Southern slavery and of persons who are documented to or may have assisted them in their settlement or flight.

The Demographic Origins of the Neighborhood

As is the case with all migrants, a combination of “push” and “pull” brought white people and people of African descent to this city and to this neighborhood in particular. Among those white migrants from more settled areas of Plymouth Colony, the hunger for larger allotments of land—and, presumably, influence—was a powerful pull. And some motivations were shared by both whites and blacks. As New Bedford’s economy increasingly thrived, both were drawn by economic opportunity. Whites and blacks also shared the push of oppression—among whites, from a

dominant Puritan/Pilgrim religious structure, and among blacks from both slavery and strictures on the movement and rights of free people. In 1656 and 1657 the General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony banned “the cursed sect of heretics commonly called Quakers”; both Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies physically punished and banished them and imposed threat of fine or imprisonment for any vessel that carried them into the colony or took them to Sandwich on Cape Cod, where the first Friends’ Meeting in North America had been established in 1657. According to local historian Zephaniah Pease, the township of Dartmouth (of which New Bedford was part until 1787) “appears to have been taken up by a class not particularly Puritan, many of them Quakers whom the government at Plymouth, if court orders are an indication, found it difficult to control.” One seventeenth-century minister termed the people of Dartmouth, Nantucket, Tiverton, and Freetown “ignorant, erroneous and vicious” because no Congregational church could be established successfully in these towns. They were all, he asserted, far too close to Rhode Island, “the place where Satan hath his throne.”² It was a “part of the world” where, as another put it, “Quakers, Baptists, Fanatics, Rantters, Deists, and Infidels swarm.”³

Though almost no Quakers were among the early town officials, they nonetheless held the greatest share of both political power and wealth in New Bedford until the 1830s. And despite the fact that a significant number of birthright Quakers became Unitarians, the cultural heritage of dissidence probably created a society that was relatively tolerant of difference.⁴ In 1853 local historian Daniel Ricketson stated that “there is, and there ever has been, in New Bedford since its origin, a strong leaven of the old fashioned Quaker principles, and though not so ardently represented by the ‘peaceful sect’ as it was wont to be in past and more prosperous days of the Society of Friends, still the most casual observer will perceive the influence of their principles upon

this community.”⁵ And despite the facts that Friends were not all abolitionists and not all abolitionists were Friends, numerous African American authors clearly equated the two. On his first days in New Bedford, for example, the fugitive Frederick Douglass was relieved to see “the broad brim and the plain, quaker dress, which met me at every turn. . . . ‘I am among the Quakers,’ thought I, ‘and am safe.’” One of the earliest known fugitives in southeastern Massachusetts, Robert Voorhis, “the Hermit of Massachusetts,” had heard much “of the hospitality of the Quakers (or Friends,) . . . as a class who were zealous advocates for the emancipation of their fellow beings in bondage” and relied upon their assistance in both of his early 1790s efforts to escape Charleston, South Carolina.⁶

As the town grew, people of color were also drawn to New Bedford by its increasingly large black community and the numbers of southern kin and friends who had already settled here. When Ellen Saunders (Elizabeth Francis in slavery) reached New Bedford four years after escaping from Norfolk, Virginia, she reported to Philadelphia fugitive assistant William Still that she had work and had found her friends and her sister well.⁷ The sister of famed fugitive Henry “Box” Brown was already working “at service” in New Bedford when he arrived in the city in late March 1849.⁸ William Still noted that “many old friends from Norfolk” lived in New Bedford at the time Thomas Bayne (alias Sam Nixon) escaped to the city in June 1855. Henry Johnson (of Wing Street) knew Lucy Faggins from slavery days in Richmond when he and other black and white abolitionists attempted to secure the girl’s release from the home of Captain Joseph Dunbar (at 26 South Sixth Street, not extant) in 1841.⁹

As in New Bedford generally, white persons who lived in this neighborhood came from three

principal areas—northeastern sections of Plymouth Colony, Nantucket, and Rhode Island. The Howland, Russell, Spooner, and Standish families were all from the Plymouth area; Henry Howland, the progenitor of that family in North America and the direct ancestor of all Howland branches in this neighborhood—came to Dartmouth “at the commencement of the Quaker persecutions at Plymouth” and became one of the original thirty-four proprietors in the early 1650s.¹⁰ The famed Pilgrim Myles Standish, ancestor of Levi and John Avery Standish of South Sixth Street, was also a proprietor whose share in the township John Russell acquired in 1661. Nantucket migrants included William Rotch Jr., David Coffin, George Randall, and Edward Coffin Jones. Philip Anthony, Thomas Arnold Greene, Samuel Rodman, and James Arnold were all from Rhode Island. Abraham Cleaveland, Constant Norton, and Jeremiah Mayhew were natives of Martha’s Vineyard. And smaller Quaker migrations to New Bedford took place among members of the Sandwich Monthly Meeting on Cape Cod and the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Charles Waln Morgan and his sisters among that latter group.

Black migration and settlement in this neighborhood mirrored white migration in some instances and stood distinct from it in others. Cuffe Lawton (50, now 62, Bedford Street) was born in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1789 and moved to New Bedford in the 1820s; Patience Freeman and Mary Collins Flood, two black women who lived and worked at Mary Rotch’s 47 South Sixth Street home, were also born in Newport; Peter Almy, who late in life lived in this neighborhood, and John Briggs, who grew up in the Walnut Street home of George Howland, were both from Tiverton in Rhode Island, part of Massachusetts until the 1740s. Polly Johnson, Deborah Cook Borden, Priscilla Slocum Washington, Gardner Wainer Jr., Rebecca Bailey, and George Riley were all from rural areas bordering New Bedford: the Wainer, Cook, Bailey, and Slocum families were

of long standing in the region. Borden's husband Nathaniel was a native of Nantucket; Juliann Potter, who was in service at the South Sixth Street home of Sarah Coffin, was from Taunton.

Yet in this neighborhood a larger proportion of people of color were born in the South, at least according to their own statements in both censuses and before the city's overseers of the poor after 1847. Of 149 people of color who lived in this neighborhood from the late 1820s to about 1860, 44 were born in Maryland and Virginia equally, or 29.4 percent from those two border states alone. Fully 45.6 percent of blacks in this neighborhood were from slave states, while 32.9 percent were from free states. Five persons of color were from the Cape Verde Islands and Africa (3.4 percent). Another 27 persons, or 18.1 percent of the total, were of unknown places of origin: either census, marriage, and death records never revealed their places of birth or these individuals reported their birthplaces differently often, if not every time, any recorder of data asked. Although the statistics are not genuinely comparable, the proportion of southern-born people in this neighborhood was substantially higher than that of all New Bedford people of color who reported southern birthplaces in the 1850 census, 29.9 percent compared to the neighborhood's 45.6 percent.

Among those people of color from slave states living and working in this neighborhood, a notable number were from the cities of Richmond, Virginia, Baltimore, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, which between 1801 and 1846 embraced what is now Alexandria, Virginia. Of twenty-two Marylanders, half were from Baltimore; of twenty-two Virginians, six were from Richmond. Another nine (6.0 percent of the total) were from Alexandria, Washington, and Georgetown. Recent historical research has shown not only the greater presence of blacks in the South's cities

and towns—fully a third of slave-state blacks lived in such places, compared to only 15 percent of white southerners, and many contemporary observers noted their overwhelming presence in the working areas of the region's ports—but the greater tendency of urban enslaved people, as opposed to enslaved people on plantations and in other rural areas, to escape to the North.¹¹ And because of their significance as ports, all three cities were attractive to fugitives, both because of the availability of work and the opportunity to escape. Among those black Baltimoreans who came to New Bedford were Mary Clark Temple, Anna Murray Douglass, William P. Roshier, Elizabeth B. Smith, and Edward and Susan Wilson. Henry Johnson, the blacksmith Lewis Temple, Thomas Randall, Averick Natus, Mary Blair, and Frances Green were from Richmond. The large Piper and Clark families, George and Margaret Fletcher, and the families of Walter and Jackson Hawkins were from Washington. Notably few people of color in this neighborhood were from Norfolk or Portsmouth, Virginia, two cities that scores of black New Bedford residents had left behind. This fact suggests that Norfolk and Portsmouth people settled elsewhere in the city—specifically in its west end, the other principle area of black settlement. This possibility, coupled with the proximity of those from Baltimore, Richmond, and Washington within the County-South Sixth neighborhood, hints at a tendency to settle in the North near those whom one had known in the South.

Many circumstances triggered the exodus of people of color from the South. First, Baltimore (through the 1820s) and then Alexandria were two of the most active slave markets in the South. In Maryland and the District, enslaved people were increasingly liable to be sold into the Deep South as grain cultivation replaced tobacco throughout Maryland and cotton agriculture developed along the Mississippi River. Grain farms did not require constant, year-round labor, as tobacco

did, and growers began to recognize that hiring seasonal labor—white, free black, and slaves whose services were contracted out—was less expensive than supporting enslaved labor.¹²

In addition, as early as the mid-1830s a growing number of Irish-born laborers had begun to displace African Americans from maritime, transportation, and many service occupations in southern cities, which threatened to consign an even greater number of people of color to unskilled labor or only periodic employment. And the laws of various southern states aimed at restricting the movement of free blacks and limiting or nullifying such rights as property ownership, formal worship, and legal marriage impelled black migration, particularly after whites renewed efforts to enforce these laws after such events as the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831 and the attempted escape of more than seventy slaves from Washington on the schooner *Pearl* in 1848. Significantly, too, all three southern cities had a small but active cadre of antislavery activists of both races who encouraged the desire for freedom among enslaved people and a fuller enjoyment of civil rights among those who were free. Charles Torrey, Jacob Bigelow, Joshua Leavitt, William L. Chaplin—all four Massachusetts natives—along with Senator Joshua Giddings and Torrey's black assistant Thomas Smallwood were key fugitive assistants in Washington; the Quakers George Drinker and Samuel M. Janney were prominent abolitionists in Alexandria; Elisha Tyson, Jacob Gibbs, John Needles—and, for a short time, Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison—actively supported abolition in Baltimore; and the black boatman Esue Foster and ship captains Alfred Fountain and William Bayliss were among those who helped fugitives escape in Richmond.¹³ Still wrote that “no one Southern city furnished a larger number of brave, wide-awake and likely-looking Underground Rail Road passengers than the city of Richmond.”¹⁴ Yet, as with the numbers of fugitives themselves, the true number of southern antislavery fugitive assistants and extent of abolitionist activity will probably never be known.

The Emergence and Geography of the Neighborhood

Intricate, almost bewildering, kin connections shaped the neighborhood from South Sixth to County Street and testify to the longstanding influence of many founding families. New Bedford village, as historians have often pointed out, was “on the riverfront of two farms” separated approximately by Elm Street. North of Elm was the vast property of Manasseh Kempton, of a Plymouth Colony family but not Quaker. South of Elm Street was the similarly large holding of the Quaker Joseph Russell (1719-1804), the great grandson of Dartmouth proprietor John Russell and the founder of New Bedford’s whaling industry. Russell’s holdings extended from the river on the east to Rockdale Avenue (then Noel Taber Road) on the west and on the south to Russell Street. According to historian Henry B. Worth, the Kemptons tended not to sell land to Quakers, while the propensity of Quakers was decidedly to sell, and do business with, other Friends. “It was practically a fact,” Worth claimed, “that the residents north of Elm Street worked for the Quakers, who lived south.”¹⁵ Elmore Haskins, another local historian, characterized the divide between the two sections in another way: “south of the Kempton line lived the men who owned the whaling and merchant ships; north of it lived the builders of these vessels.”¹⁶ The only church south of Elm Street in the village’s early days was the 1785 Quaker meetinghouse, which stood on the northeast corner of Spring and Seventh Streets. In 1822 the old frame meetinghouse was moved diagonally across to the southwest corner of this intersection to make way for a new brick structure built on its original site.

In a plan he developed for a prospective village in 1764, Joseph Russell (whose house stood on the County Road at the head of William Street, now the site of the New Bedford School Department

administration building) included a street from the cartway that ran from the shore to his property, what is now Union Street. Union Street terminated at its intersection with County Street: by 1810 Russell's son Abraham had built a house on County at the head of Union. Five years earlier Russell's son Gilbert built a home (still standing) on County Street at the head of Walnut Street. Joseph Russell's plan also featured Spring, School, and Walnut Streets running parallel to Union and eight north-south cross streets extending between the river and County Street. In this section Union was the first to be accepted formally as a street, in 1769; Walnut (1796), School (1801), South Sixth (1801 between Union and Spring and 1806 to Walnut), Seventh (1807 from Union to Walnut) followed before 1815. Wing Street and Russell Street from County to Sixth Street were approved in 1821, and three years later Spring Street between County and Sixth was formally accepted. In this area South Sixth was the first to extend south to Bedford Street (1818), and then to Wing (1835), and between 1830 and 1838 Bedford (from County to Acushnet Avenue), Madison to Seventh Street, Eighth to Spring Street, and Seventh to Madison were all designated as official town streets. County Road became County Street in 1830.¹⁷ Thus the street pattern that exists in the neighborhood today was largely in place by the late 1830s.

Beginning in 1772 Joseph Russell sold off lots in the section that became this neighborhood. In that year he sold a tract at the southeast corner of Union and Sixth to Timothy Ingraham. In 1785 he donated the lot upon which the Friends Meetinghouse was built and sold a parcel on the north side of Union between Seventh and Sixth Streets to Caleb Greene, who was probably Thomas Arnold Greene's brother. In 1790 he sold a large tract on the north side of Union Street abutting Greene's on the north to Daniel Ricketson (grandfather of New Bedford's best-documented fugitive assistant, Joseph Ricketson Jr.), one south of Ingraham's to Captain Jeremiah Mayhew

(great nephew of Vineyard Indian missionary Experience Mayhew), and lots to Roger Haskell (uncle of John Cotton Haskell of this neighborhood) and Ebenezer Perry just west of Greene's.¹⁸ In 1799 Russell sold a lot on the southwest corner of Seventh and Union Streets (where the 1785 Friends Meetinghouse has stood since 1822) to the master mariner Reuben Swift. Swift later lived with his four sons, all mariners, at the corner of Sixth and Spring Streets; the house no longer stands.

After Joseph Russell's death in 1804, five of his children either lived in and sold land in the neighborhood. Most of Russell's real estate passed to his son Abraham, but the economic distress that beset the city during and after the War of 1812 compelled him to mortgage the property to William Rotch Sr., who then foreclosed on it in 1818. Out of this large holding Rotch retained a tract between County and Sixth Streets and Madison Street on the north. At his death in 1828 his son and namesake received roughly an acre bounded by County, Madison, Cherry and Sixth Streets. Rotch's daughter Elizabeth, who married Rotch's business partner Samuel Rodman, owned County Street tracts just south of her brother William's; her husband had acquired a tract between Walnut and Spring Streets between 1809 and 1813. The Rodmans' son Samuel Rodman Jr. built his home on the southeast corner of Spring and County Streets in 1827-28 (at one point, Pease stated, Rodman's garden extended south to School Street), and their son William Rotch Rodman built south of his uncle William Rotch Jr. Mary Rotch, another daughter of William Rotch Sr., was left her father's home (later the hotel known as the Mansion House at Union and Second Streets) and later built on land immediately behind her brother William's, between Seventh and Sixth Streets with Cherry as its southern boundary.¹⁹

Abraham Russell sold to others as well. In 1805 he sold a tract on Sixth Street to Rounseville Spooner, who was the uncle of this neighborhood's Paul Spooner. Rouseville Spooner sold the parcel, probably with a dwelling on it, to Gideon Allen in 1818. In the same year Russell sold Daniel Ricketson's son Joseph a half-acre plot on the north side of Union Street at the head of Seventh Street. In July 1805 Ricketson began building his house there, where his widow and son Joseph Jr. lived. The site is now occupied by a parking lot.²⁰

Joseph Russell's younger son Humphrey (1758-1836) owned half a block along Spring Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets. In 1804 he built his home at 13 South Sixth Street, probably one of the first to be built in the neighborhood, and after his daughter Rebecca (1787-1869) married Elisha Thornton Jr. in October 1804, Russell built the house next door at 17 South Sixth Street for the couple. In 1829 the Thorntons moved to a new house built for them on Humphrey Russell's land, now 20 Seventh Street. Humphrey Russell's sister Rebecca (born 1748) had married Daniel Ricketson in 1768, and now his daughter Rebecca's own daughter, Frances Moore Thornton, married Joseph Ricketson Jr., Daniel Ricketson's grandson. The second wife of Joseph Ricketson Sr. was Anna Thornton, the sister of Elisha Thornton Jr. Thus the Ricketsons, Russells, and Thorntons were bound tightly together. Frances Moore Thornton's sister Virginia married William L. Gerrish, also a longtime neighborhood resident.

Joseph Russell's son Gilbert, born in 1760, married Lydia Tallman of New Bedford and built his second house on South Sixth and Russell Streets in 1829. Lydia's brother Elkanah Tallman had built 77 Walnut Street in 1807, and in 1820 her son William Tallman Russell built 66 Russell Street. Gilbert Russell's daughters Elizabeth and then Mary married Cornelius Grinnell Jr.; his

daughter Susan married Moses Grinnell, whose brother Joseph built his mansion on the west side of County Street in 1832; and his daughter Lydia married William W. Swain. It was Swain who sold the land at the northwest corner of County and Russell Streets to Cornelius Howland Jr. in 1845.

In addition to Rebecca Russell Ricketson, the family of Joseph Russell's daughter Patience was also involved in the neighborhood. Born in 1749, she married James Davis, a Quaker minister whom early New Bedford Friends held in much esteem, when she was twenty years old.²¹ In 1781 Davis had acquired a seven-acre plot abutting the south boundary of Joseph Russell's land; by 1790 he purchased lots on both sides of Third Street, and in 1805 he deeded what became the first Quaker burial ground just east of these two lots to Asa Smith and Roger Haskell. Davis died in 1825, and two years later his children (including Deborah, who married "Old Light" Job Otis and was much involved in the New Bedford Quaker schism of the early 1820s) divided six acres of his property covering the north half of the block between County and Bedford (then Davis) Streets. The neighborhood that arose on these lots is much the same as it developed originally through the 1850s. In 1826 Davis's heirs sold a lot that today is occupied by 62 and 58 Bedford Street to George Howland, who had built his own house roughly four blocks north, on Walnut Street, about 1810. In the same year they sold a lot on South Sixth between Bedford and Wing to Caleb Jenney Jr. In 1827 Caleb Bryant bought a lot running from the southeast corner of Bedford and County to Howland's lot, Jenney acquired the lot from his initial parcel on South Sixth to the corner of Bedford and the east side of Howland's parcel, and in the same year Davis's heirs sold the parcel just west of Jenney's 1826 purchase, running to County Street, to Abraham Shearman. In 1827 the heirs sold another parcel, which bordered William Tallman Russell's land on Russell

Street, to James Bunker Congdon, who in turn sold it to Billings F. Corey in the same year.²²

Corey, a housewright, built a house at 48 South Sixth Street, at the northeast corner of Bedford Street, in which he and his son Alonzo lived. This shingled dwelling remains on its site with a one-story storefront added later on its east and north facades.

Kin connections other than those that existed in the Russell, Ricketson, and Rotch families helped to structure the neighborhood as well. John Howland Sr. was master of one of first whaling vessels to sail from New Bedford and, according to Pease, “one of the richest man in New Bedford in the latter part of the eighteenth century.” One of his sons, Captain James Howland 2d (so called because his uncle James Howland was alive at the same time), built his home at 21 Sixth Street between 1808 and 1815. John Howland’s son John Jr. built 38 Sixth Street in 1834. John Howland built 46 Sixth Street for his daughter Ann and her husband Elisha Dunbar in 1820; Elisha’s brother Joseph Dunbar lived at 26 Sixth Street, which has not survived. John Howland’s daughter Sarah married Joseph Howland Allen, who built at 48 Sixth Street, next to her sister Ann’s home, in 1845. Joseph H. Allen’s two brothers, Gideon and William H., also lived nearby, and each had occupied houses in the neighborhood before they built their back-to-back mansions on the south side of School Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets in 1831. Abner Howland, who was the nephew of John Howland Sr., lived across Sixth Street from Gideon Allen. John Howland Sr.’s father James Howland and George Howland Sr.’s father Matthew were brothers: George Howland and his son George Howland Jr. also lived and died in the neighborhood. The three Allen brothers were also related to the George Howland branch of the family. Gideon Allen’s first wife was Hannah Howland, the sister of George Howland Sr., and Sylvia Allen, the sister of Gideon and his two brothers, married George Howland Jr.

Still other family connections attest to what must have been a remarkably intimate level of social knowledge in this neighborhood. A mere sample of additional kinship ties among neighborhood residents illustrates the point:

- § Abraham Allen's second wife was Mary Jones, mother of Edward Coffin Jones, and his daughter Lois married Billings F. Corey.
- § Edward C. Jones's third wife was Mary Luce, daughter of Matthew Luce.
- § James Bunker Congdon's mother Susannah was the sister of William C. Coffin, he married Lucy Randall, brother of George Randall, and his daughter married Peleg C. Howland.
- § George Randall's sister Lucretia married John Cotton Haskell, and Randall's daughter Jane married Edward P. Haskell, John C. Haskell's son.
- § Susan Howland, the second wife of George Howland Sr., was the daughter of Cornelius Howland, whose grandsons Cornelius and Edward Wing Howland both lived in the neighborhood.

Among people of color who lived in this neighborhood kinship connections were probably fewer, in large part because fewer lived in the neighborhood. However, migrations from and marriages in the South, the probable use of aliases, and the tendency among official enumerators both North and South to underrecord the vital statistics of people of color make these family relations considerably more difficult to trace and document. The children of Cuffe Lawton married and lived nearby. His daughter Mahala married James R. Davis, who was probably born in Savannah,

Georgia, and lived at 114 Seventh Street: only one house at the corner of Seventh and Bedford separated their house from her father's. Cuffe Lawton's son Frederick married Mary Antone, whose father Joseph lived on Wing Street just east of the neighborhood: Frederick and Mary Lawton lived at his father's 62 Bedford Street home until the 1850s, when they moved to a rural section of Allen Street. At some point after David S. Fletcher came to New Bedford in the early 1830s, probably from Washington, he married Martha Bailey, probably his second wife. She was the daughter of Quaco Bailey, part of a longtime family of color from Dartmouth. And William Piper's son Philip married Jane Gibson, who had been enslaved at the time her master brought her to New Bedford in 1834; Gibson, her mother, her sister, and others of her mother's children were brought up in the 21 Seventh Street home of Nathan Johnson. Perhaps the most extensive of all black kin networks was that of Archibald Clark, who came to New Bedford by the early 1830s and lived most of his life on Third Street, east of this neighborhood. His sister Mary married the blacksmith Lewis Temple, who lived until the 1840s at 42 (now 54) Bedford Street; his daughter Mary married the blacksmith Miguel Fortes, who also lived in this house. In 1860 probably until his death two years later, Archibald himself lived at 42 Bedford with his daughter and son-in-law. Clark's sons John C. and Archibald Lloyd Clark also came to New Bedford, as did, after 1848, his sister Lucinda with her husband William Bush and their family. Bush's daughter Louisa Bush Besselleu later owned 54 (now 66) Bedford Street but may not have lived in the neighborhood; similarly, the barber Anthony G. Jourdain Jr., who married Bush's daughter Anna, also owned land but may never have lived here.

By 1815 the neighborhood to just south of Walnut Street, where Sixth and Seventh Streets then terminated, had been subdivided and sold in eighth-, quarter-, or half-block lots.²³ By 1813 Samuel

Rodman Jr. sold six lots on the west side of Seventh Street. The earliest extant houses on Seventh Street were both built in 1807. Captain John H. Congdon built 29 Seventh at the southwest corner of School Street but lived there only four years: he died on board the merchant ship *Aldebaran* in 1811, at the age of thirty-seven. His widow Frances Hyer Congdon and her children Elizabeth and Sarah lived in the house for decades. Sarah and Elizabeth, who remained single, worked in the genteel profession of mantuamaker, or dressmaker.²⁴ Sarah Congdon died at the 29 Seventh Street in 1883 and may have been the last of the family to occupy the house. Also in 1807 Elkanah Tallman built on the northwest corner of Seventh and Walnut, what is now 77 Walnut Street. On South Sixth Street the earliest surviving houses are 13 and 17, both built by Humphrey Russell in 1804. The War of 1812 and the depression that followed it seems to have forestalled house building in this neighborhood, and presumably in New Bedford generally, until about 1820, when Captain John Akin built a dwelling at the northwest corner of Madison and Seventh Streets, Humphrey Russell built 46 South Sixth for his daughter, and Gilbert Russell built a third home at 61 South Sixth Street. In 1822 both Philip Anthony (14 South Sixth) and Abraham Allen (50 Bedford) built their homes. With the exception of Gilbert Russell's first house at the head of Walnut and Abraham Russell's at the head of Union, no homes have survived on County Street from this period, and none had been built on the east side north of Bedford Street. The mansion-building era on the east side of County did not begin until 1827, when Samuel Rodman Jr. built his plain dwelling out of granite on the southeast corner of its intersection with Spring Street. Most of the houses that have survived in this neighborhood were built from the late 1820s to about 1850.²⁵

In geographic terms, the terrain of the neighborhood roughly matches the expense that must have

been incurred in building homes. The gradual slope from the riverfront to its peak at County Street rises noticeably between Fifth and Sixth Streets; between Russell and Wing Streets it drops at least as noticeably. As this drop occurs, dwellings were more built more closely together and in more vernacular styles, just as commercial structures began to appear and building density increased east of Sixth Street. While the Union Street end was a mix of homes and shops before the Civil War, the other, or southern, end of the neighborhood was a residential area of smaller homes occupied by people of color, Irish immigrants, and working-class whites. The only boardinghouses in the neighborhood were here, between Bedford and Wing Street. Aside from Nathan Johnson and his wife Polly, who owned four properties at Seventh and Spring Streets, no people of color in this neighborhood owned any property north of Bedford Street before the Civil War.

That a negative perception came to attach itself to this more southerly part of the neighborhood is indicated by the public corner over Dog Corner in the 1830s and early 1840s. Dog Corner was the intersection of County, Allen, and Wing Streets just south of the point where County Street began its descent to the ocean from the bluff occupied increasingly by the town's elite. It thus bordered the Bedford-Wing-lower County section. Dog Corner was what Zephaniah Pease labeled a "a disreputable neighborhood," one of several such pockets in the antebellum city. In late October 1831 Samuel Rodman Jr. wrote in his diary, "Spent a considerable part of the day in promoting the prosecution of several individuals who are in the habit of selling liquor without license to the great detriment of the public morals. Complaints entered before justice Bradford, against Rich'd Johnson, Job Swift, Wm. Hurl, Peleg Albro, and Robert Ingraham." Ten years later Rodman was still concerned about the neighborhood. In mid-June 1841, after having made a sweep of "grog

shops” as well as vessels and boardinghouses, Rodman stopped to “remonstrate with Ira Jennings, a keeper of one of the infamous places at ‘Dogcorner.’” Clearly the area was generally perceived as a blight, for later that month and through the first half of July four pseudonymous correspondents complained about it in the *Mercury*, the city’s principal newspaper. Like the others, “Enquirer” pointedly asked why city officials seemed unwilling or incapable of restoring and preserving “public peace” in Dog Corner:

It is well known that there is one place at least in a settled part of this village, at the crossing of two public streets, where there is daily and nightly constant exhibitions of drunkenness, brawling and profanity; and at dusk such is the concourse assembled there that it is not only disgusting and indecent, but such is the character of the assemblage, that it is dangerous for civil persons to pass in the vicinity. It is now years since the neighborhood alluded to, has been a moral stain and a public curse upon our community—and yet every summer the same scenes are repeated. . . . There does seem to be an incongruity in allowing in a civilized community a whole district to be debased by atrocious scenes of paganism, and no effort made to prevent the calamity. In the district I allude to, the houses are occupied by many tenants—some men, some women, some married and some unmarried, some in cellars and some in garrets, each having an apartment that at dark is thronged with visitors—and at that hour the fiddle strikes up and the place swarms. And here also may be seen children by dozens who are becoming initiated into the vilest habits, which cannot fail to lead them to the public prisons.²⁶

“Enquirer” noted that 249 New Bedford citizens had called a town meeting to determine how to

“suppress illegal grog-shops” and had appointed a committee of fifty to help town officers rid the place of them. “And yet,” the writer noted, “grog-shops are (if possible) more numerous than ever. And now the brothels are as public as the grog-shops; and we have it from the lips of the harlots themselves, that they had rather ‘mount the gallows’ than have their children to walk in their footsteps—and yet nothing is done to rescue those children, nor to suppress the growing evil.” In the next week’s *Mercury*, “Observer” charged that New Bedford residents were “indifferent to the whole subject” and that the profit motive involved in selling liquor on the part of what he termed “the *one* class” overrode any general disapproval or indignation about intemperance. The 1851 volume *Rich Men of Massachusetts* asserted that the basis of several New Bedford fortunes lay in the liquor trade. The tongue-in-cheek description for Abraham Barker termed him “a Quaker, whom the SPIRIT moved to make money all the time . . . he once dealt largely in ‘blue ruin,’” a contemporary euphemism for gin. Of the next-listed Jonathan Bourne Jr. the book pointed out that “a little liquor [was] at the bottom here too,” and of Alexander Gibbs’s assessed worth of \$100,000 that “considerable liquor lies at the foundation of the above ‘figure,’ as Mr. Gibbs would probably admit.”²⁷

The 1841 town meeting and the *Mercury* letters, presumably coupled with other complaints, appear to have triggered a crackdown in the area. In September 1841 Rodman recorded having taken “a short walk before breakfast round Dog Corner to see if the rum traffic was in action, but did not see any proofs that such was the case.”²⁸ “Enquirer” had bemoaned the fact that the “riotous proceedings” in Dog Corner “disturb the peace of those whose houses are so situated that they must pass and repass through a throng of drunken and profane men and women.” Thus it was arguably an issue of how one traversed a city in which neighborhoods had begun to be

segregated by class and income. When the Ark riots of the 1820s caused public alarm, the homes of such wealthy persons as Samuel Rodman Sr. and Andrew Robeson were merely blocks from the infamous lower Middle Street institution. But just as the mansion-building era on and near County Street blossomed in the 1830s, rowdiness, prostitution, and drunkenness were issues not only in Dog Corner but in the Marsh (on the waterfront by Howland Street) and Hard-Dig, that section of Kempton Street that was earlier part of Dartmouth. So too were public complaints about the city's apparent inability to establish control over these districts. One may speculate that as law enforcement officials left these areas largely unregulated, people of the middle and elite classes were less and less likely to venture into them.

By 1820, fourteen people of color were living in the homes of whites in this neighborhood. Two—one adult man and one adult woman—lived in the home of Charles Waln Morgan, then on the south side of Union between Sixth and Seventh Streets. It seems likely that these two were Nathan and Polly (Mary J. Mingo Durfee) Johnson, who had married in New Bedford on 24 October 1819. The couple were not listed in their own household in the 1820 census, and judging by numerous of Morgan's papers—diaries, letters, receipts, and deeds—it is clear that both Johnsons worked for Morgan's family. One entry in the household accounts of Sarah Morgan is a debit for wages due "Polly Johnson (came to us 1st mo 22nd 1820)"; she worked for them off and on at least through 1826, and her name appears in Morgan's domestic account book in 1833 as well.²⁹ The Morgans also employed Polly Johnson's daughter, Rhoda Durfee (later Berry), on several occasions, and Nathan Johnson worked for them regularly. In 1823 Morgan's accounts record wages due him for working on the highways (probably as Morgan's substitute), at the couple's house, garden, and stables, and for general labor over a period from 21 June to 23 November. And

a year earlier Morgan's reference to "my black man Nathan" in a letter to William Logan Fisher in Philadelphia almost certainly refers to Nathan Johnson, with whom he had a relationship until Johnson left the city for the California gold rush.³⁰

Morgan, a Philadelphia native, had married New Bedford's Sarah Rodman in June 1819. Polly Johnson was an Afro-Indian from Fall River, but her husband's origins are obscure. Though he may have been born in Philadelphia about 1795, as he several times stated, his death record records his birthplace as Virginia. His parents were both Virginians, according to this record, but only his mother's name, Emily, is listed. As Emily Brown she lived with the Johnsons at their 21 Seventh Street home by 1850, and she died there in 1857. Her death record states her birthplace as Philadelphia and her parents as unknown. In 1857, however, enslaved people who had escaped to the North were still in danger of arrest and rendition, and thus it is at least possible that Nathan Johnson, who probably reported his mother's information for the death record, was not entirely candid about her origins, as he was not about his own.³¹

The identities of the other black people living, and no doubt working, in white households in 1820 is unknown: the federal census, the only listing available at this time for New Bedford, lists only householders by name. Five people of color were in the household of William Rotch Jr., who had not yet moved to County Street; there were three in the home of James Howland 2d, two lived in the household of William H. Allen, and one each was listed in the households of John Howland Jr., Constant Norton, and Abraham Russell. By 1830 two people of color were listed in both the James Howland and David Coffin households, three at William H. Allen's, two at William Rotch Jr.'s, and one each in the households of Levi Standish, Joseph Dunbar, and George

Howland. The person of color listed in Howland's household that year was almost certainly John Briggs, who was then twenty-four years old; Briggs married the next year and is shown in his own household by the first city directory of 1836. By 1840 twenty-two blacks lived in white households in this area, up from twelve ten years before.³² As a proportion of all live-in people of color in the city, however, they did not compose a greater share over this period: 21 percent of all live-in people of color in New Bedford were in this neighborhood in 1820, while in 1840 the proportion was 22 percent. Still, in New Bedford as a whole the proportion of the black population living in white households had steadily declined, from 32 percent in 1820 to slightly less than 11 percent in 1830. Judging by the 1840 census (used in conjunction with the 1836 and 1841 city directories to determine places of residence), about eighty-two people of color then lived in this neighborhood; thus about 27 percent of the total lived in white households. Even though comparable figures for 1820 cannot be derived because no systematic recording of residence exists before the mid-1830s, it does appear that living in was more common in this neighborhood than in other parts of New Bedford and that the tendency to live in was probably not in decline. Certainly the presence of blacks in white households was more widespread—twenty-two people of color were living in seventeen households—which probably reflects the increasing affluence of the areas' whites.

The publication of New Bedford's first directory in 1836 makes it possible to identify some of the people of color who lived and worked in white households. John Goings, who was born in the South but rarely reported the same state of origin, lived in the 47 South Sixth Street household of Mary Rotch (after her death the home of Rotch's companion Mary Gifford) from at least 1841 to at least 1870. He worked there as a waiter and later as a coachman. In 1843 Goings purchased a lot with a dwelling house on it on the east side of County Street between Bedford and Wing

Streets, just east of the Bedford Street property Cuffe Lawton had purchased in 1835. Two years later he bought another lot with at least two houses on it on lower Madison Street. He appears to have rented these houses, for he is not listed in his own household, on William Street, until the 1880 census. He died in 1898 at the age of ninety-two, at which time his death record shows his birthplace as Maryland; his parents' names were not listed.

Other people of color also lived and worked for Mary Rotch or Gifford. Shortly after the death of her husband James in 1839, Nancy King was listed among the city's tax delinquents. James King had "been sick a long time," the record stated, and his widow was so poor that she could not pay the \$1.50 property tax on their Middle Street home. By 1841 Nancy King was living in Mary Rotch's household. The same memo of tax delinquents lists the mariner Henry Freeman, who in 1840 was in the crew of the whaling vessel *Averick*; his surname was one regularly assumed by people of color who had been freed from slavery. Henry Howland Crapo, who compiled the tax list, noted that Freeman's wife "lives at Mary Rotch's." Patience Freeman was a Rhode Island native, but her husband Henry was probably from Johnson County, North Carolina. Freeman went to sea off and on through about 1855 and worked as a shoemaker or a laborer when ashore. When he died in New Bedford in 1871, he owned three houses and three lots in the city's West End. His wife Patience died in the city twenty years later. Like Patience Freeman, Mary Flood Collins was also a Rhode Islander: she, Goings, and Grace Chase lived and worked at 47 South Sixth in 1850. All that is known of Chase is that she was born in Maryland; after 1850 she is never again recorded as a New Bedford resident.

The households of David Russell Greene, William Rotch Rodman, and Edward Coffin Jones also

included people of color at one time or another, and sometimes continuously, from at least 1836 through the mid-1850s. In 1836 James W. Harris, who stated his birthplace as Philadelphia, worked for David R. Greene before buying his own property on Ray Street (now Acushnet Avenue). In 1849 Virginia native Ananias Smith lived and worked at Greene's 56 South Sixth Street home. Smith, whose wife was also a Virginian and whose daughter Ann had been born there in 1836, migrated to California (probably with their son Jeremiah); his wife died in New Bedford in 1871. The fugitive David W. Ruggles lived first in the home of Andrew Robeson on North Second Street, then may have worked but not lived at the County Street home of Robeson's son Thomas, and finally lived in the two prewar households of Edward Coffin Jones, at 55 Walnut Street and then at 104 County Street (the William Rotch Jr. mansion) before he too went to California, probably in 1853.³³ Also at the Jones County Street household in the 1850s were Sarah Hobbs, Eliza Ann (or Elizabeth) Spaden, Lucy Ann Williams, and possibly Isabella Roberts White. White was a fugitive from slavery, and Hobbs may well have been. At least two men of color, both fugitives, at William Rotch Rodman's 104 County Street estate—Thomas Randolph (who also worked and lived at D. R. Greene's) and John S. Jacobs—while other people of color lived out and worked for him for decades, including William and Robert Piper and William H. Roshier, who married William Piper's daughter Sarah.³⁴ Substantially more people of color who worked for whites in this neighborhood lived in their own households, as the Pipers did, or with other people of color in multifamily dwellings; their stories are described as part of the larger web of connections between neighborhood residents.

Wealth and Work in the County-South Sixth Neighborhood

The political and economic character of the antebellum neighborhood ranged from great wealth to poverty, the kind that required occasional or regular relief from the city's overseers of the poor. In

1829, for example, William Rotch Jr., who moved to his County Street home in 1834, paid the highest tax in the city. George Howland (now 245 Walnut) paid the third highest, Samuel Rodman Jr. was fourth, and James and John Howland's company, not counting their smaller individual estates, was fifth. While Rotch paid \$1017 in tax that year, Nathan Johnson paid \$4.55 on his real estate; what personal estate he may then have owned was not of sufficient value to tax. Leonard Jenney and Joshua Richmond, both at the beginning of their careers, paid seventy cents in tax in 1829, and many people, both white and black, owned no real or personal estate and paid only poll tax.³⁵ By 1855, Edward C. Jones was New Bedford's wealthiest resident with \$514,900 in real and personal property. William Rotch Rodman's estate was valued at \$462,800, David R. Greene's and Abraham Hathaway Howland's at more than \$186,000. At the lower end of the economic spectrum were such men as George F. Fletcher (114 Seventh), who owned \$900 in real estate, Tillinghast Soule (47 Bedford) at \$700, Humphrey Smith (49 Bedford) and John Ryan (rear of 87 School) with \$500, and John Sylvester, whose house on leased land at 114 Seventh Street was valued at only \$100. As in 1829, many people owned only personal estate or nothing of sufficient value to tax.

At midcentury, many of New Bedford's most affluent citizens lived here in houses that were among the most valuable in a city that was viewed as the richest in the nation, if not the world. In 1855, city journalists figured, the city's total wealth based on assessors' records was \$25,809,000, the average wealth per taxpayer \$5,979.84, and the average wealth per capita \$1,265.83. In 1860 the New Bedford *Republic Standard* reprinted an excerpt from a New York *Evening Post* article on this affluence. "In case of an equal distribution of property . . . among all the inhabitants the share of each man, woman and child, would exceed \$1000. There is not a city in the Union with

such an aggregate of wealth according to the population.”³⁶ In 1849 William Rotch Rodman’s house and two-acre lot were worth \$33,000; he also owned land on Wing Street as well as 90 South Sixth Street. His personal property—chiefly shares ranging from one-sixteenth to full ownership of fifteen whaling ships and barks and three schooners—was estimated at more than \$230,000.³⁷ William Rotch Jr.’s property next door—his house, barn, and one-acre lot—was valued at \$20,000. George Howland’s lot and plainer house on Walnut Street was valued at only \$7000, but his entire estate was estimated at \$488,600. In terms of today’s purchasing power, that sum would be about \$12 million. The value of the 38 South Sixth home and lot of John Howland Jr. was set at \$21,000 in 1849, while the homes and house lots of Samuel W. Rodman, Gideon Allen, George Howland Jr., Ann Howland Dunbar, Mary Gifford, David R. Greene, David Coffin’s widow Sarah, and John C. Haskell were valued at between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

Some of these more expensive homes were also architect-designed dwellings. The first house designed by later-famed architect Richard Upjohn was the 110 (now 396) County Street home of William Rotch Jr., built in 1834, while Providence architect Russell Warren designed the homes of William Rotch Rodman and Joseph Grinnell, the latter on the west side of County Street. Rodman’s 1833 mansion was said to have cost more than \$74,000 to build; his and John Avery Parker’s similarly high-style mansion of 1834 in the city’s Acushnet Heights section were among the most expensive houses in Greek Revival style then to emerge on the national landscape. Governor Edward Everett termed Rodman’s house “the most magnificent establishment I ever saw in America.” Before the house was built the two-acre lot alone was worth \$13,000, more than almost every house with its lot in the neighborhood. In 1835 Charles Francis Adams, son of former president John Quincy Adams, stated that County Street generally “has lately risen like

magic, and . . . presents more noble looking mansions than any other in the country.” His father referred to them as “fine Palace Houses.”³⁸ With the exception of the more modest but quite stylish Samuel W. Rodman house of 1842, all of the prewar mansions on County Street (those of Joseph Grinnell, Cornelius Grinnell Jr., William Rotch Rodman, William Rotch Jr., Gilbert Russell, James Arnold, and Samuel Rodman Jr.) had been built by the time the Adamses visited the city.

Some of these new houses reflected the continuing influence of Quaker testimonies on plainness and material display. Zephaniah Pease noted of the house Samuel Rodman Jr. built in 1827-28 at the corner of County and Spring Streets, “The severity of its architecture conformed to the mandate of the Friends that there must be avoidance of ostentation in all things.” When Rodman’s aunt Mary Rotch and her “friend and protege” Mary Gifford finished their South Sixth Street home in 1838, Rodman’s ideas about architecture were clear in his approval of the place. “The scale of their house and its finish is unostentatious and unpretending, in unison with the modest merit and unambitious character of my Aunt,” Rodman wrote.³⁹ Her house, which has been moved and much altered, was originally a five-bay, story-and-a-half structure with Dutch gables and end chimneys; the center entrance was flanked by double columns.⁴⁰

Yet the grandeur of others homes was unsettling to some local Quakers, and no house was apparently more provocative than the one William Rotch Rodman built on County Street in 1833. Rodman’s want of modesty bothered his father, who in 1819 complained in a letter that this son William had “never been satisfied with reasonable and moderate things. . . . In his determination to be rich he has embraced schemes that common judgement and foresight would

have turned from with disgust.” Especially when compared to the house his brother Samuel Rodman Jr. built four years earlier, the immoderate tendency William Rotch Rodman exhibited was reflected in his home.⁴¹ Even his children were uncomfortable about the house. After their father died in 1855, Samuel Rodman Jr. wrote, “My brother William’s children are desirous to sell without delay his splendid mansion as it is on a scale of magnificence which neither of them wish to possess.”

The elegance of the Rodman mansion also disturbed Abraham Hathaway Howland—at least until he bought it. According to local historian Edmund Wood, Howland warned members of his family against building houses on County Street because living there would expose them to, as Wood put it, “pernicious influence”; there they would be compelled to associate with “young men of expensive habits and their sound inborn Quakerism might even be contaminated by those wicked Unitarians.” But when Rodman’s heirs put the house up for auction of 29 September 1855, Howland made what he viewed to be an unrealistically low bid of \$33,500 on the property. That bid prevailed, and, Wood said of Howland, “now he supposed he would have to live there, although it was contrary to all his convictions.” Howland remained at 104 County Street until his death in 1867, and his family continued to live there until about 1907.⁴²

Many of the men for whom these stylish homes were built had a good deal of power or influence in New Bedford. Three of New Bedford’s first seven mayors, through the end of the Civil War, lived in this neighborhood—Abraham Hathaway Howland (1847-51), George Howland Jr. (1855-58, 1862-65), and George H. Dunbar (1857-58), the son of Elisha and Ann Howland Dunbar. George Howland Jr. and James Bunker Congdon had been selectmen; Frederick Bryant, who lived

at 78 Spring Street, was the city treasurer and tax collector in the mid-1850s. A few neighborhood residents were active in state politics. Thomas A. Greene (1827-36, 1838-41), George Howland Jr. (1840-41, 1852), Robert Gibbs (1860-61), and Thomas D. Eliot (1839, 1846) were all members of the Massachusetts General Court, either as representatives or senators. Eliot was also a United States senator (1854-55, 1859-69). In addition to being principal owners and agents in the whaling industry, many men were directors of the city's banks and insurance companies, including George Howland Sr. (president of Commercial Bank from 1819 to 1855), George Howland Jr. (president of New Bedford Five-Cent Savings Bank from 1855 to 1892), William Rotch Rodman (president of Mechanics Bank), and directors John Howland Jr. (Commercial Bank), Abraham Barker, William H. Allen, and Nehemiah Leonard (Merchants Bank), and George W. Baker (New Bedford Institution for Savings). James Bunker Congdon was cashier and Peleg C. Howland assistant cashier at Merchants Bank, while Congdon's brother Joseph was cashier and William C. Coffin clerk at the Mechanics Bank. Barker, George Howland Jr., James Howland 2d, Abraham Hathaway Howland, Moses Gibbs, and Joseph Ricketson Sr. and Jr. were all presidents or directors of local insurance companies. There were also professionals, such attorneys as Eliot and Thomas A. Greene, and Paul Spooner, a highly regarded physician. In 1856 one factory owner—Peleg S. Macy, who ran a sash and blind factory on Leonard's Wharf, lived at 55 Bedford Street.

The neighborhood, however, was not the exclusive province of well-to-do whites. There were, for one thing, numerous white laborers, mariners, and domestics. With very few exceptions, these people lived on Bedford, Wing, lower Seventh, and lower County Streets. In 1849 they included such seamen as William B. Allen (38 Bedford in 1849), Benjamin Brownell (52 Bedford), Peter O'Connor (44 Bedford), Robert Soule (47 Bedford), Henry Buxton (60 Wing), and Francis C. and

William H. Stimpson (94 County); laborers including Samuel Haskins and his son Joseph (42 Bedford), Rodney Howland (108 Seventh), James O'Connor (44 Bedford), Humphrey Smith (49 Bedford), and Lettis Weston (95 South Sixth). A fair number of white men were live-in domestics—Mark Dollard, who worked for and lived with Abraham Barker; Timothy Mahoney and Bernard (elsewhere “Booman”) Reynolds, at the John H. W. Page home at 61 South Sixth; Edward O'Connell, for Samuel Rodman Jr. at 92 Spring; Fernando Norbert, at William Rotch Jr.'s estate; James Hogan, at the 89 Spring Street home of Alexander Gibbs; John Holland, at Abraham Barker's on 26 South Sixth; and William Peschke at William Rotch Rodman's. Others, including the Scottish-born gardener Robert Allen, who worked for William Rotch Rodman, lived out in the neighborhood: he was at 90 South Sixth in 1849, a property Rodman owned.

The neighborhood also was home to a few men of questionable repute. William Hurl, a trader who lived on the southeast corner of Bedford and County Streets at least from the early 1830s through at least 1856, was probably the subject of many complaints about Dog Corner, only a block south of his home. In 1833 Hurl was assessed taxes on two houses, a shop, and a brewery, the last three of which may well have been in the infamous section. The most infamous resident of the neighborhood was Caleb Miller, who lived at 33 Seventh Street in the mid-1830s. The *New Bedford Mercury* reported in early June 1835, “Capt. Caleb Miller, of the brig *America*, arrived at N. York a few days since has been taken into custody on an information against him for introducing slaves into this country. It appears that two colored children, about five or six years old, came to this country in the brig, who, according to the statement of Capt. M., were presented to him by their parents, at Luondo, and at Novorondo [both in Angola]. Capt. M. states that it was his intention to bring them up in his own family, and that he took the children solely for that

purpose.”⁴³ The *America* was a registered New Bedford vessel and, according to trial testimony, was owned by “Messrs. Hathaway and Swain”—that is, New Bedford merchants William H. Hathaway and William W. Swain. New Bedford native Moses H. Grinnell, representing the New York firm of Grinnell and Minturn, the vessel’s agent, stated that the *America* had been trading on the African coast since 1830. The *Mercury* alleged that the case came to public notice through the efforts of “certain abolitionist gentlemen”; testimony at the ensuing trial stipulated that a crewman of color had alerted authorities to the presence of the two African girls on board the brig when it returned to New York.

Released on bail of three thousand dollars, Miller returned to New Bedford with the *America*’s mate, John Baptiste, who was probably black.⁴⁴ Once they arrived, however, both were taken into custody again, and a legal argument then ensued in the United States District Court in New York about the jurisdiction of the case. The presiding judge ruled that Miller could be tried in both New York and Massachusetts. Daniel Webster and Charles H. Curtis, the *Mercury* noted, were Miller’s attorneys.⁴⁵ The *Mercury*, never an abolitionist newspaper, later reported that Miller, who “had always borne a highly respectable character in private life, as well as in his profession,” had been hired to command the *America* on a trading voyage to Madeira and then Africa. In Africa he sailed to the mouth of a river “called Rio Danda or Nova Danda, where domestic slavery exists in as full force as it does in Virginia or South Carolina.” While anchored there Miller was asked to take thirty Africans to a destination the *Mercury* did not reveal. At Miller’s New York trial, the New York *Herald* reported, Swain testified that he understood “it is common practice to take passengers, who are slaves, from one port to another, on the Coast of Africa—does not know whether the vessel had carried slaves before or not—this was Miller’s first voyage in the vessel.”

Both Swain and Grinnell testified that neither had given Miller orders to deal in slaves.

According to the *Mercury*, Miller had brought two girls to New Bedford to give them “employment in his family.” The newspaper editors (principally, probably solely, Benjamin Lindsey, who lived in this neighborhood on Russell Street) had not “the slightest doubt, that in tearing as he did, those two female children from the bonds of slavery, and bringing them to this happy country, he was actuated alone by *humanity*, the very best of motives.” At the trial one Captain Ezra Forster, who was on the African coast on another vessel when Miller was there, conveyed his impression to the court that one of the children was given to Miller by “a lady to bring to New York”; the other child, called Columbia, was given to Miller by the slave owner Donna Anna. The *Herald* reported that Forster “understood the captain was to keep her till she was twenty years of age as a servant, when she was to be free.” Both Miller and Battiste were acquitted in New York of receiving and transporting Africans with the intent to sell them as slaves, but Miller was found guilty on the charge of having brought the two girls to the United States to be “held to labor.” The two children were kept by court-appointed guardians and then transferred to the custody of a federal marshall. What became of them and of Miller has so far not been determined.

Battiste, in prison in Boston since the New York trial, was tried in circuit court in Massachusetts in December 1835. There he testified that he had worked for “the respectable house of Messrs Hathaway of New Bedford” for sixteen years. The court, on the grounds that he and other crew should have left the vessel once they learned “slaves” were aboard, found Battiste guilty. But because it was his first offense and many had testified to his character, he was ordered to pay a fine of one hundred dollars and spend thirty days in a New Bedford jail.⁴⁶

The occupations of the people of color in the County-South Sixth neighborhood ranged the spectrum of jobs then available to them. At the top of the ladder in terms of prestige were clergy, proprietors, and skilled tradespeople. Certainly the best known among whites in New Bedford were Nathan and Polly Johnson of 21 Seventh Street. Next to Richard Johnson, a trader on South Water Street who had been in New Bedford from 1806—and who owned property on South Sixth Street—Nathan Johnson was the most prosperous man of color in the city by midcentury. As early as 1835 abolitionist Samuel J. May had termed Johnson's holdings a "very pretty estate" that included a large lot, at least two houses, and residential and commercial property in other parts of town; in 1849 assessors set the value of his real estate at \$15,500 and his personal estate at \$3,200.⁴⁷ Before the war he or his wife owned 17-19 Seventh (the first Friends meetinghouse), 21 and 23 Seventh (their house and shop), and 96 Spring Street, just behind the old meetinghouse.

The city's elite patronized, evidently regularly, the fancy confectionary and store the Johnsons ran. Johnson's advertisement in a July 1830 issue of the *New Bedford Mercury* noted the availability of "Fresh Bordeaux Almonds; superior (French) Olives, Olive Oil, Prunes, Cocoa Nuts, Oranges, Lemons, Lemon Syrup, shelled Almonds, Spices, &c. &c. Confects, Jellies, Ice Cream, Cake, Candies, &c. as usual. Refreshments served up in the best manner, and charges moderate."⁴⁸ The confectionary business was his wife's. One 1913 reminiscence recalled "Polly Johnson's candy shop on Seventh street, with its toothsome ginger cookies, sticks of candy and spruce gum. . . . Polly Johnson hobbled about her little candy shop exchanging the children's pennies for Jackson-balls and John Brown's bullets."⁴⁹ In 1845, in an effort to persuade Boston abolitionist Wendell Phillips to speak in New Bedford, Deborah Weston wrote, "Polly Johnson shall freeze her best ice

& ice her best cakes” if he should come.⁵⁰ Nathan Johnson was probably better known as a proprietor of various city institutions (a bath house and a dry goods store among them) and as a caterer. In 1880 Daniel Ricketson recalled that in the 1840s Johnson “and his worthy wife, ‘Polly,’ were the *sine qua none* at all the fashionable parties of our places, as caterers and waiters.”⁵¹ In 1847 Johnson also owned a one-eighth share of the whaleship *Draper*.⁵²

Peter Ross, who lived at 42 Bedford Street in 1855, was a Methodist minister of national standing within his church. In 1840, when he was also a New Bedford resident but living in the west end, the General and Annual Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of America named him one of the ministers appointed to oversee the conference for the next year. In 1840 Ross organized the city’s “Zion’s Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.” The *Mercury* reported at the time of the church’s founding that it had forty-four members and “a Sabbath School of thirty-six scholars” who then occupied “a school house on South Second though unsuitable.” It was the same “little schoolhouse on Second Street” in which William C. Coffin (who then lived at 34 South Sixth Street) heard Frederick Douglass speak and thereupon invited him to speak at the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society convention on Nantucket. That Nantucket meeting launched Douglass’s long and remarkable career.⁵³ Still, the city’s record of tax delinquents, which termed Peter Ross a “travelling minister,” noted that he was poor.⁵⁴

Other proprietors of color were neighborhood residents. Richardson Brown, a native of Tennessee, ran a restaurant on 19 First Street and lived at 46 Wing Street in 1856. George F. and David S. Fletcher, who may have been brothers and had come to the city from Washington, ran an oyster house at the corner of Union and Fourth (now Purchase) Street. In 1838 Joseph Ricketson

Jr. leased the Fletchers a lot on North Sixth Street for ten years, at a payment of fifty dollars every six months over that term. The next day they entered into a remarkably detailed contract with the housewrights Timothy D. Cook and Braddock Gifford to construct the shop—ten feet high, twenty by thirty-seven feet square, and one story with a partition to separate the rear “Cooking room” from the front. It was probably the 19 North Sixth Street shop where David’s wife Martha ran a confectionary in 1841.⁵⁵

Over the twenty years between 1836 and 1856, four blacksmiths lived in the neighborhood. The best known was Lewis Temple (about 1784-1854), who in 1848 invented but did not patent the toggle iron. Considered one of the few true technological innovations in whaling in the 1800s, the harpoon point swivelled so that it locked into a harpooned whale, which decreased greatly the chances of the iron slipping out. Temple had come to New Bedford from Richmond, Virginia, by June 1829, when he married Mary Clark, perhaps of Baltimore, in New Bedford, and he lived from at least 1836 through the mid-1840s at 42 Bedford Street.⁵⁶ The shop of James Durfee produced some thirteen thousand Temple toggle irons from its invention through 1868. Like his father, Temple’s son Lewis Jr. (born about 1830) was also a blacksmith who worked for Dean and Driggs at the foot of Walnut Street, where the Temple family had moved by 1849. Temple died in 1854 as the result of an accident near the new shop the New Bedford firm of Delano and Pierce was then building for him at the foot of School Street. His son later became a barber, also a well-respected occupation among people of color.⁵⁷

By 1841 Nelson Mason, the grandson of Richard Johnson, was working as a blacksmith and living with Temple; in the early 1850s Miguel Fortes, a Cape Verdean who had married Mary Clark, the

niece of Temple's wife, worked as a blacksmith and lived at 42 Bedford. Christopher Kent, who lived at 95 South Sixth in the early 1850s, was a blacksmith in New Bedford before he left for California in mid-decade; so too was Manuel Antone (who may have been Azorean rather than Cape Verdean), who lived at 80 South Sixth, the home of black laborer Marshall Potts.

Among the numerous black mariners in the neighborhood were several who achieved the rank of mate, including two of Cuffe Lawton's sons. Historian Martha Putney has stated that Frederick Lawton went to sea at the age of fourteen on the 1830 voyage of the whaler *Charles*, which was owned by Samuel Rodman, David Coffin, and Andrew Robeson; he was among the crew on that vessel on every whaling voyage it took until 1841. He then served as second mate on the bark *Superior* on its 1849 whaling voyage to the Pacific, second mate of the ship *Martha* of Fairhaven in 1856, and first mate on the Newport whaler *Dolphin* in 1862.⁵⁸ He was lost at sea in the same year.

Men of color who were ordinary seamen, as they were often termed, were numerous. Marshall L. Potts, who came to New Bedford probably from Springfield, Pennsylvania, by 1823 (when he married the Afro-Indian woman Cynthia Auker), was a mariner off and on through 1850 and in 1840 bought a large lot at the southeast corner of South Sixth and Bedford Streets with Nathaniel A. Borden. In 1842 Borden sold Potts the western half of this lot, and the two families lived side by side (Borden on Bedford Street between Sixth and Fifth) for decades. Potts worked at other times as a lamplighter and newspaper carrier for Benjamin Lindsey's *Mercury*. William Piper's son Robert, who lived next east of the Lawton family, was also a mariner from the late 1830s through the mid-1850s, though he may have worked on coasting vessels rather than whalers. When Potts died in 1875 his house was put up for sale and apparently bought by Robert Piper, whose wife Alexine owned it until her death in 1885. The house was taken down for Morse Twist Drill by

1865. The black mariner John L. Jackson lived two doors south of the Potts home in the late 1840s, and in the early 1850s the mariners James Natus and William I. Lewis lived at 95 South Sixth Street, which the black trader Richard Johnson and then his heirs owned.

In this same neighborhood on lower South Sixth Street, Bedford Street, and Wing Street lived most of the men and women who worked as laborers and in other homes in service. The fugitive Henry (later William Henry) Johnson, who lived at 46 Wing Street, was at first a laborer and then a city crier before becoming a lawyer in the late 1850s. William Price, a laborer who may also have been a fugitive, lived at 95 South Sixth Street in 1849. In that same year Martha Fletcher, the widow of David, and Anna Williams Almy both took in washing and lived at 86 South Sixth Street, where the mariner John L. Jackson also lived. At that time the property was owned by Eleanor Lee, a woman of color from Virginia about whom little else is known.

Men and women of color who worked in white households but lived on their own, usually in this southern section of the neighborhood, were more numerous than laborers. Joseph Bantum, who was born in Maryland and worked for Joseph Ricketson Jr. at his 179 Union Street home in 1849, lived at 26 Wing Street. He was working as a watchman on the wharves in 1854 when his body was found in the Acushnet River; he was believed to have drowned accidentally. His wife Fanny, also from Maryland, died three years later. Mary Blair, from Richmond, came to New Bedford about 1849 with her five (possibly six) children and was also working in Ricketson's home by 1850. Ricketson hired other people of color, some of whom are known by first name only from his correspondence and some of whom were definitely or probably fugitives. When fugitive Henry "Box" Brown stayed with Ricketson after his escape in 1848, he found "considerable

employment,” Ricketson wrote; “he has worked several days for me & if I commence manufacturing oil again I think I can give him constant employment.” In a letter to the abolitionist Deborah Weston written in September 1850, just weeks before the Fugitive Slave Act was passed, Ricketson described the response of some of his domestics—one of them probably Mary Blair—to a slaveholder agent’s attempt to take an alleged fugitive back to slavery from New Bedford:

The colored women were the first to hear it & they went in a body down there & in a few minutes the alarm was general—The colored men were at work or just returning & they spread it like wild fire from house to house, where colored persons lived—Some one left word at our House. John was about washing the dishes, he remembered us however by putting them all in the sideboard unwashed & locked it, & went on the Hill like a Race Horse—Mary, who is one of the best of women & kind disposition, was raging—she went ditto—& so did every one I presume.—Mary when she returned told me [she] would fight to the death because she would be doing God’s service—says she, I would hurl down the top or covers of range & stove on their heads like brick bats. I would fight like a Horse—and her eyeballs glistened I assure you & then she exclaimed—they not only [illeg] the body but the brains yes says she & even the soul. . . . In the evening every colored man had a club—John says he never saw so many clubs in his life—all the colored churches are shut up this evening & they have a public meeting in Sears Hall, where I presume they will vote to take a bold stance at least. . . . Mary has just returned from the meeting and says, they have appointed a committee to call on our city officers after twelve oclock for a writ to arrest the slaveholder George W. Wim & the constable a Sheriff Hays by six oclock in the morning,

for violating our laws.⁵⁹

In addition to such live-in domestics as Ananias Smith and Francis Brown, David R. Greene hired at least four other men of color to work for him between the mid-1830s and mid-1850s. George F. Fletcher worked as a laborer and waiter at Greene's 56 South Sixth Street home from 1845 to about 1850; he had earlier worked on Elm Street for Thomas Hathaway. Thomas Randall, from Richmond, was a porter at the Mansion House in 1849 and then a waiter at Greene's in 1850. James W. Harris, whose protection paper states Philadelphia as his birthplace, may have lived at Greene's when he worked there in 1838.

William Rotch Rodman also regularly hired people of color for domestic service. In addition to the fugitives Thomas Randolph and John S. Jacobs, Rodman provided more or less constant employment for William Piper. Piper lived first at 87 South Sixth Street and then at 46 Bedford, which became their family home for generations; Rodman's home was less than two blocks away on County Street. Born in 1786 in Virginia, Piper had been enslaved in Alexandria and may have been a fugitive when he came to New Bedford between 1825 and 1830. From about 1838 he worked for Rodman, sometimes if not always as a hostler; in 1854 the *New Bedford Republican-Standard* notes that Piper had been "in the employ of William R. Rodman for a number of years, and by his integrity and great fidelity to the trusts committed to his charge, has won for himself an honorable name."⁶⁰ After some time at sea, Piper's son Robert worked as a waiter at Rodman's from 1845 probably into the 1850s. In 1861, shortly before he died, Rodman's brother-in-law Charles W. Morgan also hired Piper. He wrote in his journal, "Robt Piper came at 1 o'clock to rub me & try what effect that will have." When Morgan died he owed money to Robert Piper and left

one hundred dollars to William Piper, “now in my employ” (William Rotch Rodman had died in 1855). William P. Roshier, born in Baltimore and William Piper’s son-in-law, was a gardener at William Rodman Rotch’s on the west side of County Street in the late 1830s and early 1840s; he then worked as a waiter at the Eagle Hotel and by 1849 ran a restaurant on County Street.⁶¹

Rodman’s brother Samuel Rodman Jr. and Samuel’s son Samuel W. Rodman (for whom a Gothic Revival house was built at 122 County in 1845) also hired men of color who lived out, but not far away. Edwin Dorster and Jackson Hawkins lived at 96 School Street, just behind Rodman’s house. Dorster, who was born in Virginia, was married to a Washington native and had seven children when he came to New Bedford about 1850. In that year he worked as a waiter for Rodman and then as a laborer for him. His wife Julia, born in Washington, and his children Ann, John, and Louisa were among the ninety-six founding members of Salem Baptist Church in 1858, but by 1865 the family moved back to Washington (though Edwin Dorster was not listed with them in that year’s census). At that time John Dorster worked in the federal government’s printing office, Anna (then married) was a dressmaker, and her sisters Louise and Marian were schoolteachers.⁶² In contrast, Jackson Hawkins and his family remained in New Bedford. His father Walter, who came to New Bedford in 1845, had been manumitted in Georgetown in 1826, when he was about forty-three years old, but there is no indication in the Washington Registers of Free Negroes that Jackson was born free or ever manumitted. He may have come from Washington with his father’s family, and by the late 1840s he was working for Samuel Rodman at 96 Spring. By the late 1850s Jackson Hawkins was living in the west end and visited the city’s overseers of the poor “for a chance to saw wood” and for heating coal. He died in New Bedford in 1890. His wife Ellen, a Baltimore native, died eight years earlier. His son John Jack Hawkins was sixteen years old when he

enlisted for a three-year term as a landsman in Union Navy at New York City.⁶³

The status of other domestics in the neighborhood is less clear. George Coleman, who in 1835 bought a lot on County Street between Wing and Bedford Streets from Abraham Barker, worked across the street for Joseph Grinnell through at least 1841. He must have lived out, at least in 1840, for the census lists only a black female domestic in Grinnell's household that year. Born in Virginia, Coleman was one of the nine men of color who owned the whaling vessel *Rising States* in 1836-37.⁶⁴ His daughter Elenora, according to the census, was born in Maryland in 1838, which suggests that she came to New Bedford after her father did. His marriage to Frances Barker Coleman, recorded at one time to have been born in Maryland and another as a New Bedford native, took place in 1841. It is possible that the two women came together and that the 1841 ceremony merely formalized the Colemans' marriage. In the later 1840s Coleman lived and was a "trader" with a shop on lower Dartmouth Street, not far from the lot he earlier owned, and the 1850 census recorded him as a gardener. The Colemans seem then to have disappeared from New Bedford.

The Breadth of Involvement in Whaling

There were some people in the County-South Sixth neighborhood who do not appear to have been involved with the whaling industry, but they were relatively few. John Perkins Jr., who lived at 17 Seventh Street, sold wallpaper in 1856; Henry V. Davis of 92 County Street owned a plant of North Water Street that manufactured chemicals (including Prussian blue, an early synthetic compound used as the basis for laundry bluing, is the blue pigment on cyanotype photographs, and was used to test irregularities in surfaces designed to be flat). Both Leonard Jenney and

Billings Corey were housewrights. George T. Moore was a saddle, trunk, and harness maker who lived at 33 Seventh Street (where Caleb Miller once lived) with William H. Willis, for whose company he worked. But the vast majority of blacks and whites were tied into the industry directly or indirectly. Even such boot and shoe makers as Daniel B. Davis (born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and the husband of William Piper's daughter Amelia) and boot and shoe dealers such as Lucien B. Keith of 76 South Sixth Street may have been making footwear for whaling crew members or selling to them.

The investment in whaling was widespread, particularly when it came to owning shares in whaling vessels. Of seventy-seven persons who can be identified as neighborhood residents and taxpayers in the 1833 assessor's records, forty (51.9 percent) owned shares ranging from 1/32 to full ownership. In 1849, 38 of 109 neighborhood taxpayers (34.8 percent) owned shares, while in 1855 63 of 202 persons (31.2 percent) in this neighborhood did. The declining share probably signifies the increasing expense involved in building and fitting out a whaler for ever longer voyages, which itself probably indicates greater inequality in the distribution of wealth in the city. Still, the proportion of neighborhood taxpayers who owned vessel shares is certainly high given the wide range of incomes that must have pertained there. In 1833 the low end of vessel investment among neighborhood residents was represented by that of the watchmaker Alanson Gooding (24 South Sixth), who owned one-eighth of the ship *Grand Turk*, and of the merchant Levi Standish (20 South Sixth), who owned a sixteenth share in the ships *Mercury* and *George Howland*. In 1855 the laborer Abner T. Davis (37 Seventh) owned a sixteenth share in the brig *Governor Carver* and the bark *Janet*, while laborer Frederick Davis (49 Bedford) owned a thirty-sixth of the bark *Champion* of Westport. The only other property Frederick Davis owned was half of the house and lot on which

he lived, valued at four hundred dollars.

At the higher end of investment in whaling vessels in 1833 were the brothers Gideon and William H. Allen, who owned three-quarters of the ship *Octavia*, five-eighths of the bark *Brahmin* and ship *Coral*, half of the ship *Victory*, five-sixteenths of the ship *Francis 2*, and a quarter of the J. W. & L. packet vessel. Alone Gideon Allen owned one-eighth of the sloop *Mary Howard* and the same share of the ships *Canton*, *Milwood*, *Leonidas*, and *Herald*. George Howland Sr. and Jr. were more heavily invested. Together they owned all of the ships *Ann Alexander*, *George and Susan*, and *Hope*; all but a sixteenth share of the ships *Corinthian* and *Java*; seven-eighths of the ship *Rousseau*, and three-quarters of the ship *Cortes*. On his own account George Howland Jr. owned half of the ship *Golconda* and one-eighth of the schooner *William Brown*.

An account of the *Grand Turk's* sixth voyage in 1834 provides some indication of what such shares were worth after a moderately successful voyage. In late January 1836 the *Grand Turk* brought home a lower-than-average quantity of sperm oil compared to other New Bedford whalers that sailed that year, but its 2400 barrels of whale oil was the second-highest take of the 42 vessels that returned to port that year. Abraham Barker (26 South Sixth) owned one-quarter of the vessel and was its agent. On this voyage the *Grand Turk* cleared \$15,155.18, which was split between eight men including Barker: a one-sixteenth share netted \$947.20, while Barker's quarter-share earned \$3788.79.⁶⁵ By 1855 Edward C. Jones, then living in the William Rotch Jr. mansion on County Street, owned \$287,300 in personal estate, the great bulk of which was tied up in shares in twenty-one whaling vessels that ranged from one-sixteenth to three-quarter interests. The personal estate of William Rotch Rodman, who had died that year, was worth \$360,000 and invested heavily in

larger shares of fewer vessels: the estate owned all of the ship *Audubon* and bark *Columbus*.

Whaling provided not only an investment opportunity for a full range of people in this neighborhood as elsewhere in New Bedford, but it was the source of employment for the majority of them. Many of the men who led the industry were born to a life of management and investment: William Rotch Jr., William Rotch Rodman, Edward C. Jones, Philip Anthony, Charles W. Morgan, and Samuel Rodman Jr., among probably others, never worked as crew or masters of whaling vessels. Others worked their way ashore through a career as a master mariner or captain. An uninspired student at both the New Bedford and Providence Friends' schools, Weston Howland Jr. first went to sea as a twelve-year-old on a coasting vessel from New Bedford, was a cabin boy at the age of thirteen, and took his first whaling voyage when he was fourteen (1829). One of the family biographers stated that Howland "followed this occupation until he had risen to a captaincy, and commanded a ship on a successful voyage."⁶⁶ By 1847 Weston Howland had become a ship Chandler and a whaling vessel owner and agent. Elisha Dunbar of 46 South Sixth Street was a shipmaster before moving ashore to run a ship chandlery, import and deal in bar iron, and own and manage whaling vessels. Edward C. Jones learned the industry as a clerk and then principal in Dunbar's firm. Joseph Dunbar of 26 South Sixth had also been a master mariner—at his death in July 1841 the *Mercury* noted that Dunbar had crossed the Atlantic sixty-eight times in his career and had never shipwrecked—before becoming a whaling agent.⁶⁷ So too was Elkanah Tallman (77 Walnut), who had commanded whalers in the first decade of the 1800s before he began to invest in whaling ships. Across the street from Tallman was Isaiah Burgess (76 Walnut), whose father Isaiah had been a master mariner (and captain of the *Beaver*, said to have been the first ship to fly the flag of the United States in a British port) and who was also a whaling captain.

Later in life he became partners in the whaling firm of Burgess and Howland with Abraham Hathaway Howland, who began his career as a outfitters' clerk and then an outfitter on his own; "dealing with the whalers as their outfitters," Pease noted, "[he] finally became a ship owner, and made two voyages as master of the ships he owned."⁶⁸

Like Howland, James D. Thompson (286 Union) also came to whaling investment through clerking. He was born on a Middleboro farm in 1807, worked in a Maine cotton mill, and then went to West Point. Ill health compelled him to leave the academy, however, and he came to New Bedford in 1827 to clerk for Ivory H. Bartlett, who lived on Union and Purchase Streets until the 1840s, when he moved to 26 Seventh Street. At some point over the next seventeen years that Thompson lived with and worked for Bartlett's firm, he bought an interest in the bark *Garland* and over time owned either wholly or partly seven vessels, including one named for him. Both Gideon and William H. Allen began their careers as tailors with their father James, a trade that brought them into outfitting and ultimately into agency and ownership. David R. Greene began his working life as a cabinet maker but eventually became a whaling agent and oil broker. In addition, many whaling agents and owners also owned shares of vessels in the coasting trade, which was a significant part of the port's business before the Civil War.

The neighborhood included many men who were master mariners or mariners but apparently not owners or agents. John Akin (51 Seventh), born in Dartmouth in 1787, spent most of his life in the coasting trade commanding packet vessels between New Bedford and Boston. He later became a pilot. Daniel Wood (33 Seventh), born a year earlier in the same town, was master of such vessels as the *Minerva*, *Commodore Decatur*, and *Braganza*. Like Akin he ended his career mostly shoreside

by becoming a ship inspector for insurance agents. Reuben Swift (12 South Sixth) was a master mariner as were his sons Obed and Rodolphus; in 1836 two other sons, Franklin K. and William C. N., were listed simply as mariners in the directory. In 1849 three of Abraham Barker's four sons were mariners: Alexander R. was master of the ship *Abraham Barker*, while Abraham Jr. and John A. Barker were both seamen.

The investment of many whaleship owners and agents extended to ancillary shoreside industries and services, most prominently oil and candle manufacture. David Coffin (34 South Sixth) owned six whaling vessels in the mid-1830s and a candleworks and tryhouse on Water Street. Nehemiah Leonard (180 Union) (whose Taunton family had founded and run forges since the seventeenth century) first operated a forge in Rochester and then came to New Bedford in 1822, where, according to local historian Leonard Ellis, he "drifted into the manufacture of oil." In the late 1840s Samuel Rodman Jr.'s son Edmund (92 Spring) was a partner with Leonard at his works, which he built in 1836 on his own wharf.⁶⁹ Leonard's brother Samuel began a separate oil factory in New Bedford in 1837 which even as late as 1870 made "immense numbers of candles a year" and refined both sperm and whale oil.⁷⁰ Samuel Rodman Jr., George Howland, James Howland 2d, Charles W. Morgan, William Tallman Russell, and William T. Hawes all owned candlehouses or oil factories in whole or in part in the early 1830s. Joseph Ricketson Jr. (179 Union), whose grandfather Daniel and father Joseph had owned, outfitted, and insured whalers and merchant vessels since the late 1700s, went into oil manufacture with Richard A. Palmer (17 Seventh) in the 1840s.

Many neighborhood people were in the business of supplying whaling vessels with goods and tools

rather than processing its products. The William Rotch family had operated a ropewalk just east of this neighborhood in the late 1700s and early 1800s. In the mid-1830s Abraham Allen of Bedford Street was copartners in a Third Street ropewalk and ran a cordage store on Central Wharf. In general, the neighborhood's coopers, sailmakers, and blacksmiths lived in the more modest, southern part of the neighborhood. Except for David S. Bradley, who in 1836 lived at 35 Seventh, other coopers who lived in the neighborhood for a number of years (George Muspratt, Charles Paker, and Pardon and Barton Wilber) had homes on lower South Sixth and Bedford Streets. The only sailmaker regularly recorded in city directories was George R. Stimpson, who lived for many years at 92 County Street, between Russell and Bedford Streets. Shipwrights Abner Howland and Pardon Gifford lived on the northern end of South Sixth Street in 1836, while Hervey Cables and Bela Lewis, also shipwrights, were in the Wing-Bedford section in 1855. Thomas Jackson, a black shipwright, lived at 96 School with other people of color in 1849.

Among what was then often termed the "middling sort" was a range of proprietors serving the whaling industry in numerous ways. The Allen brothers not only supplied clothing to the city's elite but also cloth, thread, and clothes to whaling agents and outfitters. Joshua Richmond of 96 County Street was partner in the merchant tailoring firm of Richmond and Wood on North Water Street. Charles W. Morgan paid the firm \$190.19 for "slop clothing &c" (that is, clothing to sell on the voyage from the vessel's "slop chest") for the 1841 maiden voyage of the ship *Charles W. Morgan*.⁷¹ The firm also seems to have boarded and enlisted the services of crew members. As agent for the *Liverpool's* 1844 voyage, Abraham Barker paid Richmond and Wood "[for] recruits" and advanced the firm more than \$750 "for 11 men" for the sixth voyage of the *Roman 2* in 1847. Richmond's firm was clearly operating as an outfitter in these years. Humphrey Manchester (175

Union) was in business with Samuel M. Watson in the manufacture of bread, probably most of it ship's bread: the firm was paid \$184.33 for "baking 110 bbls flour" for the *Morgan's* 1841 voyage. Grocers such as Sylvanus G. Nye (19 Seventh Street) and George Macomber (178 Union) were also no doubt supplying whalers, as of course were the ship's chandlers—Daniel Ricketson and his son Joseph Sr. (through 1841), Elisha Dunbar (through 1839), and Weston Howland and his brother William Penn Howland. There were also in this neighborhood such men as John Bailey and Amos Bates, who manufactured chronometers for whaling voyages, and both Charles Taber and John Kehew, who sold charts and nautical instruments. Even such apothecaries as Elisha Thornton Jr., John R. Thornton, and William L. Gerrish would probably have supplied the medicine chests carried on board each vessel that went to sea.

Others did various unskilled or service jobs on whalers. The fugitive Henry Johnson (46 Bedford) advertised in 1838 that he was available to "clean paint in houses, and ships cabins";⁷² Frederick Douglass and John Briggs, who both worked for George Howland preparing ships for sea, lived at 21 Seventh and 75 Walnut in this neighborhood. Tiverton native Peter Almy, who died in 1864 at the age of ninety-five and lived at the end of his life at 95 South Sixth Street, worked once during his long life of labor as a janitor at the Bedford Commercial Insurance Company offices on Water Street. Historian William Wallace Crapo recounted Almy's life in 1906:

Among the acquaintances made in connection with the Insurance Company was that of Pete Almy, an aged colored man who made the fire in the stove in the outer office and swept the floor and dusted the chairs and tables, but never with conspicuous neatness. Pete was fond of telling his experience in the United States Navy. When a lad in the War of

1812 he served as a powder monkey (such was his official designation) on board the United States warship Essex. This vessel, under command of Commodore Porter, had been ordered to the South Pacific for the protection of our commerce in that part of the globe. Pete would tell of the orders he received from a little midshipman, a mere boy, as he said, whose name was Farragut, the same who in the Civil War was our great Admiral. The Essex on her cruise recaptured from the British the whaleship Barclay, owned, if I remember rightly, in New Bedford and commanded by Gideon Randall, the grandfather of the late Charles S. Randall. Midshipman Farragut, then twelve years of age, was placed on board the Barclay as Prize Master and took her into the port of Valparaiso. Subsequently in a naval engagement the Essex capitulated to the British warships Phebe and Cherry and Commander Porter and Midshipman Farragut and Powder Monkey Almy, with others of the officers and crew, were taken prisoners of war. All of these occurrences Pete would recount with great minuteness of detail.⁷³

Between the mid-1830s and mid-1850s, directories list at least thirty white men and fifteen men of color who lived in this neighborhood and worked as crew on whaling or trading vessels. From the age of fifteen until he died at sea in 1862, Frederick Lawton spent his entire life on whaling vessels. In 1845, he wrote home to his father Cuffe from a Nantucket whaler then off the Azorean coast:

once more by the healp of God I am permitted to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well at preasant & hope that these few lines will find you and mother enjoying the same good blessing & all the rest of the Family. I can say that I never entered upon a more

agreeable voyage then I now are on & hope that we will make a good voyage & return safe home again I like all of the Officers & they like me & we have a good ship . . . we have not got any professors on board but I hope that we will before we return if we should be spared. We have all good whaling men & I hope that we will make a quick voyage. This day we went on shore with the captain & saw the remains off [sic] the ship Charles & Henery of Nantucket which got on shore yesterday Afternoon by laying off & on for Potatoes & Onions. There was another ship like to went on shore also. Nothing more at present give my respects to all enquiring Friends.

About two months later the famed black mariner Absalom F. Boston of Nantucket—related to the Cook family of lower Wing Street—wrote Cuffe Lawton to say that Frederick was still off Fayal and had “consign’d to my Care 2 basketts with flours arterfishell to be remitted to you to be given to Miss Mary Antone with his best respects.” Three years later Frederick Lawton married Mary Antone, daughter of a Wing Street shopkeeper.

Black-White Business Relations

Commercial relationships between the white and black people living in this County-South Sixth Street neighborhood were sometimes involved and often of long standing. Such men as William Rotch Jr. and Daniel Ricketson hired men of color both as tradesmen and crew from at least as early as the 1790s, but it cannot be known from existing records whether any of them lived in this area of the city. Rotch and Ricketson both did business with Paul Cuffe—in his will Cuffe in fact named Rotch as executor of his estate. Ricketson bought corn, a variety of cloth, and buttons from John B. Anthony and Aaron Child, who was listed as the only black householder (though there must have been others) in the 1790 federal census. Charles W. Morgan had numerous dealings

with men and women of color. He hired Henry Remington of Water Street, John Lewey, Cuffe Lawton, Archibald Clark, and Lewis Dixon to help supply and fit his vessels and as crew (he was also the administrator of Dixon's estate).⁷⁴ For the 1841 voyage of the *Charles W. Morgan*, he paid Clark \$18.00 for scraping the ship, Cuffe Lawton \$15.60 for sawing wood, and Lewey \$1.35 for his labor in fitting it for sea. For the 1832 voyage of the *Condor* Lawton was paid \$14.19 for sawing twenty-one cords of wood.⁷⁵ Morgan's household accounts document regular payments to Lawton—in November 1832 for his labor and supplies in cleaning grates and a stove, in June 1836 for "clearing out yard back of Purchase Street stores," and in November 1836 for "sawing old wood at Candleworks" from "ship Fr Henta [*Francis Henrietta*]."

In 1831 and 1832 Morgan, who had a long relationship with Nathan and Polly Johnson of Seventh Street, appears to have supplied the up-front financing for the work of housewright Gifford Hook (amounting to \$2554.69) for "altering Old Friends meetinghouse into a dwelling" for Nathan Johnson and perhaps for some repairs to the bath house Johnson had run on William Street since at least 1829.⁷⁶ Between mid-January of 1836 and late January of 1837, the Morgans bought nearly \$150 worth of confections on dozens of occasions from the Johnsons, including "all kinds of candy" and "cremes"; sponge, loaf, and short cake; macaroons and "jumbles" (a cake-like cookie with dried fruit, nuts, and sometimes spices); ice cream, both unmoulded and moulded; preserved pears; apples, oranges, and peaches; lemonade; moulded blanc mange (a chilled cornstarch-based pudding); and both an unspecified "jelly" and calves foot jelly (made from boiling down calves' feet, chilling the jellied product, melting and boiling it with various liquors, spices, eggs, and fruit, and then rechilling it).⁷⁷

In 1829 Morgan also sold to Nathan Johnson the plot of land on which he had lived since early 1826, in the two-story frame house that had been converted from a schoolhouse and is now the rear ell of 21 Seventh Street. The land Johnson owned—slightly less than a third of an acre at the southwest corner of Seventh and Spring Streets—had passed from the Joseph Russell estate to his son Abraham, from Abraham to the Nantucket mariner William Mooers—then running the Dunkirk, France, branch of the Rotch family whaling business—and from Mooers' estate to Samuel Rodman.⁷⁸ In 1824 Rodman sold part of this lot to his son-in-law Charles W. Morgan, and in 1829 sold the land for the same price to Johnson. In that same year Samuel Rodman Jr. built his home on the western section of the property his father had purchased from Mooers.

About 1822 the former Quaker meetinghouse was moved to Johnson's land, and the proprietors of the "Independent Meeting House" (formed of Quakers who had left or been disowned during the schism taking place at that time) paid Johnson an annual rent of eighteen dollars on the land, from about 1823 to 1829. In 1832 Johnson had the meetinghouse converted to a dwelling and rented it, as he did the house he moved from Fifth Street in 1845 that is now 96 Spring Street.⁷⁹ The property next south of 21 Seventh Street was the Johnsons' shop, probably a one-story structure that stood on its site until it was razed for the current 23 Seventh Street. In 1843 Johnson received a mortgage on his Seventh Street property from the wealthy whaling merchant James Arnold. Three years after Nathan Johnson left for California he was declared an "insolvent debtor," and his wife Polly mortgaged the property to William Rotch Rodman. By 1859 she had satisfied the terms of both mortgages and appears to have held the house free and clear until her death in 1871. Her descendants remained there until 1918.

In 1841, after the Congregational church left its meetinghouse at the northwest corner of Purchase and William Streets for the 1838 Unitarian church at Union and County Streets, Johnson was one of forty-six New Bedford men—and one of six men of color, including his son-in-law William Berry and the fugitive David W. Ruggles—who bought shares of the building. In that year it became Liberty Hall, the city's principal site of antislavery meetings and abolitionist lectures.⁸⁰ Neighborhood whites who owned Liberty Hall shares included Edward Merrill, Thomas R. Robeson, Mark B. Palmer, and John Bailey, the last an ardent abolitionist.

The role George Howland Sr. played in the lives of some of New Bedford's men of color has been documented in Frederick Douglass's last autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1893). After white caulkers resisted his being hired at his trade, Douglass did a variety of unskilled jobs:

I went again to the wharves and, as a laborer, obtained work on two vessels which belonged to Mr. George Howland, and which were being repaired and fitted up for whaling. My employer was a man of great industry; a hard driver, but a good paymaster, and I got on well with him. I was not only fortunate in finding work with Mr. Howland, but fortunate in my work-fellows. I have seldom met three working men more intelligent than were John Briggs, Abraham Rodman, and Solomon Pennington, who labored with me on the 'Java' and the 'Golconda.'⁸¹

Howland had known and employed John Briggs, a native of Tiverton, for years. "When but twelve years old," one writer stated of Briggs, "he went to New Bedford to live in the family of a Quaker,

George Howland, who had two sons—one the age of John Briggs, the other younger. From these boys he obtained much help in his studies, and so faithful to duty did he prove that he was retained in the employ of the Howlands, father and sons, up to the time of his death, which covered a period of more than fifty years.” Both Briggs and George Howland Jr. were born in 1806, and by 1841 the directory lists Briggs as employed by him. From at least 1836 he had lived out, at the longtime Briggs family home at 29 Allen Street, just west of Dog Corner. The Howlands also had a long relationship with Solomon Peneton (“Pennington” in Douglass’s text). Peneton, almost certainly born in Maryland and possibly a fugitive (he, like many others, never reported the same place of birth twice), was in New Bedford by April 1832, when he married (his name is shown in the marriage record transcription as “Tenetem”); in June of the same year he took out a seaman’s protection paper. By 1836 Peneton was shown as a mariner living on Ark Lane, infamous as the site of riots in the 1820s, but in 1838 he was working in the household of the merchant Thomas Nye Jr. on Eighth Street. He must have gone to work for the Howlands that same year, the year Douglass came to New Bedford. Through the later 1840s he worked for George Howland Jr. at 37 Sixth Street, and at some point in those years, tax records suggest, he may have lived there. In 1842, however, Howland Jr. sold Peneton a lot on Cedar Street in the city’s west end for \$700, the same price he had paid for it earlier that year when he acquired it from James Sampson. (Howland’s father had also sold land to men of color decades before.⁸²) Peneton lived there until he left for California about 1863. In 1853, his first wife apparently having died (no New Bedford death record exists for her, however), Peneton married Lucy Hasler, whom he must have met through George Howland Jr., for in 1850 she was living and working in his South Sixth Street home. In the 1850 census Hasler gave her birthplace as Massachusetts, but her marriage record states it as South Carolina.

Like the George Howlands, Joseph Ricketson Sr. and Jr. also had fairly extensive business relationships with New Bedford people of color (their roles as fugitive assistants will be treated later) and with Frederick Douglass, who wrote of Joseph Sr. in *Life and Times*:

One of the gentlemen of whom I have spoken as being in company with Mr. Taber on the Newport wharf when he said to me, 'Thee get in,' was Mr. Joseph Ricketson, and he was the proprietor of a large candle-works in the south part of the city. By the kindness of Mr. Ricketson I found in this 'candle-works,' as it was called, though no candles were manufactured there, what is of the utmost importance to a young man just starting in life—constant employment and regular wages. My work in this oil-refinery required good wind and muscle. Large casks of oil were to be moved from place to place and much heavy lifting to be done. Happily I was not deficient in the requisite qualities. Young (21 years), strong and active, and ambitious to do my full share, I soon made myself useful, and I think liked by the men who worked with me, though they were all white. I was retained here as long as there was anything for me to do.⁸³

Joseph Ricketson Sr. insured the brig *Traveller* and its cargo for Paul Cuffe in the 1810s, and his son and namesake hired several people of color to work in his home.⁸⁴ Aside from Henry Box Brown, it cannot be determined how often Ricketson hired men of color to work at the candleworks. Finally, among the wealthiest neighborhood residents—George Howland Sr. and Jr., Samuel Rodman Jr., William Rotch Jr., and Charles W. Morgan among them—regularly hired men and women of color for whaling crews and as domestics, and there was some measure of

occupational and income improvement among them. John Goings, a longtime domestic for Mary Rotch and then Mary Gifford, became a property owner; Solomon Peneton bought property and ran a grocery store in the mid-1850s; Frederick and Francis Lawton achieved mate's positions on whalers; Nathan Johnson became a significant proprietor and land owner.

In addition to the property Johnson acquired, other people of color in the neighborhood acquired land from white owners. In 1838 the merchant Philip Anthony (14 South Sixth) and an associate from New York sold black trader Richard Johnson the store and lot on Water Street, just south of Union. The property had belonged to Johnson's former business partner Alexander Howard, one of the twin "former slaves" who had come to New Bedford about 1806 and married into the Cuffe family. Johnson already owned land just east of this parcel. After Howard's death in 1822 the property passed the property on to his daughter Eliza Ann, wife of black tailor and mariner John C. Crouch, who rented the store. The property had come to Anthony by a mortgage deed.

In 1834 Joseph S. Tillinghast, a fire insurance agent who lived on lower Walnut Street, sold Cuffe Lawton his Bedford Street property for \$575. The next year, in the same neighborhood, Abraham Barker sold a parcel on County Street to George Coleman and a Thomas Robinson, who may have been the black restaurant proprietor Thomas T. Robeson. William Rotch Rodman, who held the 1850s mortgage on Polly Johnson's Seventh Street house, sold land and held mortgages for his employee, William Piper, at both 87 South Sixth and 46 (now 58) Bedford Streets. Dennis Cavanaugh, of whom very little is known, bought Piper's Sixth Street property in 1841 and in the same year sold him 42 Bedford Street, which he had acquired from George Howland in 1829. The leather dresser Thomas B. Bush, who lived in the mid-1830s at 41 Wing Street, sold the parcel

next door, at the northwest corner of Wing and South Sixth, to Richard Johnson in 1839; Johnson is listed as owning a house and land on Wing Street generally in 1833. The black shoemaker John Cory (later a steward on New Bedford-New York packets) lived in a house at the rear of Bush's lot; this may have been the seven-by-nine foot house "at the south" of town that James B. Congdon described in 1863. Congdon said of him, "He had about him every type of the pure African."⁸⁵ Corey's father Glasgow had lived in the region since the late 1750s, just before Dartmouth was incorporated.

In 1833, six years before he acquired the Wing Street parcel from Bush, Richard Johnson bought the Sixth Street lot adjacent to it on the north from Gideon Randall, the master mariner whose son George lived at the corner of Walnut and Sixth and whose daughter had married Congdon. On this property stood 95 South Sixth Street, a tenement Johnson and his sons Richard C. and Ezra rented out, chiefly to people of color. In the 1850s the Johnson brothers also held a mortgage on 30 Bedford Street, just east of the black laborer Marshall Potts's house at the southeast corner of Bedford and South Sixth. In 1856 they were living there with the widow Deborah Cook Borden, the widow of black activist Nathaniel A. Borden, who then ran it as a boardinghouse. Nathaniel Borden had bought this parcel, probably in a bank sale, in 1840, sold parts of it to black laborer Marshall Potts and Ellen Lee, also black, and mortgaged it twice with Thomas Arnold Greene, who lived at the corner of County and Spring Streets opposite Samuel Rodman Jr. Borden and several of her sons lived at 30 Bedford until her death in 1873. By the next year, when her son Nathaniel died, her son Charles was living at 42 (now 54) Bedford, the home of Miguel and Mary Clark Fortes. And by the 1870s Robert and Alexine Piper had purchased Potts's 80 South Sixth Street home.

In 1844, perhaps in much the same spirit as Howland's sale of property to Peneton was undertaken, David R. Greene sold the land and house that became 114 Seventh Street (then "a contemplated street running north from Bedford Street") to George F. Fletcher, who worked for him in the 1840s. By the 1880s Fletcher had moved to Elm Street in New Bedford's west end, and the city directory listed him as a "man servant." In this house, which has survived, the Richmond black mariner James R. Davis lived from the late 1840s until he left for California in 1856. Marriam Johnson Seals also lived there in 1849. She and her children were from Washington, and it is tempting to speculate that Fletcher knew her there. Ultimately they became kin: Fletcher's son and namesake married Marriam Seals's daughter Marriam Francis (Fanny in her marriage record) in 1870. Fanny's older sister Marcelina married the fugitive John H. Jenifer, who at some point bought the lot and house at 95 South Sixth Street from the Johnsons. Finally in this area Miguel Fortes, who worked with Lewis Temple and married his niece, Mary Clark, purchased the 42 (now 54) Bedford lot and dwelling from the firm of Mosher and Cook and the next year mortgaged it to his father-in-law Archibald Clark, who lived with them in the mid-1850s.⁸⁶

In addition to hiring people of color as domestics, Mary Rotch, the daughter of William Rotch Sr., sold some of the property she inherited to the black laborer Richard G. Overing, who was probably the son of Tony Overing, a servant in her father's (and probably her) household. In 1834 Samuel Rodman Jr. visited Overing "on the occasion of the death of my grandfather's old servant Tony. He died yesterday m'g and was interred this afternoon; his wife not much short of 100 years." Tony Overing was living in Newport in 1796, when he asked to become a member of the town's Free African Union Society. He and Richard (listed in the Newport census of 1820) may

have come together to New Bedford between the 1820 census enumeration and April 1826, when Charles Morgan's wife Sarah recorded a transaction with him. In 1832 Mary Rotch sold Overing a lot of land on North Second Street, bounded on the east by the land of the New Bedford Port Society and on the south by her father's old house, then the Mansion House hotel. Overing lived here until about 1855, when he was listed as a resident of the almshouse.

James Bunker Congdon had close associations with many people of color, both in and outside the neighborhood, and his brother Joseph was probably the earliest collector of the area's African American history. In 1851, in apparent response to a query from Joseph Congdon, Ruth Cuffe wrote from Fall River about her family's whereabouts and described Gardner Wainer Jr., the great-nephew of Paul Cuffe. In 1813 this part of the Wainer/Cuffe family moved to Scipio in Cayuga County, New York, as part of a group of Dartmouth Quakers who with others settled that community. Like Paul Cuffe, Gardner and Rhoda Wainer were apparently Friends; their names appear on the record of removals from Dartmouth Monthly Meeting and among the members of the new Scipio (New York) Monthly Meeting. "In his early days," Gardner Jr. wrote in a brief biography of his father, "his occupation was to follow the whale fishery business and coasting and trading by water from Westport Mass"; in New York State he farmed fifty acres. By 1828 the family moved on to Canada, and by 1854 Gardner Wainer Jr. had returned to southeastern Massachusetts. In the mid-1850s he lived at 54 Bedford Street with the William Piper family. Ruth Cuffe, the correspondent with Congdon, was Rhode Cuffe Wainer's younger sister:

These few lines is to lette the no aboute my oldeste sisters children their is only 3 of them a liveing Jeramiah Waineur he lives in Canada he is a marride man he has a wife and too

children. Gardener Waineur he has only one litell girle her mother died when she was 2 or 3 weekes olde Rhoda drumons the wife Sameul [sic] drumons she has 3 children she was my oldeste sisters daughter she now lives in new bedford town south from kemptons corner and gardener waineur has made it his home with his sister at Sameul drummons and I do thinke it will Be for the Beste to gite their names and all of their childrenes names to pute into the Reorde [record] gardener waineur is a momethedis [sic] minister and has preached their in the town and I hearde of him their sence you was here Cosin Elisabeth Cuffe that lives in your house can tell you wher to finde gardener waineur and his sister and her family. This from Ruth Cuffe doctris

Abolitionism in the County-South Sixth Neighborhood

Abolitionism may be viewed as a liberal or reformist impulse that most antebellum Americans perceived to veer toward, if not to occupy firmly, the radical fringe of social thought and behavior. It was a movement within the larger antislavery movement, which itself lay within a broader sphere of benevolent action in which many residents of this neighborhood lived. Many people in the County-Sixth neighborhood, for example, were key in forming and keeping afloat the men's and women's branches of the New Bedford Benevolent Society, both formed in 1840. The women's branch dedicated itself "to alleviate the evils of poverty, by administering in extreme cases to the physical necessities of the poor, by helping to employment those who cannot find it for themselves, and especially, by seeing that the children of the destitute, are brought within the reach of intellectual, moral, and religious instruction." Among the first officers and board were Mrs. James Howland 2d (vice president), her daughter-in-law Mrs. James Henry Howland (secretary and treasurer), Mrs. George T. Baker, Mrs. Frederick Bryant, Mrs. Joseph Ricketson, Mrs. William

T. Russell, Mrs. Paul Spooner, and Mrs. Abraham Barker. Others—Mrs. John R. Thornton, Mrs. Thomas A. Greene, Mrs. George Howland, Mrs. Edward Merrill, Mrs. James B. Congdon, Mrs. George Randall, Mrs. John C. Haskell, Mrs. John Akin, and Mrs. William H. Allen—were donors, members, and later directors. The women spent much of their time sewing clothing and soliciting donations of shoes, cloth, and money. The men’s branch helped sustain the women’s branch financially and included among its members Samuel Griffiths Morgan (Charles Morgan’s nephew, who lived at 61 South Sixth Street in the 1850s), Joseph Ricketson Jr. and his brother Daniel, John R. Thornton, George F. Baker, Edward C. Jones, Thomas D. Eliot, William C. Coffin, Elisha Thornton Jr., and Benjamin Lindsey.⁸⁷ Mary Rotch’s consciousness of noblesse oblige led her to work with other New Bedford women to create the predecessor to New Bedford Benevolent Society, the town’s “fragment society,” in 1813. The women met once a week and sewed from 1:00 in the afternoon to 10:00 at night. “We have entered the abodes of the miserable whenever the weather would admit of it for the last week,” She wrote to Sarah Rodman that February, “. . . and on contrasting my own situation with that of many whose necessities we are enquiring into . . . I am sometimes led to enquire, wherein have I meritted a better allotment? Why am I surrounded with every temporal blessing & these my fellow beings strangers to the common comforts of life? Perhaps they are now far more deserving than I am, & had they been placed in my situation would have a life of far greater usefulness & acceptance in the Divine Light.”⁸⁸

Samuel Rodman Jr. epitomized this sense of benevolence and charitable obligation. He was active in disaster aid (for the famine-stricken people of Cape Verde in 1832 and for the Irish in 1847). He supported prison reform, particularly at the local House of Corrections, where, he believed as did many of this time, “the separation and discipline which is essential to the moral reformation of

the inmates” did not exist. Rodman’s diary first mentions his inclinations and activities in the fall of 1829, after he attended a sermon in New Bedford by a traveling South Carolina minister “on the condition of seamen and suggested means for their moral improvement.” The minister spoke on behalf of the American Seaman’s Friend Society, which had been founded in 1825 to improve living conditions among mariners. In early June 1830 Rodman and others had formed a local “society for the moral improvement of seamen” (the New Bedford Port Society), and he—“much against my inclination,” he wrote—was appointed president. Rodman and his fellow members then began a local crusade on the society’s behalf, helping to create the Seaman’s Bethel and to accomplish the move of William Rotch Sr.’s first home to Bethel Street (now Johnnycake Hill) to become the Mariner’s Home. He visited boardinghouses to urge seamen to attend the Bethel and to deposit Bibles and religious tracts, which he also carried onto whaling vessels. At one point in August 1840 he and others rowed out to one ship just underway to place twelve Bibles with those of the crew “as were deficient of this important accompaniment of the human voyage whether in the literal or figurative sense”; he determined on reflection that a dozen was not enough. One November evening in 1835, he recorded his disappointment in the small number of people at the Port Society’s annual meeting. The sparse attendance demonstrated, he wrote, “a want of interest in the welfare of a large and depressed class of our fellow citizens whose exertions, perils, and privations have raised our fair village from its rocky site and gained for them the wealth in which many of them flourish.”⁸⁹

Rodman’s interest in the moral needs of mariners spread naturally into temperance reform. He worked consistently and in many ways to end public drunkenness, both in town and on whaling vessels. Early in his temperance work Rodman visited his aunt Mary Rotch to urge her not to allow

a bar room in the Mansion House (which she owned, and in which she may then still have lived). He attended local and county temperance meetings, tried to raise subscription income for the *Gospel of Temperance*, helped enact a local antiliquor law, worked with vessel captains to have crew sign temperance pledges, and regularly brought to task unlicensed or simply notorious liquor dealers such as William Hurll. During the day and evening of 27 March 1841 he and others visited forty-five places “where spiritous liquors were vended . . . and passed three others, not being able to gain admittance, the shops either by accident or design being shut.” On 31 March he visited another six “on the Dartmouth Road.” On the Fourth of July in 1832 he was relieved to find the incidence of drunkenness lower than usual for the holiday. “I had however one pitiable object in that respect,” he wrote, “an apprentice lad who was lying perfectly helpless and senseless in the street. I carried him in my wagon to his master’s house (Benj’n Almy) and I hope it may be made an example and a terror to the criminal venders of this poison called ardent spirits.” He was a tireless emissary and disciplinarian against “the illegal dissemination [sic] of ardent spirits among the low and reckless portion of our population” in the “several districts” of town in which they lived.

One entry in Rodman’s diary suggests that his efforts among the less fortunate were color blind. After a riot one night in a black section of Dartmouth, he took in a man of color “who was turned out of his miserable quarters by the riotous proceedings of the 16th. and has since, after a night or two in the open air, been the helpless occupant of a bed of straw in an adjacent barn. Had him washed and clothed, and sent him to the poor house,” he wrote.⁹⁰ Rodman sometimes went to the “African Church” (the African Christian Church, established in 1826 and then on Middle Street in the west end), once to attend a discussion about setting up a separate school for black children;

in the 1840s he sometimes attended the First of August West Indies Emancipation Day celebrations organized by the city's black population.

Rodman first expressed an interest in antislavery in January 1832, a year after William Lloyd Garrison issued his first *Liberator*, when he visited the homes of residents to gather signatures for petitions to be sent to Congress in favor of abolishing slavery and slave trading in the District of Columbia. In 1837 he was horrified by the riot in Alton, Illinois, that culminated in the murder of the abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy. "As the blood of the martyrs has been said to be the seed of the church so may this victim to lawless violence and tyranny [sic] be the means under Providence of hastening the time when by the irresistible [sic] power of truth the fetters of 2 1/2 million of the native citizens of the United States shall be struck off, and the slave be restored to the prerogatives of man," he wrote. He expressed out-and-out abolitionist sentiments after one antislavery lecture by Charles C. Burleigh in 1843. "The house was well filled and all I believe delighted with the strength of reasoning and power of eloquence with which he established his positions, of the title of the slave to immediate and unconditional freedom without compensation, also their perfect right not only to this but to large compensation for the wages of the past years which have been fraudulently withheld from them."

Though no documentation of Rodman's activities on behalf of fugitives has yet emerged, he did extend his charity to people of color from the South, and he actively fought racial discrimination. He spent most of one afternoon helping a former Virginia slave named David Norfolk raise money "to get a small house rent free to shelter him and his wife during their remaining years." And Rodman reacted publicly when Nathan Johnson, whom he described as "a colored man of

property and respectability,” was refused service at a Newport tavern on his way to the American Anti-Slavery Society’s annual convention in Philadelphia in 1839. Though he did not witness the event, he decided to boycott the place in preference for another tavern on his own trip south for the convention. He also deplored, and saw behind, the New Bedford Lyceum’s denial of membership to Nathaniel Borden. Rodman noted that it was “perfectly evident that his being colored was the objection,” and he called the Lyceum’s offer to seat people of color in the hall’s gallery “a ruse by which the proscription was sought to be concealed by a semblance of liberality and thus make it the more secure, thereby in effect adding to injury. So inveterate is the prejudice against the unfortunate race in this com’y.”⁹¹

Rodman seemed to object to the fact that “the abolition zeal of our community is not warm enough to resist a low point in the scale of Farenheit,” and he was aware that the public leeriness of abolitionism hurt the cause. After one lecture he wrote, “The prevailing prejudice keeps the mass of the respectable people away from these able and powerful expositions of the enormous wrong com’d by the champions of freedom on the victims of Southern tyranny.” After a skirmish at a local antislavery meeting he cancelled his subscription to the *New-Bedford Mercury* “on account of its anti-abolition bias as indicated by is silence on the exciting occurences [sic] of last week.”⁹²

Yet at the same time Rodman shared the public wariness about the perceived excesses and radicalism among the abolitionists—the sarcasm Frederick Douglass used to argue against slavery, the harshness William Lloyd Garrison expressed toward the efforts of certain others engaged in the cause, and the tendency among some lecturers, confronted with “the mountain mass of wickedness” that was slavery, to be “carried beyond sometimes the true bounds of propriety on the

theme.” In 1839 he seemed to give up on the efforts to ban slavery in the nation’s capital. “The recent speech of Clay has made me doubt the propriety of continuing to press upon Congress the subject of abolition in the Dist’t of Col’a. . . . I think, taking into consideration also the great doubts as to the right of the Gen’l Gov’t to act in the matter, the agitation of the matter by Northern men with reference to such abolition ought to be suspended and the subject left to the calm reflection of the people most deeply and immediately interested.”⁹³ And, with his brother-in-law Charles W. Morgan, he seemed to feel the civility and intelligence of the free people of color in his midst had rather less to do with them than with those whites who advocated against southern slavery. After attending the local 1844 West Indian Emancipation celebration and noting with evident approval the temperance there exhibited, he wrote, “Considering the disabilities under which they labor, I think our colored citizens deserve great commendation for their good morals and industrious and prudent habits and for their title to this praise they are largely indebted to the zealous efforts of the ‘abolitionists’ for their elevation in intelligence and morals.”

Though it is difficult to judge from known documents—very few people in his time were as assiduous record keepers as Samuel Rodman Jr.—certain residents seemed as if not more firmly attached to antislavery reform. Joseph and James B. Congdon were both founders of the Young Men’s Anti-Slavery Soc of New Bedford in 1836, established as an auxiliary to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.⁹⁴ Congdon intervened in the case of the Gibson women, who had been brought to New Bedford in 1834 from Creighton Island, Georgia, by their owner, Patrick Gibson; with the enslaved woman Betsy, Gibson had at least two daughters, Jane (who married William Piper’s son Philip), and Helen (who married New Bedford black sailmaker Shadrach Howard); another probable daughter, Catherine Molyneux, married New Bedford black activist Jeremiah

Sanderson. Gibson left the four women to the care of Nathan Johnson, who housed them, assured they went to school, and acted on their behalf in the confusing (at least locally) efforts of Gibson's executors to take them to Jamaica, where slavery had been abolished in 1834, by way of Georgia. Congdon, Benjamin Rodman (Samuel Jr.'s brother), and Johnson were certain that the executor would re-enslave the Gibson women.

While he was chair of the city's board of selectmen, James Bunker Congdon also hired lawyers "of the highest standing" in the 1849 case of Henry Boyer, the black steward aboard the coaster *Cornelia* who was accused and ultimately jailed on the charge of having assisted a Norfolk boy to escape slavery aboard the vessel.⁹⁵ In 1859, Congdon introduced to a small New Bedford audience the black physician J. B. Smith, who was then promoting a colonization plan that brought back to life Paul Cuffe's interest in establishing a black-run economy competitive with the South. Congdon noted that the society would further the cultivation of cotton in Africa, and, should the effort succeed, it "would prove a greater blow to the system of slavery and the slave trade than all the moral efforts that had been used in this country." Congdon's brother Joseph and his sister Mary T. Congdon were also active in antislavery, the latter having been one of ten delegates to the New England Anti-Slavery Society meeting in 1839.⁹⁶

Thomas Dawes Eliot acted in a manner often similar to Congdon's in antislavery. Several of his interventions occurred while he was serving in Congress. In 1855 he solicited funds and helped a New Bedford woman identified only as "Mrs. Brown" purchase her own children. On 3 September Hetty Peterson, a friend of hers, wrote in the *Republican-Standard* that the children had arrived in New Bedford the day before. "Especially to Hon. T. D. Eliot do I feel under great obligation, for

the interest he has taken in the matter,” and she thanked as well Leonard Grimes (briefly a New Bedford resident) and other New Bedford and Boston people who contributed to the purchase. In 1860 Eliot secured the release of Alexander Scarborough of New Bedford, who was captured on the suspicion that he was a slave and put in a Baltimore jail.⁹⁷ A few years before Abraham Lincoln laid out the principle Lincoln in his 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, Eliot had introduced a resolution in Congress that the president had the right “to emancipate all persons held as slaves in any military district in a state of insurrection against the national government.” He chaired the committee of the House that sponsored legislation creating the Freedmen’s Bureau during the war, and he worked steadily toward the passage of the equal rights amendments to the Constitution afterward.⁹⁸

Although very little is documented about George Howland Sr., his antislavery sentiments are documented in his correspondence with Nathan Hunt, a North Carolina Quaker whom he knew well. George Howland Jr. was also viewed as a friend of people of color. Local people believed that the votes of the “colored abolitionists” secured his election as a state representative in 1839, and he was one of those men who in 1857 offered their own funds to the effort to “extinguish slavery.” When a mob action similar to the racially motivated draft riot of New York was rumored in New Bedford in 1863, then-mayor George Howland Jr. ordered the city garrisoned and set up mounted patrols to watch for possible instigators. Joseph Ricketson Jr. described these efforts:

Last evening we had 150 extra police, tonight which is thought to be the night, there will be a still larger force—Pickets were stationed last night on all the outskirts for 2 or 3 miles—We are determined there will be no Blank Cartridges, I assure you—Men have slept on

their arms for several nights in the different Armorys & Public Buildings—the City Greys sleep tonight in the City Hall—Last evening one villain said he would head the mob & burn the Negro Houses in the west part of the town—the man is marked & twenty negros patrolled around his house, with Revolvers to shoot him, if he comes out—There is but one opinion—We are going to stand by the negro in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—Remembering in as much as we have done it unto the least of these & so forth.⁹⁹

Still, there were a good number of other people, in New Bedford at large and in this neighborhood, who shared Rodman's concerns about abolitionism. After Fugitive Slave Act passed and New Bedford had been rumored as a site of a massive effort to take resident fugitives back to slavery, *Mercury* editor Benjamin Lindsey was one of only four men among 122 who voted against resolving that the Massachusetts Personal Liberty Law of 1843 (which enjoined state officers from enforcing the 1793 Fugitive Slave Law and forbade the use of state jails for detaining fugitives) should override the new federal statute.¹⁰⁰ Sixteen years earlier, in 1835, a "large and respectable" meeting at the town hall took place to state the attendees' overarching belief in law and the necessity to preserve "the union of the states." Among the twenty men named to a committee to report resolutions of the meeting were David R. Greene, George Randall, Isaiah Burgess, and Thomas D. Eliot. The meeting stated that it viewed "with most serious regret" the recent actions of the antislavery societies of New England the Middle States to flood with southern states with a "great mass of Anti Slavery publications"—some "puerile" and "inflammatory"—in response to laws punishing their distribution in Georgia and South Carolina. The meeting declared that the abolitionists' tactics were "marked by a headlong and reckless philanthropy, in which neither present danger, nor the safety and tranquillity of all are judiciously considered"; unanimous

pursuit of this course would “instantly dissolve the Union,” the meeting declared. It further resolved that “inasmuch as by the South only Slavery can be removed, to leave the subject to the calm consideration of the benevolent and thinking among them.” Instead of behaving as if “to seal the ears and close the eyes of the South,” abolitionists would be wiser to “enlighten” the slave states “upon a subject which they better understand and from which they have more to fear than their instructors.” Ultimately the meeting concluded, “We should hail with gratitude and acclamation any proposition which would free our union from the evil of slavery without sacrificing the rights and endangering the domestic safety, and impoverishing the white population. . . . While we cannot forget the servitude of one portion of the population we will never trample upon nor tamper with the Constitutional liberties of another.”¹⁰¹

Two years later, however, David R. Greene was among those (including Joseph Ricketson Jr., Joseph Congdon, and Thomas A. Greene) who declared again their belief in and adherence to the Constitution—“the Constitution confers upon Congress no control over the institution of slavery as it exists in the several States,” they stated—but who rejected the idea of extending slavery to Texas. The statements of this more moderate group did not necessarily indicate its opposition to the concept of immediate emancipation but instead its belief in the necessity of preserving the Union and the inviolability of the Constitution. The committee of 1835 seemed also to suggest that if abolition were to occur, it ought to occur gradually so as to avoid conflict and not to inundate the southern labor market with freed people and thus undercut the income prospects of white workers.

Mingled with these sentiments was, for some, a Quaker testimony of nonviolence. Later, at a

public meeting called after the September 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, Thomas A. Greene refused to put his name to resolutions calling for any type of resistance called in opposing the act's provisions. "With his view of resistance by physical force, he could not sign them if that was their meaning," the *Republican Standard* reported. Greene, one local historian noted, was "by birthright and conviction and Friend. . . . He *believed* in Quakerism, in its simple faith and simple forms"; he adhered to "the simple manners of the society . . . in costume and speech." In 1846 Greene was one of two vice presidents of the Peace Convention in New Bedford, but in his term in the state legislature he fought against the imprisonment, and sometimes sale into slavery, of black mariners in southern ports. In 1857 he was one of eight New Bedford men who pledged "to share [the] expense necessary in extinguishing slavery."¹⁰²

Needless to say, the range and complexity of attitudes in the world of antislavery reform was great. It is still possible, however, to identify certain individuals as firmly pitched within the abolitionist camp. William Rotch Jr., James Davis, Caleb Greene (who was probably the uncle of Thomas), John Howland (the father of John Jr. and James 2d), his brother James Howland, Daniel Ricketson, and Abraham Russell were among the twenty-six men from Massachusetts who were charter members of the Providence Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, founded in 1789 and chartered in 1790. So were, from Rhode Island, were the fathers of Thomas Arnold Greene (Nathan) and James Arnold (Thomas). From the 1830s to the Civil War, the period of greatest abolitionist activity, nearly every one of the most active abolitionists in New Bedford lived in this neighborhood, the notable exceptions being Andrew Robeson, John F. Emerson, and Rodney French. Two of the sons of whaling merchant Weston Howland, Weston Jr. (87 Spring Street) and William Penn Howland (122 County Street), ran a free labor grocery store on the

wharf at the bottom of Walnut Street.¹⁰³ An 1848 advertisement describes the enterprise:

The undersigned in offering to the public their Stock of GROCERIES, which they confidently represent as the production of FREE LABOR, think it proper to state that we have these goods directly from the store of Hoag & Wood, New York, which store has been established under the direction of the 'Free Produce Association of Friends,' in that city. By the arrangements and united efforts of this Association, which includes many active and efficient business men; the origin and history of the goods they purchase are so far traced as to place them entirely beyond their suspicion, and their extensive operations enable them to supply us at prices which we think will compare favorably with the cost of goods of the same quality produced by Slave Labor. The patronage of the public is respectfully submitted.¹⁰⁴

William Penn Howland also attended the state colored people's convention held in New Bedford on the anniversary of West Indian emancipation in 1858.¹⁰⁵

In some instances, the work of their fathers must have served as inspiration for the efforts of these residents. William Rotch Jr. and his father had been involved in abolitionism since at least the 1780s. The senior member of this great whaling family was greatly disappointed in the form the Constitution ultimately took with respect to persons held in slavery—that is, that those “bound to Service for a term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed,” would be counted for the purposes of taxation and representation in the federal Congress as “three-fifths of all other persons.” The arguments establishing the three-fifths rule solidified the bitter struggle between northern states

and the so-called “slave power” of the southern states. “I had entertained some hope that so many wise men, would have found some system of Government, founded on equity & justice, that thereby it might have acquir’d some strength and energy, and that it might be on such a basis that we as a Society might lend our aid in establishing it so far as it tended to peace and morality,” William Rotch Sr. wrote to the antislavery Quaker Moses Brown of Providence, “but we may say in truth that the wisdom of man (as man) can or shall not work the righteousness of God; and whatever high encomiums are given to it (the Constitution) it is evident to me it is founded on Slavery and that is on Blood, because I understand, some of the southern members utterly refused doing anything unless this horrid part was admitted.”¹⁰⁶ In 1770, upon being appointed by the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends to investigate the antislavery testimony of the region’s monthly meetings, Rotch advised that all then enslaved be set free except those who were too old or too young to care for themselves. As clerk (the highest position) of the New England Yearly Meeting in 1793, he was key in issuing a call for an end to the slave trade, and his son William was among those who lobbied Congress, then in Philadelphia, in the same year to that end.¹⁰⁷ The slave trade was ultimately banned in 1808.

For his part, William Rotch Jr. was the first president of the New Bedford Anti-Slavery Society in 1834 and a member of the state antislavery society. He actively pursued and largely financed the successful prosecution of the owners and of the brig *Hope* on the charge of having fitted out as a slaver in Boston in June 1788, three months after the Commonwealth of Massachusetts had passed a law banning the slave trade; he had hired the already well-known Boston lawyers Christopher Gore and Thomas Dawes (Thomas Dawes Eliot’s grandfather) to argue the case. To Rotch, the uprising of slaves in Santo Domingo in 1791, in which the recently freed Toussaint

L'Ouverture took active part, was an event to be applauded. Among "the thinking people of New England whose minds are unclouded with the dark seeds of slavery," he wrote to his uncle Francis, "it is looked upon that the struggle on the part of the Negroes & Molattoes is as just as was the American struggle for liberty." He also stated to Francis Rotch, "I have pledged myself a faithful friend to the abolition of the slave trade & slave holding, and am almost daily concerned in protected the injured Africans and promising their liberation where any pretence can be found to avoid the law & Massachusetts being the only state in the Union where slavery dare not rear her head we have abundance of them seek refuge here."¹⁰⁸

Mary Rotch, the sister of William Jr., also expressed strong antislavery sympathies during a religious mission to the South she took on behalf of the Friends in 1804. From New Garden, North Carolina she wrote to her brother Thomas, "The constant stretch of our feelings at the sight of that misery & horrid oppression imposed on our wretched brethren & sisters of color, has seemed at times sufficient to overpower all the resolutions of nature & spirit, so that on every acct it is particularly grateful to find ourself again turned toward the North."¹⁰⁹ Samuel Rodman Jr. expressed much the same feeling, and his father had been directly involved in purchasing enslaved people in Rhode Island.

John Weiss, who came to New Bedford in 1847 to accept the call as pastor of the First Congregation (Unitarian) church, vigorously supported abolitionism; his views on this subject had forced him out of a Watertown church, according to most biographies. He was close friends and later the biographer of Boston abolitionist Rev. Theodore Parker and lived by 1849 at the house Elkanah Tallman had built in 1807, at 77 Walnut Street. In a letter to Caroline Weston in

October 1847, Joseph Ricketson Jr. reported that Weiss “preached a Red Hot Abolition Sermon last Sunday morning which gave universal satisfaction—Mr Robeson says he shall certainly go to church when he preaches he has been every time yet, so has Deacon Emerson—Please keep it secret, I think there is not much doubt but that they will settle him—dont tell this—The conservatives are all for him & we abolitionists keep still as we do not wish to put any hinderences in the way.” Weiss was indeed invited to become the church’s minister and accepted in early December of that year. In August 1848 he spoke at New Bedford’s West Indian Emancipation Day celebration. In his diary in January 1849 Charles W. Morgan recorded that he, William James Rotch, and Emily and Anne Drinker of Philadelphia had at afternoon tea “an animated discussion on Slavery Mr Weiss taking the ultra antislavery ground WJ Rotch the opposite—I in the middle as usual.” Weiss was a vocal opponent of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. In 1856 he left the New Bedford ministry because he was not in good health, but by 1859 he returned to his ministry in Watertown and remained there until 1870. In 1857 he returned to New Bedford to speak at the funeral of Daniel Drayton, fugitive assistant and martyr. He died in 1879.¹¹⁰

New Bedford people who subscribed to Garrison’s abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* presumably may also be counted among abolitionists. Philip Anthony (14 South Sixth), Joseph and James Bunker Congdon (34 South Sixth and 118 County), William C. Coffin (34 South Sixth), Joseph Ricketson (179 Union), Weiss, Susan Howland (75 Walnut), Henry V. Davis (92 County), John Bailey (167 Union), James Henry Howland (21 South Sixth, when he was living with his father James Howland 2d), and John Howland (38 South Sixth) were all New Bedford subscribers. Nathan Johnson (21 Seventh), Martha Fletcher (86 South Sixth), David W. Ruggles (later living at Edward C. Jones’s house on County Street), Jane Gibson Piper and her sister Helen Gibson

Howard (46 Bedford), Sophia Lyons (a domestic in the 24 South Sixth household of Alanson Gooding in 1850), Solomon Peneton (who worked for George Howland Jr. at 37 South Sixth), Archibald Clark (“addres’d to John Bailey”; Clark later lived at 42 Bedford), Marshall Potts (80 South Sixth), and Nancy King (at Mary Gifford’s, 47 South Sixth) were people of color who subscribed to the abolitionist paper.¹¹¹

As the *Liberator* rolls in part indicate, some of the city’s foremost black abolitionists lived in this neighborhood. Lewis Temple was the first vice president of the New Bedford Union Society, a black auxiliary to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, in 1834. In 1847 he was charged, along with one white man and two other men of color, with having rioted at a proslavery lecture and there assaulted a man named Jonathan Bell at the city’s concert hall. The four were released on sixty dollars’ bail until the county Court of Common Pleas met at Taunton in September. All of them pled not guilty, but only Temple was acquitted.¹¹² The fugitive Henry Johnson, who had escaped from Richmond to New Bedford in 1834, joined the black Wilberforce Debating Society of New Bedford in 1837: he was once assigned to argue, against Frederick Douglass, that intemperance was a greater evil than slavery. He represented New Bedford at the American Anti-Slavery Society annual meeting in New York in 1843 and attended local abolitionist meetings; he attended the 1857 and 1858 state colored people’s conventions, and in 1859 he was a delegate to the New England Colored Citizens Convention. He was among seven New Bedford men of color who investigated and confirmed a September 1850 fugitive rendition attempt, and six years later he was clerk of the colored citizens’ meeting that registered a protest against the black Bethel church for refusing to allow the fugitive-assisting New Bedford Vigilant Aid Society to meet within its sanctuary. Johnson also took to the antislavery lecture circuit with fellow fugitive and New

Bedford resident David W. Ruggles.¹¹³ He wrote to William Lloyd Garrison from Augusta, Maine, in August 1843:

I was called to lecture on Sunday evening last, some few miles from Augusta village; and to my great surprise, they had never heard an anti-slavery lecture in that place before. . . . I had not been speaking more than 20 minutes, before more than one half of the congregation was weeping; and I never saw more interest in a meeting, since I have made myself acquainted with the anti-slavery enterprise; and in the whole course of my remarks, not one person left the house. After the close of the meeting the congregation surrounded the pulpit, stating that they would have remained upon their seats and heard us until the rising of the morning sun. . . . Anti-slavery light is much wanted in this part of the land; and we are determined, through God, to diffuse it according to our ability.¹¹⁴

Ruggles himself, named for the New York black abolitionist who helped him escape, was in New Bedford by 1838 and the next year was one of the men selected at a local colored people's meeting to raise funds to support the *Liberator*. He was one of the subscribers of one dollar each to the treasury of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1841 (Frederick Douglass, Archibald Clark, and Mary T. Congdon also did).¹¹⁵ Ruggles worked with Johnson on the committee to investigate the 1850 attempted fugitive rendition and, also with Johnson, openly castigated Massachusetts educational reformer Horace Mann for his views on race in 1852. "As compared with the Caucasian race, I suppose the African to be inferior in intellect, while in sentiment and affection the whites are inferior to the blacks," Mann had written to a colored convention in Cincinnati. ". . . I believe there is a band of territory around the earth, on each side of the Equator which

belongs to the African race. The commotions of the earth have jostled them out of their place; but they will be restored to it when reason and justice shall succeed to the terrible guilt and passions which displaced them.” The New Bedford meeting declared Mann’s statements to be “inimical to our much oppressed and downtrodden race” and resolved “that we have not the remotest idea of leaving this country either for Liberia, Canada, or the West Indies.”¹¹⁶

Other documented or possible fugitives who settled in New Bedford were active abolitionists. Solomon Peneton, who most often said he was from Maryland but in 1850 stated his place of birth as “unknown,” was the presiding officer of numerous antislavery meetings held by the black community of New Bedford—an 1840 meeting to support the “old,” or Garrisonian, American Anti-Slavery Society, an 1847 meeting to support the candidacy of James B. Congdon for mayor, an 1858 meeting protesting the Dred Scott case, and one in 1854 protesting the actions of Edward Greeley Loring (son of the Boston abolitionist Ellis Gray Loring) in ruling that the fugitive Anthony Burns must be returned to slavery from Boston. “Mr. Peneton, on taking the Chair, addressed the meeting, urging the importance of persevering efforts to obtain signatures to the memorial for the removal of Loring from the office of Judge of Probate for Suffolk County,” the *Standard* reported. “A Committee consisting of 18 persons handed in their names to canvass the city.” Marshall Potts of South-Sixth Street was on the resolutions committee, which put before the group that “the names of Cain, Benedict Arnold, and Edward Greeley Loring form a beautiful trio, the last one being the Boston kidnapper and slaveholders’ pimp, consequently the most detestable.” He and others publicly protested the Dred Scott decision of 1858. Peneton was one of four New Bedford delegates to the Massachusetts colored people’s convention in 1857 and was elected its vice president. By 1862 he had resettled in California, where he was at the center of

movements to secure voting rights and equal education for that state's black population.¹¹⁷

William Piper and at least two of his daughters took part in local antislavery activity. The *Liberator* reported that any articles for the January 1840 antislavery fair—and event sponsored by antislavery women in different towns and cities to raise money for the state organization—were to be sent to his 87 South Sixth Street house, no doubt because Amelia J. Piper and Sarah Ann Roshier were two of the five managers of the New Bedford Female Union Society, the counterpart to the organization men of color had established in 1834. Piper, with Peneton, Henry Johnson, and David W. Ruggles, was among those who denounced the AME Bethel church for closing its doors to the local fugitive assistance group.¹¹⁸

Several native New Englanders living in this neighborhood may also be counted among black equal rights activists. Though nothing is yet known of his political activity in New Bedford, Cuffe Lawton was almost surely the Cuffe Lawton Jr. who had been active in the early African organizations of Newport, Rhode Island, before he came to New Bedford about 1826. Born in Newport in 1789 and the son of Cuffe and Judith Lawton of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Cuffee Lawton Jr. had been a student at the town's Free African School in 1808 and 1809; the next year he was listed as a member of the Free African Union Society of Newport in 1810 and as clerk of the African Benevolent Society.¹¹⁹ While Lawton's sons Frederick and Francis were mariners, their brother Edward B. became a well-known abolitionist in New Bedford and then Boston. In 1841 he was among those people of color who spoke out against discrimination against New York black abolitionist David Ruggles on the New Bedford-Nantucket steamer, and in 1843 he and other Bostonians fought to preserve the freedom of fugitive George Latimer and organized abolition

lectures on behalf of its black Adelpic Union Library Association. By 1846 he was living in Boston's black West End and working as a waiter; he later became a caterer. Lawton was a close associate of both Jeremiah B. Sanderson of New Bedford, who became a leader in San Francisco black public education, and William Cooper Nell, who with Lewis Hayden was the most committed of Boston's black abolitionists and fugitive assistants. During the long effort to desegregate Boston public schools, he was one of many black Bostonians who moved to Cambridge, where he and his family (Lawton married the Richmond-born Eliza A. Logan about 1841 and had nine children) grew close to Harriet Jacobs. Lawton's daughter Virginia taught in Alexandria in the freedman's school with Jacobs, whose 1861 narrative of bondage and abuse scandalized the country; her sister Marianna also went south to teach freedmen. Edward B. Lawton died in 1864 in Cambridge, when he was only forty-five years old.¹²⁰

Gardner Wainer, who lived next door to the Lawtons on Bedford Street, was also active during the few years he lived in New Bedford; like Lawton, his activism may have been influenced by his father, Gardner Wainer Sr. That he thought like his cousin Paul Cuffe is suggested by a letter Cuffe wrote to Wainer shortly after he moved to Cayuga County, New York. "You have not Stated whether true Religion flourishes in that Countery," Cuffe stated, "nor whether the Children of Africa is Liberated from their gauling Chains of Slavery." In 1832 Gardner Jr., then twenty-two years old, wrote to Cuffe's brother (and his uncle) John about the influx of people of color to Ontario, where the family then lived. "There is a good deal said and a doing for our oppressed Breathern the affrican Raice," he reported. "They are coming in by Vessel loads from the Slave States the free ones and now let us all be willing to Clasp Shoulder to the Work the avice is Given not to make use of none of the cottons shugar & molases here is a store keep for that use to Keep

nothing but what is free and they are about to imploy a coullard man To Cart it about the Streets it claims the attention of allmost every Class of people it is thought by some that this Store will be a very Graite one the Quakers or friends are working hard for them in all their yearly meetings.” When he moved back to New Bedford Gardner Wainer Jr. was one of those men of color who spoke against Loring’s decision about Anthony Burns in 1854.¹²¹

In addition to Sarah Ann and Amelia Piper, other women of color were involved in antislavery and abolition. In 1837 107 of them signed a petition to protest the “laws in several of our Sister States which operate to depress us and many other citizens of this Commonwealth of the priviledges and rights guaranteed to us and them by the federal Constitution—now more laws which subject us to heavy losses cruel treatment and even to the deprivation of liberty for life in direct violation of the avowed purposes to the American Union.” The women (and the men of color, in a separate petition) specifically complained of the Negro Seamen’s Acts recently enacted in the Carolinas and Georgia, which subjected black mariners to potential imprisonment, and other slave-state laws that presumed all free black person were “runaway slaves” and thus liable to sale if no one could be found to document their free status. Among the signers were neighborhood residents Nancy King (who later lived in Mary Rotch’s household), Cuffe Lawton’s daughter Mahala, Lucy Peneton (signed as “Pendleton,” one of many area variants of the surname), Avis Williams, Leah Fletcher (David S. Fletcher’s first wife), Martha Bailey (Fletcher’s second wife), Cynthia Potts, Amelia and Amelia J. Piper (the wife and daughter of William), Sarah Ann Roshier, and Violet Cory (the mother of John Cory).¹²²

Yet of all men and women of color in New Bedford, Nathan and Polly Johnson were probably the

most active in black abolitionism, and they were certainly its local public face. Nathan Johnson housed the fugitive Douglass and gave him his name—and it is certainly possible that when Johnson told Douglass that “nearly every slave who had arrived in New Bedford from Maryland” had assumed the surname Johnson, Nathan might have counted himself among them. Douglass noted further that Nathan Johnson was “the owner of more books—the reader of more newspapers—[and] more conversant with the political and social condition of the nation and the world—then nine-tenths of all the slaveholders of Talbot county, Maryland,” whence Douglass had originally come. And when Johnson told him “that no slaveholder could take a slave from New Bedford; that there were men there who would lay down their lives, before such an outrage could be perpetrated,” he certainly thought he was one of those men. In 1827 Johnson and several other men of color had gone with clubs and stones to a house inhabited by a man named John Howard. They broke down the doors, smashed the windows, threw rocks at Howard and then beat him. Court records are mute on the provocation, but Samuel Rodman Jr. revealed it in his diary. Rodman, his father, and about fifty other persons were called to testify about the event in Taunton at the Superior Court’s April 1827 session. Rodman Jr. left Taunton after the first day, but his father stayed for the pending trial “of Nathan Johnson Norris Anderson & others for an alleged riot occasioned by a visit of a coloured man from New York or farther south whose object it was to get information of run-away slaves.”¹²³ A jury declared Johnson and his codefendants not guilty, and they were immediately released.

Douglass wrote in 1855, “Sure I am, that had any slave-catcher entered [Johnson’s] domicile, with a view to molest any one of his household, he would have shown himself like him of the ‘stalwart hand,’” an illusion to the fact that, in Walter Scott’s poem “Lady of the Lake” (1810) about

sixteenth-century Scotland, Douglass's honored namesake Lord James of Douglas was called "Douglas of the stalwart hand" for having vowed to exchange his life for the captured Scots Malcolm Graeme and Roderick Dhu.¹²⁴ Johnson was involved in the struggle for racial equality virtually from the beginning of the movement's organization. He was a delegate to the second annual convention of free people of color in Philadelphia in 1832, the only delegate from New Bedford and one of only two from Massachusetts.¹²⁵ With Richard Johnson, he attended the third annual convention of free people of color, also in Philadelphia, and was named one of four honorary members of that group. He was also a delegate to the fourth annual meeting of that group, held in New York City in June 1834, and one of two vice presidents elected at the fifth convention of the group, in Philadelphia in 1835. Two years later, he and other men of color in New Bedford met at the city's African Christian Church to establish an abolition strategy, and in 1839 he was appointed one of three men of color to investigate and determine the antislavery views of all Bristol County candidates for legislative office. In 1840 Johnson was elected one of five vice presidents of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and in 1847 he was elected president of the National Convention of Colored People, held that year at Troy, New York. He also worked as part of a local committee that investigated charges of discrimination brought by Shadrach Howard, a New Bedford man of color, against the New Bedford and Taunton Railroad in 1842. The letters of abolitionist Deborah Weston document that the Johnson also sold candies made from free labor sugar.¹²⁶ For her part, Polly Johnson attended the New England Anti-Slavery Society meeting in June 1839 and was one of the three women of color among eight who prepared the New Bedford table at the Boston antislavery fair of 1842, for which she also solicited donations around town. After Nathan Johnson died Daniel Ricketson recalled of Polly, "I remember of seeing her walking arm in arm with Mrs. Maria Weston Chapman, down Summer street, Boston, after an

anti-slavery meeting a short time before the war, while I had the honor of escorting the venerable Lucretia Mott.”¹²⁷

The community’s understanding of the Johnsons’ position among New Bedford’s people of color is indicated by two events. In 1847, after his divorce, the fugitive William Wells Brown brought his daughters Josephine and Clara (or Clarissa) to live with Johnson and go to school; Brown was then on the lecture circuit for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Clara was still living at 21 Seventh Street in 1850; Josephine had gone to live with Martha Fletcher at 86 South Sixth Street. After Brown fled to England in 1851, his daughters went there to live with him. Josephine was the author of *Biography of an American Bondman, by His Daughter*, published in Boston in 1856.¹²⁸

In 1834, when Patrick Gibson brought Betsey Gibson and their daughters to New Bedford, the innkeeper Thomas Cole recollected that “Gibson arrived in May or June was introduced to me by the Capt of the Sloop. said he had some children with him which he ‘wish to have educated’ Inquired for a suitable person to have the care of them—I recommended Nathan Johnson sent for him—and an agreement was made with him.” Patrick Gibson sent Johnson money for their support, as well as fruit and cloth, the latter for the women to make into clothes for themselves. But after he died in 1837, Gibson’s executor Edmund Molyneux wrote Johnson first that he anticipated bringing the women back to Georgia and then, in 1839, directed Johnson to see that the women reached Newport so that they might be taken to Jamaica by an associate. This Johnson did not do, at which point Molyneux ceased to pay for the women’s support. “Your charge pr board from 30 June I cannot pay,” Molyneux wrote in late September 1839. “Betsey must now support herself by her own labours. . . . Any orders for Betseys going to Jamaica ought to have been

obeyed & you should have turned her out of Doors.” Next he asked Johnson to send the women to Darien, Georgia, so that he might then forward them to Jamaica. Alarmed, Johnson sought the assistance of Benjamin Rodman to determine Molyneux’s real intent. In a certificate composed shortly afterward, David W. Ruggles testified to Johnson’s feelings in the matter:

I heard that Mrs. Gibson & family were about to leave tomorrow & called to see them. Nathan Johnson was present at that time. We had some conversation about their going to the South. The Woman said that she had made up her mind to go & trust in God. N.J. remarked that it seemed almost like going into the lions den & that there was great danger that they would be again enslaved & at the same time said that he should feel almost unwilling to go and if it was for himself he would not; but that he felt confident from his last letter from Mr. Mollyneux that they would be sent to Jamaica. Mrs Gibson said that Mr. Gibson had frequently told her that it was his intention to settle the family somewhere under the British Government. This is the substance of a conversation I heard a day or two before the family left town.

In the end the Gibsons never left. Betsey remained in the area, lived with her daughters and their husbands for a period, and died in Fall River in 1863. She is buried in Rural Cemetery in New Bedford with her daughter Helen and Helen’s husband Shadrach Howard; what became of Jane and Philip Piper is not yet known.

The Neighborhood’s Fugitives and Fugitive Assistants

Between the 1840s and the Civil War, New Bedford abolitionists pegged the number of fugitives living in the city at anywhere from three to seven hundred.¹²⁹ While these estimates may be

doubted, they are certainly sounder than any that might be developed today. If three hundred fugitives lived in New Bedford in 1850 they would have composed 29.7 percent of the official count of the total population of color—which, probably coincidentally, nearly matches the 29.9 percent who claimed a slave-state birthplace. If there were seven hundred here, 69 percent of the black population would have been fugitives. Given the secrecy surrounding fugitive escapes, the fact that censuses routinely undercounted minority populations, and the tendency of many people of color to report different places of birth to different enumerators, it is not possible to determine either the full presence of fugitives or their share of the local community of color.¹³⁰

Data and contemporary primary sources do suggest, however, that New Bedford was a principal place of settlement for people of color, free and fugitive. In 1850 the census counted 1,008 people of color in New Bedford and 1,999 in Boston, a city with more than eight times the population. The gap between the two cities' black populations had narrowed by 1855: while New Bedford was home to 991 fewer people of color in 1850, only 721 fewer lived there in 1855. Between the 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Act and 1855, most northern cities, including Philadelphia and Boston, lost black population, but in New Bedford the number of residents of color increased over these five years, both in raw numbers and in proportion to total population. While 2,248 blacks lived in Boston and 1,527 in New Bedford in that year, only 201 lived in Worcester, 409 in Springfield, 309 in Salem, and 299 in Cambridge. In addition, while people of color who claimed southern birthplaces were only 16.6 percent of Boston's black population and 15.0 percent of New York's in 1850, fully 29.9 percent of New Bedford's were. In Massachusetts only Springfield—the home for a time of abolitionist John Brown and on the route of fugitive traffic from New York City up the Connecticut River—had a comparably high proportion (though in raw numbers few

relative to New Bedford) of southern-born blacks, and no other city in the East, including Philadelphia, could claim a similarly large share.

With the declarations of local people—one New Bedford Quaker stated in 1850, “We have about 700 fugitives here in this city, and they are good citizens, and here we intend they shall stay”—other documents indicate the city’s importance among fugitives. Of 892 fugitives William Still recorded to have passed through the officers of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, seventeen went to Boston and twenty-three to New Bedford.¹³¹ In 1855 and 1856, the New York Vigilance Committee sent fifty-six of 158 parties of fugitives to Syracuse, forty-two to Albany, five to “Syracuse & Canada,” four to “Albany & Syracuse,” nine to New Bedford, eight to Boston, and nine to Canada; the destinations of twenty-five were not listed.¹³² Neither the Philadelphia nor New York Vigilance Committees directed fugitives to other Massachusetts cities or towns. Records of both Boston Vigilance Committees—the first, of 1846-47, and the second, of 1850-61—document that nine fugitives who came to that city were sent to New Bedford. Thirteen fugitive slave narratives—those of Henry “Box” Brown, Leonard Black, William Grimes, Harriet Jacobs, John S. Jacobs, Thomas H. Jones, Edmund Kelley, George Teamoh, John W. Thompson, James Williams, and the three accounts of Frederick Douglass—are about escaped slaves who lived for some time in New Bedford. The narratives of Boston Vigilance Committee’s Austin Barse and of Jonathan Walker and Daniel Drayton, white mariners who attempted unsuccessfully to rescue fugitives from the South, also touch upon New Bedford people and events; Walker and Barse once lived in New Bedford, and Drayton took his life in the city and is buried at Rural Cemetery, not far from the County-Sixth neighborhood.¹³³

Still, both the genuine scarcity and partial nature of records make it difficult to determine with any precision the free or fugitive status of African American people. Identifying fugitives in New Bedford is complicated by the fact that its population of color was uncommonly large, its whaling and coastwise trading industries fostered a high degree of transience, and the use of aliases (not exclusive to blacks but to mariners in general) was routine.¹³⁴ Records of southern states are also incomplete, even such useful ones as the registers of free negroes compiled in many Virginia and Maryland counties and cities. Laws there presumed that all people of color were slaves unless someone testified to their free status, but many clearly did not register their status officially. The District of Columbia free negro registers from 1821 to 1861 include 2,871 certificates of freedom and manumission (some of them reregistrations of the same individuals), but the free black population of Washington over this period ranged from 4,048 persons in 1820 to 11,131 in 1860. In Alexandria 581 persons registered as free between 1847 and 1861, when the population of free blacks stood between 1,400 and 1,450. Thus it cannot be assumed that someone who did not register was either free or enslaved.¹³⁵

Still, the registers can identify the free status of certain people of color. Jane B. Robertson of Georgetown manumitted Jackson Hawkins's father Walter in 1826. Ten years later Spencer Seals presented a deed of emancipation as well as a bill of sale; the record states that Seals had been "property of Lindsay Hill & Co and was transferred by them to Geo Johnson & Co, which in turn transferred him to Lawrence P Hill & co of Mobile from which firm he purchased himself." Seals's wife Marriam and her children were manumitted by James Irwin of Alexandria a month earlier in 1836. The recorder described her as "a bright mulatto woman, about 5 feet 1 3/4 in tall, with a scar on her right arm on the front side above the elbow caused by a scald." Records exist of others

who came to New Bedford though not to this neighborhood—the brothers Fountain and John Ellis, for example.

The records of the First African Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, are similarly revealing. Its members were both free and enslaved people, including Rosanna Dandridge, “owned by Charles Morris” in 1842, and Andrew Dandridge, “owned by Miss Catherine Turner” in 1846. When the couple received a letter of dismission to the Second Baptist Church in New Bedford in 1855, however, they were both identified as free. Lewis Temple also transferred from this church to New Bedford’s Baptist congregation by the late 1820s, but its records are mute on him, to say nothing of his status.¹³⁶ And even when enslaved status is identified, it is not possible to state that one was not free by the time he or she moved North. In one case escape can be asserted based on church records. In October 1849 when Anthony Loney was admitted to the Richmond church, he was enslaved by Dr. Warren Taliaferro. Eight years later his escape was recorded by William Still. The Second Baptist Church records kept by Rev. William Jackson document his admission in September 1857, and that he had gone on to California is stated in the 1876 will of his uncle, the New Bedford black laborer Simeon P. Greene.¹³⁷

Despite the frustrating silence of most records, thirteen of the residents of the County-South Sixth neighborhood were documented fugitives from slavery, and others whose full names are unknown also lived there. The first known to have settled permanently in New Bedford was Henry Johnson (who later called himself William Henry Johnson), who lived at 46 Wing from 1845 probably at least until the Civil War. Johnson was said to have been born in 1811 on the Richmond plantation of Andrew Johnson, who owned and raced horses; a Works Progress Administration

biographical account, based on a 1925 *Boston Globe* article, held that Johnson was Andrew Johnson's "star jockey." But when Johnson became too heavy to ride competitively he was submerged in a dung heap for all but two hours a day to lose weight. "He was given a pipe to breathe through and in the two hours he was released, he was given a single meal of bread and vinegar," the WPA's Warren E. Thomson wrote; he added that Johnson's escape was motivated by having grown "tired of being fertilized to check his growth."¹³⁸

In November 1833, partly with funds given him by Andrew Johnson's daughter, Henry Johnson "made a bargain with the crew of the schooner *Tantovy*, which was loading with flour for New York, to stow away himself, his mother, and his brother in the forecastle." His brother, in the end, did not go and was later sold to New Orleans. In New York harbor the *Tantovy* wrecked, and somehow Johnson and his mother made their way to Jamaica, Long Island, where Johnson was a farm laborer, probably for several years. He then moved to New York City and found work as a dishwasher at the Astor House, created by John Jacob Astor in 1836-37. Astor had been partners in Adirondack lands and fur trade with the famed abolitionist Gerrit Smith, and his name appears as an aide in more than one fugitive narrative. One night at his city home Johnson heard the voice of the overseer of his former Richmond plantation, and by subterfuge he managed to escape to the Astor House; Astor arranged for him to go aboard the packet *Rodman* to New Bedford. The captain of the *Rodman* at that time was Charles L. Wood, who lived at 196 Union Street in this neighborhood.¹³⁹ On his arrival Johnson sold soap on commission for Zenas Whittemore (who also employed and sold land to Henry O. Remington of South Water Street and was a *Liberator* subscriber), then carried Benjamin Lindsey's *Mercury*, and was later a domestic, stevedore, sawyer, and lamplighter. While working as a janitor in attorneys' offices he grew interested in the law,

studied with New Bedford attorney Francis L. Porter, and was working as a lawyer by the mid-1850s. He died in 1896, but not on Wing Street: he probably was then living at 68 Kempton Street, where directories listed him from 1888 to 1890.

Within several years of Johnson's arrival, Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey (Frederick Douglass) came to New Bedford with his wife Anna Murray Douglass, a free woman from Baltimore. David Ruggles, the black abolitionist who sent the fugitive David W. Ruggles to New Bedford about the same time, determined that Douglass's caulking skills, acquired at a Baltimore shipyard, suited him to New Bedford. Clearly having made arrangements in advance with New Bedford white abolitionists William C. Taber and Joseph Ricketson, Ruggles sent the Douglasses to Newport in the new packet *John W. Richmond* in September 1838. Taber and Ricketson met Douglass at the steamboat wharf and brought him by stage to New Bedford. He was then directed—with a letter from Ruggles—to the 21 Seventh Street home of Nathan and Polly Johnson, where he and his wife may have stayed only a matter of months. How many fugitives the Johnsons housed before the war cannot even be guessed. Others were documented in the New Bedford Overseers of the Poor records on 12 February 1861: "Caroline Harris c [colored], fugative [sic] slave, came from south 3 month, has 1 child, coloured, 2 1/2 years old. 7th st. Rear of [Nathan Johnson crossed out] 21. (wid of Wm Harris) 1/4 ton coal." Johnson's name was probably crossed out because he was still in California, so it was Polly who sheltered the woman and her child; by that time Polly Johnson had moved the original Seventh Street back on the lot and attached an addition to the front, so the Harrises must have been staying in the older part of the house, where the Douglasses had lived.¹⁴⁰

Just as Johnson had received a letter from Ruggles introducing Douglass, Joseph Ricketson Jr. received one like it from the New York City Vigilance Committee's Sydney Howard Gay introducing Henry "Box" Brown ten years later. Brown, like Henry Johnson born and brought up around Richmond, had proposed to a white storekeeper in that city to ship him in a wooden crate to the North and thereby effect his escape. Despite reservations Philadelphia abolitionist James Miller McKim agreed to receive Brown on the other end, McKim sent him to Gay, and Gay sent him to Ricketson.¹⁴¹ "I received your very valuable consignment of 200 pounds of Humanity last evening and as merchants say will dispose of it to the best advantage," Ricketson wrote to Gay soon after Brown arrived. "The storage and incidental expenses shall be light, as I have plenty room enough for a short while, and I hope I shall receive more than the ordinary commission in disposing of it as most probably what I do receive will come from Heaven."¹⁴² Ricketson referred first to him as Henry Smith, but he crossed out Smith and wrote Brown above the line; in a letter to S. A. Smith, McKim referred to him as "Clark." The "Box" in his name, according to Still, had been added in Philadelphia. Ricketson told Gay that Brown had "staid at my house last night & took breakfast this morning," but could not work at the time because his one of his fingers had been badly injured in transit. In addition to his sister in New Bedford, Ricketson wrote, Brown "has many friends here who former [sic] lived in Richmond—he will remain with them for a while— & I think with their assistance & my own he can get along." Charles W. Morgan heard about Brown's escape at a New Bedford party during the fugitive's first week in New Bedford. Because it tallies so well with Brown's own account of his escape, it seems likely that Brown himself related it to Morgan.

Sarah & I went to Wm J Rotchs to tea but came home early—I there heard a singular

account of the escape of a slave who has just arrived here which I must record—He had himself packed up in a box about 3 ft 2 in long 2 ft 6 in wide & 1 ft 11 in deep and sent on by express from Richmond to Philadelphia—marked “this side up”—He is about 5 ft 6 in high and weighs about 200 lb—In this way he came by cars & steam boat to Philad^a near 25 hours in the box which was quite close & tight had only a bladder of water with him and kept himself alive by bathing his face and fanning himself with his hat He was twice turned head downwards & once remained so on board the steam boat while she went 18 miles—which almost killed him and he said the veins on his temples were almost as thick as his finger Yet he endured it all and was delivered to his antislavery friends safe & well—who trembled when he knocked on the box and asked the question “all right[”]—and the answer came promptly “all right sir”—I think I never heard of an instance of greater fortitude & daring and he has well earned the freedom which he will now enjoy—¹⁴³

During the time Brown lived at Ricketson’s 179 Union Street home, Ricketson was working on another fugitive case, “writing & devising a scheme for the colored man who lives with me to get his wife & 3 children from Maryland they being free & he having run away last October.”¹⁴⁴ In August 1851 Ricketson wrote Weston, “I shall not have time to write about the Slave woman & child consigned to me—her story is a long one—She seems very bright & is now very cheerful.”¹⁴⁵

Some documented fugitives, perhaps many, stayed in the neighborhood only briefly. Thomas Randolph, who lived at both David R. Greene’s on Sixth Street and William Rotch Rodman’s on County Street in 1849, had only reached New Bedford in that year, having escaped from Virginia in December 1848. Randolph left the same year for California, where he became a Baptist

minister in Marysville.¹⁴⁶ John S. Jacobs spent no more than a few months in the city before shipping out on ship *Frances Henrietta*, owned by Charles Morgan and Samuel Rodman Jr., in 1839. Jacobs was the younger brother of Harriet Jacobs, who at that time had spent three years (and would spend four more) hiding in a crawl space of her grandmother's home in Edenton, North Carolina, to escape the pursuit of her master and to keep watch over her children. After having accompanied his master to Canada, Chicago, Buffalo, and Niagara Falls, John S. Jacobs escaped from him in New York City. Like Henry Johnson, but in markedly different circumstances, Jacobs stayed with his master at the Astor House. Each day, he related in his 1861 narrative, he sent out a few clothes "as if to be washed" and then ultimately had his trunk sent from the hotel, ostensibly for repairs. Jacobs wrote that "one of his old friends from home" in New York picked up the trunk, packed it, and put it on board the vessel bound for New Bedford that Jacobs took.

Jacobs arrived in New Bedford in late spring or early summer of 1839 and was introduced to "Mr. William P—, a very fatherly old man, who had been a slave in Alexandria." Because of the vessel whose crew Jacobs joined, the fact that he was living and working for William Rotch Rodman (the brother of Samuel Rodman Jr.) in that year, and Piper's documented origins in Alexandria, it seems almost certain that "William P." was William Piper, who also worked for Rodman, as a hostler, at this time. Piper lived then at 87 South Sixth Street, which Rodman had owned since 1831. Jacobs left New Bedford on the *Frances Henrietta* in July 1839 and was still in the crew when the vessel returned more than three and a half years later. While the vessel was in the harbor, a man Jacobs identified only as R. P. rowed out into the harbor to tell him that his sister Harriet had at last escaped and had been to New Bedford to look for him. "R. P." was probably Robert Piper,

William's son, who worked for both William Rotch Rodman and Charles Morgan. Jacobs found his sister at the Astor House in New York and with her moved to Boston, where he collaborated with her to keep her location a mystery. Jacobs also became an antislavery activist and lecturer for "the oppressed the world over," as he told Sydney Howard Gay in one 1846 letter.¹⁴⁷

Other fugitives, for lack of records, presumably left town after some years of residence. Thomas and Sarah Price, who lived at 95 South Sixth Street in the latter 1850s, were identified as "runaway slaves" in an overseers of the poor record of 1848. Thomas Price rather consistently stated a different place of birth at every official enumeration: he stated it as Connecticut for the 1850 census, as New Jersey in the 1855 state census, as Massachusetts in 1860; his daughter Mary Ann stated before the overseers that he was born in Virginia, although his death record again states New Jersey. In 1852 the overseers reported that Price's wife "has ran away," but by the mid-1850s she had returned to the city. Four times during the winter of 1859 the Prices sought outdoor relief for them and their children. In March that year the overseers noted that Thomas Price was "going to work for Wm Penn Howland next month, 'will trouble us once more and that is all.'" Within a week the family was compelled to return. The overseers in their notes declared "no more" after this late March visit, but Sarah Price returned for help in July that year. "Husband has work now, mowing, dont expect to call again very soon," but the winter again was hard: three days before Christmas they applied again for relief. In the overseers notes is the statement that their daughter Anna was then "living out, near Boston." Thomas Price died in New Bedford in 1861, but what became of his wife and children is not known.

Like the Price family, William Winters was another fugitive who did not remain permanently in

the city. Though the 1855 state census did not record his presence, assessor's accounts for that year show him at 20 Seventh Street with Elisha Thornton Jr., the 1856 city directory shows him at the same address, and the 1860 New Bedford census shows him as a Delaware-born waiter living in a two-family household, probably on South Second Street, with the black mariner William H. Smith and his wife Mary E. and black mason Francis Douglass (from North Carolina) and his family. Winters was also listed as a founding member of Salem Baptist Church in 1858, when it split from Second Baptist. Winters was Daniel Fisher before he came to New Bedford from Deep River, Connecticut, to which he had escaped; his story, published in a Deep River newspaper in 1900, stated that he had been born in Virginia in 1808, sold to South Carolina in 1828, and escaped from that state, first by hiding in the woods and then stowing away on a lumber vessel bound for the District of Columbia. The captain of the vessel, not identified in the article, then put on a "coat of a certain color" and told Winters to follow him. He then freed the him and sent him to Baltimore. Winters moved on to Pennsylvania and then New York, where they boarded a steamer for New Haven. From there someone whom Winters also did not identify sent him to Deep River to Deacon George Reed, who gave Winters his alias. He then moved on to New Bedford, "because," one Underground Railroad historian stated, "it was known that Massachusetts was more friendly to escaped slaves than Connecticut." He remained in New Bedford "a dozen years or more" and then returned to Deep River after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, though the 1870 census does not list him there under either name.¹⁴⁸ The druggist Elisha Thornton Jr. is not so far known to have participated in fugitive assistance in any instance other than Winters's, but like a number of New Bedford's white abolitionists his father, who lived on the northwest corner of Seventh and School Streets, openly opposed slavery. In his undated journal Elisha Thornton Sr. wrote, "During these years [the Revolution and immediately after], my mind was

often led to view and reflect, very feelingly, on the subject of the African Slave Trade; and also, on the very great injustice done to the natives of this land; and from the prospect which I had, I should scarcely hesitate to predict, that the United States, sooner or later will feel the scourge of the Divine displeasure, in a very awful maner, on account thereof! and the period may not be very distant!" He wrote a poem, "On the Slave Trade," castigating the practice in 1789.

David Wright Ruggles is also a documented fugitive who lived in the neighborhood from the late 1840s through about 1853, most of that time as a domestic in the homes of Edward C. Jones. Amelia Hickling Nye, the mother of Jones's second wife, wrote about him in one 1855 letter written in New Bedford:

The South hate New Bedford as we have a great number of free blacks in our midst—David Ruggles who is now in California lived many years in this city with Mr. Robeson and afterwards with Mr. Jones—he was a runaway slave, and offered through a gentleman who was going to New Orleans to purchase himself for any sum not exceeding 1,000 dollars but the gentleman wanted 12 or 15 hundred so he lost his money and his slave he could read and write being self taught. [H]e told me how he ran away, he accompanied his master to New York and elsewhere north two or three times his master gave him a check to a Bank for 2 or 300 Dollars to pay their expenses—as they were going south in the morning he procured the money paid all the Bills and packed up his trunk placing what money was leftover in it, and then came north so that when his master discovered he had run away it was too late. [H]e offered a reward for his apprehension, but David knew what he was about—he would not touch a cent of the money, even if he had needed it ever so much, as

he did not wish his master to accuse him of stealing.¹⁴⁹

African-American historian Dorothy Porter interviewed Ruggles's son and namesake (1872-1956) in California, who told her "that his father had been given aid by David Ruggles, the abolitionist. He had discarded his slave name and assumed the name of his benefactor," the New York black abolitionist who had also assisted in the escape, and placement in New Bedford, of Frederick Douglass.¹⁵⁰ In California by 1855, David W. Ruggles was named as one of eighteen delegates from San Francisco County to attend that state's first black convention, he was a founding member of the Franchise League (which worked to revoke state laws denying the vote to people of color), and he was a trustee of the Livingstone Institute, a short-lived school for black children. Ruggles was still living in San Francisco in 1900, an eighty-year-old stove dealer who stated his birthplace as Louisiana. In the 1880 census for that city Ruggles stated he was born in Virginia, and in both censuses he stated his parents were native Virginians.¹⁵¹

It seems likely that another of the Jones family domestics was a fugitive, based on the records Edward Jones's second wife Emma kept. On 1 January 1850, while the family still lived on Walnut Street, Sarah Hobbs began work in the household, probably cleaning house. She remained employed by the Joneses through 17 April 1851, "when she left for Canada." Only a month earlier, on 16 March, New Bedford's fugitive community had been alarmed by the rumor that a federal marshall from Boston, with a troop of one hundred "marines"—"some say 200," the *Standard* reported—was on its way by vessel to New Bedford to capture them en masse and return them to the South. Slave agents had decided "to try their hand in New Bedford," the newspaper stated, because their Boston efforts in the same direction had failed. The *Standard* must have been referring to the unsuccessful attempts to take the fugitives William and Ellen Craft, in late

October 1850, and Shadrach Minkins, in February 1851. The New Bedford raid never took place, but, the newspaper reported, “We understand that a number of fugitives have this week left the city for a region where color is not a crime punishable by enslavement”—in other words, Canada. Though Hobbs clearly was not among this initial group, she may have followed. She returned to New Bedford and began working again for the Joneses in August 1851, and she stayed with them until November 1853. By 1855 Hobbs was living and working in the household of merchant Oliver Crocker on William Street, but after that year her name disappears from New Bedford records.¹⁵²

It is possible, too, that Isabella Roberts White worked early in her life at the Jones household, though her obituary of 1924 does not mention the fact. Her story is variably told in different accounts. Prepared more than a decade after White’s death, a WPA account was apparently supplied to its author by Agatha Snow, the granddaughter of Loum Snow, based on what White had “told to friends and acquaintances” in New Bedford.¹⁵³ The WPA account states that Snow was known to be an “ardent abolitionist” and to have purchased the freedom of other enslaved people. In 1859, the fugitive William Carney asked Snow to help negotiate the purchase of his wife Nancy, held in slavery in Norfolk and owned by Joseph Carter; Nancy Carney arrived in New Bedford in the fall of that year, having paid eighty dollars toward her purchase price of three hundred dollars. Documents confirm that Snow also paid the traveling expenses of Carney and his children to New Bedford after Carney returned to Norfolk to retrieve them in 1863.¹⁵⁴ Yet no solid evidence has so far emerged to document that Snow acted similarly with respect to Isabella White. Agatha Snow told the WPA’s G. Leroy Bradford that as a four- or five-year-old girl White had been placed in a barrel marked “sweet potatoes” and sent north, in the manner of Henry

“Box” Brown. Bradford averred that the story “has never been verified but was quite generally accepted.” Snow told him that she was “never certain” who had helped her escape, but the WPA account states that “older residents of New Bedford recall that it was Mrs. White’s idea that parents she did not remember” had put her in the barrel. Loum Snow, who lived at 159 County Street just north of Union, cared for her until she was old enough to work. “Her definite recollections,” Bradford wrote, “were confined to the time after she was taken into the home of the late Miss Amelia Jones, where she spent the greater part of her life in various pursuits as a domestic.” However, no people of color were listed as servants in the Jones household in either 1870 or 1880, and White’s obituary states that “during her residence here Mrs. White had served as a cook to Dr. Wilder and Dr. Clark.” Census records confirm her presence in 1860 in physician Daniel Wilder’s home—with two children, Solomon, age two, and nine-month-old Maria C. The 1867 directory lists White at the 95 William Street home of Henry Clarke, as does the 1870 federal census. *Liberator* records document that the partnership of Wilder and Clarke, who were homeopathic physicians, were longtime subscribers to the abolitionist newspaper. Both doctors had left New Bedford by 1871—after which point it is at least possible that White worked for Amelia Jones but lived out. In 1875 White was living on Sears Court. White’s obituary of 1924 related her story somewhat differently than the later WPA account did:

From those who knew Mrs. White well it was learned that her escape from the south was effected by putting her in a packing box and shipping her to Philadelphia. She carried sufficient food on the trip, and with the aid of a pair of scissors she cut holes in the box to obtain air.

It was said that when Mrs. White arrived at Philadelphia it was feared by those who

were to receive her that she was dead. But Mrs. White allayed the fear of friends by pounding on the box and shouting, "I'm not dead. I have the life of a dozen."

After being in the Quaker City but a short time, pursuers were on her trail, and her capture appeared so imminent that she was forced to leave the city and escape to Canada. Still followed to Canada, it was said that she foiled her pursuers by cutting off her hair and disguising herself so well that she eluded those who would have taken her back to the South.

Leaving Canada, Mrs. White went to Albany when the Civil War was on and remained there until near its close, when she came to New Bedford and settled here. . . For a time Mrs. White conducted a small restaurant at Union and First streets.¹⁵⁵

Contradicting this account are poor relief records, which indicate that she was in fact in New Bedford by March 1860, when she twice sought aid. "Isabella White, c, wife of [blank] White, who was never here (gone to Canada), she came here last fall from South, 2 children 17 mos, Maria[,] Child age 7 weeks, Isabella is living on Chesnut St, north of Smith in family of Mary Lacy, c, Isabella wants food & fuel," the 3 March overseers account states. The 16 March entry provides more detail: "Isabella White c, age 24, wife of Solomon, who was never here. She came here from South last Aug. 2 children Solomon 18 months Maria 2 months. Chestnut St last house north of Smith. wants food & fuel." If she stated her age correctly in this account, she would have been born about 1836, which tallies with what she told enumerators for the 1860 and 1870 censuses. Her obituary states that she was "about 79" when she died, which would place her date of birth at about 1845; her 1900 census listing has her as fifty years old, which would place her date of birth as 1850. Both the obituary and the later census must be incorrect: she could not have had her first

child by 1858 if either were accurate.

City directory listings consistently show Isabella White as the “widow of Solomon.” By 1880 Isabella White was living on lower Union Street with her two children (her daughter Maria, shown in the census as Lydia M., was then a nineteen-year-old domestic, while her son Solomon was a shoemaker), and twenty years later she was living at the rear of 235 Park Street and working as a laundress. She stated her age at that time as fifty, a clear understatement. Where and when she married Solomon White is not known, though her childrens’ census record give their father’s birthplace as Massachusetts. Strangely, the only listings of White’s two children in New Bedford are the 1880 census and poor relief records: they were never listed in city directories, though both were clearly working in New Bedford by 1880.¹⁵⁶

One other documented fugitive came later to the neighborhood, having bought 95 South Sixth Street from the heirs of Richard Johnson after the Civil War. John H. Jenifer, according to one biographical account of his son, was in New Bedford from 1841, though his name does not appear in any formal listing until 1870. Jenifer’s son John Thomas became a nationally known figure in the African Methodist Episcopal church. His biography states that he was born “in Upper Marlboro, Prince George County, Md., March 10, 1836, in the Tyler Family. His parents John H. and Catharine Jenifer were slaves. At the age of eighteen John was carried by his owners to Baltimore where he served as under clerk in several dry goods houses. In 1859 he went to New Bedford, Mass., to live with his father who, in 1841, went there on the ‘underground railroad.’” John Thomas Jenifer himself recalled his first meeting with Frederick Douglass, in New Bedford:

In the days of my bondage, a slave boy in Baltimore, I heard a great deal of the rare powers and qualities of Frederick Douglass, hence, craved to see him. Having left Baltimore in 1859 for New Bedford, Mass., in search of freedom, and learning, among other things, I had a fondness for essay writing. Sitting outdoors one morning, at the home of my father, trying my hand on an essay, I heard my stepmother in the yard exclaim, 'Why, how d'ye do, Mr. Douglass.' A long-desired opportunity brought me to my feet and out in the yard, where I beheld that splendid figure with princely bearing, standing, expressing his delights at the variety and beauties of the choice flowers. . . . Between Mr. Douglass and my father there existed a life-long fellowship. Each was a slave: each from Maryland, and each found a harbor of refuge in New Bedford, Mass.: hence he appeared to take a deep interest in my welfare. . . . I knew Mr. Douglass in his home life. I was his pastor whom he respected. I was the last minister whose hand he shook the day of his death.¹⁵⁷

Other people of color in this neighborhood left records suggesting they may have been fugitives, not free, when they came to New Bedford. People who claimed different birthplaces fall into that category. James R. Davis of 114 Seventh Street stated at various times that he was born in New York City (1833), Richmond (1839), New Bedford (1849), Savannah (1850), and Washington (1855). Samuel Douglass, who married Marshall Potts's stepdaughter Cynthia Auker and lived with Potts at 80 South Sixth Street, told 1855 state census enumerators that he was born in Massachusetts, but his 1852 marriage record states it as Edenton, North Carolina, the town from which Harriet and John S. Jacobs escaped.

At 95 South Sixth Street in the late 1850s, Edward Simpson also gave conflicting information: in

the 1855 state census his birthplace is shown as Virginia and in the 1860 federal census as Massachusetts (he may have felt he had more to fear from federal census officials than those of the state), but an 1864 overseers of the poor record and his own death record of 1867 state his birthplace was Savannah, Georgia. It is possible that Simpson was an alias for Pernall (there were slaveholding Pernalls in Maryland); an Edward and Susan Pernall were living at 95 South Sixth Street in 1858, with children named Amanda, Charlotte and James E.; in 1859 and 1860 Edward and Susan Simpson with a daughter Charlotte were at the same address. Another child shown in their household in 1855, Sarah, died in 1858. An 1864 poor relief record stated that Edward and Susan Simpson had no children living, and the 1865 state census shows them alone in their household. Edward (or Edmund) and Susan Pernall were shown only in the 1850 New Bedford census, while the Simpsons do not appear until the 1855 census. Discrepancies exist in the names of some children, their stated dates of arrival in New Bedford, and Susan Simpson's account of the death date of her husband, but there is reason enough to suspect that the two families were the same. David S. Fletcher, who lived in the same household as James Davis, may also have used an alias: the record of his intention to marry shows his name as David S. Hitch, while his marriage record has it as Fletcher.

Archibald Clark, who lived with his daughter at 42 Bedford late in his life, may also have been a fugitive. His 1862 death record identifies him as a shipkeeper, born in Maryland, his father as James Pumpey, and his mother Tamah Clark, both of Maryland. The death record of Archibald's sister Lucy Clark Bush identifies her parents as James and Tamar Clark. The Washington free negro registers document that Lucy Clark had been freed by a James Pumphrey and that her children Julia, Susan, and James were born free. An Eleanor Clark was freed in Washington about

the same time by her father, James Warren; a later record states that Eleanor Clark was “born free, as were her three children: Archy, aged ten, Cornelius aged eight, and John aged six years.”

Because the names and birthdates of Archy and Cornelius cohere with New Bedford records about them, it seems possible that Eleanor Warren Clark was Archibald Clark’s first wife and John and Archy their children; John Clark’s 1831 New Bedford protection paper makes clear that the witness, Archibald Clark, was his father. It seems possible that Eleanor Clark died before Archibald Clark came to New Bedford, possibly at the same time as his son and certainly by 1836. That he is not recorded in the free negro register when his probable wife, children, and sister were hints that he was not free.¹⁵⁸ The records do make clear that both Archibald and Lucy were the children of a white slaveholder. The 1820 Washington census shows a James Pumphrey with five slaves in his household, and his daughter Susan was born to Pumphrey and his wife in Prince George’s County, Maryland, where Archibald Clark stated he was born on an 1849 protection paper.

It is also possible that William Piper was not free upon his arrival here, though from the similarity of given names other probable relatives in Alexandria were. Piper’s 1870 death records states his parents’ names as William and Amelia, and all records indicate that he was born about 1786. Among his children were Sarah Ann, Amelia (the name of his wife as well), and Augustus. In Fairfax County, which abuts Alexandria, a Sarah Piper was freed about 1800, but the only record for a William Piper is for a son of hers born about 1819. Sarah Piper also had children named Amelia, Jackson, and Jane B.; no age is stated for Amelia, but Jane was born about 1821 and Jackson about 1824. An Augustus Piper, born about 1806 a free men and indentured until about 1829, is also shown in free negro registers for Fairfax County. The children of New Bedford’s

William Piper were all born between 1816 and 1825. It seems possible on the basis of these names and dates that the Sarah Piper freed about 1800 was the sister of William Piper, that they both passed the name of their mother onto one of their children, that Sarah named one of her sons for her father and brother, and that Augustus of 1806 was somehow related, perhaps a brother of William and Sarah. But no manumission or certificate of freedom exists for New Bedford's William Piper or any of his other children in Alexandria, Washington, or Fairfax County.¹⁵⁹ The chance of them having been fugitives thus exists, and that he was a "former slave in Alexandria" was attested by the fugitive John S. Jacobs.

Evidence—most of it of the retrospective sort—suggests that neighborhood whites other than those specifically mentioned in connection with known fugitives also assisted in escapes from slavery. Zephaniah Pease maintained in 1919 that James and Sarah Rotch Arnold "entertained great people at their home, but Mr. Arnold regarded the humble no less. The fugitive Negro was welcomed to his door during the period which preceded the Civil War." Caroline Weston also alluded to the claim at the time. "The descendants of the early Quakers begin to remember that they ought to have a testimony offer in this matter [antislavery] as many among them remember when the garrets of Thomas Arnold and Wm Rotch the elder were constantly tenanted by runaway slaves (forwarded to their care by Moses Brown of Providence) which explains how it was that this place became a refuge for slaves—(there are now living here more than four hundred)."¹⁶⁰

Evidence that documents the presence of specific fugitives in the home of Arnold or William Rotch Sr. has not emerged, however. William Rotch Sr. deplored the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, which he noted in one letter to Moses Brown would compelled Rotch's business associate Samuel Rodman, then living in Nantucket, to return an enslaved man named Cato, who had escaped to

the island, to his titular owner, John Slocum of Newport. In the end Rodman negotiated an agreement with Slocum that Cato would return to him, but only for two years; Rodman also paid \$250 to Christopher Mardenborough of Newport to free his slave Jack. After a visit to the home of William Rotch Jr. in July 1837, the black abolitionist Charles B. Ray wrote in the *Colored American*, “The old gentleman entertained us in part, in relating cases of fugitives in which he had participated. He had been, during life, a practical abolitionist.”¹⁶¹ William Rotch Jr. had been involved in fugitive assistance since at least 1792, when he worked with several of his New Bedford relatives to send a family to Providence upon learning that a slave agent was attempting to return them South.¹⁶² In her memoir, Martha Routh, an English “Public Friend,” noted that Rotch helped free the husband of a ship’s cook on the voyage between England and Boston in July 1794.¹⁶³ An intriguing reference also exists in an 1804 letter Rotch’s sister Mary wrote from North Carolina. “We have also been at Rich square the former residence of our dr Richard Jordan, who we secretly congratulated on his escape from these southern states, tho’ we far from apprehending that in removing to N England he has left all trouble behind him.” Yet whether the man Rotch described was a fugitive is impossible to know.

With Joseph Ricketson Jr., probably no white person in New Bedford was more active in fugitive assistance than the watchmaker and jeweler John Bailey (1787-1883), whose 167 Union Street house was a few doors east of Ricketson’s home. He was a birthright Quaker, and his sister Mary Bailey Newhall was the “New Light” minister who helped foment the 1820s schism in that sect in New Bedford. Bailey moved to New Bedford about 1823-24 and became a prominent member of the local and county antislavery societies, vice president of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1855, a *Liberator* agent, subscriber, and correspondent, and managing editor later of several

antislavery papers, including the *Path-Finder* and the *Peoples Press*, both begun in 1854. There was scarcely an antislavery incident in New Bedford or the region in which he was not involved, and he was so highly esteemed among people of color in the city that “the colored abolitionists” supported him (along with George Howland Jr. and Joseph Ricketson) for state representative in the 1839 election. He was also chosen chair of the First of August celebration committee in 1847.¹⁶⁴

Bailey’s fugitive assistance seems first to have been documented in the *Liberator* in August 1844. “A schooner arrived here two or three days since from the South, with two ‘chattels personal’ on board, about eighteen or twenty years of age,” he wrote, “They like New-Bedford so well, that they have concluded to make this their residence for the future.”¹⁶⁵ Two years later he tried to explain why people of color pretending to be fugitives was such a serious problem:

We are peculiarly situated—here is one of the fugitives’ depots. There is scarcely a week passes but that more or less of that oppressed race arrive here, and are thrown immediately upon our hands for protection and support, all classes turning them over to the abolitionists to be fed, clothed, and provided for. In the large cities it is not so. A few hundred fugitives in the city of New-York would be but a few drops in that ocean of human beings, and would soon mingle and be lost in the living mass. But here, they preserve their identity. They are strangers, and we take them in. In so doing, we are sometimes taken in ourselves.¹⁶⁶

In January 1848 Bailey publicized an incident in which a fugitive woman, whom he called only “the wife of Aaron Chase,” came to him to see if he might find information about her husband.

She and her two children had left Mount Holly, New Jersey, a few days after her husband's brother, "Commodore Chase," escaped pursuing slave agents. Commodore Chase had come to New Bedford, she told Bailey, and she had then followed. Aaron Chase was apparently taken at Mount Holly. Mrs. Chase noted also that another family, that of the blacksmith John Taseo, had left Mount Holly at the same time for New Bedford. Bailey stated that Taseo had never been able to pursue the trade he learned in slavery in New Jersey and in New Bedford "came out with his basket the other morning, asking for bread! I gave him some, for which I am liable to a fine of \$500, by the laws of our pious Christian rulers—at least, I should be, in some of the States of the Union."¹⁶⁷ The Chase couple listed in the poor relief records in November 1847—"William & Emeline Chase came from N. Jersey in Nov 1847 He is runaway slave-Have one child Saml 11 mos old born in N Jersey; 1/4 ton coal 16 Feb 1858"—was probably the same family Bailey had described. Neither Taseo nor any of the Chases are listed in any formal record of city inhabitants; they may have believed they were still hunted and may have moved on, perhaps to Canada.

"Our house was the home of the Anti-Slavery lecturer and the fugitive slave," one of John Bailey's daughters recalled. "Under cover of night fugitives were brought and carried away. For years not a day passed but a lecturer or fugitive was our guest. New Bedford was considered a very safe place for the slave and they were sent to us from New York and Boston, and when it was not deemed safe or they were too frightened to stay, they were passed on to Canada."¹⁶⁸ She described as well what her father and his family experienced as abolitionists in New Bedford's antislavery community, a recollection that underscores how probably a great many people regarded abolitionism at the time.

He was a conscientious abolitionist, a friend of Garrison, Phillips and Pillsbury, and could not support either political party. The whole colored population of New Bedford followed his lead. They held the balance of power, and always came to him to know for whom to vote. He told them to vote for men who would do justice to their race.

Both parties [Whigs and Democrats] were alike pro-slavery. Sometimes New Bedford was left unrepresented in the Legislature because the abolitionists defeated the election. A whig asked a colored man, "Who will your vote for?" "John Bailey." "Oh, he's pizen," said the whig. Our friends used to call us 'Pizen's daughters.' At the close of one of the abortive elections father was pushed about fifteen feet down a flight of stone steps. His escape from death was miraculous. At last the whigs agreed to take their work away from him, unless he would vote, and cause the colored people to vote the whig ticket. There were only two democratic ship owners in the place. George Howland a wealthy Quaker and ship owner, a cousin of mother's, told him of their decision and urged him to yield: if he did not he would be ruined. Father replied, "George, as long as fish live in the sea, and clams live in the sand, I'll not sell my principles." The next week every chronometer was taken from his store and given to a man whom the Whigs had hired to come to New Bedford and take the work, and father's business was ruined. . . .

The present generation can have no idea of the persecutions and annoyances to which the abolitionists were exposed. . . . When we had had an Anti-Slavery Convention, and the speakers had denounced in the strongest terms slavery and its apologists, the mob would howl around our house all night. Father had his store newly painted, and the next morn it was covered with filth. It was said his daughters were "going to marry niggers," and someone, wishing to be witty, hung the fore legs of a calf on our door, marked "For John's

nigger son-in-law.” I cannot begin to tell of the annoyances and insults to which we were exposed. Many a time we came home from Anti-Slavery lectures, our dresses were ruined by rotten eggs and tobacco spit; but in spite of all we none of us faltered in our work.

This Bailey reminiscence noted too that one of her father’s eight-day clocks that years later came to a New Bedford shop for repairs had an inscribed brass plate inside it which stated, “Know all men whom it may concern, that in the year 1837 John Bailey was proscribed on account of his political and Anti-Slavery principles and work taken from him by Wm. R. Rodman, Wm. T. Russell, and other kindred whigs. *O mores, O tempora!*”¹⁶⁹

Bailey alluded to this incident in 1842, when he introduced resolutions at the New Bedford Anti-Slavery Society meeting that no member should vote for anyone running for state or national office unless they would “go to the end of their constitutional powers to bring about abolition,” and that anyone who voted was compelled to vote for candidates that supported immediate abolition. He resolved further “that we would most cheerfully make any sacrifice, excepting a sacrifice of principle, to preserve peace and harmony with both political parties; but no threats, no proscription, or loss of friends or business, shall ever induce us to make that sacrifice, or abandon the cause of the slave and the rights of man.” Bailey’s daughter’s account notes that “Father struggled along for some time, but at last moved to Lynn, a strong Anti-Slavery town. Here he met with nothing but kindness.” It appears he remained in New Bedford at least a decade after his business was hurt by Whig politics. In October 1848, after having visited New Bedford for an antislavery convention, the abolitionist Samuel J. May wrote to one of the Weston sisters, “Good John Bailey was there, packing up his household effects & sending them off to Lynn, to which

town he removes, as N. Bedford seeks to starve & freeze his antislavery fidelity out of him. He seemed very heavy-hearted at leaving N.B.; his daughters keep up their spirits nobly. They remain in N.B. to keep school.”

In the 11 August 1848 *Liberator*, eleven New Bedford men of color published a “testimonial of respect” to Bailey upon his departure. “Hundreds of fugitives have known his benevolence,” the wrote.

Many, in this place, will bless his memory. . . . Ever since the origin of the anti-slavery cause in New England, he has been found among its firm supporters, laboring with his time, influence and money, to promote its objects, and amid all the trials through which the cause has passed, has never turned back, or faltered, but ever been of the first to proposes, and foremost to assist, in carrying out measures to forward the work of emancipation, so that his name has become identified with the anti-slavery cause in New-Bedford.

Among the men who prepared this testament were Solomon Peneton, David W. Ruggles, Nathan Johnson’s son-in-law Thomas Buchanan, and Robert Goldsberry (or Goldsborough), who had been a waiter at the Mansion House in 1841 and may have been the fugitive who waited on British abolitionist Joseph Sturge in its dining room that year. That man could also have been Henry Johnson, who was working at the Mansion House in the same year. It is worth noting, though not necessarily meaningful, that the Mansion House may still have been owned in 1841 by Mary Rotch, who had lived at 47 South Sixth Street house since 1838, and it was she who in 1829 gave John Bailey a ten-year lease for the shop he occupied on the corner opposite North Second Street

from the Mansion House.¹⁷⁰

In addition to these men and women, one may assume that New Bedford people who contributed to the fugitive-assisting Boston Vigilance Committee supported at least the general effort to help people escaping slavery. In addition to Joseph Ricketson, James Bunker Congdon, William C. Coffin, and Henry V. Davis were neighborhood residents who donated funds to the group; both James Arnold also contributed funds to the New York State Vigilance Committee in 1849. New Bedford also had a vigilance committee, but its records (if records were compiled at all) have not survived, and thus it is not known who joined it. Coffin, whose mother was the sister of Joseph and James Bunker Congdon, was a book seller and a disowned Friend. He was secretary of the Young Men's Anti-Slavery Society of New Bedford in 1839, secretary of the state antislavery society meeting in Worcester in 1840, and with Thomas A. Greene was a secretary of the peace convention held in New Bedford in 1846. Coffin was the man who in effect discovered Douglass at the Second Street church and invited him to speak at the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society convention in 1841. With other black and white abolitionists he investigated the discrimination against black sailmaker Shadrach Howard on the New Bedford Taunton Railroad in 1842.¹⁷¹ A letter he wrote to Maria Weston Chapman in 1840 documents his assistance to one fugitive:

I received your letter requesting me to inform Abraham of the arrival in Boston of the amiable Mr Hogan by this mornings mail. I immediately went in search of him and informed him of the fact, he did not seem to be at all alarmed—feeling perfectly safe surrounded as he is by kind friends who are willing to do all in their power to prevent his falling into the hands of his christian slave-holder.

He thinks it would be better for Pendas to remain where she is for the present as Hogan might discover his whereabouts if she should attempt to come to him, which I think is good advice. He wished me to say that he was well, and that she should have paid Penda a visit in a week or two had he not received this information. He wishes to know if Hogan's wife is with him and whether he intends to remain in Boston during the winter.¹⁷²

The man Abraham is almost certainly the one described in Chapman's barely fictionalized book *Pinda: A True Tale*, published (against the advice of her sister Deborah Weston) by the American Anti-Slavery Society in the same year. Pinda had been brought to Boston on the ship *Eli Whitney* in 1836 by her owner, which act by Massachusetts law technically freed her. She wished, however, to return to Savannah for her husband Abraham and stayed on board the vessel intent on making the trip south. In Savannah her husband advised her to escape, which she did during a trip with her mistress to New Hampshire. Chapman's account then told how "Mr. Logan of Savannah" came to Boston for the sixth annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society; his presence compelled some unidentified person to bring her to Chapman's West Street home, where she probably stayed for several weeks. Abraham must have escaped to Boston and then have been sent to New Bedford. In March 1840 Deborah Weston reported to her sister that he had arrived.

Today at noon Abraham came with your letter. I did not know him though I thought I had seen him before, which was a mistake. He kept talking about his family, & removing his family Pinda I suppose he meant. I liked him very much. He wanted me when I wrote to tell you that he got here safe. He was put he said in the Jim Crow car, but rode in the inside of the stage I understood him. He wants you to tell Pinda that at the place where he

is staying are two old acquaintances of his, who came from the very place he did, Savannah I suppose & that he has not the least trouble in getting along—I told his story to Mr. Howland, who was much interested & thinks he can give him some work immediately. There is great feeling for runaway slaves here, & it is rather a recommendation than otherwise. I don't doubt he will prosper. I should not think it at all safe though to publish his story, which is a great pity, for there never was a prettier one—Why did he not go to Guiana? He quoted you very often. . . I will do every thing in my power for him.¹⁷³

The “Mr. Howland” to whom Weston referred was probably either James or his son James Henry Howland; one James Howland frequently accompanied her to antislavery meetings.¹⁷⁴ James Howland’s father John had given work to the fugitive William Grimes in 1816, from his arrival in June that year “until it began to grow cold.”¹⁷⁵ Whether Howland knew Grimes was a fugitive is not known, and there are other instances in which such knowledge, and therefore willing fugitive assistance, cannot be established. In 1824 a “runaway slave” is shown among the crew of the New Bedford merchant ship *Abigail*, owned by David Coffin, Elisha Dunbar, Andrew Robeson, and Benjamin Rodman.¹⁷⁶ John Randolph and two other fugitives came to New Bedford between 1815 and 1818 aboard the *Regulator*, a flour packet between the ports of New Bedford and Alexandria. The *Regulator* was owned principally by John Avery Parker and Weston Howland, whose sons Weston, William Penn, and Abraham lived in the neighborhood. Because there were three fugitives aboard it seems likely that Samuel Chadwick, the vessel’s captain, was aware of their presence, but this too is not known. Randolph left New Bedford after city abolitionists managed to thwart efforts to return him to slavery in 1822. In that year Gideon and William H. Allen witnessed a deed that sold Randolph’s New Bedford property, but the significance of their witness

is not clear. Gideon Allen, as agent for the whaling ship *Milwood*, asked no questions of the fugitive John Thompson when he asked to join the crew in 1842 except whether he was a good steward; Thompson did not reveal that he escaped slavery to Captain Aaron C. Luce until the voyage was underway.¹⁷⁷

Other neighborhood residents declared their intention to help fugitives who came to the city, though specific evidence of such assistance has not emerged. John Weiss was clearly one of them. After he addressed the large Liberty Hall meeting protesting passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, the *Standard* correspondent "Free Soil" declared that Weiss's speech to the group expressed "the only true and consistent course" and quoted him to have said, "I will resist it [the law] as a christian duty, with all my strength, and will leave my sacred desk to rescue the panting slave at the corner of the streets when danger threatens." Henry Johnson, identified here as a fugitive, followed Weiss to the platform and stated, according to the newspaper, that "he would spill the last drop of blood in his body before he would submit to be carried back into slavery." Resistance of whatever sort necessary was decidedly the path "Free Soil" advised, and he was in the minority: the meeting appointed none of the well-known abolitionists to the resolutions committee, and it concluded that while the law was "unconstitutional and oppressive," it should be modified or repealed rather than openly disobeyed. "We deeply sympathize with our colored fellow-citizens in their danger and distress, and . . . freely tender them whatever aid we may rightfully afford them," the meeting stated, but those who voted for the resolution stated their willingness to assist only as "a generous construction of the law will allow, and which it does not imperatively forbid." Free Soil lambasted the meeting's sentiments afterward.

What advantage will it be to the poor slave for us to mount the rostrum and quote the sacred and hallowed language of our Forefathers, and swell with indignation and disgust at the odious slave-catching law, if *our indignation* is only *deep rooted* enough to talk loud when surrounded by a crowded assemblage, and when the chances that we shall have to back up our indignant language by FORCIBLE RESISTANCE to the United States law is small? . . . If our speeches are only made for the *occasion* to catch the votes of our colored citizens and made them satisfied that we are the true friends of the fugitive and are ready to fight for them, and our resolves are so *bold* and so *mild* that our neighbors in the District and County will admire us for our conservatism and moderation, we had better, *far better* say nothing, than encourage our colored brethren with *false hopes*. We want men here to incur the penalty of the law, '*fine and imprisonment*,' rather than suffer a slave to be dragged from our city. We want a Representative in Congress who will not shrink from rendering assistance to the slave even at the CAPITOL *itself* if need be.¹⁷⁸

The Role of the Coastwise Trade

In the study of fugitives and who if any aided particular individuals in their flight from slavery, the most difficult area of research is the role that coastal vessels and packets played in that flight, either knowingly or unknowingly. Many slave narratives attest to their role overall, and with other accounts it is almost certain that they were the means by which most fugitives escaped to New Bedford. Even those who accomplished the journey out of the South on foot took a trading or regular passenger vessel from Philadelphia or New York to ports further north, and a list of those fugitives who came to New Bedford by one of these vessels suffices to make this point.

- \$ April 1799: slaveowner Samuel Sloane accuses Thomas Wainer, master of the *Ranger*, of having “carried off” both Sloane’s slave Harry and Harry’s then-pregnant wife Lucy, owned by a hatter who lived in Snow Hill, Maryland. Sloane stated that Wainer was a “Mulatto, who traded here, and cleared out as Capt. of a small vessel from Westport—came to the port of Snowhill, Maryland, where he got a load of corn and staves, and cleared for Norfolk, Virginia, whence, he said, he intended for Westport, whither I suppose him to have gone.”
- \$ 1816: William Grimes escapes to Boston aboard the brig *Casket* (cotton) from Savannah to Boston
- \$ 1815-18: John Randolph and two others travel on the *Regulator* (flour) to New Bedford from Alexandria
- \$ 1824: A “runaway slave” is listed as a crew member of the New Bedford merchant vessel *Abigail*
- \$ about 1830: Joseph M. Smith escapes from his native North Carolina to New Bedford on an unnamed vessel carrying lumber
- \$ about 1834: Henry Johnson escapes from Richmond on board the *Tantony*, carrying flour to New York City and then aboard the packet *Rodman* from New York to New Bedford
- \$ September 1838: At New York City Frederick Douglass is put on the packet *John W. Richmond* to Newport
- \$ 1838: John S. Jacobs escapes from his master in New York City aboard a vessel bound for New Bedford; he lives in the city until he joins the crew of the whaler *Frances Henrietta* later that year

- \$ 1842: Harriet Jacobs, the sister of John S. Jacobs, escapes Edenton, North Carolina, on board a vessel bound for Philadelphia. When she learns her former master is in pursuit of her, she is sent by Cornelia Grinnell Willis, her employer and the adopted daughter of Joseph Grinnell, to Grinnell's New Bedford home
- \$ August 1844: a schooner "from the South" arrives in New Bedford with two fugitives aboard [John Bailey to Liberator, 13 August 1844]
- \$ 1845: Daniel Ball of Virginia is sold to the owner of a "coaster" and escapes it in port in Providence; he comes by some unidentified means to New Bedford, lives with the black clothes dresser Thomas A. Williams on First Street, and saw woods for income
- \$ April 1847: John Armstrong (name in slavery John Hill) arrives in New Bedford after having left Baltimore on "a packet to Brandywine [Delaware]" and travels through Philadelphia and New York to New Bedford; abolitionist Isaiah C. Ray advises him to continue to Boston¹⁷⁹
- \$ February 1848: William Ferguson and his wife Nancy are identified as "runaway slaves" in New Bedford overseers of the poor records; late in life Ferguson tells the *Standard-Times* that he had stowed away on a coal schooner *Pornony* at Norfolk and, after it reached Boston, had come to New Bedford¹⁸⁰
- \$ April 1849: Henry "Box" Brown is crated in Richmond and carried aboard a packet to Philadelphia
- \$ August 1849: Thomas H. Jones arranges with the steward on the brig *Bell*, loaded with turpentine, to take him from Wilmington, North Carolina, to New York; by 1867 he was living in New Bedford, where he died in 1890
- \$ March 1853: two unidentified fugitives are reported in or near New Bedford and are

- believed to be part of a group that escaped by vessel from Portsmouth to the city [*Standard*, 16 March 1853]
- \$ February 1854: Andrew Robeson writes to Nathaniel B. Borden of Fall River that “a slave, who escaped to this place in a vessel from Norfolk, Va.,” was being followed to New Bedford and must be sent on to Fall River “if you can keep him out of sight for a short time”¹⁸¹
 - \$ March 1854: The *Liberator* reports that “a number of slaves” had recently left Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia, by vessel and arrived in New Bedford [31 March 1854, 51:4]
 - \$ March-April 1854: The brothers of Clarissa Davis escape Norfolk as stowaways in the *Ellen Barnes*, bound for Wareham, and are sent from there to New Bedford [*Norfolk Beacon*, reprinted in *Republican Standard*, 25 May 1854 3:3]
 - \$ May 1854: Clarissa Davis stows herself away “in a small box near the Furnace” on the steamer *City of Richmond*, bound for Philadelphia; she is sent on to New Bedford, where her brothers, father, and sister are already living
 - \$ September 1854: Edinbur Randall hides aboard the bark *Franklin* of Portland, Maine, at Jacksonville, Florida, but is discovered. Bound for Bath, Maine, the vessel stops at Holmes Hole (Vineyard Haven) to arrange for Randall’s return, but he escapes with the aid of the crew into the Wampanoag community at Gay Head. Tribe members take him to New Bedford to “the residence of an abolitionist” and works on the city wharves “for some time.”¹⁸²
 - \$ May 1855: several fugitives landed on Martha’s Vineyard are sent on to New Bedford [*Republican Standard*, 17 May 1855 1:4, from *Vineyard Gazette*]
 - \$ December 1855: William Jordon (alias Price) arrives in Philadelphia from North Carolina

after having hid in a Cape Fear forest for ten months awaiting “a reliable captain from the North, who would consent to take this ‘property,’ or ‘freight,’ for a consideration. He leaves on the vessel of “a certain Captain, who was then doing quite a successful business in an Underground way,” and was “forwarded” from Philadelphia to New Bedford, “where he is anxious to go” [Still, *Underground Railroad*, 91]

The fact that coastal vessels were the principal vehicles of fugitive escape was well known at the time, both North and South. “Vessels loaded at other places bound for Northern ports daily and hourly anchor in our waters. They leave no money among us and steal away our slaves in the bargain,” one “Citizen” complained to the *Norfolk Beacon* in 1854. Another Norfolk resident later wrote, “Our commerce with the North is increasing daily, Northern vessels are multiplying in our harbors, and in the wood trade upon the rivers, hundreds of negroes are employed in loading these vessels.”¹⁸³ Yet aside from a few well-known master mariners, almost nothing is yet known about others who were willingly involved in this traffic. Since New Bedford’s earliest days as a port its vessels had been trading along the coastal South. In the 1760s New Bedford merchants such as Joseph Rotch were trading sperm and whale oil with merchants in North Carolina ports. By the 1790s the city’s two newspapers regularly reported whaling and coasting vessel clearances for North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia ports from late October through December and returns generally from mid-February through late April. But as the hunt for whales took the industry farther afield after about 1800, whaling vessels ceased to moor in southern harbors, and schooners and sloops largely took over the coastwise trade.

These vessels left New Bedford with oil, candles, and New England manufactured products to

exchange for raw goods in the South, the materials that made much of northern enterprise possible. In these years before the Erie Canal made western New York the nation's breadbasket, the best commercial grain crops were grown in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. By this time, too, shipbuilding was rapidly expanding in the North and depended very heavily on southern raw materials. The rare surviving shipping manifests for coasting vessels document that apples, sperm and whale oil, candles, cheese, plaster, and potatoes were freighted to Alexandria and Richmond; from the 1810s forward New Bedford vessels also carried south ceramic tablewares, bridles and harnesses, and a great many shoes and both woolen and felt hats. In these years vessels returned from Alexandria with ship stores, superfine flour, and corn; from New Bern with tar, barreled pork, corn, bacon, pine lumber, planks, feathers, varnish, and lard; from Savannah with rice, cotton, beef hides, cedar posts, iron ware, hops, feathers, bonnets, nails, and skins. Tobacco was another common import, as well as such naval stores as turpentine and pitch from the Cape Fear and Dismal Swamp area on the border of Virginia and North Carolina. Of twenty-three manifests in January 1815 alone, eleven were for vessels headed to and coming from southern ports—Wilmington and Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and Norfolk. Between his first voyage as a cabin boy in 1784 until 1827, when he “left off going to sea,” Captain Gilbert Howland (1772-1857) made sixty-five trips to the “Capes of Virginia and back,” ten to Philadelphia and back, fifteen to New York, ten to Providence, sixteen to Boston, and twenty to Passamaquoddy in Maine.¹⁸⁴ In 1854, according to the “Marine Intelligence” column in the *Standard*, twenty-one vessels entered New Bedford from Baltimore, thirteen from Norfolk/Portsmouth and another eleven from nearby Nansemond and Suffolk Counties, six from Richmond and Fredericksburg, eight from James and York River in Virginia, and another twenty-four from other southern ports; fully eighty-four came from Philadelphia.

Many men in this neighborhood who became merchants directly or indirectly involved in whaling began their careers in the coasting trade; several of them have earlier been described. After his parents died in 1817, Paul Cuffe Jr. “shipped aboard the *Alexander Barclay*, Captain Joseph Dunbar, bound to Baltimore, for Cotton, Fustick, and Tobacco-stalks. After loading our vessel with the above articles, we set sail for Bremen, a town in Germany, on the river Weser.”¹⁸⁵ In his early years in New Bedford, the merchant Robert Gibbs (27 South Sixth Street) was master of the sloop *Experiment*, which traveled up the Hudson River in the summer and to Savannah in the winter.¹⁸⁶ The brothers Abraham Hathaway, William Penn, and Weston Howland Jr. all began their maritime involvement in coasting. Abraham Cleaveland of 22 South Sixth Street was master of the sloop *Escort* in 1849. And it was a fact not only that many men invested in both whaling and coasting vessels but also had family or commercial connections with particular southern merchants. In 1834 Abraham Barker had accounts with Parkhurst and Nye of Baltimore and Allibone and Troubat of Philadelphia; in addition his brother Jacob ran a brokerage business in New Orleans in the 1840s.¹⁸⁷ From at least the 1810s members (or branches) of the Howland family had established themselves in the South. George Howland built his trading sloop *Emily* in New Bedford but registered it in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, in 1815. Another member of the family, the master mariner Joseph Howland, had worked in the coasting trade between Savannah and New Bedford between 1818 and 1831 and was well known among many southerners. According to a family biographer Thomas H. Howland, brother of the New Bedford’s first mayor, “was for many years in the grain business in Alexandria, Va., in connection with his father.” Another part of the far-flung family had established itself as Howland and Sons in Norfolk and was trading regularly with New Bedford and Nantucket merchants. William Tallman Russell

traded candles and whale oil with merchants Thomas Whitridge (related to New Bedford's William C. Whitridge) and Richard G. Howland in Baltimore as well as with the ports of Charleston, Philadelphia, and Norfolk. Charles W. Morgan's business included supplying whale oil to lighthouses from Maine to New Orleans and as far west as the Great Lakes.

Quaker merchants, and probably also those who had once been Quakers, tended to deal with Quaker merchants in other places, and some of those southern Quaker businessmen were known abolitionists. Samuel M. Janney of Loudoun County, Virginia, was a merchant in Alexandria in 1825-27 and, he wrote, "during many years a considerable share of my attention was devoted to the subject of slavery and the means of alleviating the condition of the people of color." His day book documents that he regularly did business during this time with the brig *Traveler*, a Cuffe family vessel, and its master Alvan Phelps, Cuffe's brother-in-law. Janney also paid Charles W. Morgan for oil and candles he had received on the New Bedford sloop *Justina*, probably on consignment.¹⁸⁸ Paul Cuffe knew Quaker flour merchant Elisha Tyson of Baltimore, who often bought men and women at the city's slave market and then freed them.¹⁸⁹ Still, no hard evidence connects any of these merchants in the coastwise trade to the passage of fugitives to New Bedford and elsewhere. And that question remains the greatest outstanding one in understanding the connection between commerce and fugitive assistance, in this neighborhood, the city, and elsewhere.

Conclusion

The County-South Sixth neighborhood was a transitional space between the earlier waterfront neighborhoods and the neighborhood developed afterward west of County Street. In geographical

terms the County-South Sixth neighborhood represented a middle ground in the climb of wealth and status from the low-lying waterfront to the bluff of County Street. And its wealth and status declined markedly as County Street began its descent from the bluff to the ocean. It was also transitional in urban development. The waterfront was a mixed-use area integrated by class, race, and income; west of County Street emerged as a wholly residential district segregated by class and race. The County-Sixth neighborhood was occupied a middle ground. It was not totally segregated, but it featured a pocket where most of its black residents lived, among whites who may have been perceived to occupy the same social and economic position. Within this working-class subsection, hard by New Bedford's troublesome Dog Corner, lived the area's only renting population as well. Indeed, this southerly part of the neighborhood—lower South Sixth, the Seventh Street extension, lower County, and both Bedford and Wing Streets—resembled more closely the older waterfront neighborhoods than it did the area just north of it.

Still, the many connections residents of color maintained with whites in the neighborhood suggest that it may properly be termed an integrated one, in racial and economic if not in residential terms. Though Nathan and Polly Johnson were the only property owners in the northern part of this district and the area of black settlement and home ownership was almost exclusively confined to the southern part, the relations between whites and blacks were regular and manifold. People of color worked in and around the households of neighborhood whites, engaged in business and real estate transfers with them, and sometimes worked with them in antislavery reform and fugitive assistance. The familiarity borne of such connections appear as well to have promoted a certain modest degree of mobility among some people of color: domestics over time both acquired property and became business owners, unskilled seamen became mates. Moreover, involvement in

whaling was widespread, as indeed it may have been in most parts of the city. Both whites and blacks either worked at sea or in shoreside trades, and in many instances even small investments in vessel ownership helped to heighten or at least solidify one's economic standing. For many residents who began their careers in areas not involved in whaling, owning part of a vessel was the first step in more extensive and direct participation in the industry.

Extensive and intricate networks of kinship among white residents account in large measure for the physical development of the neighborhood, and continued marriages among residents cemented its character. These kin connections also too helped determine one's position in the local economy, as well as, in a notable number of cases, one's political attitudes and behavior. Family wealth positioned some residents at the top of the occupational ladder in whaling, just as antislavery and abolitionism rubbed off on some immediate descendants. Residents of color, by contrast, had to establish themselves in economic, social, and political spheres essentially from scratch. Almost half of blacks living in this neighborhood before the Civil War were born in slave states, and, though kin ties united some of them, place of origin in the South was probably an equally strong factor in their settlement in the neighborhood. The five Cape Verdeans residents were the seeds of a residential concentration that arguably has persisted into the current day. The very foundation of black abolitionism may be located in this neighborhood: Lewis Temple, Nathan and Polly Johnson, and the Piper family were all critical in the early stages of antislavery reform among the city's people of color. Their abolitionism extended into overt aid to fugitives from slavery, no doubt to a greater (if less well documented) degree than among whites. Yet from time to time white and black neighborhood residents worked together in abolitionism and fugitive assistance, and in that sense, too, the County-South Sixth neighborhood may be viewed as

integrated. Their intermingling—in business and in politics—allows no doubt that whites and blacks in this neighborhood knew each other well, accepted each other in practical terms, and in some instances may have found genuine intimacy.

1 Kenneth A. Scherzer, *The Unbounded Community: Neighborhood Life and Social Structure in New York City, 1830-1875* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 9, notes that neighborhoods, or “neighborhood communities,” “are particularly difficult to define, for they exist as products of social relations and states of mind (consciousness which may or may not be related to class, ethnicity, transiency, or gender) and as *things* that have names, particular kinds of people inhabiting them, and physical boundaries.” Scherzer (11) has termed the urban neighborhood “a series of overlapping social relations that include three crucial elements: the internal spatial organization of the city; the operation of the local area as a crucible for social relations for the urbanites who live there, and the symbolic (cognitive) significance that these neighborhoods hold for their residents.”

2 Zephaniah W. Pease, *History of New Bedford* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1918), 1: 11; Edward Byers, *The Nation of Nantucket: Society and Politics in an Early American Commercial Center, 1660-1820* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 106, 115. Byers quoted Rev. Samuel Danforth of Taunton.

3 Caroline Hazard, *Thomas Hazard son of Robt call'd College Tom: A Study of Life in Narragansett in the XVIIIth Century* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 49-50.

4 Neighborhood resident William Rotch Jr. donated the parcel at the northeast corner of Union and County Streets for the Unitarian Church that now stands there. The 1836-38 building committee for the congregation’s new church (Unitarians had earlier met at Liberty Hall, the town’s first Congregational church) was composed largely of neighborhood residents as well—George T. Baker, William Tallman Russell, James Howland 2d, William H. and Gideon Allen, William W. Swain, David R. Greene, and James Bunker Congdon. Three men who lived outside this neighborhood rounded out the committee, one of them being former resident Charles Wain Morgan. See

5 “An Abolitionist” to editor of *Republican Standard*, 24 March 1853, 1:3. The records of the New Bedford Benevolent Society at Massachusetts Historical Society indicate that Daniel Ricketson was the “abolitionist” who wrote this letter. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), in *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies*, 355-56; Caroline Weston, New Bedford, Mass., to Wendell Phillips, 9 February 1845, Weston Papers, Boston Public Library

6 Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, in *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994), 355-56; *Life and Adventures of Robert, the Hermit of Massachusetts, Who Has Lived 14 Years in a Cave, Secluded from Human Society. Comprising, an Account of His Birth, Parentage, Sufferings, and Providential Escape from Unjust and Cruel Bondage in Early Life—and His Reasons for Becoming a Recluse. Taken from His Own Mouth, and Published for His Benefit* (Providence, R. I.: H. Trumbull, 1829), 15, 20; Charles L.

Blockson, *The Underground Railroad: Dramatic Firsthand Accounts of Daring Escapes to Freedom* (New York: Berkley Books, 1987), 22-23, 43; Leonard Black, *The Life and Sufferings of Leonard Black, a Fugitive from Slavery. Written by Himself* (New Bedford: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), 22-27; Chace, "My Anti-Slavery Reminiscences," 163; Rev. W. H. Robinson, *From Log Cabin to the Pulpit; or, Fifteen Years in Slavery*, 3d ed. (Eau Claire, WI: James H. Tifft, 1913), 12; *Liberator*, 4 July 1851. Quakers figured critically in the escapes of Georgia fugitive John Brown, Kentucky's William Wells Brown (who took his name from an assisting Friend), Leonard Black, Peter Robinson, and Fall River's James Curry, to say nothing of the scores aided by Thomas Garrett in Wilmington, Delaware, Abigail and Elizabeth Goodwin in New Jersey, Elisha Tyson in Baltimore, Passamore Williamson, Isaac T. Hopper, and Lucretia Mott of Philadelphia, and Friends in other cities. One abolitionist who accused Quakers of negrophobia and proslavery sentiment in 1851 nonetheless conceded in the *Liberator*, "Strange to say, the black people, many, too many of them, will run mad, almost, after a Quaker!" For more on Quakers, their attitudes toward slavery, and blacks' perceptions of them, see Kathryn Grover, *The Fugitive's Gibraltar: Escaping Slaves and Abolitionism in New Bedford, Massachusetts* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 30-36. See also Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), esp. 5-7, and Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers & Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

7 Collison, *Shadrach Minkins*, 46-7; William Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c., Narrating the Hardships Hair-breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Effort for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others, or Witnessed by the Author. . .* (1871; reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1970), 283; New Bedford Overseers of the Poor Records, vol. 1, 72, 74, 111, New Bedford Free Public Library.

8 Joseph Ricketson, New Bedford, to Sydney Howard Gay, New York City, 30 March 1849, Sydney Howard Gay Papers, Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library. I have been unsuccessful in identifying this sister in census or directory listings.

9 Still, *Underground Railroad*, 263. On the Faggins incident, see Grover, *Fugitive's Gibraltar*, 160-69.

10 Franklyn Howland, *A Brief Genealogical and Biographical History of Arthur, Henry, and John Howland and Their Descendants of the United States and Canada* (New Bedford, MA: by the author, 1885).

11 Philip J. Schwarz, *Migrants against Slavery: Virginians and the Nation* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 5, 13, 20; Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African-American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 2; Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, DC, 1828-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 4, 14; Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*

(London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 34-35; Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review* 85, 1 (February 1980): 67; Philip D. Morgan, "Colonial South Carolina Runaways: Their Significance for Slave Culture," *Slavery and Abolition* 6 (December 1985): 63-65; David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

12Harold, *Subversives*, 15, 20, 30.

13 Ibid., 20-21, 24, 25, 27, 80, 95, 154; on Bigelow see also vol. 42, "The Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C.," vol. 42 of Material Collected by Professor Wilbur H. Siebert, Ohio State University, Columbus, n.d., Houghton Library, Harvard University.

14 Still quoted in Schwarz, *Migrants against Slavery*, 19.

15 Henry B. Worth quoted in Pease, *History of New Bedford*, x.

16 Elmore P. Haskins, "Some of the Streets of the Town of New Bedford," *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches* 19 (January 1908): 9.

17 "Some Streets Accepted by the Town of New Bedford before 1847," *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches* 19 (January 1908): 17-18.

18 For the Haskell genealogy see George I. Randall, comp., "Genealogy of Roger Haskell of Salem, Mass., to Nov. 1925" (bound typescript, Haskell Family Association, 1 June 1926), New Bedford Free Public Library.

19 "Historic Structure Report," 11, citing H. B. Worth to Amelia Jones, 23 Feb 1914, Rotch-Jones-Duff House. This report states that Elizabeth Rotch Rodman deeded her son William the property on which his house stands, but this is incorrect: she retained ownership of the land until her death in 1856; her son William had died the year before. In the mid-1830s, if not at other times, Mary Rotch and Mary Gifford spent summers at their Newport, Rhode Island, house known as the "Glen." See Pease, ed., *Diary of Samuel Rodman*, 19 June 1836.

20 Abraham Russell to Joseph Ricketson, Bristol County Registry of Deeds (hereafter cited as BCD), New Bedford, MA, 14:422, recorded 18 October 1805; entry 7 mo 1805 for "House building for Joseph Ricketson," Daniel Ricketson and Company Ledger, vol. 2, D. Ricketson and Sons Records, MSS13, Series A, Kendall Institute, New Bedford Whaling Museum.

21 James Davis was one of at least twelve original New Bedford members of the "Providence Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of Persons unlawfully held in Bondage, and for improving the condition of the African race," founded in 1790. See Austin Collection of Moses Brown Papers, in Archives of New England Yearly Meeting of Society of Friends, Series B, Folder 1, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. In September 1806

James and John Russell Davis asked permission of the New Bedford Friends Meeting to make a religious visit to "many or most of the meetings of Friends in the Southern States. . . as truth may open the way." New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, vol. 400, New Bedford Monthly Meeting, RIHS.

22 Heirs of James Davis to James B. Congdon, 19 May 1827, BCD 30:52; Congdon to Billings F. Corey, 22 September 1827, BCD 30:271.

23 "Original Purchasers of the Lots of New Bedford of the Russells and Kemptons, 1753 to 1815," map drawn by E. C. Leonard, n.d., copy in Bristol County Registry of Deeds, Plan Book 6:16.

24 A mantua was a woman's garment of the 1600s and 1700s made up of a bodice and a full skirt cut from a single length of fabric. The skirt was cut in front so as reveal an underskirt. According to historian Marla Miller, mantuamaker was one of the most prestigious occupations among American women since the 1600s. An Isaac Congdon, possibly a son of Captain John H. and Frances Congdon, lived at 29 Seventh Street in 1836.

25 New Bedford lost almost one thousand residents between 1810 and 1820 due to "dull business following war in 1812." See Zephaniah W. Pease, ed., *Life in New Bedford a Hundred Years Ago: A Chronicle of the Social, Religious and Commercial History of the Period as Recorded in a Diary Kept by Joseph R. Anthony* (New Bedford: for the Old Dartmouth Historical Society by George H. Reynolds, 1922), 9.

26 Enquirer for the *Mercury*, 3 July 1841, 1:4. See also Examiner for the *Mercury*, 26 June 1841, 1:4; Observer for the *Mercury*, 10 July 1841, 1:4; and The Voice of Many for the *Mercury*, 14 July 1841, 1:4.

27 Abner Forbes and J. W. Greene, *The Rich Men of Massachusetts* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, 1851), 187, 188. This volume listed some fifteen hundred residents of the commonwealth whose wealth was estimated at fifty thousand dollars or more. Forty-four New Bedford and one woman, Sylvia Ann Howland, were included, with fortunes estimated from one hundred thousand to one million dollars; John Avery Parker and Edward M. Robinson, the father of Hetty Green, were millionaires. Of the forty-five persons listed, seventeen lived in this neighborhood. The book is available on line at <http://members.cox.net/bridgewaterma/contents.shtml>. Dale H. Cook's scanned on-line edition included penciled notes that updated estimates of wealth to 1870. David R. Greene's wealth grew from \$200,000 to \$750,000; James Arnold's from \$600,000 to \$1.5 million; Jonathan Bourne's from \$100,000 to \$1.0 million. Sylvia Ann Howland, whose wealth was estimated at \$300,000 in 1851, had died in 1866 and left nearly \$3.0 million, according to these notes.

28 Pease, ed., *Diary of Samuel Rodman*, 13 June and 8 August 1841.

29. Sarah Rodman Morgan account book, household expenses, 1820-35, collection 27, vol. 43, Morgan Papers, G. W. Blunt Library, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, CT.

30 Charles W. Morgan Papers, MSS41, SG1, Ser V, SS1, Folder 9, Kendall Institute. Many thanks to Laura Pereira at the Kendall for calling my attention to this document. See also Charles Waln Morgan, New Bedford, to William Logan Fisher, Germantown, PA, 2 mo 10th 1822, Morgan Papers, Mystic Seaport.

31. Laura E. Beardsley, research services librarian at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, has not been able to find Johnson's birth record in extant church records nor a man of this name in the Pennsylvania Abolition Society's manumission records or in city directories between 1785 and 1800. The same records failed to yield the birthdate or presence in Philadelphia of Emily Brown, Johnson's mother, or of Benjamin H. Johnson, who shipped with Nathan Johnson to California in 1849 and may have been his brother.

32 Four people of color lived in the home of John C. Haskell, two each in those of Edward W. Howland (son of Cornelius Howland) and Mary Rotch, and one each in the households of William Rotch Rodman, Isaiah Burgess, Ann Dunbar, John Parkhurst, Sarah Coffin (the widow of David), James Henry Howland (the son of James 2d), Abraham Barker, William H. Allen, George Howland, Thomas Arnold Greene, Paul Spooner, George W. Baker, and Franklin K. Swift.

33 A seaman's protection paper exists for Ruggles from 1853, and the story of his escape is told later in this report.

34 Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 19, states that a T. E. Randolph escaped slavery in Virginia in December 1848 and settled in 1849 in New Bedford. In that year he is shown as living both at Greene's and at Rodman's. By 1851 Randolph had left for California, perhaps, Lapp has speculated, in a New Bedford whaling vessel; he was later a Baptist minister in Marysville, California. Delilah L. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California* (1919; reprint, New York: G. K. Hall, 1998), 102, identified Randolph as one of pioneers of Marysville and stated that he arrived in 1849. Randolph was not shown in the 1850 census. He is not recorded as black in his 1849 tax listing, but the coincidence of dates and the tendency of both Greene and Rodman to hire people of color suggest strongly that the Thomas Randolph in their 1849 households was the fugitive. On Jacobs, see his anonymous narrative, "A True Tale of Slavery," *The Leisure Hour* (London) 476 number 476-79 (7-28 February 1861), reprinted online at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/texts.html#J>. Henry H. Crapo's memorandum of tax delinquents includes this entry: "[1839] John Jacobs, in ship *Francis Henrietta*, was at Wm. R. Rodman's." Crapo also listed him in 1840 as still aboard same vessel.

35 Assessors' records for the antebellum city are stored in a basement vault at New Bedford City Hall.

36 “The Material Wealth of New Bedford,” *New Bedford Republican Standard*, 23 August 1855, 2:4; *Republican Standard*, 16 August 1860, 2:5.

37 This sum is roughly equivalent to \$6.5 million, using the Consumer Price Index as a basis of conversion and much higher using other bases—percent of Gross National Product, for example. See the “What is Its Relative Value” Web site, <http://eh.net/hmit/compare>.

38 [William W. Crapo, comp.], “Extracts from the Diaries of John Quincy Adams and Charles Francis Adams, Relating to Visits to Nantucket and New Bedford, 1835 and 1843,” *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches* 47 (1919): 15, 19.

39 Pease, ed., *Diary of Samuel Rodman*, 22 December 1838.

40 “Parsonage Has Many a Charm,” *New Bedford Sunday Standard*, 29 January 1922, 8. This feature presented a history of ownership of the house, which was then the city’s Unitarian parsonage. “This house stands aloof from the others, many feet back from the street, in the shadow of several great trees. There’s a circular gravelled driveway in front of it, so that one has to swing around in a curve to reach the steps.” According to the article, when the house was built “there was no Seventh street, and the house faced towards County. Whether it was later turned around or altered so that it faced Sixth street remains in doubt,” a strange statement if it indeed faced County Street originally. The house had a central hall ten feet wide and aligned the rear door with the front door. The article further asserts that Ralph Waldo Emerson, who briefly served as pastor of the city’s Unitarian church in 1838, stayed for an extended period at Mary Rotch’s home in that year but incorrectly puts Emerson’s pastorate to 1833, not 1838. A dormer spanned much of the facade in the photograph shown in the *Sunday Standard*, but it was almost surely not original. On Emerson in New Bedford, see Leonard Bolles Ellis, *History of New Bedford and Its Vicinity, 1602-1892* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason and Company, 1892), 543.

41 Samuel Rodman, New Bedford, to William Logan Fisher, 15 September 1819, Rodman-Fisher correspondence, Providence (RI) Public Library.

42 Pease, *Diary of Samuel Rodman*, 9, 324 (entry for 7 April 1855); Edmund Wood, “Abraham H. Howland: New Bedford’s First Mayor,” *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches* 55 (January 1931). In his introduction to Joseph R. Anthony’s diary, Pease stated that Nantucket Quakers had “investigated” a meeting member for building a fancier house “for a departure from the usual type of dwelling and another, for the same reason refused to visit his daughter in her home.” Pease, ed., *Life in New Bedford*, 10.

43 “Suspicion of Kidnapping,” *New Bedford Mercury*, 5 June 1835, 1:3.

44 A man of color bearing this surname (or Battis/Battiste, as it is often shown) shows up in three listings in New Bedford—an 1833 protection paper, in which he stated his place of birth as

New Orleans; an 1837 protection paper, where the man of this name states his residence as New York; the date on his paper would have made him some twenty years younger and nine inches shorter than the 1833 Battiste, so they seem clearly to have been different men. A John Battiste was listed singly among many other mariners in the 1840 New Bedford census. A John Battiste was also shown as the black cook on the ship *George Washington* on its 1841 voyage from New Bedford and as a member of the crew of the *Gladiator* in 1850 and the *Natchez* in 1855; there is not, however, enough personal data to identify these men as the same individual.

45 “U.S. District Court,” *Mercury*, 3 July 1835, 2:1.

46 For accounts of the Miller incident, see “Captain Miller,” *Mercury*, 31 July 1835 2:6; untitled, *ibid.*, 7 August 1835, 2:3; “The Two African Children,” *ibid.*, 7 August 1835, 2:5; “The Trial of Captain Miller,” *ibid.*, 4:4 (which reprints the New York *Herald* account), and “The U. States vs. Caleb Miller,” 3 December 1835, 2:4.

47 “Rev. Mr. May’s Tour,” *Liberator* (2 May 1835): 2:4-5.

48 “Fruit Confections, &c.,” *Mercury*, 9 July 1830, 1:1.

49 Maud Mendall Nelson, *New Bedford Fifty Years Ago* (1914), 13, 16. Nelson was the granddaughter of Phebe Mendall, who lived at 37 Seventh Street until 1881 and was herself a cake maker; Mendall published a cookbook in 1858, a second edition of which was issued in 1870.

50 Caroline Weston, New Bedford, to Wendell Phillips, Boston, 1 March 1845, folder 3, Crawford Blagden Collection of the Papers of Wendell Phillips, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

51 D. R. (Daniel Ricketson), *Daily Mercury*, 6 October 1880, 2:4.

52 Works Projects Administration, “Ship Registers of New Bedford, Massachusetts” (Boston: The National Archives Projects, 1940), 1:76, shows Johnson as part-owner of the *Draper* with Asa T. Lawton, John A. Parker and his son Frederick, Oliver Prescott, and William R. Rotch when the 1816 vessel was reregistered on 16 December 1847.

53 On the church’s founding, see “To the Public,” *Mercury*, 28 February 1840, 3:1; Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 218.

54 *Colored American*, 27 Jun 1840; tax delinquents memorandum.

55 Joseph Ricketson Jr., indenture to David S. Fletcher and George F. Fletcher, “victuallers and copartners,” 1 January 1838, BCD 1:370. Timothy D. Cook and Braddock Gifford, the firm of

Gifford & Cook, New Bedford, housewrights, and David S. Fletcher, George F. Fletcher, and Alexander Kell, the firm of David Fletcher & Company, New Bedford, 2 January 1838, BCD 1:371, set forth an agreement with respect to “the building hereinafter to be erected by them” for the Fletchers and Kell: “they [Cook and Gifford] will find all the materials and build, set up, and finish a Shop, on a lot of land situate on the west side of Sixth Street, in said New Bedford, said land leased of Joseph Ricketson; said shop to be finished on or before the 20th day of May next, to these specifications: 20 ft front and 37 ft rear and 10 ft high; the frame of good pine or hemlock timber, to be underpinned with rough stone, the front end to be ceiled [*sic*] with clear seasoned boards, the other end and two sides to be shingled with country sawed cedar shingles. Said shop is to have four windows of twenty-four lights each, 7 by 9 glass, and four windows of twelve lights each of 7 by 9 glass, and two windows in front of twelve lights each of 10 by 15 glass, and the last to have outside shutters. Said shop is to have one double sash door in front with shutters, and on backside door cleet [*sic*]. The said shop is to have four four-pannel [*sic*] doors for the interior, well hung and trimmed; as also the outer doors to be trimmed. The said shop is to have one floor, the same to be either of hard pine and single, or of soft pine or double. The said shop is to be partitioned into one front room eleven and a half by nineteen and a half, with an entry way therefrom to the Cooking room, which said Cooking room will be about nine feet by twelve. One other room to be about 16 by 8 feet, and three other rooms to be about seven and a half by seven each. All the aforesaid rooms to be finished with a single base or mop-board. The two larger rooms are to have mouldings around the doors and windows; the others to be plain and without mouldings. The whole of the interior of the shop is to be plastered with one coat of common plastering. Said shop is to have one stack of chimneys, with one fireplace and oven; said oven to have an iron mouth.” Gifford & Cook held a lein on the shop and lot until the Fletchers and Kell paid them \$225 through 20 September and paid half of the cost of insurance the shop until that time.

56 The death record of the Temples’ son, Lewis Jr., states that both of his parents were born in Washington, D.C.; given the fact that the rest of the Clark family was from Washington, it seems unlikely that Mary was born in Baltimore.

57 Sidney Kaplan, *American Studies in Black and White: Selected Essays, 1949-1989*, ed. Allen D. Austin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 231-34; Elmo P. Hohman, *The American Whaleman: A Study of Life and Labor in the Whaling Industry* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), 44.

58 Martha Putney, *Black Sailors: Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whalemen Prior to the Civil War* (New York and Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 113 n. 23.

59 Joseph Ricketson, New Bedford, to Debora Weston, 29 April 1849 and 1 September 1850, Weston Papers, Boston Public Library.

60 “History of the New Bedford Churches: Second Baptist (colored),” *Republican-Standard* 5 October 1854, 2:4.

61 Charles W. Morgan diary, 8 March 1861, Mystic Seaport.

62 See *Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Salem Baptist Church, New Bedford, Mass. December 7 to 12 1883* (New Bedford: Sherman and Purrington, 1885).

63 Dorothy S. Provine, *District of Columbia Free Negro Registers 1821-1861* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1996). Registration 282, 26 July 1826; New Bedford Overseers of the Poor Records, vol. 3, 22 December 1858.

64 Putney, *Black Sailors*.

65 Alexander Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery* (1878; reprint, Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1989), 306-7; Business Records Collection, MSS56, Series B, Subseries 6, vol. 1, Abraham Barker Ledger, 1834, Kendall Institute.

66 Franklyn Howland, *A Brief Genealogical and Biographical History of Arthur, Henry, and John Howland and Their Descendants of the United States and Canada* (New Bedford: by the author, 1885).

67 *Mercury*, 23 July 1841, 3:1.

68 Pease, *History of New Bedford*, 3:345.

69 Leonard Bolles Ellis, *History of New Bedford and Its Vicinity, 1602-1892* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason and Co., 1892), 2:121-22.

70 Everett S. Allen, *Children of the Light: The Rise and Fall of New Bedford's Whaling and the Death of the Arctic Fleet* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 107.

71 Charles R. Schultz, "Cost of Constructing and Outfitting the Ship Charles W. Morgan, 1840-1841," *Business History Review* (Summer 1967): 198-216, Mystic Seaport Web site, www.mysticseaport.org/Library/ere/ib6711.cfm.

72 *Mercury*, 16 March 1838, 3:3. Johnson was then living on Middle Street and moved to 46 Wing Street by 1845.

73 W. W. Crapo in *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches* 15 (28 September 1906): 4.

74 Box 4, Folder 13, Morgan Papers, Mystic Seaport Museum. These papers include a bill from John Parkhurst (46 South Sixth Street) for outfitting Dixon's son Lewis for a voyage on the bark Marcella, his widow Catherine's sworn and itemized behests to her children, Morgan's receipts for her medical bills and wood supplied to her, and a deed, in effect, from Polly Johnson dated 1849 (18 June?): "Poly Johnson wife of Nathan agrees to pay Catharine Dixson, Two hundred

forty three Dollars, being the sum invested by Catharine in the lot where she lives—Catharine Dixon desires that after her debts are paid the balance should be put in the Savings Bnak for the benefit of her three children—and the principal and interest to remain there for Twenty years—and no part to be drawn out unless in case of sickness, when the sick person should have a sum not exceeding Two dollars per week for their support while sick—If either of them should die the share of this one will go the survivor [*sic*—and in the case of the death of all of them the money should go to Mary Woodland wife of Samuel. . . . Furniture to be divided according to lists attached to this paper.” Morgan added notes to his document that he needed to “see Polly Johnson about this money” as well as Dr. Benjamin F. Hardy, who treated Catherine Dixon, about his agreement to receive half of the \$31.50 due him from Polly Johnson’s payment and half “out of Lewis Dixon Jr voyage.” The Dixon house was at 7 Spring Street, near the waterfront.

75 Account book for the Condor, 1832, and “Account of Labor 1832 7 mo 9th,” in Morgan Papers, MSS41, Subgroup 1, Series E, Condor vol. 1; Schultz, “Cost of Constructing and Outfitting.”

76 MR 25, Morgan Papers, Mystic Seaport Museum; advertisement in supplement to the *Mercury*, 8 May 1829 1:1: “Warm Baths/The Bathing-house will be opened for the accommodation of ladies on Wednesdays, from 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. and on Saturdays, from 1 to 6 P.M. For gentlemen, on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7 to 10 P.M./N. Johnson, Super’t.”

77 For contemporary recipes for these confections, see Miss [Eliza] Leslie, *Directions for Cookery, in Its Various Branches* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1840), online at <http://www.harvestfields.ca/CookBooks/001/05/000.htm>.

78 Mooers commanded the Rotch whaling vessel *Bedford*, the first ship to bear the American flag in a British port, in 1783.

79 Johnson bought from livery stable proprietor Ichabod Clapp “the Dwelling House and Shop, Nos 6 and 8, on the East side of Fifth Street” on the condition that he move them to his land “on Spring Street” by 10 October 1845. Johnson was to pay \$975.00 for the building, but Clapp held the mortgage in full on the structure or structures; a schedule of four payments was laid out between 10 October 1847 and 10 April 1849.

80 Jireh Perry et al., Proprietors of the Meeting House of the First Congregational Society, to Andrew et al., 12 July 1841, BCD 5:389. In 1841 Ruggles held three shares, Nathan Johnson two, Ezra Johnson and Richard C. Johnson (either Ezra’s father or brother) one each, Berry one, and Anthony Jourdain one. By 1843 Mary Johnson had purchased Berry’s share for \$120, and by 1846 Nathan Johnson had purchased another share. By 1855 Ezra and his brother Richard owned three shares and their firm three; so too did the laborer Henry O. Remington of South Water Street. Both may have purchased shares from Ruggles, who had left for California, and Jourdain, none of whom are listed as shareholders by 1855.

81 *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself* (1893), in *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies* (New York: The Library of America, 1994), 656-57.

82 See 17:397 George Howland, New Bedford, merchant, to Joseph Quanwell, New Bedford, yeoman, 21 September 1805, BCD 17:397. Howland sold Quanwell 2.75 acres at Clark's Cove for \$210.

83 *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, 656.

84 Joseph Ricketson to Paul Cuffee, 18 March 1817, Paul Cuffe Papers, New Bedford Free Public Library.

85 James B. Congdon, "The Colored Population of New Bedford" (1863), Cuffe Papers.

86 Samuel Rodman Jr. owned the house in which black barber Anthony D. Jourdain lived in 1839, which was probably 23 School Street. See "Fire!" *Mercury*, 8 February 1839, 2:1.

87

88 Mary Rotch, New Bedford, to Sarah Rodman, 13 February 1813, Rodman Manuscripts, Friends Historical Library.

89 Pease, ed., *Diary of Samuel Rodman*, 3 November 1835.

90 *Ibid.*, 23 October 1830.

91 *Ibid.*, May 6 1839, 1 November 1845.

92 *Ibid.*, 30 December 1839, 15 August 1842.

93 *Ibid.*, 18 February 1839.

94 *Liberator*, 27 February 1836, 3:1.

95 On the Gibsons, see Grover, *Fugitive's Gibraltar*, 149-52; on Boyer, see *ibid.*, 185-88.

96 "Roll of the Conventions," *Liberator* 7 June 1839, 2:6. The eight New Bedford delegates were Nathan and Polly Johnson, John Bailey, William (probably C.) Coffin, Mary T. Congdon, Anna Maria Bailey, John Burbank, Richard Johnson, Samuel Rodman, Jr., Andrew Robeson, and Deborah Weston.

97 "Slave Children Purchased," *Republican Standard*, 6 September 1855, 2:2; "Letter from Washington," *ibid.*, 19 April 1860, 1:4. Commenting on how light-complected the Brown

children seemed, Edmund Anthony, the Standard's abolitionist editor, wrote, "If the South will reduce to servitude the descendants of negroes who through the removes of a dozen generations have become as white skinned and fair browed as themselves, and in many instances *their own children*, or their half brothers and sisters at that, will they not if the power be given them enslave every man, woman and child in the country as fast as their pecuniary benefit shall demand?" In the Scarborough case Anthony wrote that Eliot had spent one hundred dollars of his own money to free the man and then "returned with him to Washington, where Mr. Eliot kept the poor fellow a few days, for he seemed almost on the verge of insanity. He appeared to be constantly fearing that some one was about to take him again, and every sudden noise threw him at once into a state of violent nervous agitation. He seemed so much to have lost his powers that Mr. E. feared to send him to New Bedford alone, and was compelled to put him in charge of a gentleman going that way."

98 John Blassingame, ed., *Frederick Douglass Papers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979-92), 2:491 n. 5.

99 Joseph Ricketson, New Bedford, to "George" [Guerrier], 17 July 1863, MSS 13, Ricketson Papers, Subgroup 4, Series A, Folder 1, Kendall Institute.

100 "New Bedford Awake! Great Anti-Fugitive Slave Law Meeting at City Hall!" *Daily Evening Standard*, 1 April 1851, 3:1-3.

101 "Public Meeting," *Mercury*, 28 August 1835, 1:3.

102 See "Convention of the Friends of Peace in New-Bedford," *Mercury*, 6 February 1842, 2:4; *Liberator*, 20 February 1846; Ellis, *History of New Bedford*, 2:89; *Evening Standard*, 9 October 1850; "Legislature," *Mercury*, 22 March 1839, 2:2. The others from New Bedford signing the 1857 pledge were Charles W. Morgan, Thomas D. Eliot, George Howland Jr., and James Henry Howland from this neighborhood, as well as William H. Taylor, Thomas Mandell, and J. C. Delano. Only four other Massachusetts men made this nationwide pledge.

103 The abolitionist Benjamin Lundy opened the first known "free produce" store in Baltimore in 1826, and before the Civil War at least fifty free labor stores existed throughout the Northeast and Midwest. According to historian Lawrence B. Glickman, "From harvesting raw materials, to producing, distributing, and marketing goods, free produce entrepreneurs sought to develop alternatives to an economy that, even in the Northern United States, was thoroughly intertwined with the system of slave labor." Glickman has argued that the free labor movement was one of several antebellum movements that formed the basis of "modern American consumer activism." See Glickman, "'Buy for the Sake of the Slave': Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism," *American Quarterly* 56, 4 (December 2004): 889-90.

104 "Free Labor Groceries," advertisement for Wm. P. Howland and Co., *Mercury*, 17 March

1848, 3:7.

105 *Republican Standard*, 5 August 1858, 2:2.

106 William Rotch, Nantucket, to Moses Brown, Providence, 8 November 1787, Austin Collection of Moses Brown Papers, in Archives of New England Yearly Meeting of Society of Friends, Rhode Island Historical Society.

107 Alice Sue Friday, "The Quaker Origins of New Bedford, 1765-1815" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1991), 135; see also "Slavery Opposed!" *The Medley or New Bedford Marine Journal*, 10 March 1794, 2:2-3.

108 William Rotch Jr., Newport, to Moses Brown, 27 August 1789, Brown Papers; William Rotch Jr., New Bedford, to Uncle Francis Rotch, 10 July 1792, quoted in John M. Bullard, *The Rotches* (New Bedford, 1947), 263.

109 Mary Rotch, North Carolina, to Thomas Rotch, Hartford, Hartford, CT, 12 December 1804, Section D, Rotch-Wales Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

110 Joseph Ricketson Jr. to Caroline Weston, 17 October 1847, Weston Papers; *Mercury*, 3 and 31 December 1847; Morgan diary, 18 January 1849 and 7 October 1850; "Funeral of Captain Daniel Drayton," *Republican Standard*, 2 July 1857, 2:2.

111 Liberator Subscription Ledgers, Ms.f.a.25V.1, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, Boston Public Library.

112 *Liberator*, 1 November 1834; "Police," *Mercury*, 30 July 1847, 2:6; *Commonwealth v. John Adams et al.*, Bristol County Court of Common Pleas, #315, September 1847, Supreme Judicial Court Archives, Boston.

113 *Liberator*, 13 October 1843, 14 March 1856; H. Johnson et al. to editor, *Republican Standard*, 12 September 1850; and see Johnson's obituary, "William Henry Johnson Dead," *Evening Standard*, 19 December 1896.

114 Henry Johnson and D. W. Ruggles, "Labors of New-Bedford Boys," *Liberator*, 13 October 1843, 161:6.

115 "The One-Dollar Pledge," *Liberator*, 19 August and 2 September 1841 43:5.

116 "Meeting of Colored Citizens," *Standard*, reprinted in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 22 October 1856, 170: 4-6.

117 John A. Collins, *Right and Wrong amongst the Abolitionists of the United States* (Glasgow: G. Gallie, 1841), 50 ; *Liberator*, 27 March 1846, 16 June and 28 July 1854, 14 March 1856, 9 July 1858; C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985-92); Beasley, *Colored Pioneers*, 60, 179.

118 *Liberator*, 23 August 1839, 14 March 1856.

119 William H. Robinson, ed., *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society & the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island, 1780-1824* (Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island, 1976), 157, 163, 169. Lawton's New Bedford death record lists his place of birth and parents.

120 *Liberator*, 9 July 1841, 10 February 1843; *Colored American*, 10 July 1841; Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 219, 327.

121 Wiggins, *Life and Letters of Paul Cuffe*, 236-37; Gardner Wainer, Norwich, Ontario, to John Cuffe, Westport, 1832, Cuffe Papers; *Liberator*, 16 June 1854.

122 "Petition of Ruth C. Johnson and 106 other Coloured Ladies of Massachusetts on the Subject of Slavery and the Slave Laws," H. 249, 1837, House Unpassed Legislation, SC 1, 230, Massachusetts Archives. Polly Johnson may also have signed and been among the seven whose names do not appear on the photocopy supplied to me. All but five of them cannot be identified in New Bedford directories, censuses, and other listings.

123 *Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. Thomas Williams et al.*, #71, April 1827 term, Bristol County Supreme Judicial Court Records, vol. 4; Pease, ed., *Diary of Samuel Rodman*, 26 April 1827.

124 Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 209-11.

125. Most of the information on Johnson's antislavery activity comes from various articles in *The Liberator*, 22 June 1833, 2 May 1835, 9 October 1840, 18 February 1842; the *Emancipator*, 16 November 1837; and Howard Holman Bell, ed., *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969).

126. Deborah Weston, New Bedford, to Anne Warren Weston, 1 February 1837, Weston Papers, Boston Public Library.

127 See *Liberator*, 7 June 1839; *Mercury*, 21 October 1842; and Daniel Ricketson in *Daily Mercury*, 6 October 1880.

128. Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984), 139-47.

129 Caroline Weston, New Bedford, to Wendell Phillips, 9 February 1845, stated that “more than four hundred” fugitives lived in New Bedford at that time; Weston Papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, Boston Public Library. The high-end estimate of seven hundred fugitives in New Bedford was stated twice, apparently by two Quakers, soon after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in the fall of 1850. See Edwin Barney, New Bedford, to Charles S. Barney, 19 October 1850, Barney Papers, New Bedford Whaling Museum, and “A City of Refuge,” New Bedford *Republican Standard*, 1 November 1850, 2:3, which reprinted a Boston *Chronotype* article itself reprinting a letter from a “wealthy Friend (Quaker) of New Bedford, [who] writes to a friend of ours who enquired of him whether a fugitive slave would be safe in that city.” The New Bedford Friend replied, “We have about 700 fugitives here in this city, and they are good citizens, and here we intend they shall stay.” It is unlikely that this latter Quaker was Barney, who was then living in a boardinghouse and was just beginning to practice law; his mother was herself taking in boarders in another part of the city.

130 Much of this data on the presence of people of color in New Bedford and elsewhere in the North comes from the author’s research for *Fugitive’s Gibraltar* and “The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts: Statement of Historic Context,” a study prepared for the Massachusetts Historical Commission in 2004. Undercounting of blacks and immigrants is attested by two records in particular. Between 1845-52 and 1858-64, when the officially enumerated population of color in New Bedford ranged around 1,250 persons, the overseers of the poor identified more than 260 men, women, and children of color who were never recorded in any other local listing of residents. Even the Reverend William Jackson’s records of Second and Salem Baptist churches, which might be expected to reveal the more settled part of the population of color, named one hundred persons whose names appear nowhere else.

131 Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 239, cites the total of fugitives in Still’s account. In eight instances, evidence other than that Still offered establishes that fugitives resided in or passed through Boston or New Bedford.

132 Janine da Silva compiled these destinations from Sydney Howard Gay’s “Record of Fugitives,” Gay Papers, in preparation for Kathryn Grover and Janine V. da Silva, “Historic Resource Study: Boston African American National Historic Site” (Boston National Historical Park, 31 December 2002).

133 Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Slave’s Narrative* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 319-27, includes a selected bibliography listing 106 autobiographical and slave narratives written by people of African descent between 1760 and 1865. This list does not include the narratives of John S. Jacobs, Edmund Kelley, or George Teamoh. William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 335-342,

lists 112 works of Afro-American biography but not Teamoh's or John Jacob's.

134 See Elmo Paul Hohman, *The American Whaleman: A Study of Life and Labor in the Whaling Industry* (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), 55; Margaret S. Creighton, *Rites and Passages: The Experience of American Whaling, 1830-1870* (Cambridge, Eng., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 50; Zephaniah W. Pease, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Rodman: A New Bedford Chronicle of Thirty-Seven Years, 1821-1859* (New Bedford, Mass.: Reynolds Printing Co., 1927), entry for 10 December 1822.

135 Dorothy S. Provine, *District of Columbia Free Negro Registers 1821-1861* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1996); Dorothy S. Provine, *Alexandria County, Virginia, Free Negro Registers, 1797-1861* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1990).

136 Spencer Seals, Registration 581, 14 October 1836, and Miriam Seals, Registration 609, 16 August 1837, in Province, *Alexandria . . . Registers*; Walter Hawkins, Registration 282, 26 July 1826, in Provine, *District of Columbia . . . Registers*; Fountain Ellis and John Ellis, Baltimore County Court, Negroes Manumitted, vol. 3, 1841-47, CM 821, CR 12,262, Baltimore County Court/Manumissions 1806-64, Maryland State Archives. Both Ellises were raised in Dorchester County, Maryland, and registered in 1845. These identifications are made based on matching dates of birth, children's names, the first known presence of a person in New Bedford with respect to manumission date, and statements about place of birth. In the case of the Dandridges, their dismissal to New Bedford's Second Baptist Church is stated. See Miscellaneous Microfilm 494, First African Baptist Church, Richmond City, Minutes, 1841-59, Book e, Library of Virginia Archives. Other identified in these records who came to New Bedford were the Baptist minister Thomas U. Allen, Ellen and Littleton Charity, Mary Smith (related to the Dandridges), Betsey Custalow, and Cornelius Turner; Isaac and Mary Ann Guinn and Peter and Margaret Roper, who were also free and dismissed from the Richmond church, also came to New Bedford, though no statement is recorded to that effect. John and Mary Ann Holmes were dismissed, the record states, to Massachusetts and were also New Bedford residents.

137 Still, *Underground Railroad*, 391-94.

138 Warren E. Thomson, "William Henry Johnson," reprinted in vol. 4 of *Spinner: People and Culture of Southeastern Massachusetts* (New Bedford: Spinner Publications, 1988), 68. See also "William Henry Johnson Dead," *Evening Standard*, 19 December 1896.

139 Several biographical accounts state that Johnson arrived in New Bedford on 13 April 1834 which, if his own story is accurate, cannot have been true: the Astor House had not yet opened. The earliest New Bedford record of him is of his marriage to Hannah Smith Niles Perry, on 28 June 1836.

140. Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times*, 650-51; New Bedford Overseers of the Poor Records,

vol. 3, 1 March 1860-28 Feb 1861, NBFPL.

141 For a more detailed account of the Brown escape, see Grover, *Fugitive's Gibraltar*, 199-206.

142 Joseph Ricketson, New Bedford, to S. H. Gay, 30 March 1849, Sydney Howard Gay Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

143 Morgan Diary, 4 April 1849.

144 Although Alexander Duval reached New Bedford in October 1848, he was apparently not the man Ricketson described; Duval had a wife and a young daughter only. In the 1850 census Mary Blair, a woman of color who gave her age as twenty-four and her birthplace as Maryland, was living in Ricketson's home at 179 Union Street, and probably by 1853 her children—Lewis, William, Jefferson, Agnes, Sarah and John, all recorded as born in Virginia between 1825 and 1850—were living the city as well. To the overseers of the poor Blair claimed that her husband, also named Jefferson, had died before she came to New Bedford and that her actual birthplace was Richmond. She claimed, falsely, to have settled in the city in 1853. Her son William was identified as an “adult” in her first poor relief listing in 1858, and Lewis was not mentioned until she sought aid again in 1860; he was then living in Boston. She never stated the same age in any two listings. Whether she was the wife of the fugitive Ricketson mentioned, and claimed he died to protect him, is unknown.

145 Joseph Ricketson, New Bedford, to Deborah Weston, 11 August 1851, Weston Papers.

146 Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, 19; Beasley, *Black Pioneers*, 102. Lapp states that Randolph came to California by way of Cape Horn.

147 For a fuller account of Jacobs's life, see “A True Tale of Slavery”; Grover, *Fugitive's Gibraltar*, 153-54, 182-83; and Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*.

148 *Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Salem Baptist Church, New Bedford, Mass. December 7 to 12 1883* (New Bedford: Sherman and Purrington, 1885); *New Era Press*, Deep River, CT, 23 November 1900, cited in Charles L. Blockson, *Hippocrene Guide to the Underground Railroad* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994), 58-60; Horatio T. Strother, *The Underground Railroad in Connecticut* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), 104.

149 Amelia Hickling Nye, New Bedford, to Thomas Hickling Jr., 7 January 1855, Hickling-Nye Papers 1796-1855, Ms. N-65, Box 1, Correspondence 1845-1855, Massachusetts Historical Society; thanks to Janice Hodson for passing along the text of this letter.

150 Dorothy B. Porter, “Family Records: A Major Source for Documenting the Black Experience in New England,” *Old-Time New England* 53, 3 (Winter 1973): 71. Porter stated here that Ruggles left New Bedford for San Francisco about 1840, but census and directory listings document his presence there through 1853, when he took out a seaman's protection paper; the

voyage for which he was issued the paper was probably the one that brought him to California.

151 Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present, vol. 1, The Black Worker to 1869* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 118, and Beasley, *Black Pioneers*, 54, 63.

152 “Emma C. Jones/House labor for 1850 & 1851,” Account Book, 1850-54, vol. 1, 1850-54. Edward Coffin Jones Papers, MSS 72, Subgroup 2, Box 3, Kendall Institute; “Fugitive Slave Excitement in New Bedford” and “The Fugitive Excitement,” *Standard*, 20 March 1851, 2:3, 2:5. Hobbs stated in the 1855 census that she had been born in Maryland. She seems to have been in New Bedford by 1846, according to an overseers of the poor record: “Sarah Hobbs Orchard St 133 Has 2 children viz Susan 6 mos born in N Bedford Maria 2 years b in Maryland came here in 1846.” She received coal in both February and March 1847, as well as funeral expenses for her daughter Maria, who died on 6 March 1847.

153 G. Leroy Bradford, “Isabella White,” *Spinner* 4, 69.

154 Snow’s participation was documented by WPA writer G. Leroy Bradford; the transcribed correspondence between Snow and Nancy Carney’s owner is in National Archives Record Group 69.5.5. See also “A Family Reunited,” *Daily Standard*, 24 March 1863, which describes Carney and his efforts to purchase the freedom of his family and bring them to New Bedford, but this short article does not mention Loum Snow.

155 “Born a Slave in Virginia/Mrs. Isabella Roberts White, Who Came North via Underground Railroad, Dies at Her Home Here,” *Evening Standard*, 7 February 1924, 4:4.

156 “Revival Incidents,” *Liberator*, 3 April 1854, 2:4-5, stated that a fugitive Isabella White had attended a meeting conducted by the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher (Harriet Beecher Stowe’s brother) at Burton’s Theater in New York to “offer up thanks to God for His Goodness in bringing her safely to this city, and to ask the prayers of Christians that she may escape the toils of the man-hunters, and be guided safely to a land of freedom.” From the podium Beecher stated that White “was willing to put her life in her hands, and for days to be smothered, without food, without drink—smothered because she was conveyed as bales and boxes of goods are—to show her love of liberty.” If this account refers to the same woman as lived and died in New Bedford, it clearly suggests that she was a good deal older than four or five when she escaped.

157 Henry D. Northrop, *The College of Life, or Practical Self Education: A Manual of Self-Improvement for the Colored Race* (Bessemer, AL: Hollingsworth and Porter, 1895), 35-36; J. T. Jenifer, “Personal Recollections of Frederick Douglass,” *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review* 23, 1 (July 1906).

158 Provine, *Free Negro Registers . . . District of Columbia*, Registration 175 (manumission) 2 April 1825, Registration 362 (certificate of freedom), 12 October 1827 for Eleanor Clark(e);

Registration 361 (certificate of freedom), 12 October 1827 for Lucy Bush. The consecutive registrations of 1827 and their identical testifier, Sarah Kyle, coheres with other information indicating that the two were sisters-in-law.

159 See *ibid.*, Provine, *Free Negro Registers . . . Alexandria*, and Donald Sweig, ed. *Registrations of Free Negroes Commencing September Court 1822, Book No. 2 and Register of Free Blacks 1835 Book 3* (Fairfax VA: History Section, Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax County, July 1977).

160 Zephaniah W. Pease, "Arnold's Garden," *Mercury*, reprinted in *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches* 48 (1919): 17; Caroline Weston, New Bedford, to Wendell Phillips, 9 February 1845, Phillips Papers.

161 *Colored American*, 22 July 1837, 2:4, 3:1.

162 Thomas Hazard Jr., New Bedford, to Moses Brown, 24 June 1792, Moses Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society. Hazard wrote, "We wish the utmost secrecy to be preserved that no person may know the cause of their being there, brother W Rotch is now at Nantucket or he would have addressed thee on this subject. Brother Thomas Rotch has written to Thomas Arnold requesting his united assistance in this business"; see also "Friend Thomas Rotch," New Bedford NB, to Moses Brown, 1 July 1792, Brown Papers. The 1793 Fugitive Slave Act was enunciated as Article 4, Section 2 of the Constitution: "No Person held to service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labor, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Part to whom such service or Labour may be due."

163 Friday, "Quaker Origins of New Bedford," 507; Rhode Island Monthly Meeting slave manumissions, 1708-1827, Rhode Island Historical Society; William Rotch Sr. to Moses Brown, 8 November 1787, Austin Collection.

164 On Bailey see "The Election," *Mercury*, 15 November 1839, 1:1; "For the Daily Register," *New Bedford Register*, 21 July 1841, 1:5; *Liberator*, 27 October 1837; 18 February 1842; 12 January, 30 August, and 6 September 1844; 20 February, 20 and 27 March, and 9 October 1846, 19 March and 9 and 16 July 1847; 21 January 1848. See also William Lloyd Garrison, Boston, to John Bailey, New Bedford, 10 January and 13 February 1845, in Walter M. Merrill, ed., *No Union with Slave-Holders, 1841-1849*, vol. 3 of *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-75, 281.

165 "Caution to Abolitionists!" *Liberator*, 30 August 1844, 139:1.

166 "Fugitive Slaves," *Liberator*, 20 March 1846, 45:3.

167 "Runaway Slaves," *Liberator*, 31 December 1847, 2:6; John Bailey, New Bedford,

“Information Wanted,” *Liberator*, 21 January 1848, 11:6. In December the *Liberator* quoted another paper citing a report in the Springfield, Massachusetts, Gazette that nine runaway slaves, “the cause of considerable excitement at Mount Holly, N.J., short time since,” were then living in Springfield. Apparently a settlement of fugitives at that New Jersey place had been threatened when Maryland slaveowners recognized some of their former slaves there and launched a suit for their recovery. The community of color attempted their rescue, but militia were summoned and a jury ordered their rendition. Upon that outcome many who had been living at Mount Holly escaped further north.

168 Many thanks to Bill Tilden of Oakland, California, who in October 2004 sent me this Bailey reminiscence.

169 Bailey reminiscence.

170 *Mercury*, 21 October 1842 3:4; Bailey reminiscence; Samuel J. May, Boston, to “Miss Weston,” 17 October 1848; “Testimonial of Respect,” *Liberator*, 11 August 1848; BCD 31:469 Mary Rotch, single woman, New Bedford, to John Bailey, watchmaker, New Bedford, 1 October 1829, BCD 31:469.

171 *Liberator*, 8 February 1839, 9 October 1840, 18 February 1842, 20 February 1846.

172 Wm. C. Coffin, New Bedford, to Maria W. Chapman (care of Henry A. Chapman, Boston), 5 September 1840, Weston Papers.

173 Deborah Weston, New Bedford, to Maria W. Chapman, by way of I. C. Taber, 4 March 1840, Weston Papers.

174 Weston always referred to this man as “Mr. Howland,” but one letter from her sister Maria in Boston was put in “care of James H. Howland.” Maria Weston Chapman, Boston, to Deborah Weston, New Bedford, 18 April 1839, Weston Papers.

175 *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Written by Himself* (New York, 1825); for Grimes’s unhappy story in New Bedford, see Grover, *Fugitive’s Gibraltar*, 86-87, 91-92.

176 Thanks to Joan Barney of the New Bedford Free Public Library, who told me of this crew list in a phone conversation on 27 April 2000.

177 *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave; Containing His History of 25 Years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape. Written by Himself* (Worcester: John Thompson, 1856), 103, 107-8.

178 “The Fugitive Slave Law. Meeting at Liberty Hall,” *Evening Standard*, 8 October 1850; see also *Mercury*, 11 October 1850, 1:5, 2:5.

179 Boston Vigilance Committee records transcribed and published in Irving H. Bartlett, "Abolitionists, Fugitives, and Imposters in Boston, 1846-1847," *New England Quarterly* 55, 1 (March 1982): 107.

180 *Standard-Times*, 15 May 1910 .

181 Andrew Robeson, New Bedford, to Nathaniel B. Borden, Fall River, 18 February 1854, quoted in Edward S. Adams, "Anti-Slavery Activity in Fall River," *Fall River Herald News*, 7 March 1939, 18:3.

182 *Standard*, 29 and 30 Sept 1854; John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 320-25, reprinted from *Liberty Bell* (Boston, 1858), 29-43.

183 "A Citizen," *Norfolk Beacon*, 25 April and 28 June 1855.

184 William M. Emery, *The Howland Heirs* (New Bedford: E. Anthony & Sons, 1919), 372-75.

185 *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Paul Cuffe, a Pequot Indian: During Thirty Years Spent at Sea, and in Travelling in Foreign Lands* (Vernon: Printed by Horace N. Bill, 1839).

186 Ellis, *History of New Bedford*, 2: 50-52.

187 Ledger of Abraham Barker, 1834, Business Records Collection, MSS56 Series B, Subseries 6, vol. 1., Kendall Institute; *Incidents in the Life of Jacob Barker from the year 1800 to 1855* (New York, 1855).

188 Janney's account book is in the collections of Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. Many thanks to Bronwen Souders (e-mail to author, 15 February 2006) for sending me a transcription.

189 Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African-American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 49; Wiggins, *Life and Letters of Paul Cuffe*, 246, 250-51.