

From Slavery to Freedom: African-Americans and Maritime History

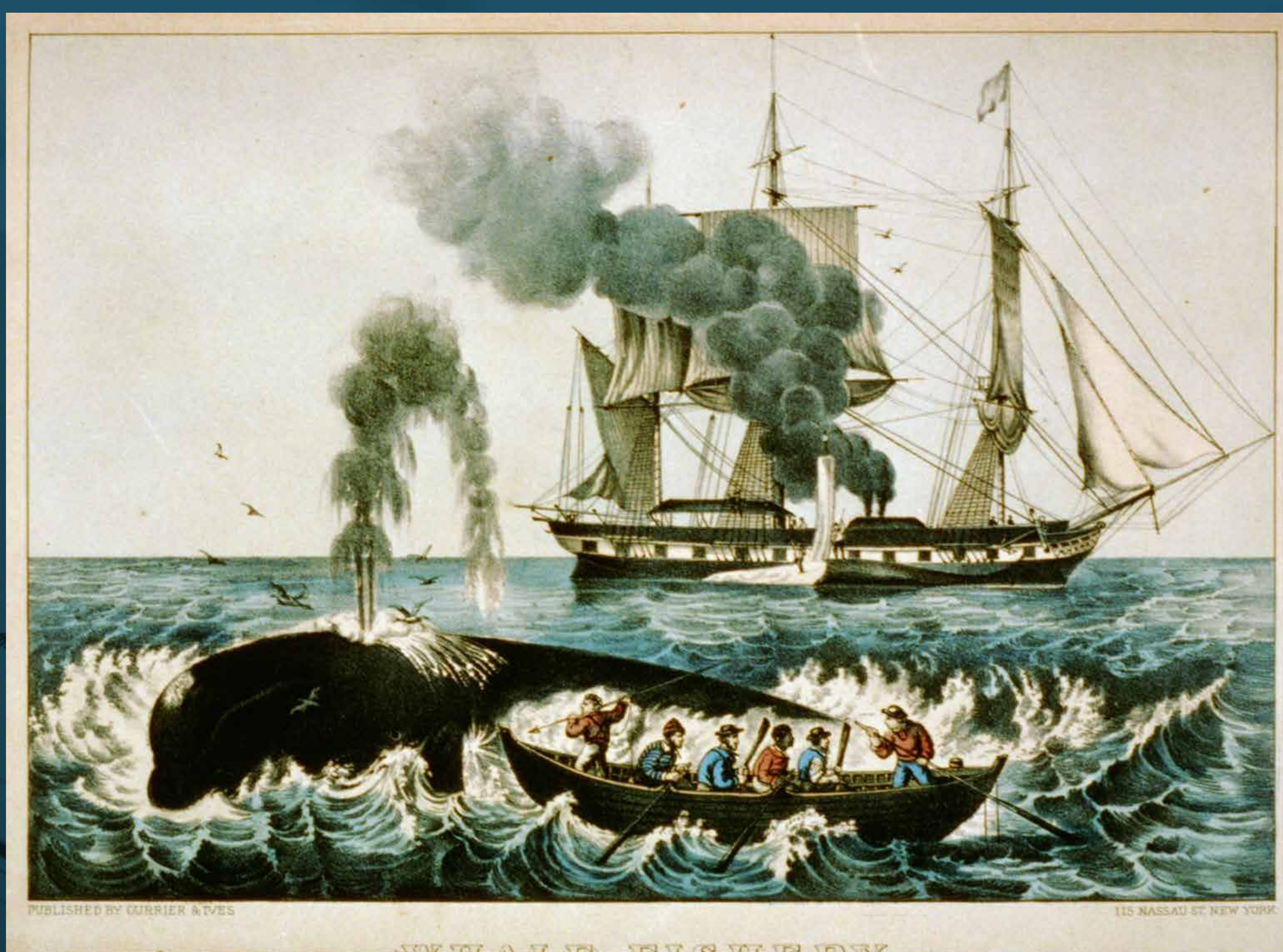
Massachusetts is at the center of American maritime history, the U.S.S. Constitution, the Salem National Historical Park, the whaling community of New Bedford.

The sea also played a significant role in the history of African-Americans. It was a source of misery on the dangerous passage from Africa to the new world. Some Massachusetts merchants participated directly in the Atlantic slave trade. Some grew rich through close economic connections with sugar plantations in the West Indies. Many grand colonial mansions were built with profits from Jamaica, Antigua or Barbados.

By the nineteenth century slavery had ended in Massachusetts and the commonwealth became an important center of the abolitionist movement. Now seaport communities were an avenue of escape for fugitive slaves and a source of employment. This was particularly true of New Bedford. Once America's wealthiest city, it had a business-elite that included many Quakers who felt that slavery was immoral. The masters of whaling ships were willing to employ African-Americans. Frederick Douglass began his Massachusetts experience in this maritime community.

Although opportunities remained scarce well into the twentieth century, some African-Americans rose to significant heights. The unique successes of Paul Cuffe may surprise and inspire today.

While Massachusetts has a proud maritime history some of it has been hidden. Maritime fortunes, based in part on slavery, helped found some of our most hallowed institutions. It is a fascinating and neglected story.

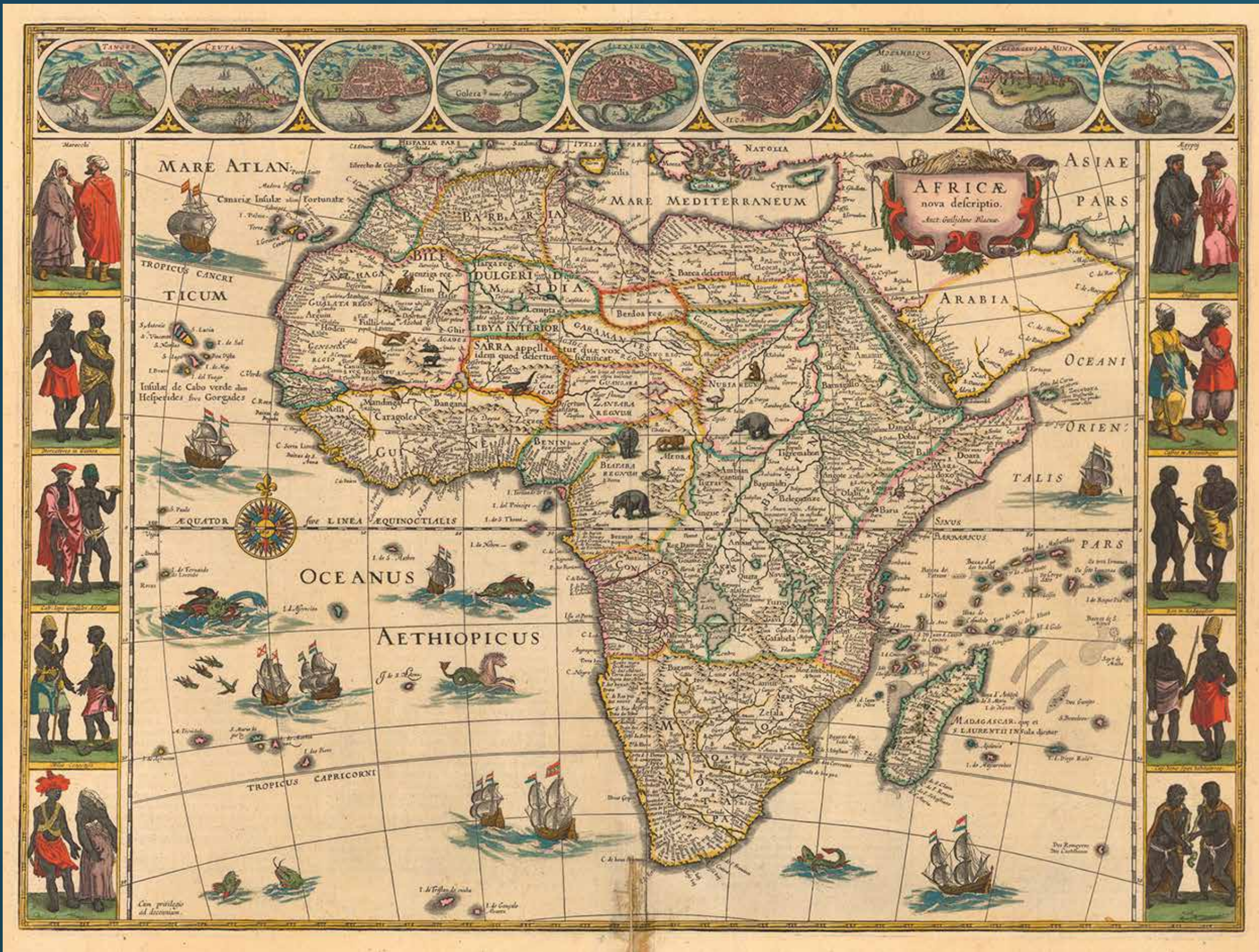


Traces of the Slave Trade

In part because it was sanctioned in the Bible, Massachusetts Puritans legalized slavery, the first English colony to do so.

“God hath set different Orders and Degrees of Man in the World.”

Merchant John Saffin, justifying the slave trade



Seventeenth Century map of Africa. European powers dominated the slave trade. Some Massachusetts vessels later sailed around the continent to Madagascar to avoid powerful rivals on Africa's west coast. MR-KARTOGRAPHIE

Harsh Realities

It is difficult to understand the shortsightedness and crudity of the slave trade. It flourished in a society that was generally harsh. In England, sixty percent of children died before the age of sixteen. Many who survived lived lives of appalling poverty. Those accused of crimes could face barbaric physical punishments. While some religious denominations—like the often persecuted Quakers—stressed charity and mercy others quoted the Bible to justify a punitive approach to life.

Slavery in Massachusetts

On February 26, 1638 the first recorded landing of African slaves occurred in Massachusetts. Arriving on the ship *Desire*, they had been exchanged for Indian prisoners taken in the Pequot War. In 1641 the Massachusetts Body of Liberties recognized slavery under certain conditions: if “It be lawful

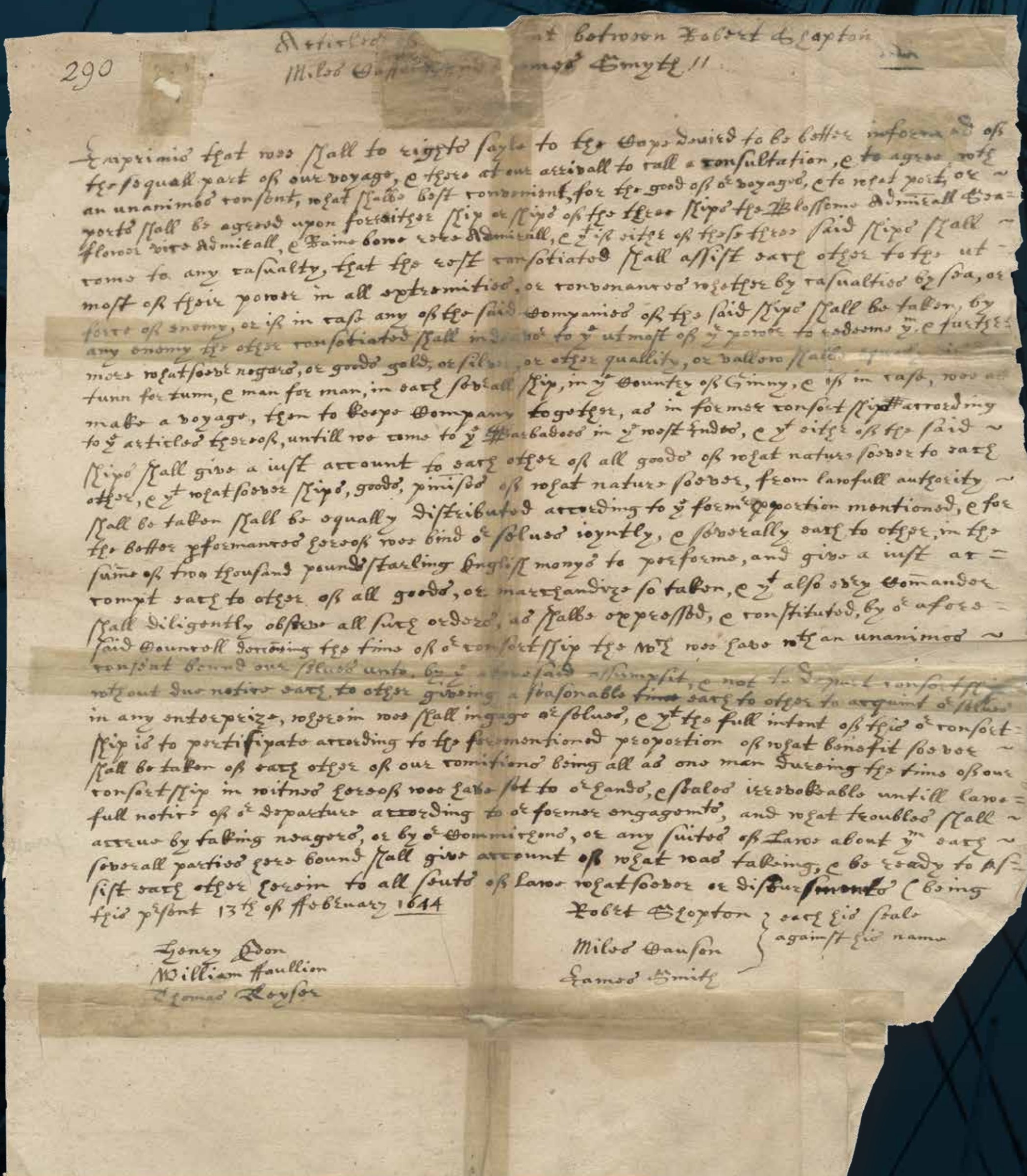


Zanzibar Slave Monument, near the site of slave auctions. BROCKEN INAGLORY

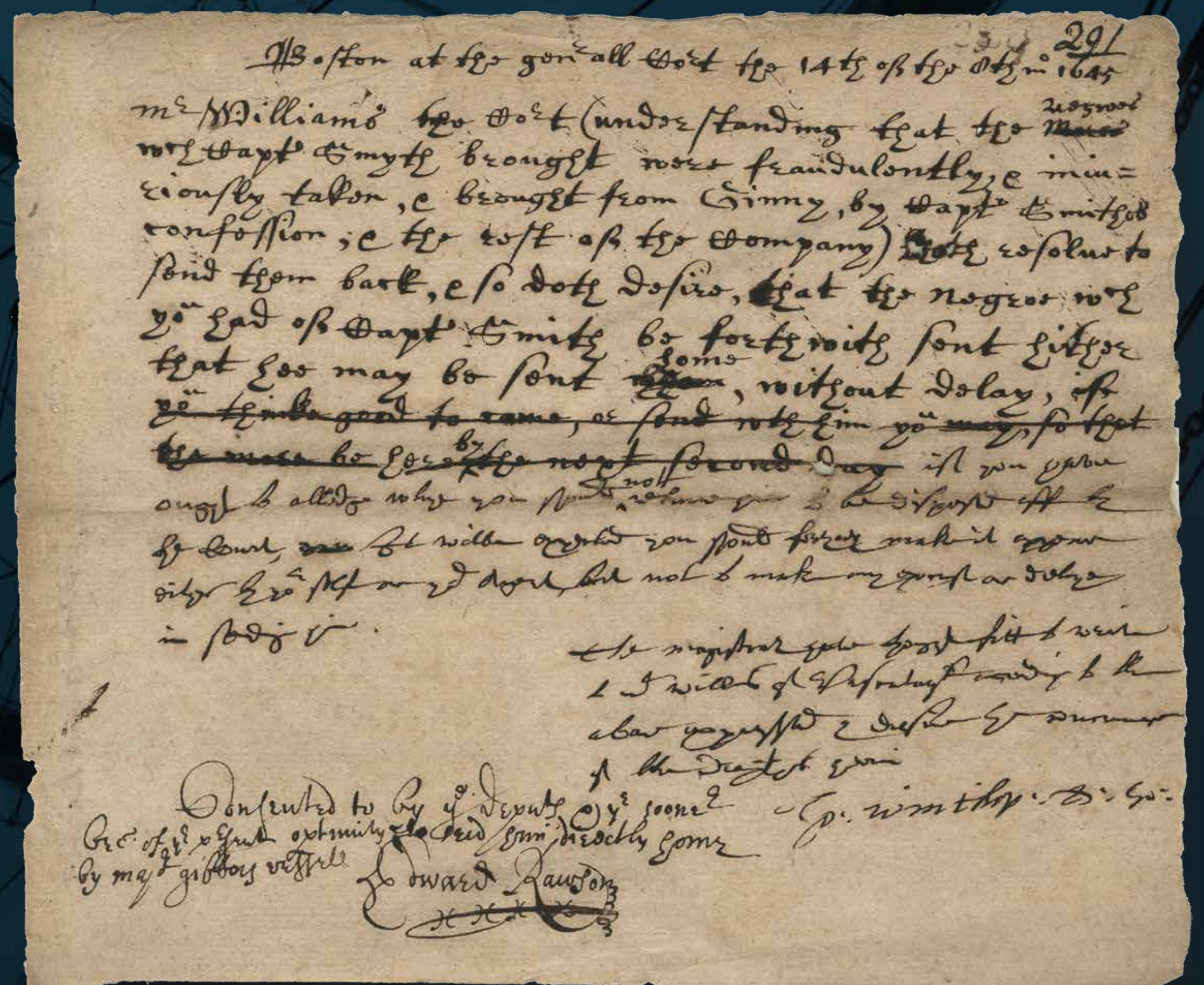
captives taken in just wars... And such strangers as willingly sell themselves, Or are sold to us.” This formula did not match the reality of slavery.



Governor John Winthrop's journal noted the first shipment of slaves to Massachusetts.



Beginnings of the slave trade. This 1644 document is an agreement by Massachusetts adventurers to “go to Guinea” and seize Africans for sale in Barbados. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Moral awareness. Off the coast of Africa, the Massachusetts crew met with a group from London claiming mistreatment by Africans. In a Sunday attack they joined in killing over 100 people with cannon fire. As Africans counterattacked they went to sea with at least 2 captives. This document from the Puritan government mandated the return of the slaves because they had been taken violently on a Sunday. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

The House of Usher

Hezekiah Usher prospered as a bookseller and merchant in Puritan Boston. His son John became involved in the slave trade.

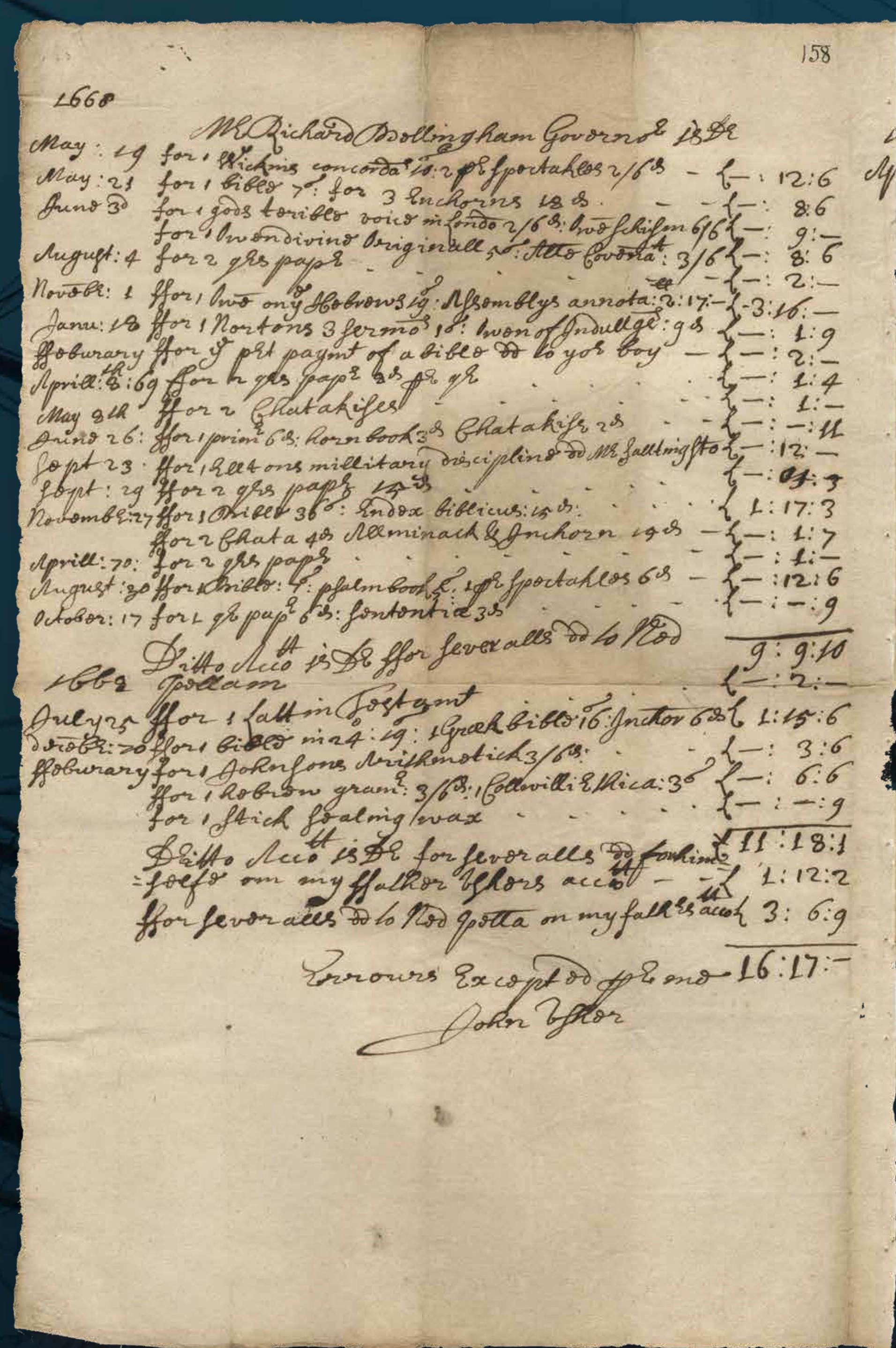


The Ushers were early booksellers and merchants. AD MEKENS

God and Mammon

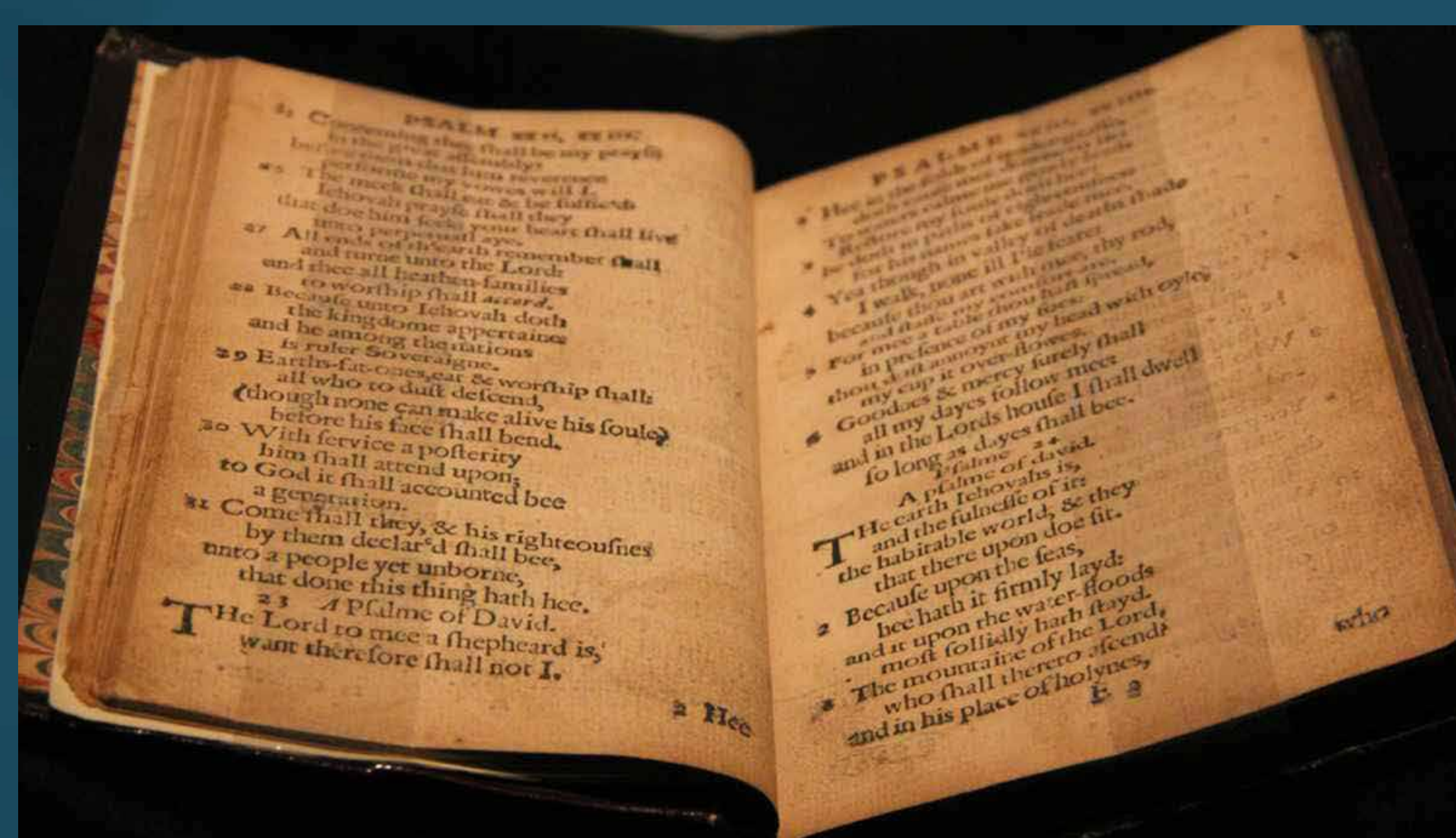
Hezekiah Usher's son John ("graceless and grasping" in the words of historian Bernard Bailyn) was an ambitious shipping merchant. In 1679 he suffered a severe financial setback on a trading voyage to Spain. One of his ships was badly damaged, while its rotting cargoes of corn and tobacco went unsold.

Alert to profit, John Usher had a contract to supply books and stationery for the colony. His invoice includes charges for Bibles, psalm books and horn books (a form of primer.) Other business activities were less wholesome. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



“Come up in the night with them...giving us notice...with what privacy you can and we shall take care for their landing.”

Instructions for smuggling slaves into Massachusetts, 1681



Hezekiah Usher is known for selling the Bay Psalm Book, the first book to be printed in Massachusetts. PATHEOS

Conspiracy Theorist

Usher saw a way to recoup shipping losses but not without breaking the law. The lucrative slave trade was restricted to the London based Royal African Company from the years 1672 to 1698. Usher and father-in-law John Saffin hired the ship *Elizabeth* for a secret voyage to Africa. Getting word that the plot was discovered, the conspirators quietly dispatched a second ship to intercept the *Elizabeth* and transfer its human cargo. The plan succeeded and a smuggling operation was born.



The sight of Hezekiah Usher's house – no longer standing – inspired Edgar Allan Poe to imagine his macabre tale *The House of Usher*. “ANNIE” DAGUERRETYPE OF EDGAR ALLAN POE



THE SELLING OF JOSEPH

After the Salem Witch Trials Judge Samuel Sewell admitted his errors and began thinking about reform. Angered that John Saffin – the slave trader - had reneged on a promise to free one of his slaves, he wrote *The Selling of Joseph*, often called the first anti-slavery tract. He refuted Biblical arguments used to justify slavery.

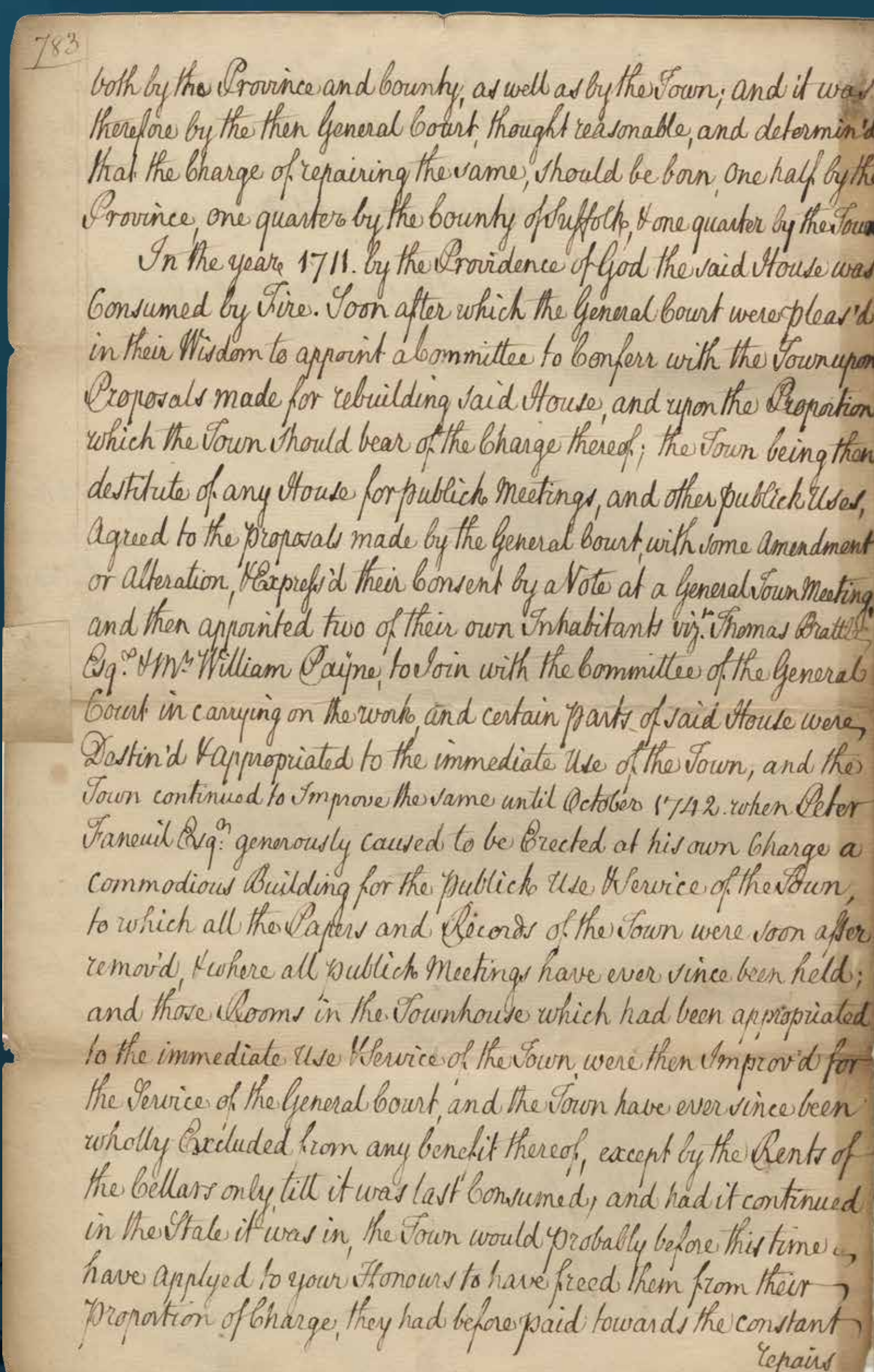
Judge Samuel Sewell

Founding Fortunes

The captains of slave ships were often disreputable men while owners enjoyed the deference accorded to wealth.

Traces of the Trade: Bricks and Mortar

Massachusetts has some surprising connections to the slave trade. Faneuil Hall, the “cradle of liberty” was first developed by Peter Faneuil, one of Boston’s wealthiest merchants whose fortune derived in part from the slave trade. Cornelius Waldo, great grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson, was an active trader. One of his vessels was named *Africa*. In early years the McLean Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital were supported in part by funds from the West India activities of the McLean-Amory families.



Sensing the need for a central market and meeting place Peter Faneuil “generously caused to be Erected at his own charge a Commodious Building for Public Use.” Remodeled since Faneuil’s time it is often called the “Cradle of Liberty.” There is much more to its story than the connection with slavery but that should not be forgotten. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Merchant Peter Faneuil participated in charitable activities but also in the slave trade. RULERS AND LEADERS

“The topiniest merchant in all the town.”

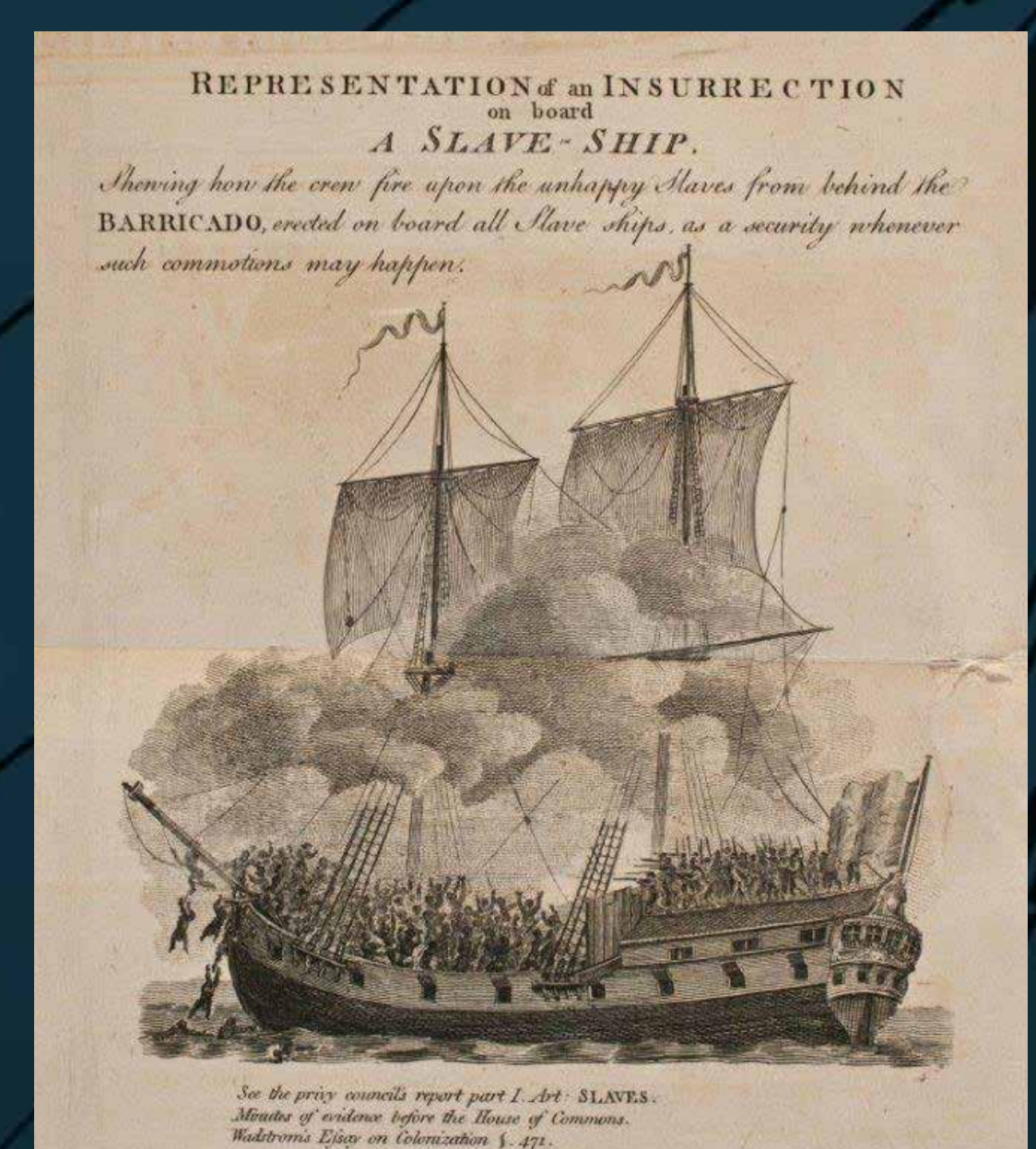
Merchant Thomas Hancock describing Peter Faneuil



Faneuil Hall. DADEROT

The Jolly Bachelor

Peter Faneuil, benefactor of Faneuil Hall, inherited a fortune from his uncle on the condition that he would never marry. His ship, *Jolly Bachelor*, made a slaving voyage to Sierra Leone. On March 2, 1742 captive slaves revolted, killing the captain and two crew members. They also destroyed the mast and rigging. Another European merchant recovered the ship, refitted it, and bought back twenty of the escaped slaves from African captors. Faneuil died before the ship’s return to America.



Representation of an Insurrection on board a Slave Ship. CARL BERNHARD WALDSTROM, 1794

SLAVE SHIPS

Jolly Bachelor, *Rainbow*, and *Gift of God*, seem like inappropriate names for slave ships. All had Massachusetts connections



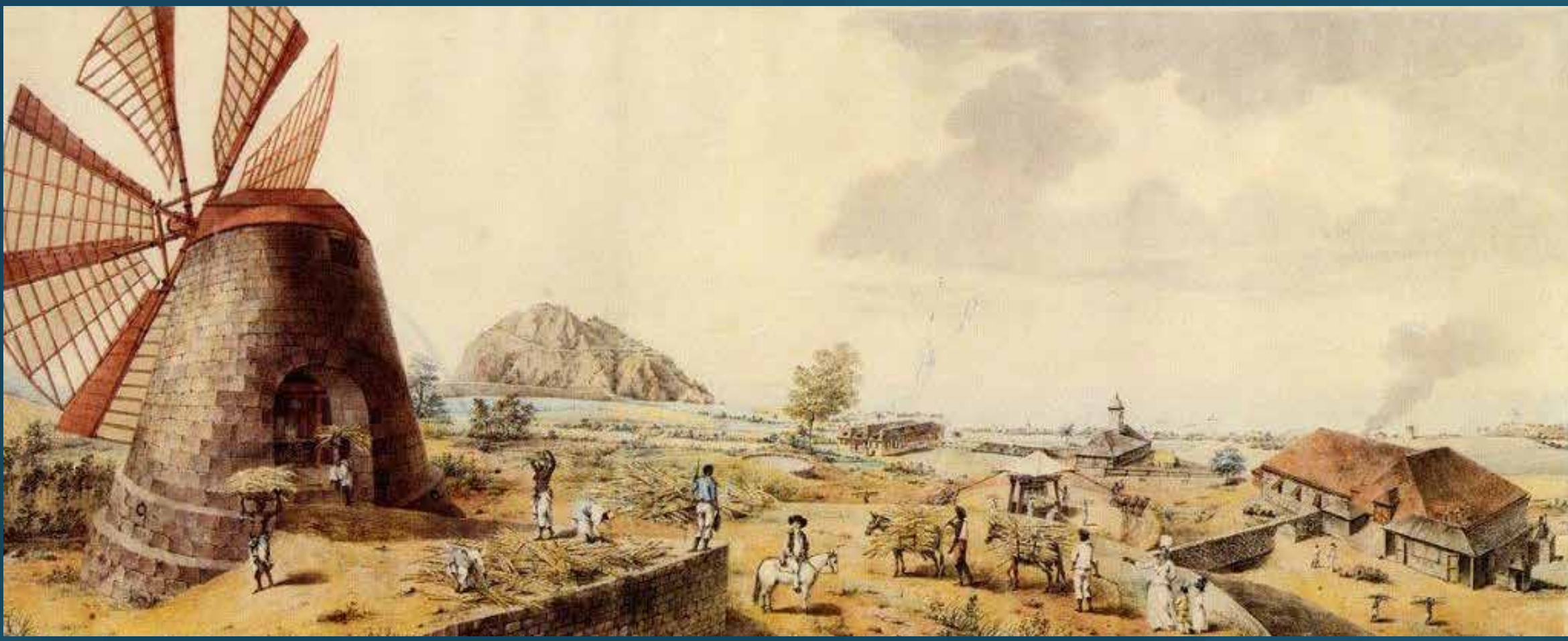
Thomas H. Perkins by Thomas Sully

THOMAS HANDASYD PERKINS

Perhaps Boston’s most prominent nineteenth century philanthropist, Perkins began a slave trading operation in present day Haiti, but fled after a slave revolt. He is best known for his role in selling furs, gold, silver, and Turkish opium in China. His charitable activities ranged from supporting construction of the Bunker Hill Monument to founding a school for the blind.

Caribbean Connections

Caribbean trade began very early. From 1630–1640 at least 20 ships sailed from New England to Barbados, the Bahamas, St. Kitts and Tortuga.



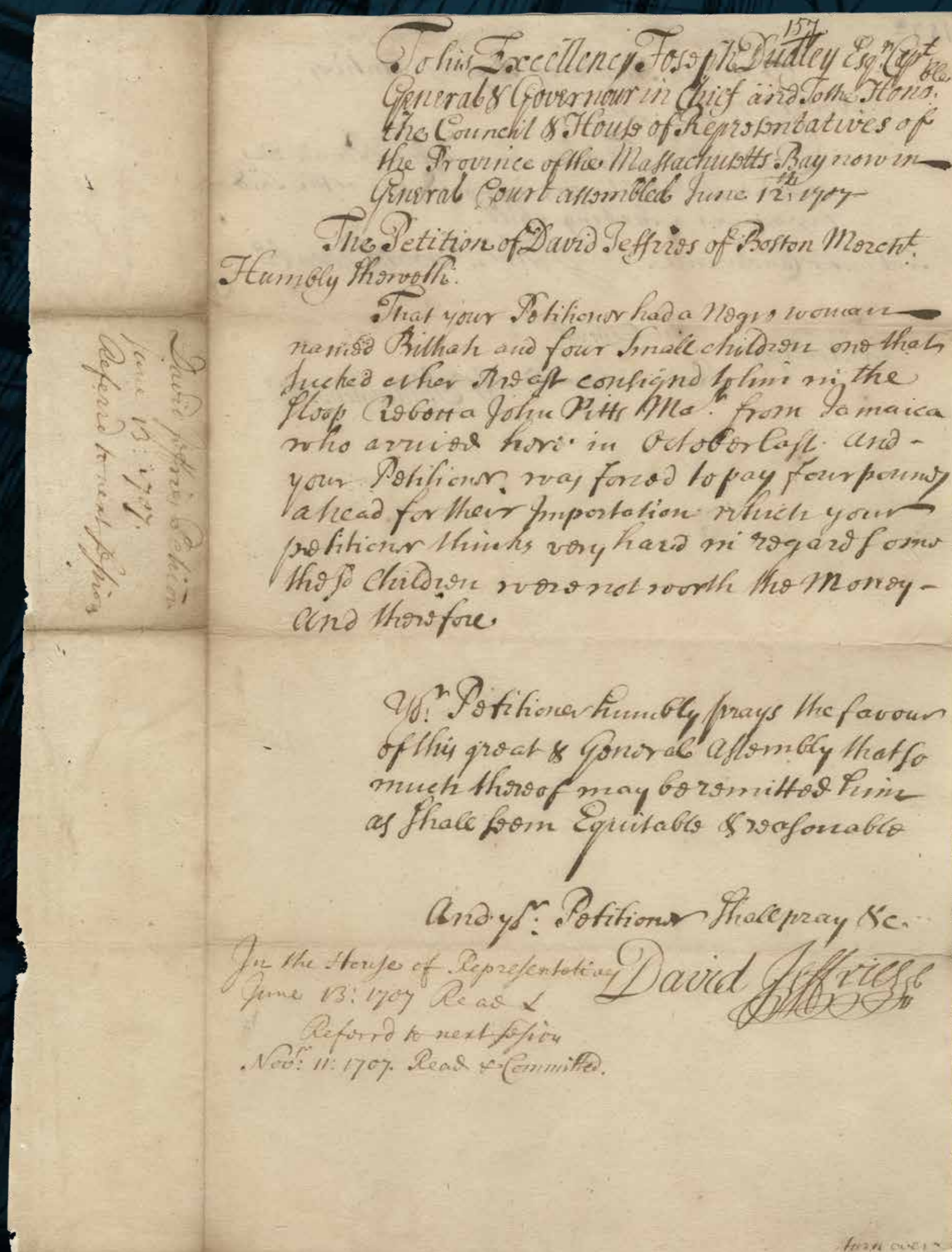
Barbados sugar plantation. Today the ruins of windmills are common in the Caribbean. COLUMBIA

Feast to Famine

Molasses, for the production of rum, was imported from Caribbean plantations. English planters on Barbados and other islands maximized production of sugar cane while importing food and other essentials from mainland colonies including Massachusetts. When Britain cut off trade with these islands after the American Revolution a famine struck Jamaica.

Variations in the Slave Trade

Some traders sailed directly to Africa in the famous triangular trade. In one version rum went to Africa, slaves to Caribbean plantations, and molasses to New England. Some Massachusetts merchants bought smaller numbers of slaves in the West Indies. They often arrived on ships with other imports like sugar, molasses, or tobacco. Because plantations were not practical in Massachusetts fewer slaves were purchased. Some, who were considered too weak for Caribbean plantations, were re-sold to Massachusetts as house servants.



Men in Barbados “are so intent upon planting sugar that they had rather buy foode at very dear rates than produce it by labour, so infinite is the profit of sugar works.”

Advice to Governor John Winthrop, 1647

RUMINATIONS

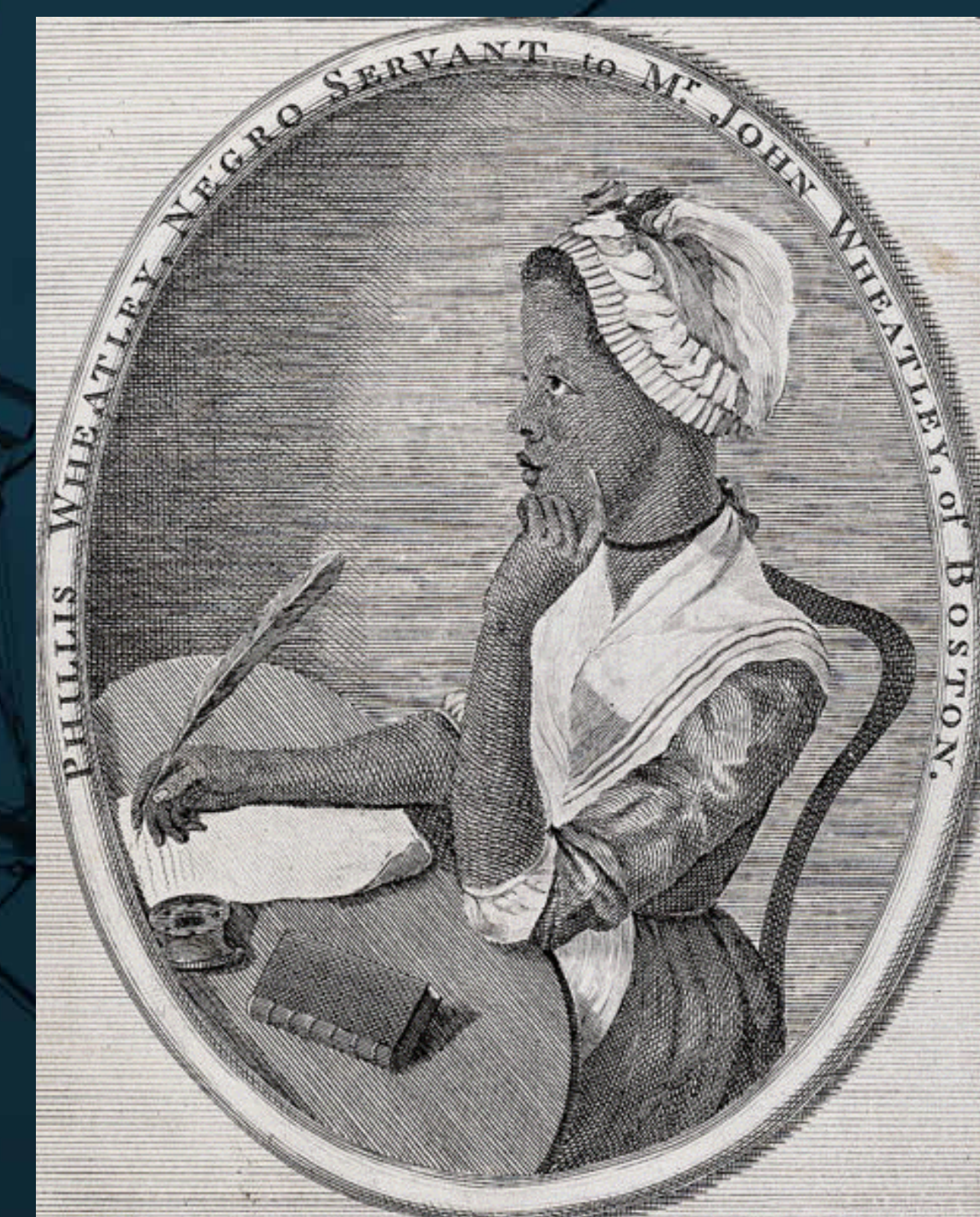
The production of rum was very profitable. New Englanders consumed a million and a quarter gallons of rum each year—the equivalent of four gallons for every man woman and child. Rum also played a central role in the African slave trade.



Cutting sugar cane on Barbados. SIDEPLAYER

Phillis Wheatley was taken from Africa at the age of 7 or 8. She was named for the ship that brought her to Massachusetts (“Phillis” or “The Charming Phillis”) owned by merchant Timothy Fitch of Medford. Her book of poetry was the first to be authored by an African-American.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Cold cash. In this 1797 petition David Jeffries protests the cost of importing slaves from Jamaica. Apparently he had paid for five individuals and received a mother with four young children. “Your petitioner was forced to pay four pounds per head for their transportation which your petitioner thinks very hard...the children were not worth the money.”

MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

Plantation Owners

Before the American Revolution some members of the Tory elite in Massachusetts also owned plantations on Caribbean Islands.

Tory Row

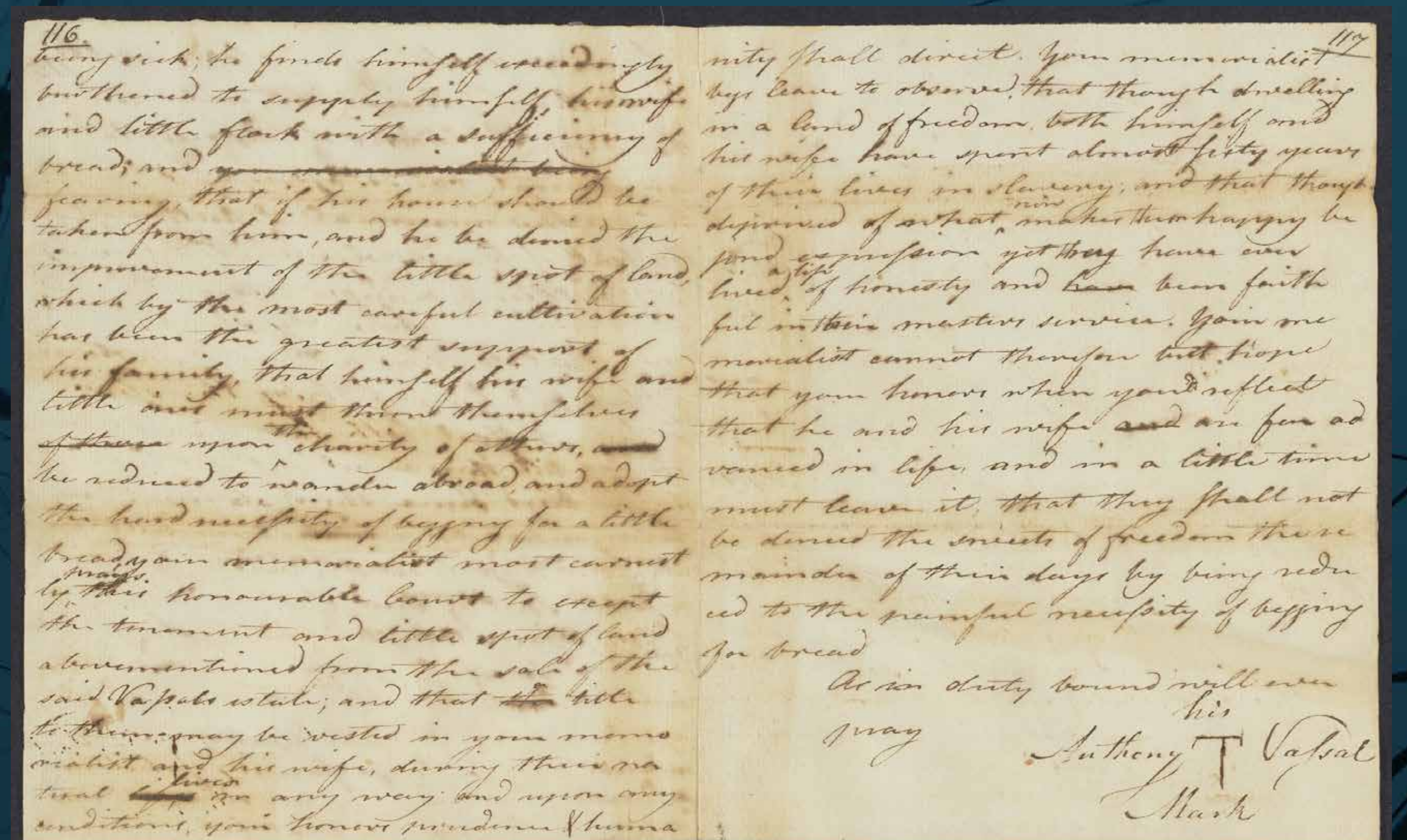
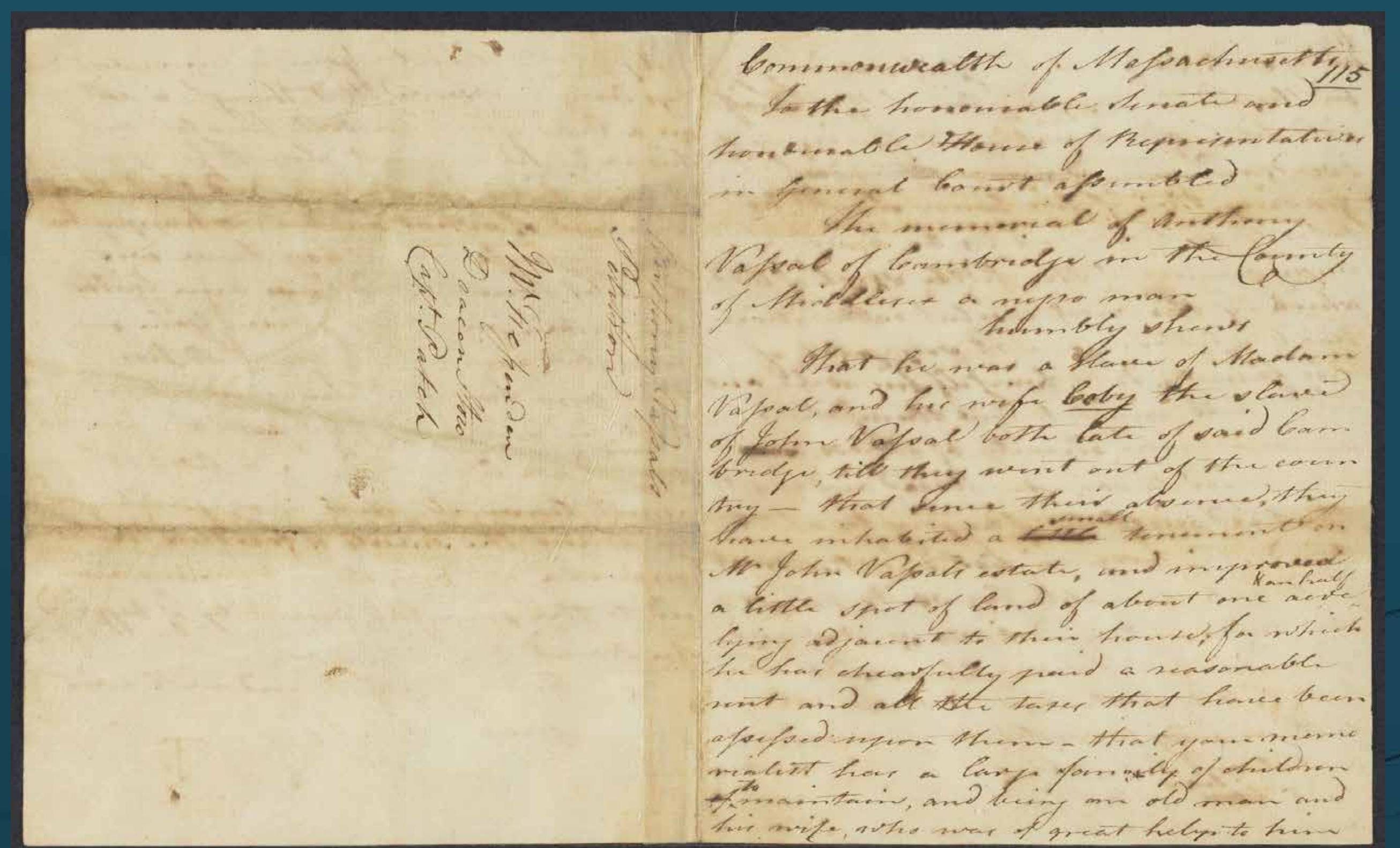
Brattle Street in Cambridge has been called Tory Row. An eighteenth century visitor would be impressed with the obvious wealth of many residents and the presence of African slaves. Some, in formal livery, drove the carriages of local grandees. Some of this wealth was derived directly from slavery. The Vassall House, later General George Washington's headquarters, was built with the help of profits from a Jamaica plantation. The Royall and Oliver families owned plantations in Antigua. Elmwood, the official residence of Harvard University presidents, was the home of Thomas Oliver (just off Brattle Street.)



Vassall House on Brattle Street, Cambridge. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



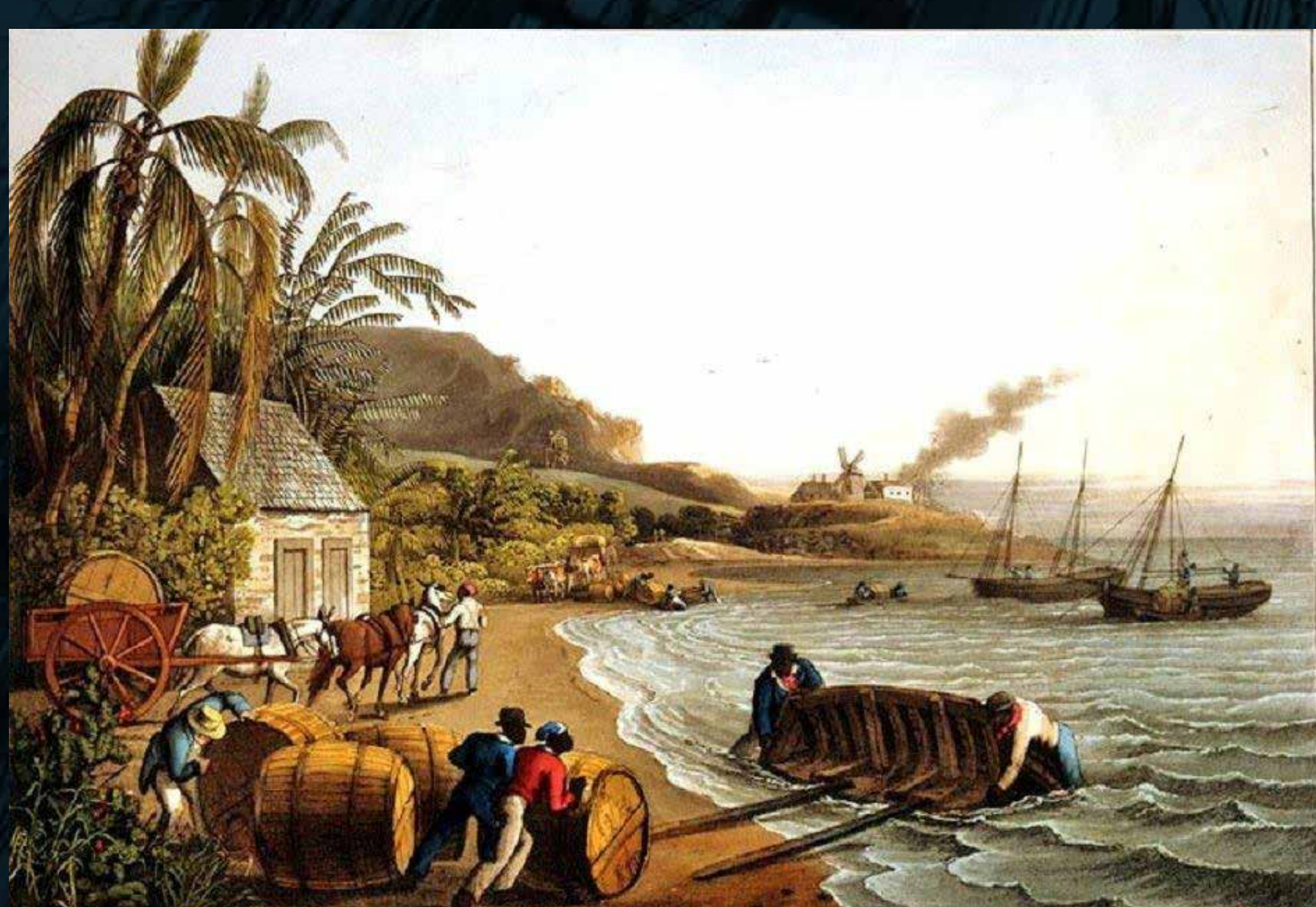
Elmwood, once the home of Antigua merchant Thomas Oliver Midnightreary



Slavery at the Vassall House: In old age former slaves Anthony and Cuba Vassall petitioned the Massachusetts government for help: "The land your petitioners now improve is not sufficient to supply them with such vegetables as are necessary for their family." In a second document John Hancock approved the payment of twelve pounds for each. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

Antigua

During the early colonial period the islands of the West Indies were seen as a more important asset than mainland colonies. Today, Antigua (pronounced An-tee-ga) is developing its tourist industry but its early history is palpable. "Nelson's Dockyard" at English Harbor would not accommodate a modern navy but great power was projected from small island outposts like this. Sugar plantations also created great wealth for owners in England, and some in Massachusetts.



This nineteenth century image illustrates the rum trade on Antigua. Seventeenth century Massachusetts merchants traded with Antigua and other islands including Barbados, and Jamaica. WILLIAM CLARK, INFANT SCHOOL DEPOSITORY



Martha Washington

When young George Washington married wealthy widow Martha Dandridge Custis, he became one of the richest men in America. Her fortune was derived in part from Antigua sugar plantations. Her late husband's grandfather, Daniel Parke, was the island's unpopular and tyrannical governor, murdered by white colonists.

Royall Rise and Fall

Medford's Royall House and Slave Quarters provide a window into the world of Massachusetts' Tory elite.

From Ryall to Royall

Of humble origins, Isaac Ryall was fascinated by the lifestyle of shipping merchants. His marriage to the great-niece of famed "Indian" missionary John Eliot brought enough money to establish a sugar plantation on Antigua. Isaac changed the family name from "Ryall" to "Royall." After a slave revolt on Antigua he spent more time at his Medford, Massachusetts home. His son Isaac Royall Jr. was forced to flee on the eve of the American Revolution.



Isaac Royall Jr. by John Singleton Copley, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

"On Wednesday last arrived here the Ship Unity...from the island of Antigua, Michael Dalton commander, who brought here passengers Col. Royal and his family..."

Boston Gazette, 1737, after the Antiguan slave revolt

Slave Revolt

In 1736 the black/white population ratio on Antigua was nine to one when a slave revolt began. The repression was brutal. Eighty three slaves were executed. Seventy-seven were burned alive including Isaac Royall's driver. Royall brought 27 slaves to his Medford property.



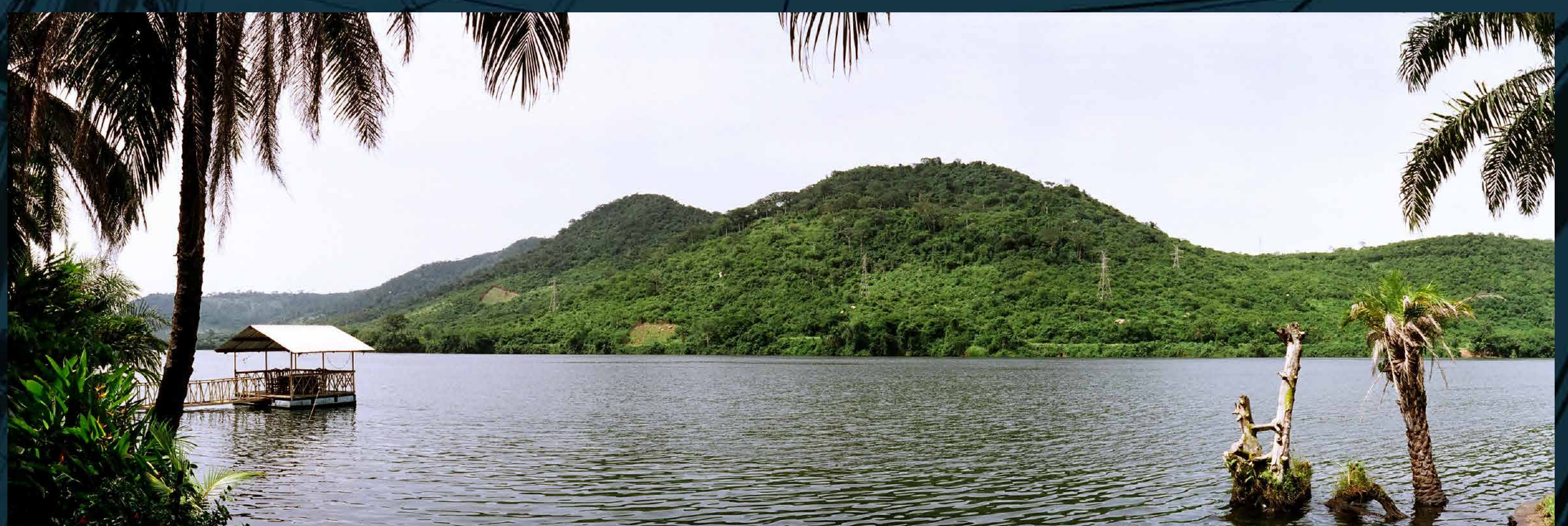
Slave quarters were located close to the main house. COURTESY OF ROYALL HOUSE AND SLAVE QUARTERS



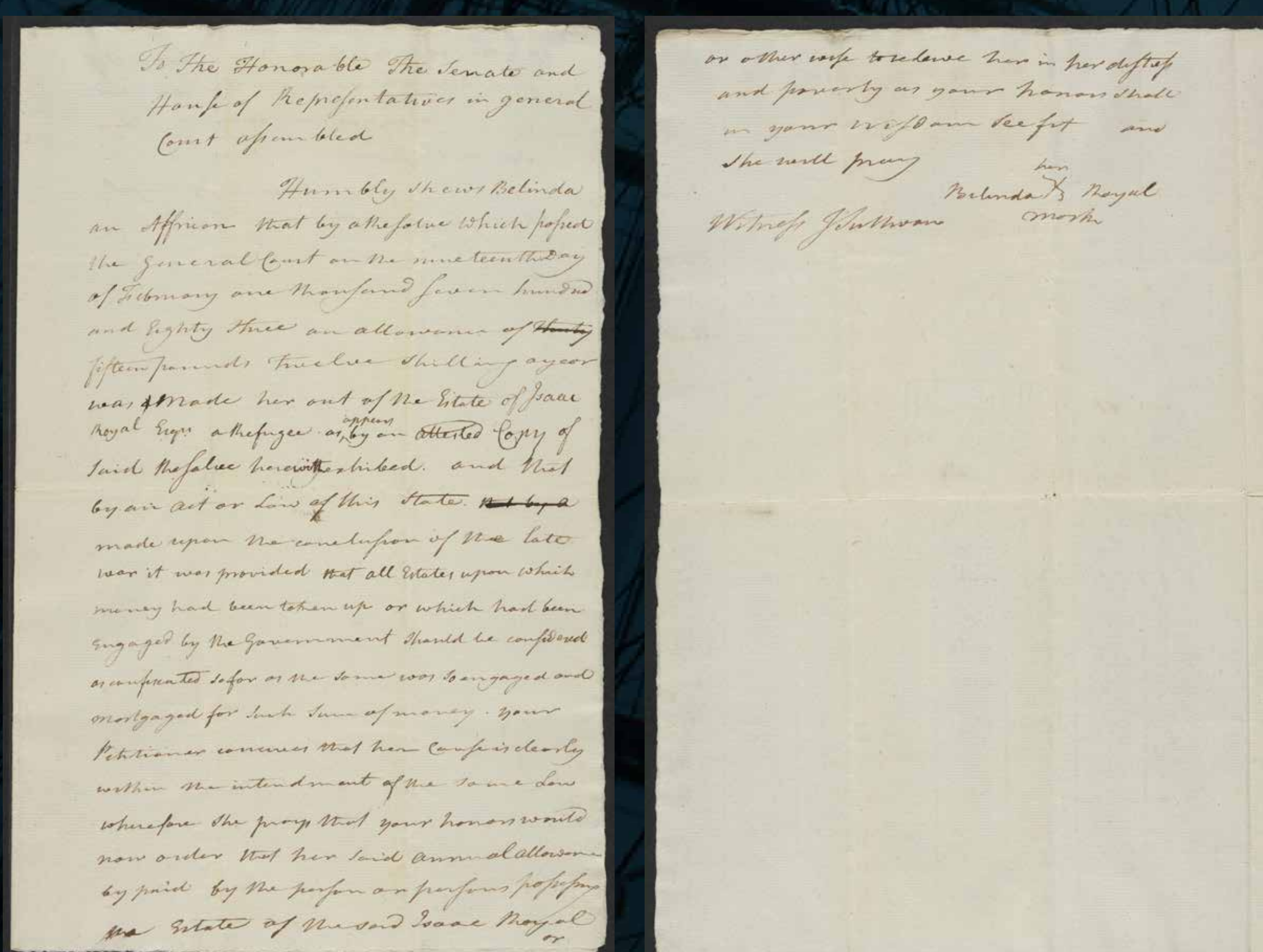
A bedchamber at the Royall House. Some slaves slept in the main house kitchen. COURTESY OF ROYALL HOUSE AND SLAVE QUARTERS

Belinda

Belinda was a slave with the Royall family for fifty years. Her last memory of her parents in Africa went back to childhood. Walking by the Volta River in present day Ghana, she and her parents were praying to the god Orisa when she was caught by strangers and dragged away. After years of slavery on Antigua, she was brought to the Royall's Medford estate.



There is no image of Belinda or most other slaves in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. She was captured near the Volta River in Ghana. STYG NYGAARD



After the American Revolution "Belinda," submitted several petitions to the Massachusetts government. Because of "age and infirmity" she was awarded "fifteen pounds twelve shillings per annum" from the Royall estate. This 1785 document shows that the promised "maintenance" was not received each year. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Isaac Royall Jr. left property to Harvard College that helped in founding the law school. Because of the connection to slavery Harvard University recently removed the Royall coat of arms from the law school seal.

By Land and By Sea

After the American Revolution, slavery was abolished in Massachusetts. By the mid-nineteenth century the Commonwealth was an important center of abolitionism.

Ship to Shore

For some fugitive slaves the Underground Railroad became a seaway. Some were brought to Boston and other northern ports by sympathetic sea captains engaged in the coastal trade. Others stowed away and risked capture. New Bedford became a particularly important destination. A fugitive slave could disappear for months or years on a whaling voyage.



Boston Harbor, Fitz Henry Lane, 1854. WHITE HOUSE ART COLLECTION

The Vigilance Committee in Boston Harbor

“I belonged to several secret societies in Boston aiming to impede the capture of fugitive slaves...One of these societies owned a boat, in which men used to go down in the harbor to meet Southern vessels. The practice was, to take along a colored woman with fresh fruit, pies and etc. – she easily got on board & when there, usually found out if there was any fugitive on board: then he was sometimes taken away by night.” Thomas Wentworth Higginson

“The slaves were forwarded, by placing them on vessels engaged in the lumber trade... and the captains of which had hearts.”

Robert Purvis, Philadelphia African-American leader, on fugitive slaves escaping by sea

Stowing Away: Elizabeth Blakesley

Elizabeth Blakesley of Wilmington, North Carolina, hid on a brig bound for Boston. Before departure her owner boarded the ship and attempted to smoke her out three times with sulfur and tobacco. Frederick Douglass later said, “The woman lay there in the hold, almost suffocated but she resolved to die rather than come forward.” She arrived in Boston, “barely able to crawl” and moved to New Bedford.

Fitz Henry Lane, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BOSTON

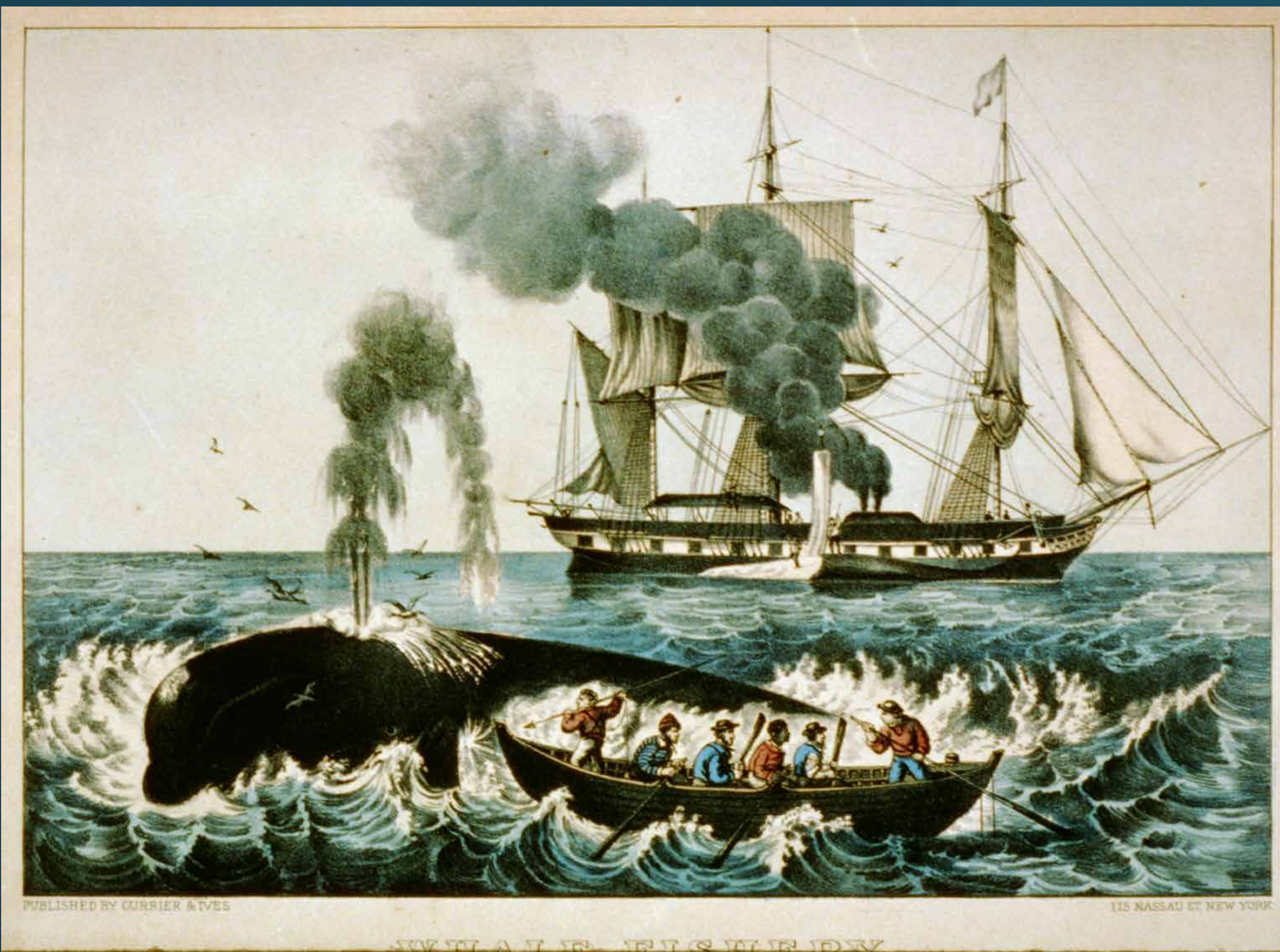


The Fugitive's Gibraltar

The whaling port of New Bedford became a prime destination for fugitive slaves.

New Bedford Quakers

Early Quakers settled in Nantucket and southeastern Massachusetts, a relatively safe distance from the hostile Puritan government in Boston. The violent whaling industry seems like an ironic choice for peace loving Quakers but many became wealthy through the sea. Because of the Quaker influence New Bedford was more welcoming to runaway slaves than most northern communities, although there could be hostility from some residents.



Whale Fishery by CURRIER AND IVES.

Diversity

New Bedford whalers made their first voyages to the Cape Verde Islands, off western Africa in 1765. Soon crew members of African descent were recruited there. Whaling voyages to the Pacific brought crew members from the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) and Tahiti. Because whaling was dangerous and pay was low, owners were open to hiring black sailors and even white fugitives from justice. Thus there was an element of self interest in accepting fugitive slaves.



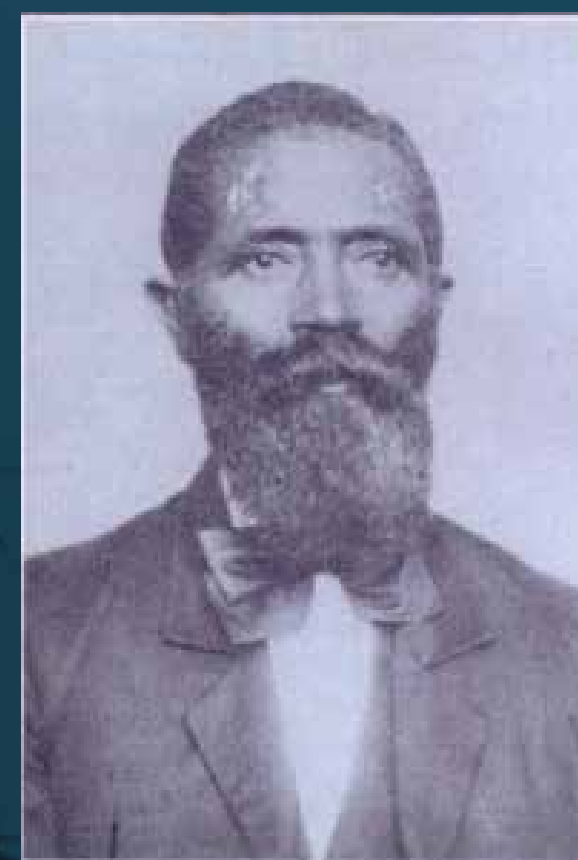
A view of present day New Bedford with period buildings. While waterfront neighborhoods could be rough, and aliases were common, there was some opportunity in New Bedford for African-Americans. NEW BEDFORD TOURISM AND MARKETING

Name Games

Whaling captains sometimes gave names to Pacific Islanders based on their ship board role. This accounts for unusual names like "Tar Bucket" and "Rope Yarn." Some were named for famous Americans. Hawaiian crew members also had names like "John Adams" and "John Quincy Adams."

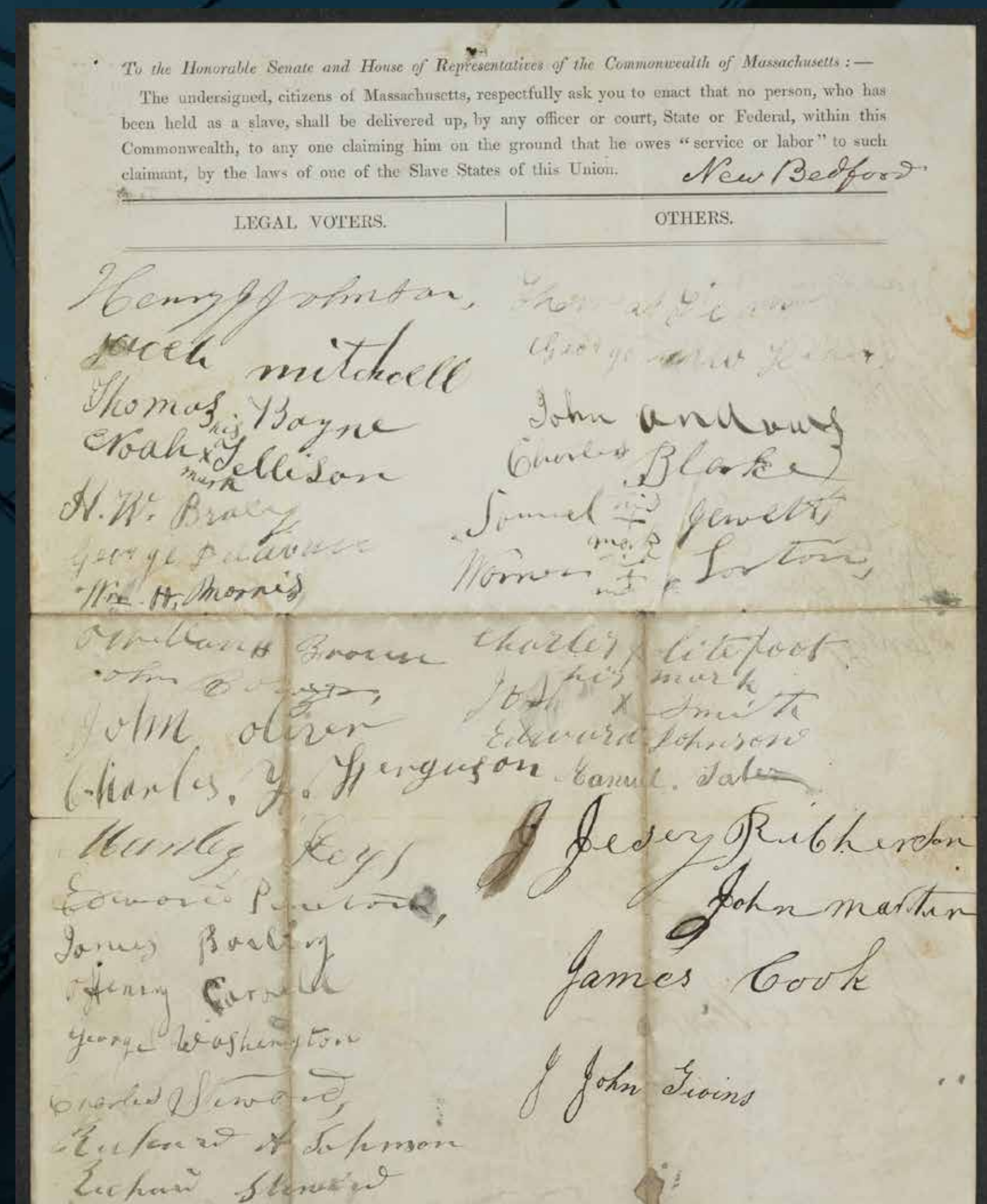
"A fugitive, a fugitive, was the cry as I sprung ashore...Had never heard the word 'fugitive' before and was pretty well scared out of my wits. But a slave had little to fear in a New Bedford crowd... they stood aside and let me pass."

Joseph M. Smith, stowaway on a lumber ship.



In his eloquent autobiography, George Temoh described New Bedford as "the fugitive's Gibraltar." He also praised the Bush family, African-Americans who sheltered fugitives free of charge in their boarding house. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Many runaway slaves living in New Bedford signed this petition to the Massachusetts government protesting the seizure of free black seamen in the south and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 which brought "slave catchers" to northern cities. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

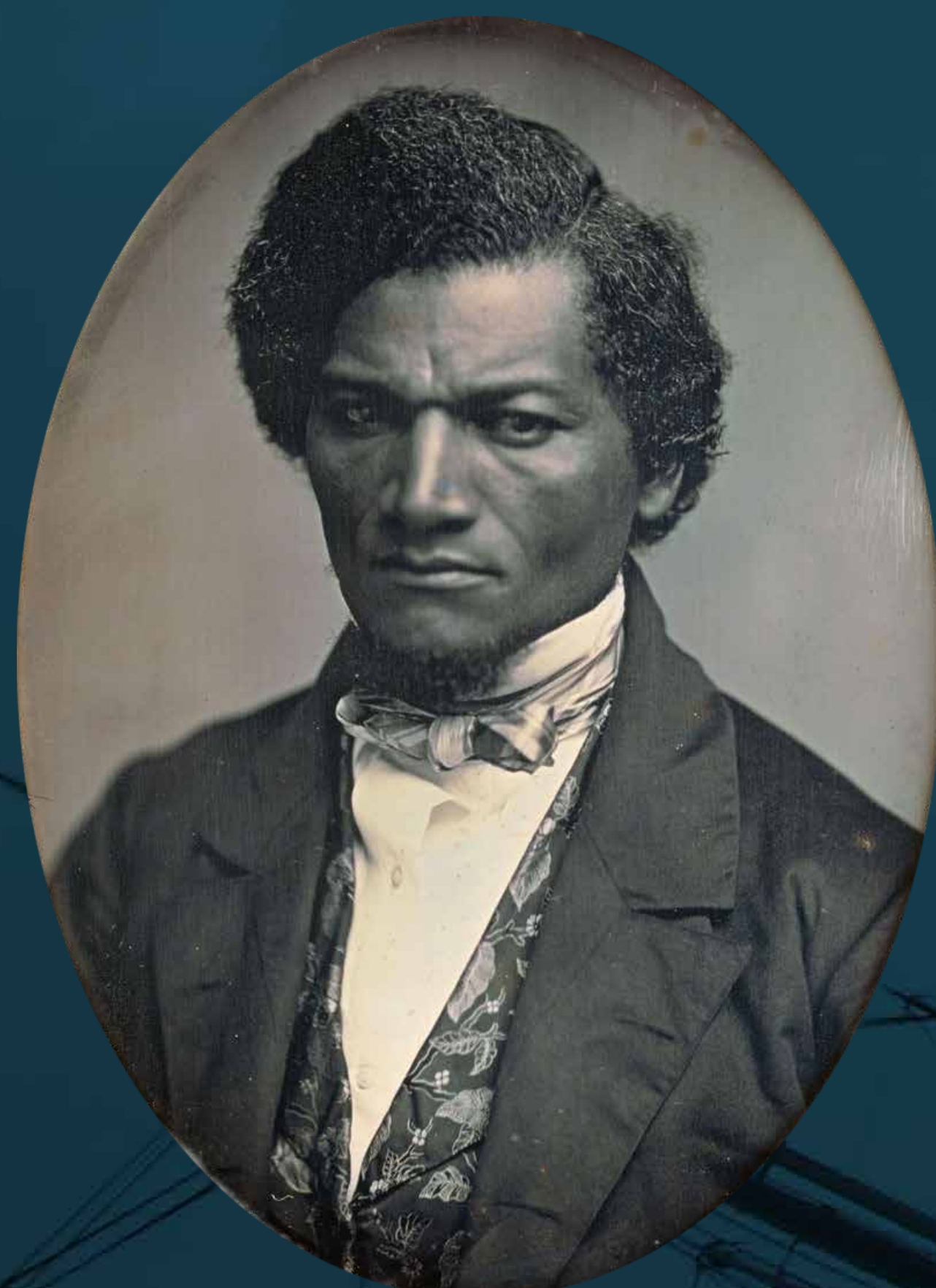


Frederick Douglass in New Bedford

Frederick Douglass found refuge in New Bedford but also a black community that achieved a measure of business and professional success.

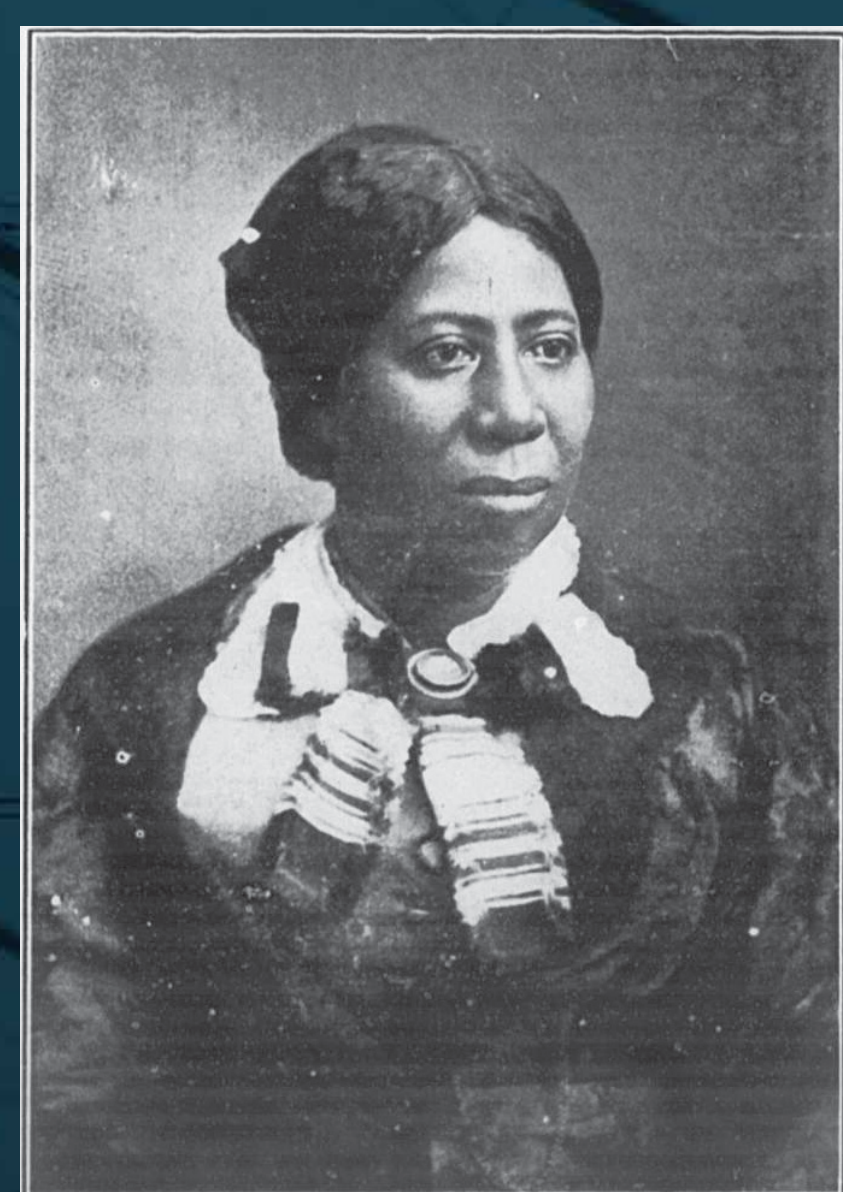
New Bedford's Most Famous Fugitive

Frederick Bailey escaped slavery by dressing in sailor's clothing and traveling north by train and steamer. In New Bedford he was directed to the home of Nathan and Polly Johnson, black entrepreneurs, whose house was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Needing an alias, they advised against taking the too popular name "Johnson." Instead they suggested Douglas, after a heroic character in a story by Sir Walter Scott. He spelled it "Douglass" to honor a black family with that name, active in Philadelphia.



Frederick Douglass saw opportunities in Massachusetts, "I was now living in a new world"..."and was wide awake to its advantages." In 1839 he gave his first known public address at the African Christian Church in New Bedford.

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO



Ann Murray-Douglass, Frederick's wife, joined in planning his escape and settled in New Bedford.

Nathan and Polly Johnson

Frederick Douglas and other fugitive slaves stayed with Nathan and Polly Johnson. The Johnsons were among the most successful African-Americans in New Bedford. For a time Nathan worked for whaling entrepreneur Charles W. Morgan. He later joined his wife Polly in a catering business. Nathan was tried, but not convicted, for beating another black man, suspected of spying on run-aways for southern owners.

Sweetness

Polly Johnson was an accomplished "confectioner" whose clients included members of New Bedford's elite. Among her offerings were "fresh Bordeaux Almonds, superior (French) Olives, Oranges, Lemons, Lemon Syrup, Jellies, Ice Cream, Cake, Candies...served in the best manner and charges moderate."

"The most astonishing as well as the most interesting thing to me was the condition of the colored people...I found many living in finer houses, and evidently enjoying more of the comforts of life, than the average of slaveholders in Maryland."

Frederick Douglass
on New Bedford



Frederick Douglass stayed with black entrepreneurs Nathan and Polly Johnson (one of several safe homes maintained by African-Americans.) The house was remodeled after Douglass visited. The Johnson's also owned the adjacent building a former Quaker meeting house. DANIEL CASE

Whaling merchant Charles W. Morgan was consistently anti-slavery but sometimes disagreed with radical abolitionists on tactics. The ship Charles W. Morgan, at Mystic Seaport, carries his name. MYSTIC SEAPORT

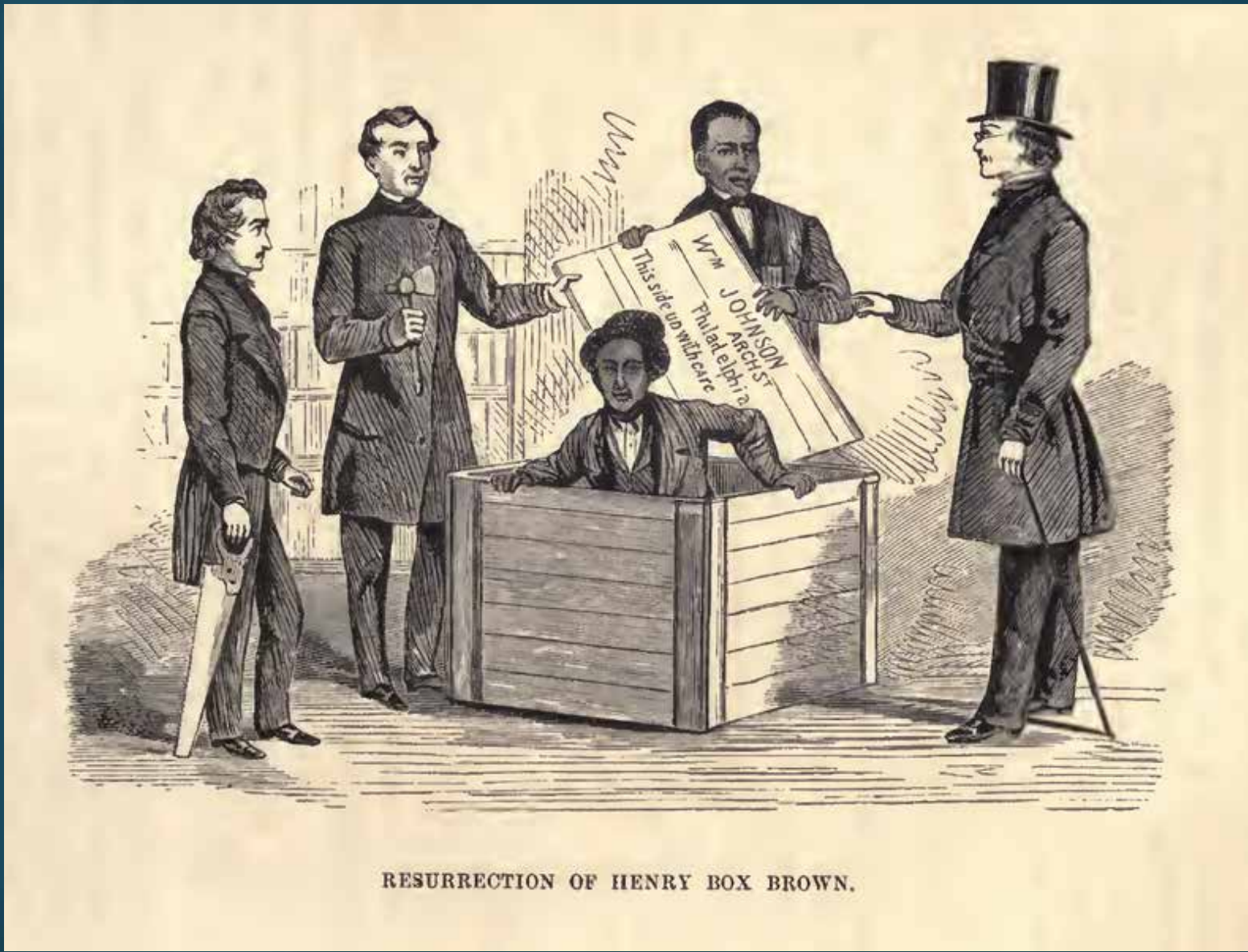


Escaping to Freedom

The whaling port of New Bedford became a prime destination for fugitive slaves.

Box Brown

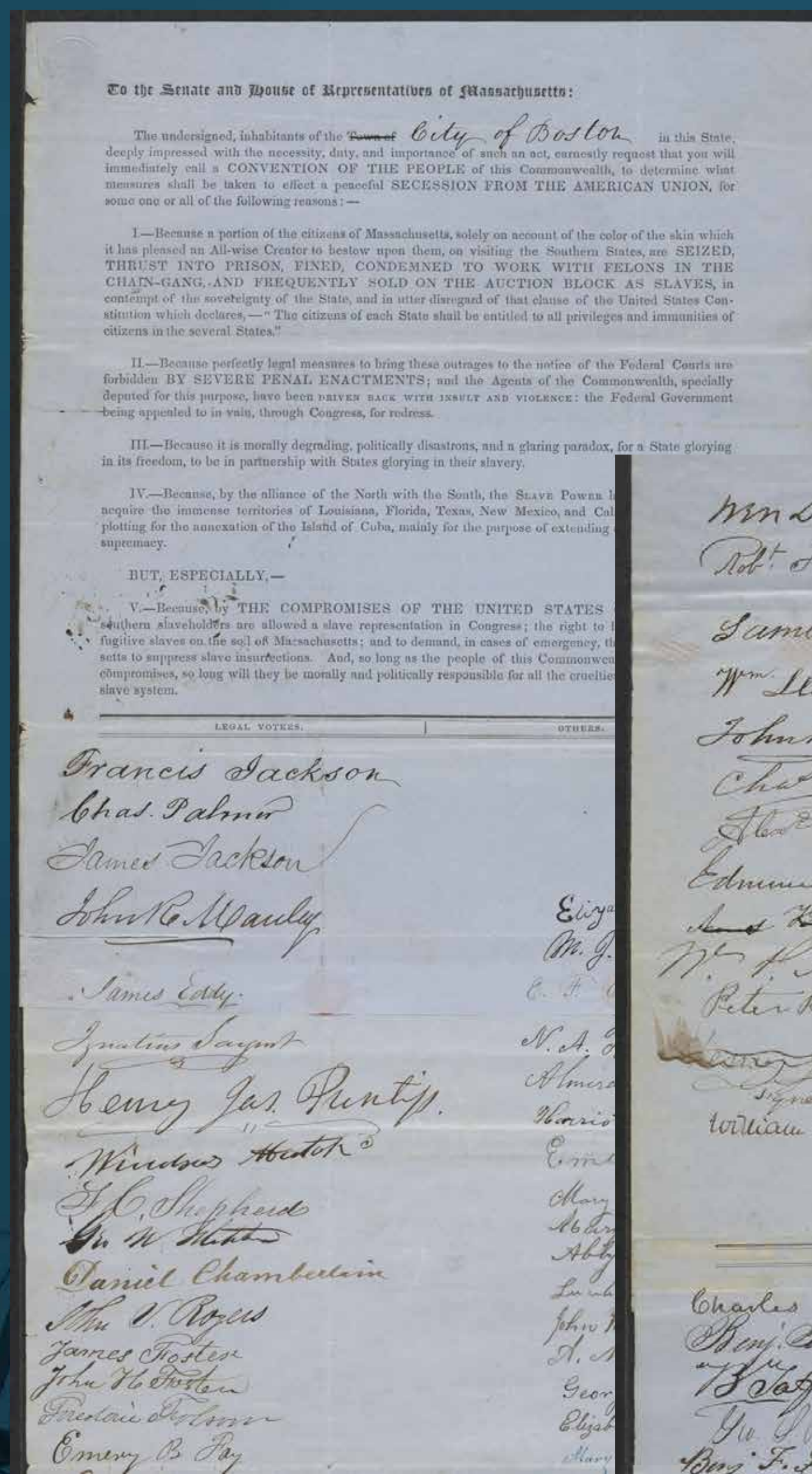
One of the most celebrated escapes from slavery occurred in 1849. Settling in to a small box marked "This side up," Henry "Box" Brown took a perilous trip by railroad and ferry. At one point the box was upside down for twenty miles on a ferry as passengers sat on top. Eventually arriving in New Bedford, his story became a sensation.



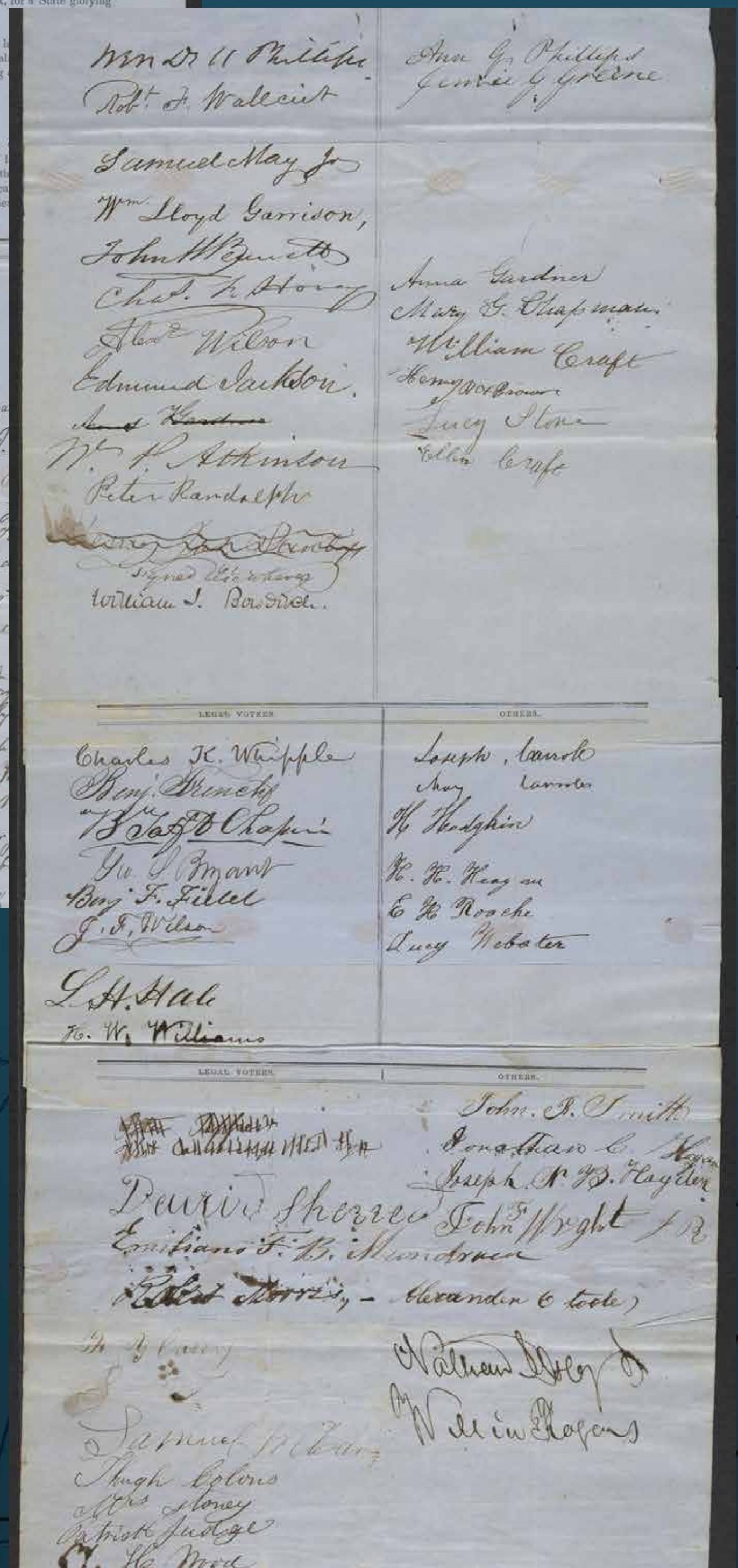
Resurrection of Henry Box Brown, William Still, The Underground Railroad

"The idea suddenly flashed across my mind of shutting myself up in a box, and getting myself conveyed as dry goods to a free state."

Henry "Box" Brown



This petition, against the Fugitive Slave Act, includes the signature of Henry "Box" Brown. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Harriett Jacobs

Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, published in 1861, detailed her life in North Carolina and unwanted attention from her *de facto* owner Dr. James Norcom. She first attempted to escape by stowing away on a sailing ship. Fearing discovery, she disembarked before departure and spent seven years hiding in an attic. Eventually she did escape by sea and settled in New Bedford. Some thought, incorrectly, that her book was authored by a white novelist.



Harriett Jacobs, Jean Fagan Yellin

No Longer Yours

John S. Jacobs was Harriett Jacobs' brother. His fourth owner was a congressman from North Carolina. Traveling with him in New York, Jacobs feigned loyalty. When the opportunity came, Jacobs left a note for his master, with the salutation "No longer yours."

For a time, fugitive slave John S. Jacobs stayed at the home of William Rotch Rodman. Jacobs signed on for a long whaling voyage to frustrate "slave catchers." PERRY HICKS, LLC



Friends Indeed

Quakers William Rotch, Sr. and William Rotch, Jr. were among the wealthiest ship owners in New Bedford. The family was involved in anti-slavery activities since the 1780's



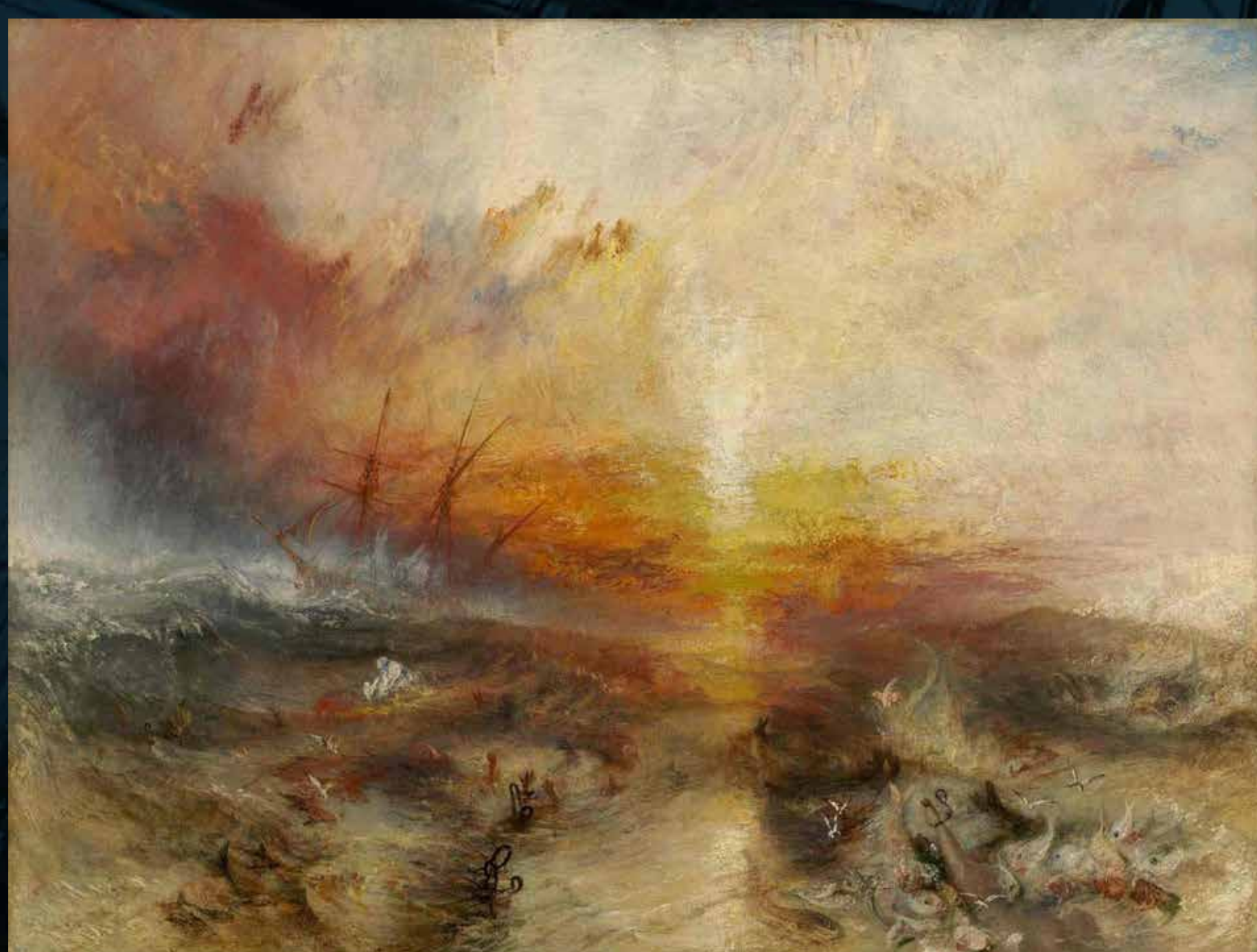
Rotch-Duff-Jones House, New Bedford. Rotch family members seemed to combine wealth with a social conscience. DESTINATION NEW BEDFORD

Friendship

William Rotch, Sr. won a court case for paying a slave named Prince directly for his service on the whaling vessel *Friendship*. The owner had demanded the pay. He also bought up the indentures of black servants and freed them after whaling voyages. "My heart is warmed toward those poor blacks," he wrote, "and I feel sometimes willing to spend and be spent if I could contribute to their encouragement."

The Ship Hope

William Rotch, Jr. and son-in-law Samuel Rodman took up the antislavery cause. Rotch accused the owner and master of the ship *Hope* of making a voyage to Africa three months after Massachusetts had banned the slave trade in 1788. He also documented incidents of cruelty to slaves and crew on other New England ships. He compared the slave revolt on Haiti to "the American struggle for liberty."



J.M. W. Turner's painting "Slave Ship," underscores the brutality of the slave trade. In 1781 a British captain threw 133 slaves overboard to collect insurance payments. MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

"Thou queries how friends can be active in establishing the new form of government which so much favors slavery...it is evident to me that it is founded on Slavery and that is on Blood."

Quaker merchant William Rotch Sr. on the proposed United States Constitution, 1787



Nineteenth century model of a whaling ship, crafted in Martha's Vineyard. SMITHSONIAN

Conditions on Whaling Ships

"Many whaling skippers, who on shore passed as pious Friends or church members, were cold-blooded heartless fiends on the quarterdeck," according to historian Samuel Eliot Morison. Still some captains had a reputation for fairness and offered advancement to black crew members.

After William Rotch's complaint, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court found against the owner and master of the ship *Hope* and upheld fines of "fifty pounds for each person" imported after "a voyage from Boston in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to that part of the world - Africa." GARDNER V. GORDON, COURTESY OF SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT ARCHIVES

been moniedly, proper to try the same and the
the moiety, to the person who shall prosecute
for and recover the same. - Now the St. in
fact saith, that some time in the month of June
last past the Brigantine called the Hope was fitted
by the said Capt. & Math. & the said Capt. was fitted
from Boston in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
to that part of the world - Africa, which said
Brigantine was then and is still owned by the
said Capt. & Math. & the said Capt. was then & is still
master of the said Brig. & the said John did actually
proceed in the said Brig. on a voyage to the Coast of Africa
and did there receive on board Negroes & other
-stanch of the said Africa & from thence did import
or transport them to certain Islands in the
West Indies, by reason of which the said Capt. & Math.
and John have forfeited the sum of fifty pounds
for each person they imported, or transported, to
the sum of 100. for the fitting out the said Brig. they
by law are liable answer to the St. to recover of
the said Capt. & Math. & John the sum of 600.
Or half thereof for the use of the Commonwealth
of Massachusetts and the other half to the use of the
said Math. and Gordon the St. - Yet the said Capt.
& John the requesters have not paid said
sum, nor have either of them ever paid a sum
but unjustly detained -
1766/72
To the Damage of the said Math.
1/21

Masters of their Fate

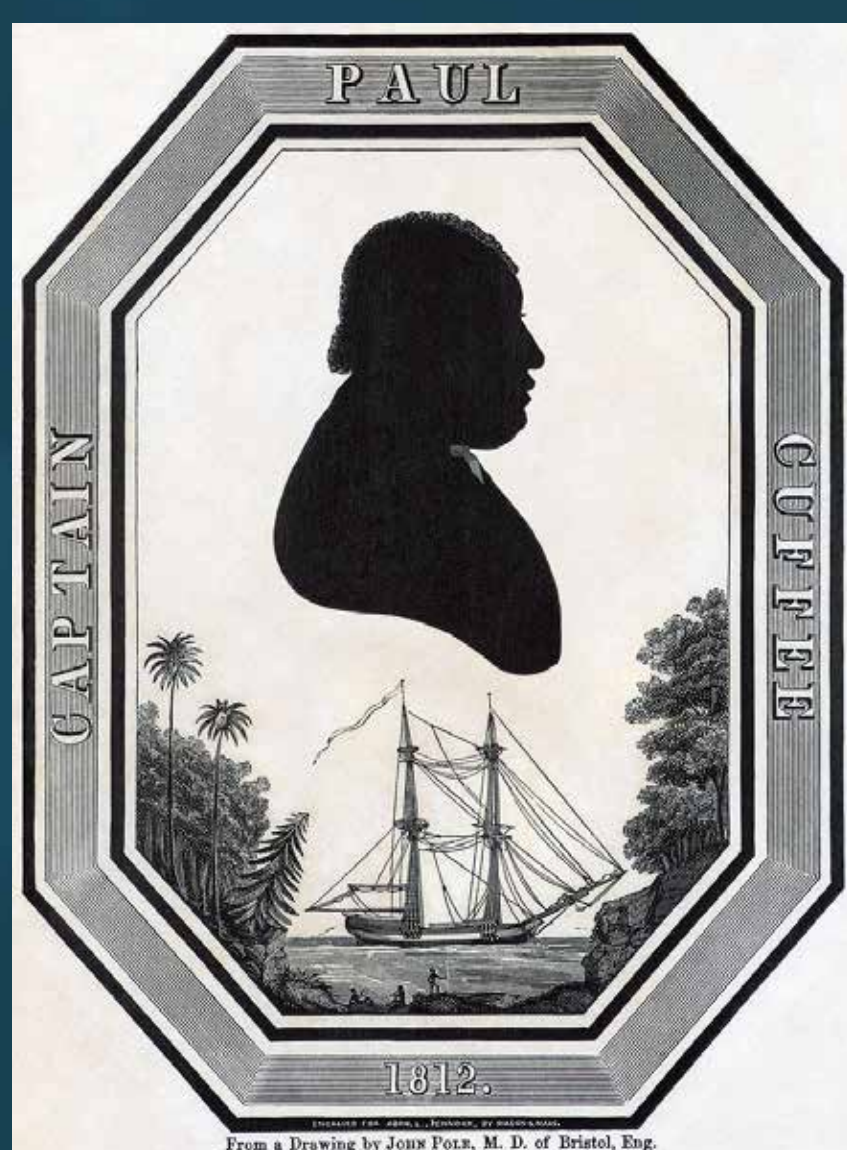
Paul Cuffe and business partners in the Wainer family became ship owners as well as sea captains.

Paul Cuffe

Paul Cuffe signed on to a New Bedford whaler as a teenager. The son of an African father and Wampanoag mother, he built and owned six vessels. On trading voyages to the south, he noticed the shock that some felt seeing a ship with a black crew. He may have taken stowaways with him to Massachusetts. Cuffe also traded with a Sierra Leone colony populated by former slaves. He hoped to support a successful community based on free labor.

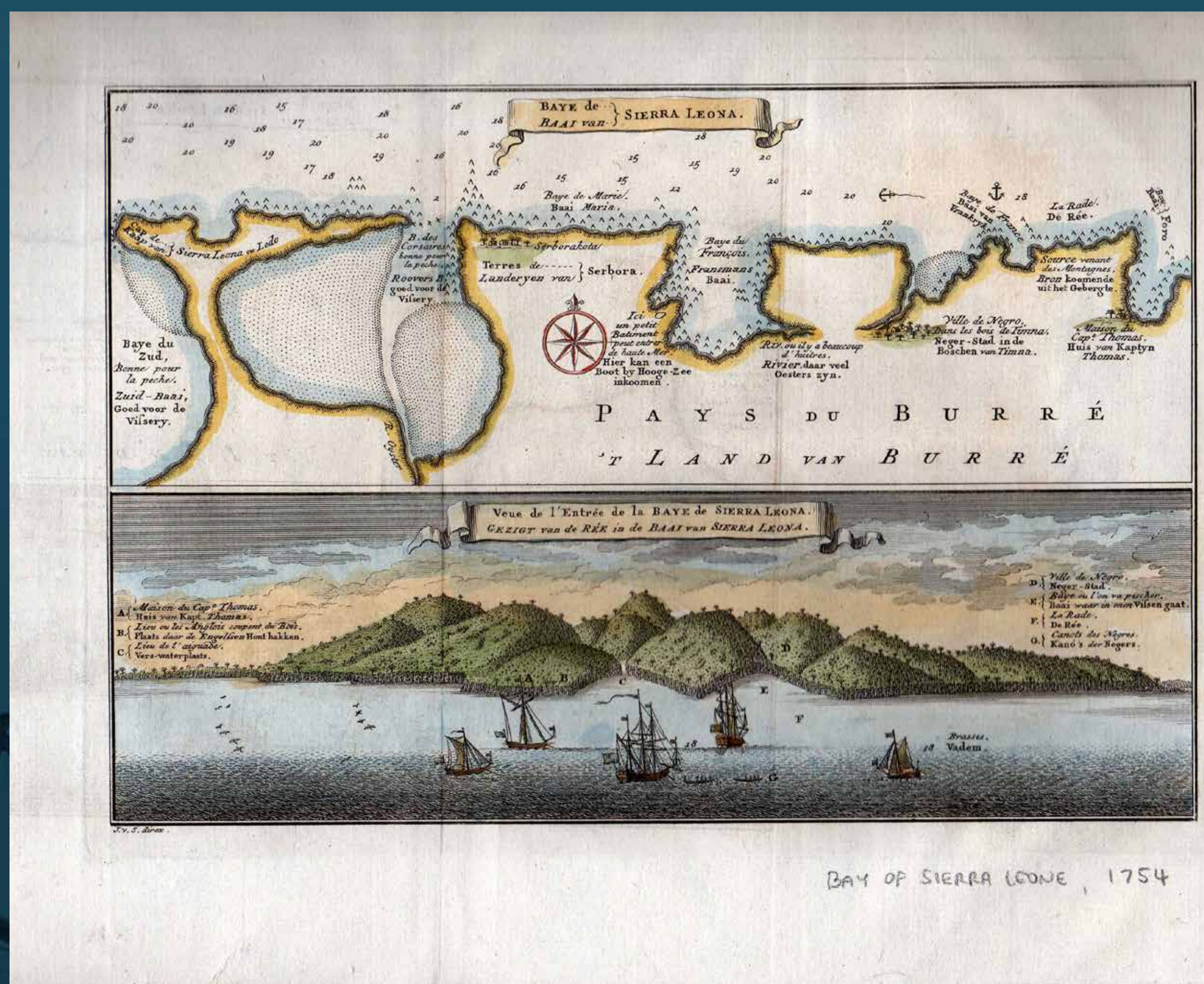
“Harry is supposed to be carried off by a certain THOMAS WAINER, of Westport, in Massachusetts...who traded here...as Capt. of a small vessel.”

From a 1799 ad for the return of “Harry” a fugitive slave from Somerset County Maryland



Paul Cuffe in profile engraved from a drawing by Dr. John Pole, Bristol, England

An eighteenth century map of Sierra Leone. Paul Cuffe took an interest in this African nation that was home to many former American slaves. SIERRA LEONE WEB

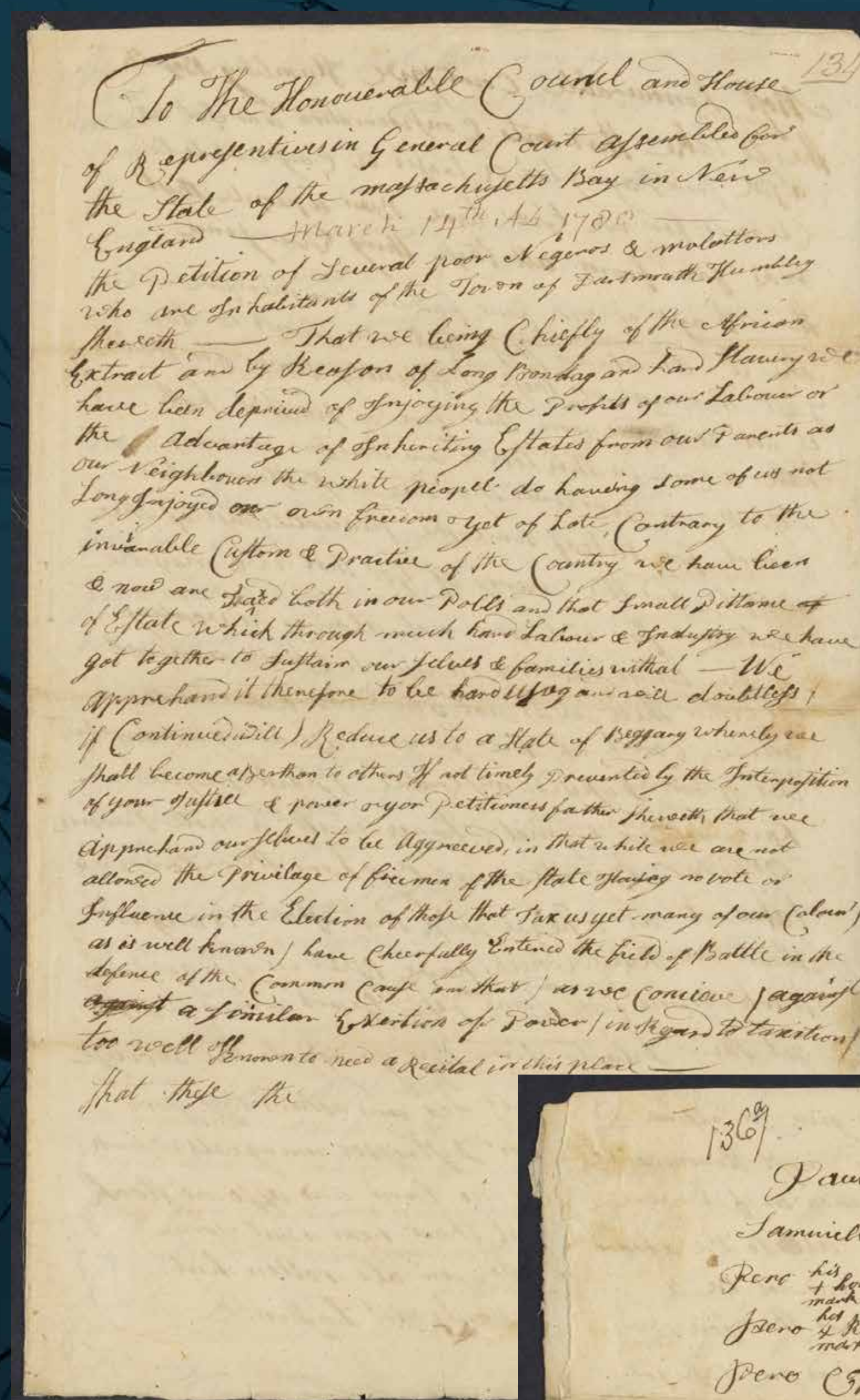


African Names

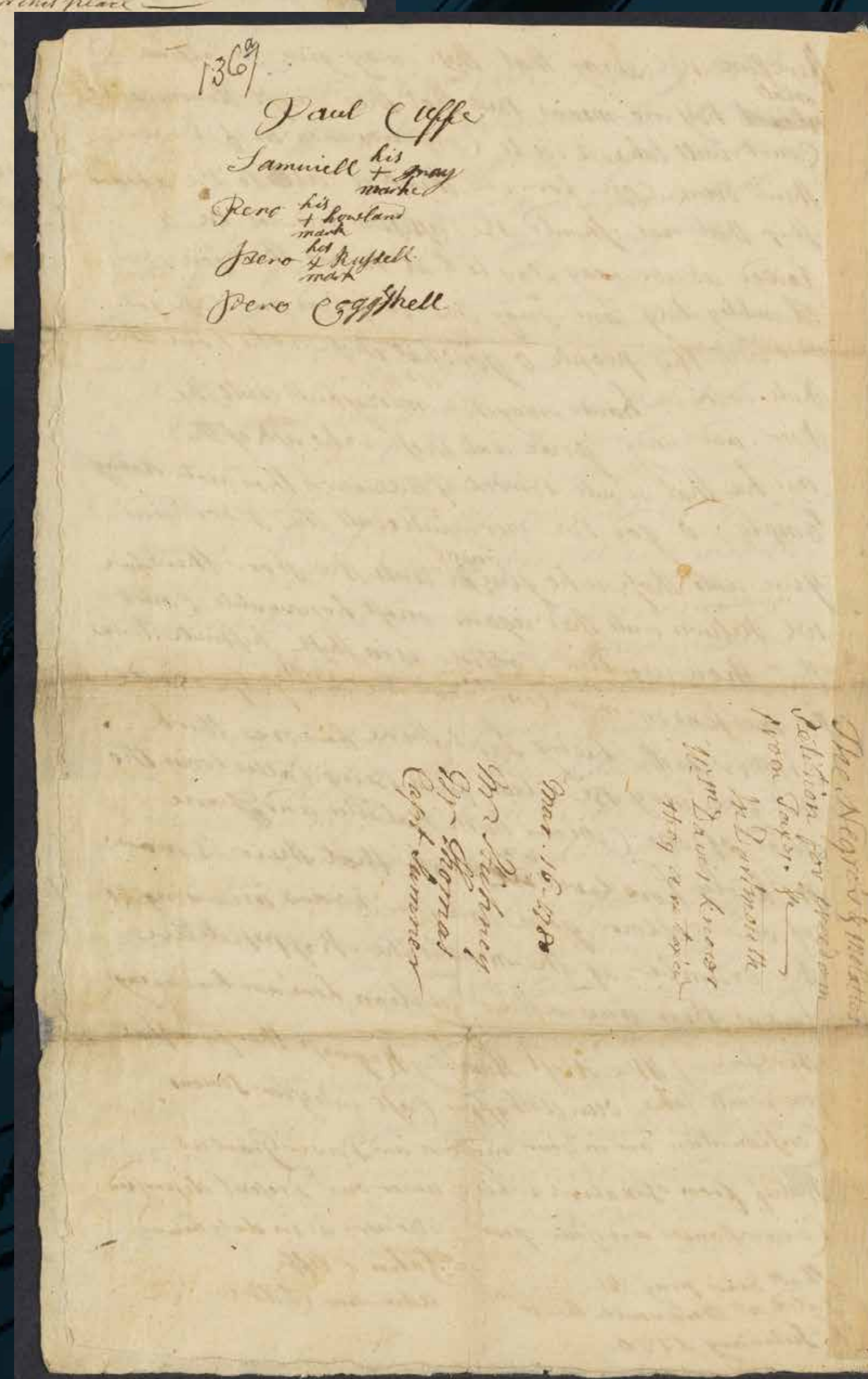
Kofi is a West African name that means Friday. It was common to name children for the weekday of their birth. Paul Cuffe’s father was a slave from the area that is now central Ghana. He changed the spelling of his name from Kofi to Cuffe and adopted the name Cuffe Slocum. His son Paul used Cuffe as a surname.



Paul Cuffe may have kept ships on a granite pier near this Westport farmhouse. CORTICAL



Paul Cuffe, his brother John, and other men of color signed this 1780 petition to the Massachusetts General Court protesting the denial of voting rights, even though they were subject to property taxes. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



The Wainer Family

Michael Wainer, of black and native ancestry, was a friend and business partner of Paul Cuffe. His son Thomas was accused carrying off “Harry” and wife “Lucy” from slavery in Maryland and a reward of \$40 was advertised by Samuel Sloane for Harry’s return. The Wainers owned *Rising States*, a vessel with a large number of black crew members. Tragically the ship’s master William Cuffe (Paul’s son) died when the vessel was damaged in a gale.

Legacy

Institutions founded during the period of slavery are not defined by that alone. Their long history also illustrates the possibility of progress.



Nathaniel Bowditch, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Daderot

The Navigator

Nathaniel Bowditch of Salem was a gifted mathematician and scientist in Federal era Salem. He is best known for writing a classic book on navigation. *The New American Practical Navigator* appeared in 1802 and has been used by seafarers into modern times. His son Henry became an innovator in medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Dr. Henry Bowditch was also an ardent and committed abolitionist.

“The net income of the fund shall be used each year to aid needy and worthy colored students in the Harvard Medical School.”

Bequest of Harriet Hayden, 1894

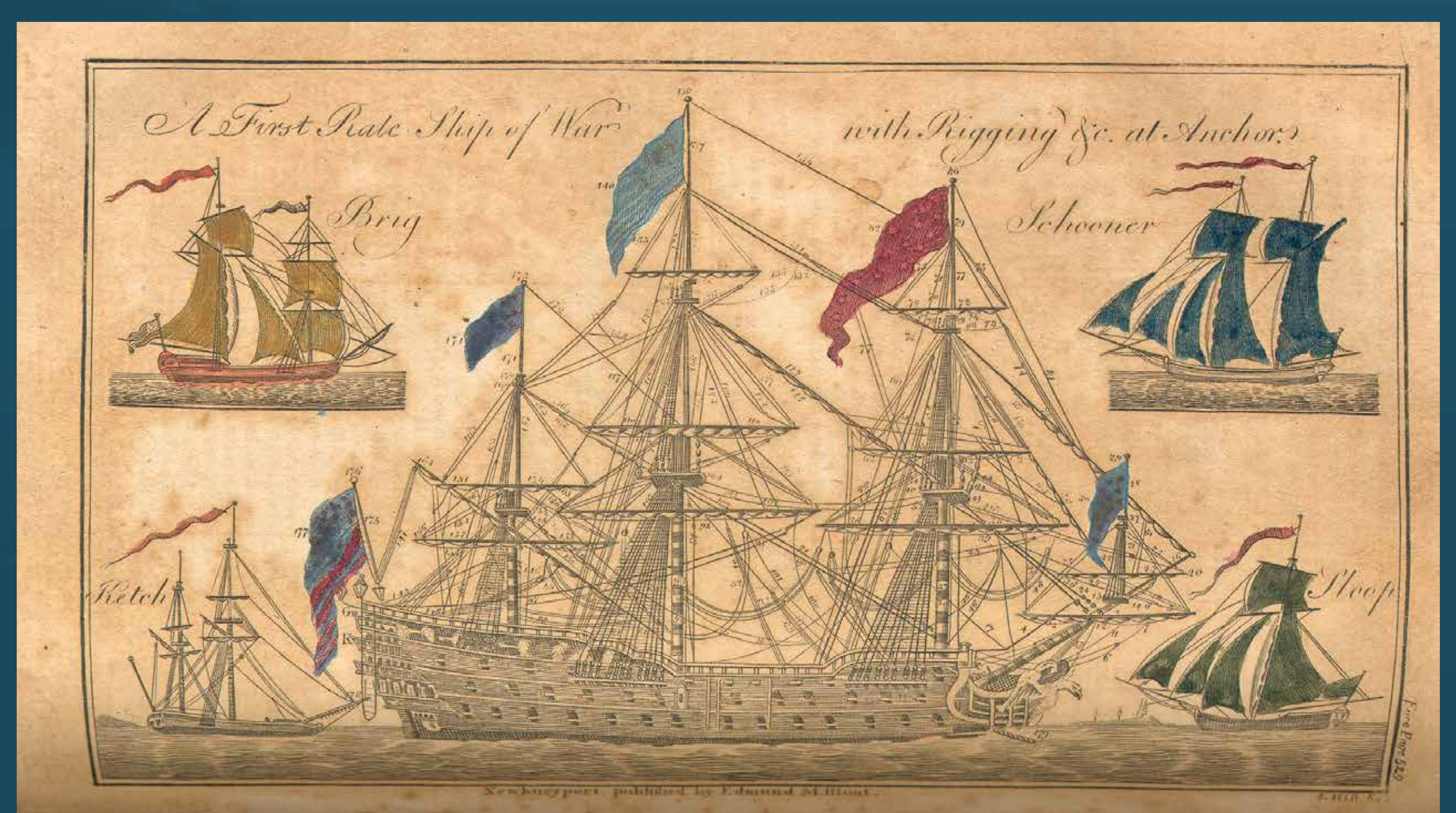
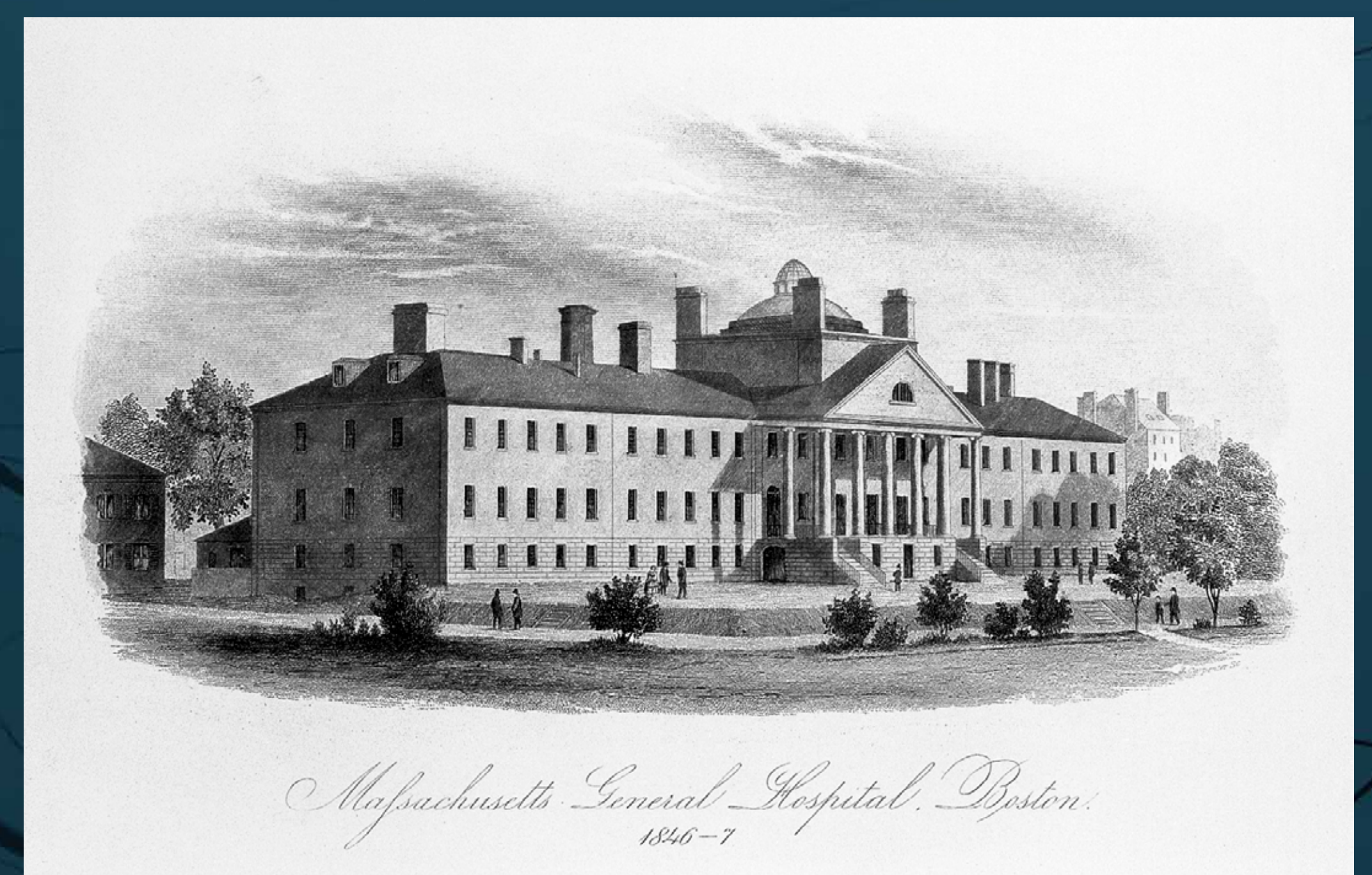
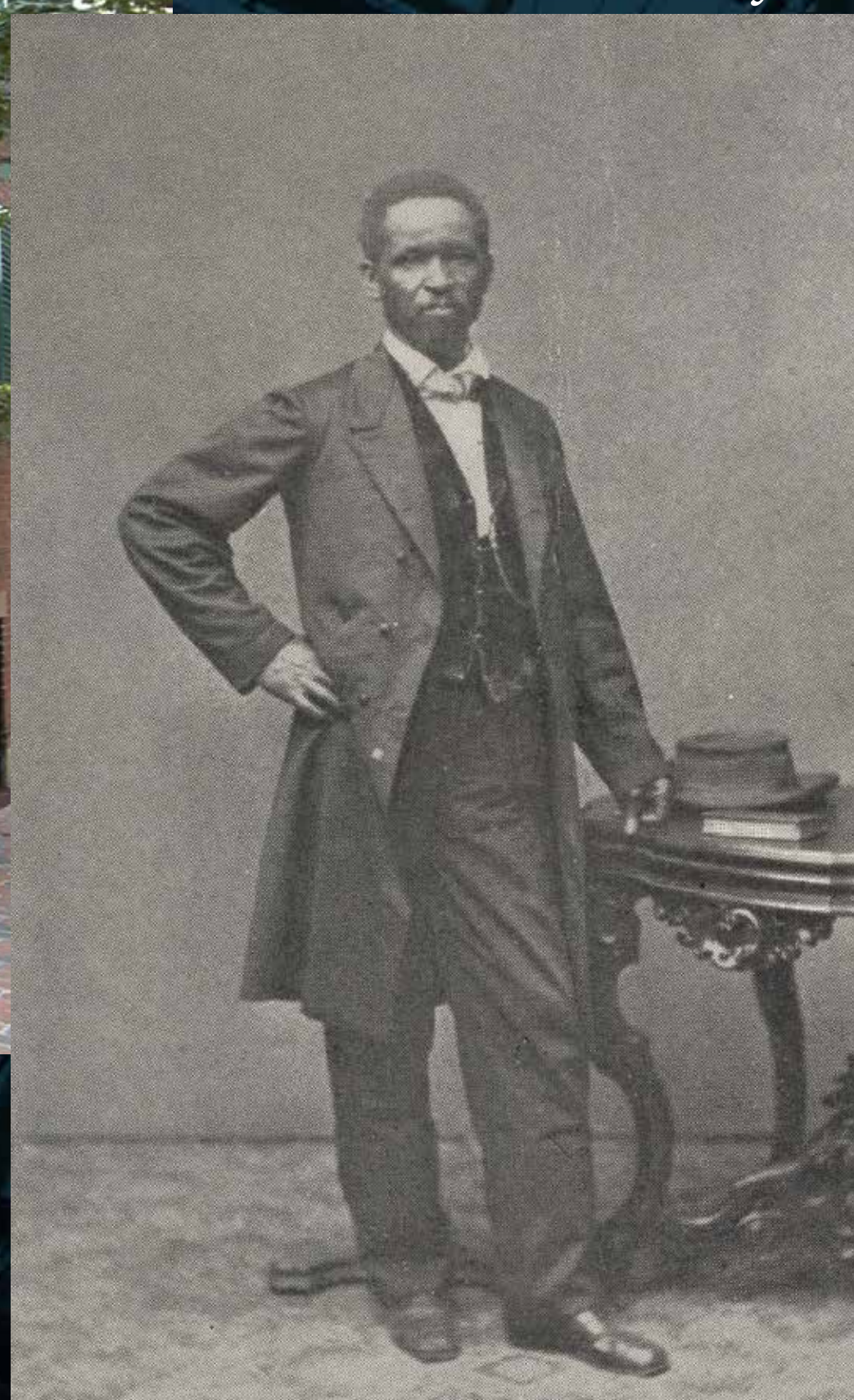


Plate from the *New American Practical Navigator* by Nathaniel Bowditch

Massachusetts General Hospital at the time of Dr. Henry Bowditch.
WELLCOME LIBRARY, LONDON



Lewis Hayden



Remodeled in later years, Lewis Hayden's Beacon Hill boarding house was a refuge for fugitive slaves. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

The Fugitive

Lewis Hayden was an escaped slave who came to New Bedford before settling in Boston. His Beacon Hill boarding house became a celebrated stop on the Underground Railroad. Dr. Henry Bowditch was Hayden's close friend and personal physician. When Hayden's widow Harriet died, she left her home to Harvard University. Recognizing the Hayden's friendship with Dr. Bowditch, its sale was used to fund a scholarship for black students in the medical school – a fund that still exists.

Historical Memory

When Nelson Mandela emerged from decades of imprisonment he did not seek revenge. However he did insist that the truth be told about his nation's past. In that spirit these stories from early Massachusetts convey pain but also serve to document the long arc of progress.