

**THE SLAVE GALLERY AT ST. AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH  
AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF SEGREGATION**

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## INTRODUCTION

The members of St. Augustine's Church on the Lower East Side have long been aware of the historical significance of the original slave galleries in their church. However, it was only recently that they decided to learn more about them. Instead of feeling ashamed of the existence of the slave galleries, the congregates believe that these rooms deserve attention and preservation. They see the spaces as architectural remnants that can serve as an educational context from which to teach the public about the history of slavery and of early African-Americans, the history of American religion, and local New York City history.

In this investigation we have taken on a formidable task: to piece together a story of people that history forgot. We have endeavored to find educated answers to questions that can only be speculated about. The construction of the church pre-dates the formation of the city building department, so there is no formal documentation about the history of the building. Likewise, the genealogical and vital records for slaves in nineteenth century New York are scarce at best. Therefore, it will be extremely difficult to determine who exactly sat in the slave galleries. Were they slaves at all? What brought them there? Where did they live? What did they do for work? What were their lives like? What were their religious beliefs? What were their personal feelings? As with any research project, this is undoubtedly a work in progress.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S SLAVE GALLERIES

The physical space of the slave galleries of St. Augustine's Episcopal Church (formerly All Saints' Church) may initially take visitors by surprise. These galleries are small, sterile,

sequestered rooms above the balcony of the church, on each side of the central tower. They are reached by narrow, winding stairs that lead from the vestibule of the church. The seating inside the galleries is quite primitive when compared with the rest of the church; that is, the galleries have no pews, only wooden steps. Today, the galleries have hinged paneled doors that can be propped up for a view into the main congregation. A photograph (n. d., but pre-1946) from the archives of the Museum of the City of New York, taken from inside one of the galleries, shows the paneling propped up, and the view into the congregation. But according to the 1934 report compiled by the Historic American Buildings Survey, this paneling was probably fixed in place originally, providing a barrier that kept the slaves from seeing and from being seen, but which still allowed them to hear the message of the sermon being preached.

#### POPULATION STATISTICS FOR SLAVES AND FREE BLACKS IN NEW YORK CITY

By 1800, there were over 2500 slaves in the city, yet slaves comprised only 4.5% of the total city residents. The majority of slaveowners were employed as artisans, merchants, lawyers, and bankers. As most of the slaveowners sought slaves for help with domestic chores, female slaves were always in highest demand. The number of slaves and free black people was nearly equal at this time. By 1810 there were just under 1500 slaves left in the city, shrinking 43% from the decade before. Free blacks numbered 7500 (84% of a population of 9000 blacks.)<sup>1</sup> The decreasing percentage of slaves was caused by the increasing number of free blacks in the city. These free blacks were comprised of those who had formerly been slaves in New York, but also those who relocated once manumitted elsewhere, and those sought refuge in the city as fugitives. In 1820, only 518 slaves remained in New York, according to the federal census of that year, while free blacks numbered just over 10,000.

However, later in the 1830s and 1840s, as white immigration began to increase, the percentage of free blacks in the overall city population decreased. In the 1840 census, there were 16,358 black people among 312,710 people in the city. Yet five years later, the overall city population had grown to 371,223, while the number of black people had decreased by nearly 500. By 1845, free blacks only numbered 2% of the total city population. In 1840, New York State had the second largest black population in the country, behind Maryland, though it dropped to fourth in the country ten years later.<sup>2</sup>

#### ABOLITION IN NEW YORK STATE

The end of slavery in New York State came about through a series of complicated abolition laws that were intended to end the institution gradually.<sup>3</sup> It has been proposed that this gradual abolition was meant to help maximize the benefit for slaveholders. Although the final law was passed in 1817, ultimately, the end of slavery did not occur until ten years later, on July 4, 1827. On emancipation day, William Hamilton joyfully declared to an audience of newly-freed blacks, "No more shall the accursed name of slave be attached to us-no more shall negro and slave be synonymous." Unfortunately, however, reality would not be as idealistic as Hamilton was.

Although not officially organized until 1824, the congregation of All Saints' had been meeting in private homes since 1819. However, the construction of the All Saints' Church was begun in 1827, and the building that stands today was not completed and consecrated until 1828.

Therefore, the presence of slave galleries there raises some compelling questions. Although the building was built long after the legislation was passed to end slavery, and completed once slavery was illegal, obvious effort was made to design segregated spaces within the building. And considering the hundreds of other accounts and examples of segregated seating in churches

that we have found, we can begin to understand how important the separation of the races was to whites at this time.

An important fact to realize is that the 1799 gradual emancipation plan did not free even one slave; only children born after July 4 of that year would be technically free, but were obligated to work as indentured servants to their mothers' masters until they were 25 (females) or 28 (males.) Not until 1841, when the state repealed laws allowing nonresidents to bring slaves to the city for up to nine months, was complete abolition actually achieved. However, in the antebellum period, many free blacks and fugitive slaves in the city lived in fear of being kidnapped and sold back into slavery in the south.

#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMANCIPATION AND PREJUDICE

The extent to which American society remained segregated by race after emancipation was shocking to many at the time, and still may come as a surprise to some people today. Writing in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville notes, "The prejudice of race appears to be stronger in the states that have abolished slavery than those where it still exists." 4 In his monumental 1960s study of slavery in the northern states, scholar Leon Litwack reiterates the point: "Freedom did not suddenly confer citizenship on the Negro . . . Until the post-Civil War era, in fact, most northern whites would maintain a careful distinction between granting Negroes legal protection-a theoretical right to life, liberty, and property-and political and social equality." Even after slaves gained freedom, it has been said, "chains of a stronger kind still manacled their limbs, from which no legislative act could free them; a mental and moral subordination and inferiority; to which tyrant custom has here subjected all the sons and daughters of Africa." 5

Scholars have traditionally named many different reasons for the increasing racial segregation that occurred in the Northern states after the abolition of slavery. Some point to an escalation of immigration from Europe: "In the North, an influx of European immigrants and the spread of universal white male suffrage between the mid-1820s and the 1840s were largely responsible for the end of an earlier period of less restrictive race relations." While this statement is unequivocally true, it omits the equally important influence that emancipation itself had on race relations. Previously, with the institution of slavery firmly in place, racial lines were indelible and universally understood. Yet after blacks gained their freedom, their social status was suddenly ambiguous and perhaps threatening to whites, as they were no longer necessarily "second-class citizens." As Charles Mackay observed on a visit to the United States in 1857-58, whites, concerned with the encroachment of the growing free black population, created clear, though unspoken social and legal restrictions. As we can see, freedom did not suddenly elevate the social status of black Americans:

"We shall not make the black man a slave; we shall not buy him or sell him; but we shall not associate with him. He shall be free to live, and to thrive, if he can, and to pay taxes and perform duties; but he shall not be free to dine and drink at our board-to share with us the deliberations of the jury box-to sit upon the seat of judgment, however capable he may be-to plead in our courts-to represent us in the Legislature-to attend us at the bed of sickness and pain-to mingle with us in the concert-room, the lecture-room, the theatre, or the church, or to marry with our daughters. We are of another race, and he is inferior. Let him know his place-and keep it." This is the prevalent feeling, if not the language of the free North.<sup>6</sup>

More often than not, the separation of the races was dictated by unspoken white public opinion, rather than by law. Again, de Tocqueville astutely explains his observation of the growth of racism after emancipation and the difficulty of eliminating deeply ingrained prejudice:

Thus it is that the prejudice which repels Negroes seems to increase in proportion as they are emancipated . . . The greatest difficulty in antiquity was that of altering the law; among the moderns it is that of altering the customs . . . This arises from the circumstance that among the moderns the abstract and transient fact of slavery is fatally united with the physical and permanent fact of color.<sup>7</sup>

De Tocqueville raises a most important point; many whites could not and would not look upon free blacks as equals, because they formed an association between the color of their skin and the status of being a slave. He continues,

If it be so difficult to root out an inequality that originates solely in the law, how are those distinctions to be destroyed which seem to be based upon the immutable laws of Nature herself? . . . I see that in a certain portion of the territory of the United States at the present day the legal barrier which separated the two races is falling away, but not that which exists in the manners of the country; slavery recedes, but the prejudice to which it has given birth is immovable.<sup>8</sup>

What the de Tocqueville is expressing here, lamentably, is strong doubt that William Hamilton's dream, "that 'no more shall "'negro' and 'slave' be synonymous", which he expressed on Emancipation Day, 1827, would ever be realized.

The racial separation of this time was so deeply established that many whites were confident it would never change. Delegates at New York's 1821 constitutional convention expressed an almost universal opposition to the legalization of black suffrage. In fact, one delegate offered, If that sentiment should alter, if the time should ever arrive when the African shall be raised to the level of the white man-when the distinctions that now prevail shall be done away-when the colors shall intermarry-when negroes shall be invited to your tables-to sit in your pew, or ride in your coach, it may then be proper to institute a new Convention, and remodel the constitution so as to conform to that state of society.<sup>9</sup>

This demonstration of arrogant confidence by many whites against the advancement of black people shows that the black people's struggle for social equality in all corners of society in no way triumphed with their legal emancipation from slavery. In 1837, an outraged editor of *The Weekly Advocate*, a black periodical published in New York City, cited the glaring contradiction in the definition of freedom for former slaves:

. . . Free man indeed! When so unrighteously deprived of every civil and political privilege. Free indeed when almost every honorable incentive to the pursuit of happiness, so largely and so freely held out to his Fairer brother, is withheld from him. A freeman when prejudice binds the most galling chains around him! . . . What a sad perversion of the term 'freeman.' . . . That liberty, and those privileges which of right, and according to those principles of our CONSTITUTION, ought to be his, he enjoys not . . . Too often the virtuous and intelligent man of color must drag out an ignoble life, the victim of poverty, and sorrow. Then unwept for but by a few of his persecuted race, drops into the grave . . .<sup>10</sup>

PUBLIC SEGREGATION

One of the primary research questions that we are posing in this project is "What did 'freedom' mean for freed slaves?" In order to answer this question, it is important for us to look beyond their legal status and to try to understand the specific social status that free black people held within the greater white society. Transportation was one public venue where blacks were not commonly given equal treatment. In 1830, a free black man was made to ride on the outside of a stagecoach between Rochester and Philadelphia, even though he had paid for an inside seat.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, in 1854 in New York City, a young black woman named Elizabeth Jennings refused to relinquish her seat on an omnibus, and was consequently knocked down and injured by the driver. She took her case to court, and won \$225, although this was only half of the amount that she had claimed in damages. The judge issued the following opinion: "Colored persons if sober, well-behaved and free from disease, had the same rights as others and could neither be excluded by any rules of the Company, nor by force or violence."<sup>12</sup>

In addition to segregation on transportation routes, Charles Haswell, in his 1890s book, *Memoirs of an Octogenarian*, describes his memories of life in New York City between 1816 and 1860: ". . . Negroes were not admitted in street stages, in the cabins of steamboats, theaters, or places of amusement; and in churches only in pews at the foot of the aisles which were assigned to them."<sup>13</sup> In his 1961 book, *The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, Leon Litwack informs us that the "social mores of the white citizens often resulted in de facto segregation where the law itself was silent. Wherever there was a sizeable black population, theaters, trains, hospitals, restaurants, hotels, and cemeteries were segregated."<sup>14</sup>

Countless slave narratives also recollect the typical segregation of this time period. A characteristic example is the 1843 narrative, *Life of a Slave*, by Moses Grandy. Grandy reported on the segregation that he experienced when he first arrived in the northern states as a free black man:

Although I was free as to the law, I was made to feel severely the difference between persons of different colors . . . No black man was admitted to the same seats in churches as whites, nor to the inside of public conveyances . . . We had to be content with the decks of steam-boats in all weathers . . . in various other ways, we were treated as though we were a race of men below the whites.

He noted that by 1843, however, after the abolitionists fought for their rights, "things are changed for the better. Now we may sit in any part of many places of worship, and are even asked into the pews of respectable white families; many public [places] now make no distinction between white and black."<sup>15</sup> While Grandy's optimistic tone should not be regarded as a universal opinion, his observations support the idea that often 'freedom' did not immediately bring a radical change in social status for blacks. The prejudice that free blacks faced in the North was often a bitter disappointment to those southern ex-slaves who transplanted themselves there to start a new life.

We have found specific documentation about a few New York City institutions that excluded blacks from patronage. Blacks were not permitted to enter Vauxhall Gardens, a public park destination owned by John Jacob Astor, located near Astor Place. Nor were they welcome in the Park Theater, except in a separate seating section. They were denied admission from the Free School Society's buildings, as well as many religious charity schools. In 1837, the Zoological Institute at 37 Bowery published a pamphlet that stated that "people of color are not permitted to enter except when in attendance upon children and families." This quote sheds light not only on

public facilities and their admission policies for black people, but it also reveals the common servile status of black people in the years after emancipation. Even after being freed, many blacks, especially women, worked as domestic servants, and were often indentured for a period of time. The next section will discuss the economic opportunities available to free blacks in New York City and elsewhere in the period after 1827.

So we see that "freedom" often meant that more severe social restrictions were placed on free black people after the abolition of slavery. Just when newly freed slaves expected opportunities might open up for them, they continued to be confined by unofficial and unspoken restrictions imposed on them by whites in charge of public facilities in the city.

#### EMPLOYMENT OF FREE BLACKS

It is known that many northern slaves worked in highly skilled positions in the 18th century, as assistants to various types of artisans. As Edgar J. McManus writes in his 1966 book, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*, the ranges of occupations held by slaves paralleled free labor. The expertise gained by many slaves allowed them extra bargaining power for personal privileges against their masters. That is, many slaves were able to travel away from their masters in order to work. McManus claims that this limited and periodic freedom allowed northern slaves to build confidence and aggressiveness that was nonexistent in southern slaves, "whose initiative and talents were stultified by total domination under the plantation system." This is not to say, however, that northern slaves in urban areas did not suffer equally under the tyranny of slavery. As ex-slave Austin Steward suggests in his memoirs:

It is a mistaken idea that there is more prejudice against color in the country . . . In the city, there is no escape from the crushing weight of prejudice, to ramble over fields of your own cultivation; to forget your sorrows in the refreshing air that waves the loaded branches of an orchard of your own planning . . .

In fact, Steward, having been sold as a slave in both the north and the south, asserts there is no difference at all in the quality of life of a slave, no matter where he or she lives:

Everywhere that slavery exists, it is nothing but slavery. I found it just as hard to be beaten over the head with a piece of iron in New York as it was in Virginia. Whips and chains are everywhere necessary to degrade and brutalize the slave, in order to reduce him to that abject and humble state which slavery requires.

Historian Richard B. Morris explains that in the north, the economic conditions changed the structure of the entire slavery system there to "a shadow zone of bondage." By this he meant that the bondage system held some slaves with a tighter grip than others, depending on the individual slave's ability to negotiate with and obtain concessions from his master. Many adult male slaves worked in the shipping industry, which required long voyages away from the supervision of their masters. On the other hand, many slaves worked as coachmen for their masters' families, which required that they accompany their employers nearly everywhere they went. As we will see, many slaves continued working in the same professions after they were freed.

In 1790, artisans represented the largest group of slaveholders in New York. But by 1800 only one in seventeen artisans owned slaves, decreasing by 50% in the previous ten years. As more blacks gained freedom, they entered the job market as skilled laborers, relying on the specialized

training they had received as slaves. In fact, in 1800, 37% of free black heads of households listed themselves as artisans in the census.

It is possible to make educated generalizations about the types of occupations that were popular for black men, even though the historic record of slave life is not well documented. Historian Shane White's analytical cross-referencing of the census and city directories of 1800 shows that 41% of merchants' households contained free blacks, which suggests that these blacks were probably employed as domestic servants, and were probably mostly women. In the same year, about fourteen percent of artisans' homes, as well as the same percentage of widows, as well as smaller percentages of other occupations, listed free blacks as part of the household also. In 1790 and 1800, one in three white households that contained free blacks also contained slaves. This arrangement implies that the life of free blacks was probably not very different from that of slaves. Both groups were likely to live in the attics or basements of these homes, and probably performed very similar work.<sup>16</sup>

The census of 1850, which is the first census to list occupation, tells us that thirty four percent of black males over fifteen years old were employed as laborers at that time. Numerous others worked as tailors, shoemakers, farmers, and market workers, while just a few had jobs such as printers, carpenters, coopers, blacksmiths and bakers. Although blacks commonly worked in these industrial trades, Irish men typically dominated these jobs. Like many had done as slaves, numerous free black men also found work as mariners, as nearly one third of the country's trade went through the port of New York in the early nineteenth century. Those that did not have a steady source of employment looked for work as day laborers. Interestingly, black workers dominated the oyster trade. In 1810, sixty percent of the men working in this profession were free blacks.

The employment of black women is harder to trace, because unless they were heads of households, they were unlikely to be identified in the city directories. We know that black women often worked in private homes as maids, washers, and other domestic jobs. In the 1840s, Irish women began to corner the market in domestic work, edging out black women, who for so long had dominated this profession. By 1855, the number of black people working in the domestic field, mostly women, but also including men who worked as butlers and waiters, was only one in thirty.

## BLACK RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

In his 1991 book, *Somewhat More Independent*, Shane White conducted detailed analysis of census figures from 1790, 1800 and 1810, and found evidence that the racial segregation of city neighborhoods in these years was lower than might be expected. Black households were often clustered only in very small groups, and in close proximity to respectable, high-class white houses. Though a few free black families, as early as the 1790s, owned their own homes, the majority rented basement apartments in townhouses also occupied by whites, or lived in rear outbuildings on the properties of white people.

The popular architectural style of the time was the Federal townhouse with a pitched roof and a high stoop over an English basement. Typically, there was a separate door underneath the stoop that lead into the basement, and this plan lent itself easily to subdivision. In a way the existing architecture of the Federal townhouse made possible the segregation of blacks into dark, cramped cellars, or attic gables. White describes this type of housing as "vertical" segregation. However, in the 1820s, whites began to move uptown, above Bleecker Street, creating

fashionable white enclaves. This was partially a result of the breakdown of the artisan/apprentice relationship, and the growth of industrialization. In the industrial city, wage labor came into practice and workers no longer worked for room and board. As middle-class white families left their former homes in lower Manhattan and built fashionable townhouses uptown, landlords subdivided these homes into proto-tenements, and lower class black and new immigrant families moved in.

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, free blacks primarily settled in the area north of John Street, between the Hudson River, around the Collect Pond, and the East River. In the 1830s, this area became known as the "Five Points" slum. The four working class wards in this area comprised over half of the city's black population. Numerous black churches were built in this area, including the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1796) on Cross Street between Mulberry and Orange Streets<sup>17</sup>. In 1800 this became the Zion Methodist Episcopal Church, and moved to the corner of Leonard and Church Streets. It seems that it was the trend for free black families to populate the neighborhood after black churches were constructed. 18

## RELIGION AND SLAVERY

When Martin Luther King, Jr. pronounced in the 1960s, "Eleven o'clock on Sunday morning . . . is the most segregated hour in Christian America," he was describing a deep racial split in the Church that had been in place since colonial times. We know from our research that free blacks and slaves were commonly segregated in many public places in the early nineteenth century, so the idea that they would also be segregated and/or isolated while attending church services in white churches is not beyond the realm of possibility. However, it is difficult for some of us to believe. Within the institution of the Christian church seems a strange place for such discrimination and prejudice. That is, the institution of slavery and the typical segregation, oppression, and torture that accompany it, seem to directly contradict Christian preachings and beliefs. So it is very interesting to look into how different denominations and individuals rationalized these contradictions, and how this was translated into their religious architecture.

Our main goal is to find out how St. Augustine's slave galleries were originally used and for whom. In an attempt to determine who exactly sat in the slave galleries of St. Augustine's, we are trying to understand the following: What was the policy of the Episcopal Church on slavery? Were they tolerant and accepting of slaveholders in their congregations? What were slaveholders' attitudes towards the religious education of their slaves? Were slaves and free blacks welcomed as full members into churches?

In his book *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865*, John McKivigan writes that the major religious denominations of the post-Revolution period showed a general toleration for slavery and a hesitation to answer the abolitionists' calls for the exclusion of slaveholders from church congregations. He explains that the Episcopal Church did not take a strong stand against slavery. Concerned more with attracting elite members to their congregations, Episcopalians generally thought it best to preach an inclusive gospel, rather than to condemn slaveholders from church membership. The Episcopalians, along with Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and other liturgical faiths, were not comfortable with mixing what they believed was a "political" issue with church concerns. Instead they avoided commentary on slavery, and believed they were not obligated to legislate against it. In comparison to evangelical groups, ritualistic religious groups, such as the Episcopalians, believed that the sins of its members could be corrected through church

attendance and adherence to ritual, and these groups rarely expelled slaveholders, or any others for that matter, from their ranks. This neutrality can be seen, however, as "an implicit toleration of Negro bondage."

We must remember that the Episcopal Church has its roots in the Church of England. The first English settlers at Jamestown held Holy Eucharist according to the English Book of Common Prayer a few months after they landed in April 1607. In 1619, when the Church of England was appointed as the official religious group of the Virginia colony, land grants were awarded to clergymen and taxes were collected on crops and paid to the church. The same year, Virginia had become the first port of entry for slave ships from Africa. This put the Church in a compromising position because it was receiving benefits from a state that supported the institution of slavery. From that point on, the church remained silent as it watched the institution of slavery make deep roots in the soil of the new colonies.<sup>19</sup>

As Harriet Jacobs wrote in her fictional work, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), concerned northern clergymen often visited the south to see the notorious slave system at work first hand. But they never saw, nor were shown, the true wretchedness and reality of slavery. They often returned believing that slavery was a "beautiful patriarchal institution, that the slaves don't want their freedom; that they have hallelujah meetings, and other religious privileges." Their false impressions possibly combined with their refusal to let themselves see the wretched reality of legal servitude may have contributed to the lack of activism of many preachers in support of abolition.

So, the question arises that if most Protestant groups did not directly speak out against slavery and slaveholders, how then did they justify keeping a fellow person enslaved according to Christian doctrine? Were slaves generally brought to church by their masters, and if so, for what reason, and to what end? Did slaves come to church by their own initiative?

It was common for slave owners to bring their slaves to church, but for a variety of different reasons. Many slave owners believed that to leave slaves unsupervised would be a security threat, as they would plan rebellions against their owners. This is especially true after the Virginia slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in 1831. However, many other slave owners educated and evangelized their slaves in order to ease their own guilt about keeping them in bondage. It was even believed that religious slaves made better slaves, which induced many slaveowners to enlighten their bondsmen to the teachings of the Bible. As the sociologist of religion H. Richard Niebuhr explains, many Episcopalian masters took interest in the religious instruction of their slaves for corrupted reasons:

The relationship of masters and servants was of a patriarchal nature. Many a master was sincerely interested in the temporal and eternal welfare of his charges and took paternal pride in their religious progress. It was not the virtue of democracy, the practice of equality, but the virtue of aristocracy, noblesse oblige, which was exercised in this relationship.<sup>20</sup>

And yet, there were also many slaveholders who did not believe in educating their slaves at all. One of the main reasons why many masters did not want their slaves to become Christians involved the teachings of the Bible. They feared that slaves might read the teachings of Jesus and begin to doubt the biblical justification of slavery. The existence of these biblical teachings was another reason why many slave owners tried to keep their slaves from learning to read. Many masters believed that illiteracy might help to keep slaves ignorant of the injustice of their enslaved state. Other slave owners saw religious education for their slaves as a waste of valuable

time, time which slaves could better spend working. It was also a common belief that slaves were unteachable, too dim-witted and inherently inferior to learn the gospel: "The gross bestiality and rudeness of their manners . . . The weakness and shallowness of their minds, render it in a manner impossible to make any progress in their conversion." 21

Contrary to popular belief, many slaves were not only able, but willing to embrace Protestantism, but for different reasons. Many were forced by their owners, but others openly consented to conversion. As Graham Russell Hodges explains, many slaves believed that accepting their master's religion might benefit them in the end:

Paternalistic creeds such as Quakers, Methodists, Episcopalians, offered salvation within one's lifetime. Members of these sects had a responsibility to God and the church to ensure Christian behavior among slaves. However many blacks came to this region already as converts to Catholicism, unacceptable to the Protestant groups. . . . Becoming a Protestant Christian was always the best means for acculturating to local society and probably created the best chances for freedom. These Protestant sects taught that enslaved peoples had a divine obligation to obey their masters and that submission to slavery was the only true path to salvation . . . 22

However, as it turned out, immediate freedom was not necessarily the consequence of religious conversion. Many masters were concerned with the ethical issues of owning Christian slaves—would he be obligated to free a slave who has been baptized as a Christian? Wouldn't it be a sin to enslave another Christian? Because of these ethical issues, many masters were hesitant to provide their slaves with religious instruction.

As early as the first decades of the eighteenth century, groups such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts worked for the benefit of slaveowners to ratify legislation that would ensure the continued enslavement of baptized slaves. And in 1727, Bishop Gibson, the Anglican Bishop of London issued an opinion that served to protect the economic interests of American slaveholders who were interested in Christianizing their slaves:

Christianity, and the embracing of the Gospel, does not make the least alteration in civil property, or in any duties which belong to civil relations, but in all these respects, it continues persons just in the same state as it found them. The freedom that Christianity gives, is freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan . . . but as to their outward condition, whatever that was before, whether bond or free, their being baptized, and becoming Christians, make no manner of change in it. . . 23

So we see that from an early date the Anglican and Episcopalian church worked to protect the interest of slaveowners, not necessarily the interest of the bondsmen.

## SLAVE GALLERIES

As much as we may find the nineteenth-century practice of racially segregated seating in churches to be shocking today, so too was a contemporary French traveler surprised when he exclaimed at the time: "Who would have believed it? Ranks and privilege in Christian churches!"<sup>24</sup> The regularity with which the practice of racial segregation is described in slave narratives, from the north and the south, shows how widespread these separate seating arrangements actually were. In the antebellum period, the church played a central role in the life of its congregates. Although beginning as early as 1794, with the founding of the first independent black church in Philadelphia, many religious blacks joined strictly black

congregations, these churches are not our primary focus here. Our interest lies in those primarily white churches that nevertheless maintained some black membership, either slaves or free people.

The three principal types of segregated church architecture for which we have found written or illustrated documentation are segregated pews on the main floor of the church, galleries, or balconies on the second floor, and galleries which were completely hidden from view. Historically, racially segregated seating in churches was commonly referred to as "nigger pews", "nigger heaven", or "the African corner." Seats were also often labeled "B. M." for black members.

The widespread construction of balconies and other types of separate seating in nineteenth century churches leads us to believe that social control and segregation was of the highest priority for whites at this time. From the colonial period to the antebellum period, before and after emancipation, in the north and south, in the country and the city, churches were built with segregated seating of many forms. We can read the architectural past for clues about the society at that time. With the number of slave galleries that remain intact or as vestiges today, and with the countless written descriptions that survive in primary and secondary sources, we have clear evidence that tells us that architecture was often employed to perpetuate racial segregation even after legislation was repealed.

In the *Colored American*, an outraged editorial exposed the hypocrisy of segregated seating in churches:

We have no particular pleasure in mingling with our white brethren in churches or else where, for we do not consider them, naturally, any better than colored men; yet such is our views of the anti-Christian practice of seating colored people in separate places and "by nooks," in the church of Jesus Christ . . . We have determined to have nothing to do with churches that keep up such chords of caste. We cannot recognize them as the true church of Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup>

## SEGREGATED PEWS

The establishment of different pews on the floor of the sanctuary for different races, ages, or genders of people was quite common. We have found examples of this practice in New York City, elsewhere in the state, as well as in other states in the north and south. The custom of building segregated pews does not seem to be limited to a certain geographic area, or time period. The *Colored American*, in 1837, wrote about the segregation in a New York Church: "It is with pain and anguish of soul that we have seen the southern tier of pews, in Broadway Tabernacle, crowded with our colored brethren." This editorial urged black churchgoers to leave white churches and join black churches, as to accept proscription would be to "become a party to your own degradation." <sup>26</sup> Leon Litwack reveals that abolitionists in the 1830s would often sit in the sections designated for blacks, and urged other sympathizers to do the same. Elsewhere in New York State, according to the *Colored American* of July 24, 1841, inside the Baptist Church in Schenectady, NY, "colored people have good comfortable seats on one side by themselves."

## GALLERIES, OR BALCONIES

The most common type of segregation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or at least the type most commonly written about, was the seating of black churchgoers in the church balconies. There are numerous remaining examples of this type of architecture in New York State, and a good number in New York City. An editorial in *The Colored American* detailed the offensive

seating arrangement for blacks in the Dutch Reform Church of Schenectady:

[The church had] so-called 'negro pews' . . . situated in the east and west corners of the church, two up, and two down stairs; and they are as far off from the pulpit as they could be without going out of doors . . . The ones upstairs are not so pleasant; they are built each side of the organ, over the stairway, and will hold about eight persons each, and to get into them you must ascend three or four steps. Truly they are very offensive to me, because they are haughty monuments of the colored people's sufferings, and the Church's disgrace.

The 1934 measured drawings of St. Peter's Church in Vancortlandtville, Westchester County, New York show second floor slave galleries with original pews. Interestingly, it appears as though these galleries were accessed by a stairway at the rear of the chapel, which is built with the main entrance on the side, in standard meeting house form. This means that the slaves entered by the same entrance as the rest of the congregation.<sup>27</sup>

The original John St. Methodist Church in New York City (1768), known as the Wesley Chapel, had "a gallery that was reached by ladders; a sanded floor and seats without any backs for pews. It was lighted with candles and heated by a fireplace in the southeast corner." While we cannot rely on this description to conclude whether this was used as a slave gallery, we can speculate, because there are descriptions of similar crude, primitive galleries elsewhere that were reserved for slaves. Also, the present Old John St. Methodist Church originally had a hidden slave gallery, according to the HABS report (see below).

In an 1819 letter to his daughter, John Pintard noted that he attended the New York Protestant Episcopal Sunday meeting at St. Paul's Chapel. He described his delight at seeing "about 700 children, males and females, and a large number of color, assembled in the galleries. The congregation below was respectable. . ." Perhaps he meant to suggest by contrast that the congregation above was not respectable. Like the situation that Pintard described, often New England churches placed "negro pews" in the balconies usually reserved for adolescents and unmarried young adults. This helped to perpetuate the widely held belief that black people were childlike. Often chaperones were assigned to watch over the children and blacks in the galleries.

To accommodate his household, his neighbors and their slaves, Governor Stuyvesant engaged the new pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in Brooklyn to conduct Sunday afternoon services in the Bouwerie Chapel, and paid him 200 guilders annually. The original chapel was on same site where St. Mark's in the Bouwerie Church stands today. A pamphlet produced by the church reads: "the gallery, supported by heavy square pillars, was for slaves. At that time, slavery was still a general custom in our country." <sup>28</sup>

The St. Joseph's Church on 6th Avenue in Greenwich Village, built by architect John Doran, is the oldest Roman Catholic church in NYC. Its cornerstone was laid June 10, 1833, and the church was dedicated on March 16, 1834. A typewritten message from the archive of the Museum of the City of New York reads: "These [galleries] were a practical necessity in the early days when the church served a vast parish. It is recorded that slaves were hidden in the galleries during the Civil War." While we cannot be sure whether these galleries were built to segregate free black people, it is exciting to imagine that seating originally intended to separate and hide black churchgoers from whites might later be used for the positive purpose of hiding fugitive slaves who were escaping from the southern states through the Underground Railroad.

The Plymouth Church, built in 1849 on Orange Street between Henry and Hicks Streets in

Brooklyn Heights, was the center of the abolitionist movement. Henry Ward Beecher, an abolitionist preacher, was the head of the church from 1847-1887. Surprisingly, however, the 1934 HABS measured drawings and plans of this church show upper galleries labeled "for colored people." It is not known at this time whether black people sat in these galleries during Beecher's incumbency, but it would be perhaps worthwhile to conduct further research into this possibility. Incidentally, these galleries "for colored people" are on the third level of the church, two gallery levels above the main congregation.

Elsewhere in the northern states, galleries were also built to separate black people from white people. Around 1840, a sign was removed from the northeast corner of the 1815 First Congregational Society Church in Burlington, Vermont, which read, "For Colored People." The galleries, original to the building were also lowered at this time. In St. John's Church, built in 1807 in Portsmouth, N. H., there were "negro pews" which were identified with brass labels. These pews were located "high above the front door in the upper balcony on the east wall, as far as possible from the pulpit."

The infamous incident that led to the formation of the Free African Society, a quasi-religious benevolent and reform society, began in St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia in 1787. A group of free black men, Absalom Jones, Richard Allen, and others, were dragged out of Sunday services for refusing to worship in the newly built galleries. Previously, black members had been permitted to sit on the ground level, but because of overcrowding, the galleries were built, and from that point forward, black members were forced to move upstairs. Richard Allen and the others vowed to never enter the white church again, and were "filled with fresh vigor to get a house erected to worship God in." 29 In 1794, Jones founded St. Thomas' African Episcopal Church, the first black congregation of the Episcopal Church, and the first of any denomination. Their founding document proclaimed that the church would be "governed by us and our successors forever." Later, Richard Allen, in 1816, helped to organize Bethel Church, and created the first African Methodist Episcopal denomination. Allen was elected as the first bishop.<sup>30</sup> The galleries of St. George's can still be viewed today on the corner of Fourth and New Streets, in the Old City neighborhood of Philadelphia.<sup>31</sup>

Elsewhere in Philadelphia, Christ Church, an extremely significant historic landmark built between 1727 and 1744, still has balconies which at one time were "rented with a few free pews there for servants and slaves of parishioners." The church, at Second and Market Streets, is known for its prominent worshippers, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, Betsy Ross, and Thomas Jefferson. William Penn was also baptized there.

Certainly we have found examples of segregated slave balconies in the southern states. The HABS drawings for the High Hills Baptist Church in Stateburg, Sumter County, South Carolina show a slave gallery over the main congregation that was entered from a separate entrance at the back of the church. It appears as though the entrance doors to the balcony were permanently closed at some later date.<sup>32</sup> The St. James Episcopal Church in Greeneville, Tennessee (1849) has a surviving "slave gallery" above the one-story church, with the original straight stair leading to the gallery still in place. According to HABS, the Christ Church (Episcopal) of Glendower, Albemarle County, Virginia, has a gallery on the second floor built "for seating of the coachmen during services." As I have already discussed, chauffeuring a carriage or driving a coach was a common occupation for black men, so it is safe to speculate that the people sitting in this gallery were probably people of color.

Another compelling church that we do not have enough information about is the First Associate

Reformed Presbyterian Church, also known as the Ebenezer Church, or the Old Brick Church, in Jenkinsville, Fairfield County, Virginia. The HABS report unfortunately does not include measured drawings and plans, but shows one photograph of a window in the so-called "slave gallery." A visit to their website gave us little information, except that the building was constructed in 1788, and that "members of the congregation molded the bricks with their own hands and cut the timber to provide the woodwork." The site also confirmed that indeed, a slave gallery remains there today. If there were slaves attending this church, then more likely than not they toiled on the construction of the church. Perhaps these bricks were molded by the hands of slaves?

A 1991 article by Paul F. M. Zahl, entitled "Where did all the galleries go?" investigates a group of English church galleries that have survived from the nineteenth century until the present day.<sup>33</sup> In this piece, the author searches for the reason for why these spaces were so commonly erected in the late 1700s and early 1800s in England, and he also searches for the reason why so many were subsequently dismantled. He hypothesizes that perhaps the construction of these galleries was related to the religious revivals and the increase in church membership and attendance during these periods of enthusiasm. The author claims that singers, musicians, small children, families with small children, and "apprentices" sat in the galleries.

While I have no concrete evidence at this point to prove that slaves or free blacks sat in these English church balconies, I am surprised that it never occurred to the author to investigate this possibility, as slavery was not abolished in England until 1834. There is substantial evidence of black members being relegated to the children's balconies in American churches, so there is a very strong possibility that the same segregation occurred in England. It has been said that these galleries "smacked of Protestantism", and "spoilt the beauty of the building by concealing medireview features." However, it is also possible that they served as painful physical reminders of a segregated history that the churches wanted to forget. This would explain the widespread dismantling and removal of the English galleries after slavery was abolished.

Even in the course of conducting our recent research for this project, we have encountered considerable hostility from a few church leaders and other historians who do not want to believe or discuss the truth that many churches once segregated black members in galleries. So it is entirely possible that this kind of shame and denial occurred historically in England as well.

## HIDDEN GALLERIES

The slave galleries of St. Augustine's Church are categorized as hidden galleries. Hidden galleries are a physical manifestation in architecture of the strictest type of social control and intimidation of slaves. Slaves who were made to sit sequestered in concealed galleries surely received the unspoken, yet overt message that they were nothing more than invisible members of the church.

Beside the galleries at St. Augustine's Church, we have found so far just a few examples of other hidden slave galleries. In Boston, at the First and Second Baptist Churches, blacks were limited to "Negro Pews . . . where they could hear [but] not see the preacher or be observed by him or the white congregation." <sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to locate any measured drawings or historical information of either of these churches in the HABS drawing collection.

As mentioned earlier, measured drawings by HABS show a hidden gallery in the Old John Street Church, which still stands today in New York City. The gallery appears as though it was hidden behind paneling in the back of the balcony, yet a recent visit to the site revealed no such hidden

seating area. It is possible that what is now a chime loft on the balcony level was once the slave gallery. There was also a space behind the chime loft that was locked during our visit. A second visit to this church may be worthwhile in order to ascertain what is inside this locked space.

The HABS measured drawings for the First Chinese Presbyterian Church (formerly the Sea and Land Church, and originally Market Street Reformed Church, 1818), on the corner of Market and Henry Streets in Manhattan, also show hidden slave galleries at the back of the balcony. We have not yet been able to make a site visit in order to verify if the galleries are extant. However, a book called *The Kirk on Rutgers Farm*, by Frederick Bruckbauer reports that "the so-called slave galleries are still there, tho neither colored servants nor Sunday school children are consigned to them now."<sup>35</sup> The Market Street Church is, of course, just a few blocks from St. Augustine's, and although we have not been able to verify it, a few sources claim that the same builder built both structures. The two churches look virtually identical from the exterior. So it would make sense that the two churches might have similar ways of segregating their black members from the rest of the congregation.

#### UNUSUAL EXAMPLES OF SEGREGATED CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

We have found accounts of a few unusual types of segregated church architecture, which are worth noting briefly here. Jack Maddox, an ex-slave who was critical of white preachers and Christianity in general, gave testimony in 1936-1938 about his experience in church as a slave:

Course we got to go to church in fair weather. They used to fix up a brush arbor in back of the whitefolks meeting house and let the niggers set out there. The white preacher would preach along and then he 'ud say, "And you slaves out there, if you want to have the Kingdom Come you got to mind your masters, work hard and don't steal your master's chickens.

After I was a plumb old man I read in the papers that there was nine hundred preachers in the penitentiary and I said to myself, "There ought to be nine hundred more there if they would just ketch them all. Them preachers and their left-handed fellowship!"<sup>36</sup>

This is the only source we have found so far which describes the seating of slaves outside the church altogether. Yet it is clear that despite the distance, there was some sort of interaction between the preacher and the slaves during the service.

A most unique type of segregated pew, designated by color, was described by a former slave from South Carolina, Genia Woodberry:

Aw dem well to do folks hab dey own pew up dere in de front uv de chu'ch wha dey set on eve'y Sunday. Dey seat was painted pretty lak un bedstead en den de poor peoples set in de middle uv de chu'ch in de yellow kind uv seat. Aw de colored peoples hadder set in de blue seat in de back uv de chu'ch. Peoples ne'er rank togedder den lak yah see de peoples rank togedder dese days.<sup>37</sup>

Another unusual type of slave gallery existed in the College Hill Presbyterian Church, near where William Faulkner was married, near Oxford, Mississippi. This gallery was only accessible by a ladder on the outside of the building. The slaves had to climb to the balcony and listen to the sermon while entirely hidden, so that they never saw the service, and their white slaveowners never saw them. Apparently the gallery is extant, although the ladder is missing, so it is unclear whether the area can be accessed today. William Faulkner, obviously knowledgeable about the practice of segregation in southern churches, even included a description of a slave gallery in one of his novels:

. . . I reckon this was the first church with a slave gallery some of them had ever seen, with

Ringo and the other twelve sitting up there in the high shadows where there was room enough for two hundred; . . . For each white person in the auditorium, there would be ten niggers in the gallery.<sup>38</sup>

It is possible that the writer had visited the College Hill Presbyterian Church during the years when he lived nearby.

#### BLACK PERIODICALS: SPEAKING OUT AGAINST SEGREGATION IN CHURCHES

The Colored American, a New York City newspaper founded in 1837 as the Weekly Advocate and renamed shortly thereafter, was an outspoken periodical run by Samuel Cornish. The paper aimed to rally the black population into activism. It called for black self-elevation and the need for black education, and also critiqued the American Colonization Society, and defended the rights of black Americans to stay in the country permanently. The pages of the paper are filled with editorials which slam the practice of segregation in churches. Below are a few highlights.

Although many whites justified segregation in church as necessary to uphold peace in society, many blacks rightfully viewed racial separation as hypocritical and anti-Christian. An editorial from the Colored American, written to inspire activism and civil disobedience against white churches, reflects this notion:

Such is our views of the anti-Christian practice of seating colored people in separate places and "by nooks," in the church of Jesus Christ, that we have long since made up our mind, that it is not our duty to submit to such "heathen oppression," nor to countenance such pharisaical practices . . . We have determined to have nothing to do with churches that keep up such chords of caste . . . We cannot recognize them as the true church of Jesus Christ.

The newspaper was often quick to point out the disparity between the Christian teachings of brotherly love and the actions of white religious leaders toward their black colleagues:

I have often seen colored ministers of fair standing and talent, go into churches of their own denomination, where they were well known, and walk the whole length of these sanctuaries of their God; without having a pew open, nor any Christian courtesy extended to them, more than would be to a beast of the forest . . . I have seen one and an other, and an other, white member, a brother or a sister of the same denomination, come in, and take seats in the same pew, . . . but on discovery of their color, . . . leave them as though they were infected with the plague . . . I have seen fifteen or twenty, aged and pious colored people kept back for a last table at which one or two white persons might chance have placed themselves, past by, by the minister, that he might give the bread and wine to the white member.<sup>39</sup>

The Colored American was a valuable, albeit short lived venue through which the most germane concerns of the black community could be expressed freely and openly.

This Christian hypocrisy never went unrecognized by slaves either. A number of slave narratives point out the insincerity of slave-owning Christian churchgoers. For example, William W. Brown, who recorded his life story as a fugitive slave in 1847, reveals the inconsistencies that he experienced in the southern church: "Slaveholders hide themselves behind the church . . . Their child-robbing, man-stealing, woman-whipping, chain-forging, marriage-destroying, slave-manufacturing, man-slaying religion, will not be received as genuine." In 1857, the former slave Austin Steward recorded similar opinions about his Christian slaveowner: "Can anyone wonder

that I, and other slaves, often doubted the sincerity of every white man's religion? Can it be a matter of astonishment, that slaves often feel that there is no God for the poor African?"

#### WHITE PROTEST OF CHURCH INTEGRATION

As a blatant act of rebellion against blacks, whites who deeded pews to their children as inheritance often stipulated that blacks never be permitted to purchase them, in order to perpetually ensure the high value of adjacent pews.<sup>40</sup> However, an interesting exception is the story of a black man in Boston who received a pew from a white man as payment of a debt. He tried to sell the pew without success, and decided instead to sit there during church services with his family. One Sunday morning, the family was physically restrained and blocked from entering the pew, then urged to take a seat in the segregated gallery upstairs. They were finally intimidated into not pressing the matter of property rights any further.

Another unfortunate victim of intimidation was the black man in Randolph, Massachusetts who won a lawsuit against whites who had forced him out of a pew in the Baptists church that he regularly attended. Despite his legal victory, however, white members of the congregation harassed him. First his pew was covered with tar, and then when that failed to stop his attendance, it was completely removed. The man finally left the congregation permanently.<sup>41</sup>

Other examples involve conflicts between white parishioners and leaders of the nationwide struggle for abolition. In 1834, abolitionist Arthur Tappan entered Reverend Samuel Cox's Laight Street Church in Manhattan, where he was a pew holder. He met black clergyman Samuel Cornish on the street nearby, and invited him to attend services in the Laight Street Church, since it was closer than Cornish's own congregation. They sat together in a pew, and the surrounding parishioners protested angrily. Parishioners threatened to resign in protest, and this led to Cox's admonishment of the congregates. He claimed that Christ himself possibly had dark skin, and denounced "nigger pews". Instantly, churchgoers and citizens city-wide were upset and spread rumors that Cox called the "Savior a nigger."<sup>42</sup>

On July 4, 1834, an integrated group met at the Chatham Street Chapel to celebrate the abolition of slavery seven years earlier, but was met with an angry protest of spectators claiming the group looked like "keys of a piano forte." These protesters broke up the peaceful meeting.<sup>43</sup>

In 1837 in Boston, Samuel Philbrick, organizer of an anti-slavery society in Brookline, hosted the daughters of a South Carolina Supreme Court Justice, Sarah and Angelina Grimke, former slave owners turned abolitionists. They all visited church one Sunday, together with a young black child who Philbrick was watching after in his home. They took the girl into their church pew with them, which caused a stir. The following week, after finding the girl had returned with the family again, an indignant parishioner marched them out of the church. A church committee gathered soon after and offered to welcome the child back if she took a seat in the gallery, but Philbrick refused these conditions and never returned to the church again.

From these examples, we can see that many white churchmembers fought aggressively to keep blacks out of their parishes altogether, or at least to keep them controlled and confined to specific seating areas. The violence employed by many whites in order to intimidate the hardworking abolitionists and to maintain the status quo of racial separation inside the church is astounding.

#### TRAVELERS' ACCOUNTS OF CHURCH SEGREGATION

European visitors often came to the United States on holiday, and left with a diary full of impressions of American society. We are lucky to have access to a few significant journals written by foreigners that feature religion and slavery as a main theme. Although Carl R.

Stockton claims that these travel journals were "condescending" "burlesque caricatures of American life"; still they provide a unique perspective outside the boundaries of our own society that should be considered. Many of the authors of these journals were members of the English anti-slavery movement, who had traveled to the United States to rally sympathizers for the abolitionist cause on this side of the Atlantic.<sup>44</sup>

William Chambers, an Englishman traveler, reported seeing black and white parishioners leaving church one Sunday (year?) "as if there were a black and white gospel." In his 1857 book, *American Slavery and Colour*, Chambers commented that even after separate colored pews were abolished in American churches, "a coloured man would have to stand a long time in a genteel New York church before he would be offered a seat." Visiting Englishman William Strickland reported that "negro pews" were usually the back rows in the Galleries" whose occupants "are not permitted or never presume to mix among the whites."<sup>45</sup> An English Quaker Joseph Sturge, on a trip to the United States in 1841, reported that he saw a Quaker meeting in New Bedford where both races were "sitting promiscuously." However, he added that this integration was quite unusual for Quaker meetings, which usually had few black people attending.<sup>46</sup>

#### ALTERNATE MEETING TIMES

Instead of designating segregated pews or balconies, many parishes simply restricted meeting times so that black and white members of the congregation were not forced to mix. For instance, Trinity Parish in New York City held services for Negro members on Sunday afternoons. Eventually, the number of black parishioners grew so large that they moved their meetings to a different space in the church school on William Street.

Martha Colquitt, a former slave in Georgia, recorded her memories of segregated church services: "Dey won't 'lowed to jine de church on Sunday, but dey had reg'lar Saddy afternoons for de slaves to come and 'fess dey faith, and jine de church . . . All de baptizin' was done on Sunday by de white preacher. First he would baptize de white folkses in de pool back of de church and den he would baptize de slaves in de same pool."<sup>47</sup> Jasper Battle, of Georgia, recalls a similar situation: "Dey preached to de white folks fust and den dey let de colored folks come inside and hear some preachin' atter dey was through wid de white folks. But on de big 'vival meetin' days de 'lowed de Niggers to come in and set in de gallery and listen at de same time dey preached to de white folks."

#### CONCLUSION

Our investigation of segregated church architecture of the colonial and antebellum period has revealed invaluable insights into the social norms of that time. By employing the hidden slave galleries of St. Augustine's Church as a benchmark, we have classified two additional types of segregated seating in churches of the same time period: segregated pews and balconies. While we have not yet found specific documentation that enslaved people sat in the galleries at St. Augustine's, it is quite possible, since the 1830 New York City census counted at least 4 black people still enslaved at that time.

Yet it is equally possible, and even more likely that those people forced to sit in the gallery were legally free, as St. Augustine's was completed the year after legislation took effect to end slavery in New York State. Also, stories such as the expulsion of the freemen Richard Allen and

Absalom Jones from a Philadelphia church have helped us to understand that, even when legally free, black people were commonly restricted to separate seating in churches in the North, in addition to being confined to separate areas in countless public places such as street cars, steamboats, theaters, hospitals, and restaurants. Therefore, it is quite possible that the practice of calling the rooms at St. Augustine's "slave galleries" does not necessarily mean that only slaves were seated in there. In fact, it may reflect the refusal on the part of whites to recognize the difference between free blacks and slaves, not only in language, but also in practice.

What we do know for sure is that at least two of the original vestrymen of All Saints' Church were wealthy slaveowners. This fact, compounded with the well-documented refusal of the Episcopal Church to take a political stand against the institution of slavery and its historically "hands-off" administration of its black denominations, supports the possibility that blacks of any legal status might be segregated within Episcopal chapels. We have also seen that there is a history of conversion and baptism of slaves in the Episcopal and Anglican churches, although this did necessarily guarantee the Christian slaves equal treatment or recognition as full members in the Church. Early pronouncements from Anglican leaders proved the interests of the Church were often aligned with the economic interests of the slaveowners. These facts support the idea that if blacks were part of the original All Saints' congregation, they were not necessarily treated equally, and very well could have been assigned to segregated seating.

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace. *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 347-349.
- 2 Graham Russell, *Hodges Root & Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 230-231.
- 3 See appendix 1 for chronology of abolition laws.
- 4 Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1954), 373.
- 5 Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 15-16.
- 6 Charles MacKay, *Life and Liberty in America; or, Sketches of a Tour in the United States and Canada in 1857-1858*, as quoted in Litwack.
- 7 De Tocqueville, p. 371-372.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 373
- 9 *New York Constitutional Debates of 1821*, p. 190 as quoted in Litwack, p. 77-78.
- 10 *Weekly Advocate*, 1837
- 11 [www.metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/steward/steward.html](http://www.metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/steward/steward.html)

- 12 [www.projects.ilt.columbia.edu/Seneca/AfAMNYC/Jennings2.html](http://www.projects.ilt.columbia.edu/Seneca/AfAMNYC/Jennings2.html)
- 13 Charles Haswell, *Memoirs of an Octogenarian*.
- 14 Phyllis F. Field. *The Politics of Race in New York: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 30.
- 15 Moses Grandy, *Life of a Slave*, 1843.
- 16 White, Shane. *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810*. (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), 157.
  
- 17 Find exact location of these streets today.
- 18 White, p. 173-175.
- 19 Harold T. Lewis. *Yet With A Steady Beat: The African American Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church*. (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996), 18.
- 20 H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: World Publishing, 1957), 248, as quoted in Lewis, 21.
- 21 The Virginia House of Burgesses in a letter to Col. Francis Nicholson, governor of Virginia, 1699, quoted in Lewis, 21.
- 22 Hodges, introduction, p.3-4.
- 23 Edmund Gibson, bishop of London, "To the Masters and Mistresses of Families in the English Plantations Abroad," 1727, cited in Wood, *The Arrogance of Faith*, 119.
- 24 Litwack, p. 196.
- 25 *Colored American*, year?
- 26 *Colored American*, August 19, 1837.
- 27 See appendix for plan of slave gallery.
- 28 Pamphlet at the archives of the Museum of the City of New York, "church" folder, n. d.
- 29 Richard Allen, *Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors* (Philadelphia, 1887), p. 14-15, as quoted in Litwack, p. 191.
- 30 Lewis, 27-28.
- 31 See appendix for photographs.
- 32 See appendix for drawings.
- 33 Paul F. M. Zahl, "Where did all the galleries go?: Pre-Tractarian Interiors in Relation to the Decade of Evangelism." *Anglican and Episcopal History* LX, no. 2, (June 1991): 165-183.
- 34 James Oliver and Lois E. Horton. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 142.
- 35 [www.webincunabula.com/html/english/books/b/br/bruckbau.htm](http://www.webincunabula.com/html/english/books/b/br/bruckbau.htm). This publication is not dated, however, we can estimate that it was probably written around the centennial of the church, 1919. And a quote which reads "So the old Kirk on Rutgers Farm has stood a hundred years", and we know the church dates from 1819.
- 36 Jack Maddox, quoted in George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 41 volumes. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972, 1977,

1979).

37 Ancestry.com, database: slave narratives

38 William Faulkner, XXX, p. 134-135.

39 Colored American, March 11, 1837.

40 Burrows, p. 548

41 Litwack, p. 197.

42 Burrows, 556.

43 Burrows, 557.

44 Carl Stockton, "Conflict Among Evangelical Brothers: Anglo-American Churchmen and the Slavery Controversy, 1848-1853." *Journal of Anglican and Episcopal History*, volume LXII, n. 4, (December 1993): 499-513.

45 Burrows, p. 398.

46 Joseph Sturge, *A Visit to the United States in 1841*, p. 100, as quoted in Litwack, p. 206.

47 Ancestry.com, database: slave narratives