"For divers good causes and considerations" : manumission practices of Albany, NY slaveholders, 1799-1824

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“For Divers Good Causes and Considerations”
Manumission Practices of Albany, NY Slaveholders, 1799-1824

by

William A. Meredith

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Abstract

On March 29, 1799, the New York State Legislature received notice that the state’s Council of Revision had approved, “an Act for the gradual abolition of Slavery.” The bill changed slavery in such a way that children born to slaves after July 4, 1799, became free upon reaching the age of twenty-five for females and twenty-eight for males. Given the monumental change produced by this legislation, historians have linked passage of the gradual abolition bill to an increase in slave manumissions. While the gradual abolition bill may have prompted slaveholders to consider manumission, it was not the overall motivating force behind slave manumissions in the nineteenth century.

As many slaveholders themselves noted, manumissions proceeded, “for divers good causes and considerations.” As such, this study will show, through an examination of slaveholders’ social characteristics, including gender, occupation, political affiliation, religious denomination, and residence, that manumissions cannot be reduced to one motivating factor, to one particular type of slaveholder or slave, or even to a slaveholder’s geographic location. Manumissions proceeded for a variety of reasons, and as demonstrated by manumissions in Albany, New York, what prompted one type of slaveholder in one area to act did not always influence a similar slaveholder in another.

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1 Albany County Hall of Records (ACHR), “Register of Manumitted Slaves 1800--1828.”
Contents

Introduction ............................................................................................................ 1

A Focus on Albany ............................................................................................... 2

Slavery in the Colony ............................................................................................ 6

Slave Manumissions ............................................................................................. 7

“An Act for the gradual abolition of Slavery” ..................................................... 9

Gender ................................................................................................................... 12

Occupation ............................................................................................................. 20

Political Affiliation ............................................................................................... 26

Religious Denomination ....................................................................................... 33

Residence ................................................................................................................. 38

Slaves ....................................................................................................................... 43

Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 45

Appendix A ............................................................................................................. 47

Bibliography ......................................................................................................... 51
Tables and Image:

Tables:

Table 1: Gender of Albany Manumitting Slaveholders, 1799-1824 13
Table 2: Occupations of Albany Slaveholders, 1799-1824 21
Table 3: Political Affiliations of Albany Slaveholders, 1799-1824 27
Table 4: Religious Denominations of Albany Slaveholders, 1799-1824 34
Table 5: Residence of Albany Slaveholders, 1799-1824 41

Image:

Image 1: G.W. Merchant’s 1828 Map of the City of Albany 40
Introduction

On December 9, 1799, the city clerk of Albany, New York, recorded the birth of a slave named Nan. Born four months prior to a slave woman held by Albany resident Jacob Bleecker, Jr., a new law required Bleecker to visit the clerk and register Nan’s birth. Approved in March 1799, “An Act for the gradual abolition of Slavery” forever changed the institution by providing freedom to slaves born after July 4, 1799. The freedom, however, came gradually as the law mandated that children serve their mothers’ slaveholders for a fixed number of years. Female slaves gained freedom at the age of twenty-five and males at twenty-eight. Transformed largely into a system of indentured servitude for the children of the enslaved born after that date, slavery remained unchanged for those born before the law’s implementation. Nevertheless, as more and more slaveholders appeared before the city clerk after Bleecker’s initial visit, the nature of their visits changed dramatically. Instead of registering the births of slaves, slaveholders arrived to manumit slaves not served by the gradual abolition bill.

Between 1800 and 1824 fewer than half of Albany’s more than 300 slaveholders manumitted nearly 240 slaves. While historians have considered the impact of the gradual abolition bill on slavery as a whole, few have considered the manner in which manumissions occurred following the bill’s passage or examined the slaveholders who offered manumissions. One of the most detailed accounts provided by historian Shane White notes that, “Slaveowners in New York City, conceding that the institution’s days were numbered, became more willing to negotiate with their slaves, allowing blacks to purchase an early release or manumitting them outright. Slaveowners in the surrounding countryside, on the other hand, and particularly farmers of Dutch origin, maintained the

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institution of slavery to the bitter end.”³ Thus, the precipitous decline of slavery in New York between 1799 and its universal abolishment in 1827, according to White, proceeded largely due to implementation of gradual abolition. The bill signaled slavery’s approaching demise to slaveholders and provided slaves with an argument for more immediate freedom.

But White’s connection between the gradual abolition bill and increased manumissions fails to fully or adequately describe the process in which slaveholders manumitted slaves. As Albany’s manumission records illustrate, manumissions occurred for a variety of reasons and were offered by a range of slaveholders. This variability is best noted by the phrase, “for divers good causes and considerations” that appeared in numerous slave manumissions registered with the Albany clerk. This study will show through an examination of slaveholders’ social characteristics, including gender, occupation, political affiliation, religious denomination, and residence, that manumissions cannot be reduced to one motivating factor, to one particular type of slaveholder or slave, or even to a slaveholder’s geographic location. Manumissions proceeded for a variety of reasons, and as demonstrated by manumissions in Albany, what prompted one type of slaveholder in one area to act did not always influence a similar slaveholder in another.

A Focus on Albany

The failure of historians to fully examine the nature of slave manumissions can be linked to their failure to fully consider the nature of slavery statewide. Initial studies of slavery in New York established a general narrative of slavery within the state but

provided little analysis. Others have adopted a narrower perspective by examining certain time periods, considering slavery through a variety of lenses, or focusing solely on specific topics such as the maneuvering that prompted the 1799 gradual abolition bill. While past studies of slavery have analyzed many different facets of the institution, these studies focused almost solely on New York City. After more than one hundred years of historical analysis on slavery in New York State, the systems of slavery occurring outside the immediate environs of New York City still remain largely unexplored.

Why historians gravitate toward New York City goes without question: a rich historiography of New York City exists, more primary sources on the topic survive, and a large number of New York City repositories housing related sources allow researchers to traverse five boroughs rather than numerous counties of upstate New York in the search

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for evidence. Accurately compiling material for a study of slavery north of New York City entails the daunting task of navigating upstate New York’s many locales. But one must also consider the misguided notion running through these previous works that New York City represents New York State. Nearly every resident of upstate New York can recount a story of someone mistaking his or her living in New York with living in New York City. New York City’s size and significance grab attention; as such, historians describing the state’s system of slavery have fallen back on this tendency to let New York City represent the whole while neglecting areas north in the process.

Nevertheless, prior omission alone does not necessitate the study of slavery outside of New York City, or of Albany, in particular. Most studies of slavery tend to describe the areas north of New York City as engaged solely in farming, mostly by persons of Dutch heritage. Yet this oversimplifies the history of upstate New York – and Albany defies that very classification. While many upstate communities, including numerous towns surrounding Albany, remained focused on agriculture and engaged slaves for that purpose, Albany’s economy was instead driven by the trade of agricultural products. At first glance the urban slavery occurring in Albany largely resembled that of New York City, yet significant differences still separated the two cities.

While New York City served as the state’s economic center, Albany served as the political center. In 1797 the state moved its capital north from Kingston to Albany. This move, two years before the gradual abolition bill’s passage, transformed the city into the

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6 The preface and introduction of Shane White’s *Somewhat More Independent* describes this point in detail with the author explaining his original intent of examining slavery in the mid-Atlantic states, narrowing his focus to New York and New Jersey, and finally settling on an examination of New York City given the wealth of resources available.

state’s center of politics. When the state government finally approved gradual abolition, it did so in the city of Albany, with Albany native Dirck Ten Broeck serving as the leader of the state Assembly where the bill originated. Yet, even with the two cities serving vital roles, significant differences differentiated Albany from New York City, including population demographics and slaveholder motivations for manumission.

Albany’s population in 1800 stood at less than 5,000, but with a slave population exceeding 500, slaves comprised ten percent of the population. In comparison, New York City eclipsed 60,000 residents but with fewer than 3,000 slaves, only five percent of the city’s population was enslaved. Although having grown to become the nation’s ninth most populous city by 1830, Albany’s population never exceeded 25,000 residents during this period.\(^8\) Albany’s significantly smaller population provides a more manageable laboratory for studying slaveholder profiles.\(^9\)

Bound by the same laws and experiencing many of the same social and economic situations, the nature of slavery bore similarities throughout the state. Yet, as the institution came to an end, the manner in which New Yorkers faced this reality differed greatly. Some slaveholders immediately released slaves while others maintained the system until required to abandon the practice. Although manumitting influences have been largely reduced to the gradual abolition bill, Albany’s manumission records describe the personal nature of slave manumission and how personal characteristics drove numerous manumissions.

\(^9\) Shane White encountered difficulty in matching slaveholders across censuses due to only heads of households being listed in early enumerations. As such, inheritance of slaves across generations could not be fully observed. This is less difficult for Albany given the smaller population and the resources available from the Colonial Albany Social History Project. https://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany
Slavery in the Colony

The history of colonial New York divides into the Dutch and English periods. Following Henry Hudson’s 1609 exploration of the area, settlements began to dot the banks of the Hudson River, as Dutch merchants capitalized on the new acquisition. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, the Dutch West India Company had commenced a colony and introduced African slaves. As the colony grew, so, too, did slavery. With the end of Dutch control of the colony in 1664, the initial 16 slaves introduced to the colony 38 years prior grew to 800. While some aspects of politics and society changed under English control, the British initiated no curb on the growth of slavery. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, New York counted nearly 2,000 slaves within the colony, a number that grew to 20,000 on the eve of the Revolution.

In the midst of war with Britain, delegates to New York’s Constitutional Convention met in Kingston during the spring of 1777 to craft a new constitution. Amid debates concerning branches of government and their respective powers, delegates debated slavery and nearly ended the practice. John Jay, future governor and a passionate critic of slavery, fought vigorously for the abolition of slavery at the convention and found support from fellow delegate Gouvernor Morris. Yet Morris observed the need to proceed cautiously on the topic, acknowledging the “great dangers” surrounding such a proposition. These dangers included concerns for public safety resulting from a large population of newly freed slaves, the potential cost of caring for slaves unable to provide for themselves, and legislators’ unease of intruding upon slaveholders’ property. But one must also consider that war raged while the delegates deliberated. With the British

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10 Hodges, 8, 30.
11 Olson, 30.
12 Berlin and Harris, 117.
holding the southern portion of the state, home to many wealthy slaveholders with vast numbers of slaves, any sudden emancipation could have jeopardized support and proven advantageous to the British.

In lieu of enacting abolition in the state’s preliminary constitution, Morris suggested that language be included encouraging future generations of lawmakers to undertake the task when more favorable conditions existed, such as when an amenable answer to the personal property rights question could be found, or perhaps when hostilities ceased. Just three days before the assemblage approved the constitution, the consensus of the delegation concurred with Morris’ call for gradual abolition at such a time when “public safety” and “private property” could be adequately protected. Nevertheless, the constitution, as passed on April 20, 1777, contained no such language; nor did it include any reference to slavery. With Jay’s absence due to an ailing mother, the convention’s ardent supporter of abolition could not prevent the erasure of any mention of slavery from the state’s initial governing document, and the institution continued unchanged.

**Slave Manumission**

In 1785 the New York State Legislature, stirred by the adoption of gradual abolition bills in the neighboring states of Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, debated and approved similar legislation. While resembling the other states’ policies in terms of age-defined freedom, the New Yorkers added amendments preventing political involvement by blacks – but this elicited a veto from the state’s council of revision on

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account of the bill’s race-based disenfranchisement. With the assembly’s failure to secure an override in order to pass the entire legislation, gradual abolition dropped from legislative consideration.¹⁴

Although gradual abolition failed to advance, its consideration moved the legislature to examine other controls on slavery, including the laws that regulated slave manumissions. Slave manumissions were unregulated by the Dutch and initially by the English, but a 1712 slave insurrection led New York’s Colonial Assembly to enact controls. After setting a structural fire in New York City, several slaves surrounded the building and murdered those who had arrived to extinguish the flames. As punishment, the colonial assembly imposed a £200 fee on slave manumissions. The legislative body foresaw the potential for manumitted slaves to become dependent on public finances for support and argued that the bond served to protect the colony financially. Nevertheless, the fee succeeded in accomplishing the assembly’s primary goal of preventing manumissions. When slaveholders voiced displeasure with the law, given that many used the promise of eventual freedom to control slave behavior, the assembly relented and allowed slaveholders to pay a lesser amount if a community’s overseers of the poor certified a slave’s potential for self-sufficiency, which provided reasonable assurance that the slave would not require governmental support.¹⁵ The structure of this law remained in place until after the Revolution.

In 1788, when the state of New York revised its colonial laws into state laws, legislators revisited slave manumission and eased these restrictions. Reflecting the fear that numerous freed slaves would require public assistance, one of the “public dangers”

¹⁴ See Chapter 3 of Gellman, “1785: The Road Not Taken.” and Gellman and Quigley, 33-35.
¹⁵ McManus, 12, 125, 142-143.
alluded to by Gouvernor Morris, the revised law allowed slaveholders to freely manumit self-sufficient slaves under age fifty. No longer requiring slaveholders to provide a payment, manumission necessitated that local overseers of the poor certify the slave’s age and potential for self-support. For residents of New York City or Albany, the mayor and two aldermen certified the age and physical condition of the slave. Obtaining certification from local overseers of the poor released slaveholders from future financial responsibility and allowed slave manumissions to proceed without charge. \(^{16}\) Although this change made slave manumissions less financially onerous, upticks in manumission did not occur until after passage of the next round of legislation – the gradual abolition bill. \(^{17}\)

“An Act for the gradual abolition of Slavery”

In 1795, John Jay, the nation’s first Supreme Court Chief Justice, became New York’s second governor after unseating George Clinton. Clinton, a Democratic-Republican, held the seat for nearly twenty years. Jay, a Federalist, remained so popular in the state that he never publicly campaigned for the seat. At the pinnacle of power in the state, Jay moved forward with his desire of eradicating slavery from New York. \(^{18}\) State politicians nearly ended slavery twice before Jay’s election; first, in the failed attempt at the state’s 1777 constitutional convention, and second, in 1785 when a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery passed in both houses of the legislature but failed to gain


\(^{17}\) Vivienne Kruger argues that numerous manumissions occurred in New York’s six southern counties after the change in manumission law (729), which is argued against by Michael Groth (174). As Berlin and Harris note (129), the uptick in manumissions in New York City occurred after 1799.

support from the Council of Revision. Nevertheless, Jay’s election handed control of state government to the Federalists, and maneuvering began to abolish slavery.

In 1796, New York City Assemblyman (and Jay ally) James Watson introduced a gradual abolition bill. Debate on the proposition focused largely on compensating slaveholders for the loss of slaves as a means of solving “the great danger” of depriving slaveholders of their property. The issue raised concerns, both in legislative chambers as well as in the public sphere, as to how the state planned on compensating slaveholders for property they had yet to possess: slaves’ unborn children. With so many unanswered questions, the legislation failed to advance any further in the session.\(^{19}\) But what did advance was a reapportionment of Assembly seats. By 1798, when the newly reapportioned Assembly met, New York City now maintained a majority of seats. In addition, new seats were created for the state’s northern and western territories, where slavery had failed to spread. With the reapportionment, maneuvered by Federalists, antislavery forces now outnumbered slavery’s proponents.

When the Assembly took up a new gradual abolition bill in 1798, compensation no longer bedeviled the Assembly, as proslavery forces failed in their attempt to add compensation to the bill. But reapportionment only allowed antislavery forces success in the Assembly. While the bill passed in the Assembly, the state Senate refused to consider the lower house’s bill, and gradual abolition failed to advance in 1798. But directional winds were shifting as evidenced by the large support garnered in the Assembly for the 1798 gradual abolition bill.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) Gellman, 165-167.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 172-176.
When the legislature reconvened in January 1799, gradual abolition came to the floor a final time. During this session, the major issue focused on slave abandonment and who should financially support abandoned slaves. A provision included in this version allowed slaveholders to abandon a newborn slave after the slave’s first birthday. Supporters of abolition favored local financial support from a community’s overseers of the poor, while opponents desired state support for abandoned slaves. The deciding factor in the debate came from an entity that had been relatively silent on gradual abolition for the past two years: the state Senate. With a majority of senators supporting state support of abandoned slaves, the final hurdle was removed. With the Council of Revision’s approval, John Jay achieved his goal of initiating gradual abolition.

Over the next eleven years, two changes occurred to the gradual abolition bill. In 1804 the state legislature disallowed the abandonment of children. A crucial element in the debate over gradual abolition, slaveholders had been allowed to abandon a newborn child born to a slave after the child reached his or her first birthday. Overseers of the poor were to place abandoned children with a family, and the state provided a monthly stipend for the child’s care. The system, however, permitted slaveholders to abandon a child and then have the child placed in their care, which provided the former slaveholder with the monthly stipend. Many slaveholders took advantage of the program, and it began to drain state coffers. While the records detailing payments to Albany slaveholders perished in a fire, the city’s manumission records include thirty-four abandonments.

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21 Ibid., 176-177.
Thus, it is possible that over four years the state paid Albany slaveholders more than $3,000.

In 1810 the state legislature updated the gradual abolition law by including a new stipulation. The updated legislation directed that a slave born after July 4, 1799 was to be, “taught reading so as to be able to read the Holy Scriptures, previous to its becoming 21 years of age…” Neglecting the child’s reading required that the slave be released at twenty-one instead of the stipulated twenty-five for females and twenty-eight for males. But only one slaveholder, Dr. Samuel Stringer, cited this law. Although the state legislature affected some changes to the chapter of law concerning slaves throughout this period, these changes largely concerned the transportation of slaves. As such, the sections devoted to manumission and gradual abolition saw almost no change, and changes to other sections of law concerning slaves failed to account for any uptick in manumissions.

Between 1799 and 1824 more than one hundred Albany slaveholders manumitted nearly 240 slaves. While the gradual abolition bill may have prompted some slaveholders to consider manumission, the following sections of this paper devoted to slaveholders’ gender, occupation, religious denomination, residence, and political affiliation will explore the many variables surrounding slave manumission. As slaveholders themselves often noted, manumissions emanated from, “divers good causes and considerations.” The following sections will attempt to define those causes and considerations.

Gender

Although men composed nearly 90 percent of Albany’s slaveholding population during this period, women were slaveholders, too. The three censuses taken between 1800 and 1820 enumerated more than thirty different women as both household heads and slaveholders. With the addition of those females identified in manumission records, this study includes nearly fifty female slaveholders. While female slaveholders constituted a small portion of the population, their manumission practices differed greatly from male slaveholders. Men and women manumitted slaves at the same rate – about one-third of Albany’s female and male slaveholders manumitted one or more slaves – but Albany’s female manumitting slaveholders were more likely to place stipulations on slave manumissions than male slaveholders. While female slaveholders made up a minority of manumitting slaveholders, forty percent of female manumitting slaveholders attached either financial or service conditions to slave manumissions in comparison to a quarter of male manumitting slaveholders. (See Table 1.) Slaves gained freedom, but some found themselves immediately reenslaved by financial or service conditions imposed by female slaveholders who remained more reliant on their labor.

TABLE 1: Gender of Albany Manumitting Slaveholders, 1799-1824

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Conditional Manumission</th>
<th>No Conditions on Manumission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early studies of New York State slavery excluded consideration of female slaveholders. While some contemporary studies have considered this group, many
continue to overlook women and their slaveholding roles. But recent scholarship on slaveholding women from Virginia and North and South Carolina, although geographically distant from Albany, suggests that reliance on slaves by women knew no geographic boundaries.

Following the deaths of their husbands, several slaveholding widows in Virginia, as well as North and South Carolina, only received one-third of their husband’s estate but became fully responsible for financial maintenance of the household. Thus, these women became dependent on slaves’ agricultural work for income. Financial problems remained so pressing that many pursued additional work such as sewing or washing to earn additional revenue. Many slaveholding women in New York City who experienced similar financial difficulties opened their homes to boarders. In both instances, the domestic assistance of slaves allowed for continued household upkeep while female slaveholders occupied themselves with additional money-making tasks.

The situation of these southern slaveholding women closely resembles that of Albany resident Lydia Visscher. Becoming a slaveholder following her husband’s 1793 death and living until 1841, Visscher likely held slaves until slavery ended in 1827. By 1800 three slaves served Lydia, and the 1810 and 1820 censuses both counted two slaves among her household. While Lydia potentially freed one of her slaves, since her initial number of slaves decreased from three to two, and the 1810 census recorded a free black member of the household, Albany manumission records contain no such act. What is

24 Graham Russell Hodges mentions slaveholding “mistresses” in terms of slaveholding in partnership with their husbands (45) as well as slaveholding men leaving slaves to their widows (107). Shane White makes the largest contribution to the subject of female slaveholders in New York State with his discussion of female slaveholders in New York City, their wealth, and occupations (9).
26 White, p. 9
known, however, are Visscher’s financial difficulties throughout her widowhood. Lydia
sold some of her late husband’s real estate holdings to alleviate financial stress.\textsuperscript{27} But she
continued to maintain slaves, perhaps requiring the slaves’ labor such as washing or
ironing for the upkeep of her own home while she occupied herself with work to provide
additional income.

Although Visscher’s situation mirrored those slaveholding widows of the South
and of New York City, biographical sketches of Albany’s slaveholding women provide
no evidence that financial difficulties affected many of them. Even so, manumitting
female slaveholders failed to rapidly part with slavery. Instead of financial difficulty
necessitating reliance on slave labor, manumitting female slaveholders of Albany
probably required slave labor due to advanced age. In 1810, 76-year-old Elizabeth Van
Rensselaer Ten Broeck, the wife of one of Albany’s largest slaveholders and former
mayor, manumitted a female slave named Susanah as well as Susanah’s three children.
Besides offering a glimpse into the work performed by an Albany slave, the manumission
illustrates the service conditions that slaveholders, particularly female slaveholders,
ocasionally attached to manumissions. Susanah’s manumission required the completion
of certain tasks until Ten Broeck’s death. These tasks included weekly washing and
ironing for the Ten Broeck family, assisting with the spring and fall cleaning and painting
of the house, as well as providing assistance, “at killing time.”\textsuperscript{28} Although Susanah
gained legal freedom, Ten Broeck’s requirements kept the woman in a state of semi-
slavery as she completed weekly tasks.

\textsuperscript{27} Stefan Bielinski, “Lydia Fryer Visscher.” \textit{The Colonial Albany Social History Project}, October 20, 2003,
\textsuperscript{28} ACHR, 82-85.
While Ten Broeck’s manumission of Susanah differed greatly from a majority of the manumissions offered by male slaveholders, other slaveholding women in Albany placed service conditions on manumissions. Albany slaveholder Eve Roseboom offered a similar, but more onerous manumission six years before Ten Broeck’s. Roseboom became a slaveholder upon the death of her husband in the 1780s. In 1790 Roseboom held three slaves, but by 1800, Eve may have manumitted a slave since her household held two slaves and a free black. While no record of such an act appears in the manumission records, her manumission of a slave named Peter, and her desire to retain his service does. Recorded in 1804, 78-year-old Roseboom promised to free Peter upon her death if he continued to serve her and her interests. Specifically, Roseboom stipulated that Peter, “diligently faithfully and freely according to the best of his power, knowledge skill and ability exercise and employ himself in doing and performing such services with due compliance to the said Eve Roseboom in and about her business and in all such things as the said Eve Roseboom shall from time to time order direct and appoint to and for the said Peter.” Roseboom died before 1810, and Peter gained his freedom on March 13, 1811, seven years after Roseboom registered his manumission.

Approaching eighty, Roseboom and Ten Broeck both placed service stipulations on slaves’ manumissions likely emanating from their inability or disinclination to complete certain tasks. But a financial condition imposed by another octogenarian slaveholder may further explain the conditions imposed by female slaveholders. On May 31, 1804 Cornelia Ryckman Price, the widow of John Price, freed her 33-year-old slave, George Golden. Cornelia had purchased George eight years before when her brother,

30 ACHR, 90.
acting on her behalf, arranged the purchase from a member of the city’s prominent Van Rensselaer family.\textsuperscript{31} George’s manumission cited Cornelia’s desire to reward him for his “fidelity and integrity.” Yet George’s excellent service failed to provide unconditional release. His manumission required a monthly four-dollar payment ending upon Price’s death.\textsuperscript{32} The sum of $4 was used by one Albany slaveholder who employed a previously manumitted slave suggesting that slaveholders had the potential of earning $4 per month if they chose to rent slave labor instead of manumitting.\textsuperscript{33} Living until 1813, George likely paid close to five hundred dollars for his freedom, a sum much higher than the average sale price of a slave in Albany.

Of Ten Broeck, Roseboom, and Price, only Elizabeth Ten Broeck had children, and most of her children lived distantly from Albany. All widowed, some childless, and having reached advanced ages, these women had little other household support, as well as few, if any, immediate family members. Whereas other slaveholding women required slaves for financial survival, Albany’s female manumitting slaveholders required slaves for general household assistance and the carrying out of day-to-day operations. But with the nature of slavery changing, these women were also apparently susceptible to thoughts akin to those experienced by southern slaveholding women who heard rumors of widespread emancipation in 1865.

On May 17, 1865, Georgia slaveholder Dolly Burge heard a rumor and took to her diary to express her fears. Hearing that the government intended to free southern slaves,
Burge asked her diary, “What can I do without them?” Dolly’s trepidation stemmed not from financial worry, but from the unknown. Although separated by distance and at least one generation, the end of the Civil War necessitated that southern slaveholding women envision a future without slaves, a vision Albany’s female manumitting slaveholders failed to fully embrace. Many of these women grew up in slaveholding households and continued the practice in their own homes. Even when offering manumissions, those manumissions failed to fully free slaves, keeping them enslaved by service or financial conditions.

The three women noted above all died before 1817, when New York set 1827 as slavery’s end date. But even the end of slavery failed to spur women to divest themselves of slaves. After her husband’s 1785 death, Cornelia “Neltie” Pruyn appeared as head of her family’s 1790 household, but the poor condition of the census prevents identifying the number of slaves inhabiting her household. The 1800 and 1810 censuses, however, listed five slaves among Neltie’s household, a large number not only for a female slaveholder, but also for any Albany slaveholder. Neltie likely knew the intricacies of the gradual abolition law as she registered the birth of a child in 1802 and abandoned her right to the child’s service. Yet that remains the only time Neltie’s name appeared within the manumission records. Pruyn’s will, however, recorded in 1808, details her intentions for her slaves’ futures. She wrote:

34 Wood, 175.
36 ACHR, 12. While Neltie freed the newborn child, such an action usually resulted in the overseers of the poor, who became responsible for all freed children, placing the child with the slaveholder who abandoned the child and providing a monthly stipend. While the practice eventually ended, Neltie’s manumission of the child likely extended from financial gain and not any antislavery sentiments.
I give and bequeath my negro Tom to my son Jacob. I give and bequeath my negro Charles to my son John. My will is that my negro woman Luce shall, if she survives me be maintained by my executrix and executors hereafter named out of my estate. My son Francis having sold my negro man Harry for two hundred and twenty five dollars I hereby devise that he or his representatives pay to his sister Maria one hundred and twelve dollars and fifty cents, being one half of the said sum within one year after my decease, and I hereby declare that the Legacy I have made in this my last will to my said son Francis is made upon the express condition that he or his representatives comply with this my desire…otherwise the said Legacy to be void.\footnote{37}

While Pruyn’s contemporaries Elizabeth Ten Broeck, Eve Roseboom, and Cornelia Price allowed for slave manumissions after their deaths, Neltie Pruyn directed that her slaves be either sold or transferred to her children. But after the 1817 passage of legislation ending slavery in 1827, Neltie filed a codicil to her will. She forgave the debt owed by her now deceased son Francis, which allowed his children to inherit his share of her estate, and she revised the section related to slaves. Neltie’s codicil manumitted Charles after her death but made no changes to the fate awaiting Tom, who had been willed to Pruyn’s son Jacob.\footnote{38} With the end of slavery approaching, Pruyn, like other manumitting women, did not bother to preempt the end of slavery by freeing all slaves.

Although New York State’s slaveholding women have evaded extensive historical analysis, and only comprised a small segment of the population, they most effectively illustrate the varied nature of slave manumissions that occurred throughout the state. While slaveholding women in New York City have been associated with instantaneous manumissions void of service or financial conditions, Albany’s slaveholding women often included financial or service conditions that dramatically slowed or even prevented immediate manumission.\footnote{39} Albany’s manumitting women offered several manumissions following passage of the gradual abolition bill, but these manumitting women,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{37} Albany County Surrogate’s Court. “Neeltie Pruyn – Her last Will and Testament, Recorded June 25, 1817,” Book 5, 1-5.\textsuperscript{38} “Neeltie Pruyn – Her last Will and Testament,” 5. Jacob later manumitted Tom - ACHR, 174-175.\textsuperscript{39} White, 30.\par}
determined to keep some control, appeased slaves with legal freedom while imposing conditions that prevented complete freedom.

**Occupation**

Descriptions of upstate New York slaveholders typically classified them as farmers with vast tracts of land that required large numbers of slaves. But this classification relies on the significant populations of slaveholding farmers in the areas south of Albany. While Albany County contained the towns of Bethlehem and Guilderland, which had several slaveholders and slaves engaged in agriculture, Albany’s slaveholders engaged in other occupations including politicians, lawyers, merchants, skippers, and a plethora of retail and skilled professions such as grocers, carpenters, tanners, and wheelwrights. While Albany’s slaveholders performed many occupations, the majority engaged in commercial pursuits, categorized in this study as either retail or skilled.

Albany was not alone in having a slaveholding population engaged in non-agrarian interests. An examination of slaveholder occupations for New York City found that nearly two-thirds of the city’s merchants participated in slaveholding, as did nearly a quarter to a third of New York City’s retailers. In addition to the high proportion of commercially-minded slaveholders in both cities, the manumitting tendencies of the slaveholders remained similar. Following passage of the gradual abolition bill, manumissions increased dramatically in both locales, with merchants responsible for the most manumissions. Merchants accounted for nearly 45 percent of New York City’s manumissions; Albany’s merchants constituted 35 percent of the manumitting

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40 Gellman, 20-21; McManus, 55; Olson, 39-41; White, 21.
41 White, 8.
population.\footnote{Ibid., 48.} As Table 2 illustrates, those slaveholders engaged in retail, including merchants, represented the largest segment of Albany’s manumitting and non-manumitting slaveholders. While slaveholders engaged in a variety of occupations, the majority pursued commercial occupations.

**TABLE 2:**
*Occupations of Albany Slaveholders, 1799-1824*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Manumission on File</th>
<th>No Manumission on File</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the propensity for merchants to free one or more slaves suggests an occupational pull toward manumission, historian Shane White has identified difficult financial times instead of antislavery sentiments as the specific impetus for manumission. Following the Embargo of 1807, White noted a strong uptick in manumissions among merchants and posits that the dire financial times caused by the embargo forced slaveholders to abandon slaveholding.\footnote{Ibid., 40-41.} While the economic downturn may have affected Albany’s slaveholding merchants, the situation failed to result in an increased number of manumissions among the city’s merchants.
The manumission practices of Albany merchant Cornelius Van Schelluyne suggest that the economic downturn of 1807 may have affected at least one of the city’s merchants. Van Schelluyne’s extensive slaveholdings included seven slaves in 1800 and six slaves in 1810. In 1803 Van Schelluyne freed a female slave named Sarah or Saur for $100. A similar arrangement accompanied the 1814 freeing of Van Schelluyne’s 28-year-old male slave named Anthony, otherwise known as Tone; Tone paid $225 for his freedom. But when Van Schelluyne freed 24-year-old Philip More in 1809, the act required no payment. With three recorded manumissions, Van Schelluyne received no compensation for the one that occurred during the economic downturn. This suggests that Van Schelluyne escaped financial difficulty and felt comfortable releasing a slave without compensation; but the possibility also exists that Van Schelluyne did suffer financial difficulty, realized the difficulty Philip faced in securing employment and thus paying for freedom, and alleviated himself of the cost associated with maintaining Philip by offering manumission. Although Van Schellyune’s case provides a potential linkage to the manumission practices of New York City’s merchant slaveholders, his situation fails to collectively describe Albany’s manumitting merchants. While some merchants manumitted one or more slaves in the years following the embargo, seventy five percent of manumissions made by merchants occurred either years before or years after the embargo. Whereas economic factors may have occasionally influenced manumission decisions, the nature of some occupations and the duties performed by slaves may have affected manumission decisions.

Slaveholding doctors, while few in number, offered even fewer manumissions. Only two of the eight slaveholding doctors that served Albany manumitted slaves, and

44 ACHR, 19, 26, 68.
those that emancipated did so without intentions of abandoning slaveholding. Dr. Benjamin DeWitt freed his slave Kate in 1815. Five years earlier, DeWitt’s household contained a slave, most likely Kate, as well as a free black. DeWitt’s manumission of Kate served as his family’s only recorded manumission, and after his 1819 death, his wife appeared in the 1820 census with two free blacks and a slave, suggesting that even after freeing Kate, the family purchased another slave. With the addition of another slave to the household, Kate’s manumission may have proceeded as a reward for her behavior and not the family’s desire to abandon slaveholding.

Dr. Samuel Stringer, a prominent Albany physician, also held a larger amount of slaves than the average Albany slaveholder. While only three slaves served the Stringer household in 1800, his slaveholding more than doubled by 1810 when seven slaves served his household. Besides his large slaveholding and increase in slaves after the passage of the gradual abolition bill, Stringer’s behavior toward slaveholding contrasted significantly with his contemporaries. In the midst of freeing slaves, he continued to secure slaves’ labor. In 1804 Stringer freed his slave, Jack, but a year later he registered the birth of a girl named Mary which protected his right to her service for twenty-five years, as provided by the gradual abolition bill. Three years after securing his right to Mary, he freed a slave named Peter McDermot, and three years later he registered the birth of another female child, Hannah, whose service he retained. Yet with the passage of little more than a month, Stringer appeared at the Albany clerk’s office to free the girl’s mother, Jane.

45 ACHR, 135.
Finally, in 1814, three years before his death, Stringer emancipated a slave named Charles citing an 1810 law passed by the legislature. The law required slaveholders to either teach their slaves how to read or to abandon the slaves by their twenty-first birthday. Given Stringer’s citation of the law, he freed his slave instead of teaching him how to read, which would have entitled him to Charles’ service for an additional seven years. Stringer remained the only slaveholder to cite the law. While Stringer’s actions fail to represent the entirety of Albany’s slaveholders, his propensity to continue with slaveholding, like most of the city’s doctors, separates him from his fellow slaveholders.

Why doctors remained unlikely to abandon slaveholding remains undetermined. Yet, the nature of their occupation may offer a motive. As studies of New York City slavery illustrate, slaves serving slaveholders engaged as artisans, such as butchers and rope makers, often toiled with their slaveholder, gaining the relevant skills. When freed, these slaves had little difficulty finding employment. Slaves with more domestic skills, ones most likely to be serving doctors and ministers, however, had few other skills to offer in search of employment. This lack of additional training resulted in some slaves desiring to stay with the slaveholder who had freed them, preferring the security it offered. As such, doctors may have decided not to manumit their slaves in order to provide continued financial support, or, fearful of poor job prospects, the slaves of doctors may not have pushed for manumission as strongly as other slaves, accounting for the low number of manumissions among Albany’s doctors. The possibility also exists that doctors may not have wanted to forfeit the labor slaves performed.

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48 Hodges, 178-179.
Like doctors who may have wanted to continue holding slaves to provide financial security for the slaves and even themselves, Albany’s slaveholding ministers also offered few manumissions. Except for the ministers of churches that had policies against slavery, such as the Quakers and the Methodists, most of the ministers serving Albany during this period held at least one slave. With the exception of one minister, however, nearly all slaveholding ministers offered no recorded manumissions. (See Table 2.)

The Rev. Eliphalet Nott gained notoriety as the long-serving President of Union College who helped establish the university’s place in academia. But before accepting the position of President in 1804, Nott served as the minister of Albany’s First Presbyterian Church. In 1801, Nott freed two of his three slaves. At that time, very few manumissions had taken place, but the advanced age of Nott’s slaves may have compelled him to manumit them before they reached the age of fifty, at which time manumission required a large bond in case the slave became dependent on the state treasury. While Nott had provided freedom to two slaves, he continued to hold a slave after leaving Albany for his new home at Union College in neighboring Schenectady.

As slave manumissions progressed in the early years of the nineteenth century, they did so amid changing economic situations. This period saw a devastating financial downturn as well as increases in available wage labor due to increased immigration. These factors weighed heavily on slaveholders of particular occupations in New York City and as such moved some to offer slave manumissions. Yet, such a scenario failed to move Albany slaveholders in a similar manner. While economics likely prompted some Albany slaveholders of specific occupations to divest themselves of slaves, as did

49 ACHR, 9.
corresponding slaveholders in New York City, such motivations failed to fully explain the actions of Albany’s manumitting and non-manumitting slaveholders.

Political Affiliation

Albany’s early nineteenth-century newspapers document the city’s continued growth both in population and commercial activity. But these newspapers also illustrate the city’s burgeoning political divisions. Like much of the early nation, Albany politics largely divided into two camps: Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. Although the city had seen such dissension before in the lead up to the Revolution, and in the debate over constitutional ratification, the setting of the state capital in the city by 1797 cemented Albany as a center of political activity.  

Early Albany newspapers provide extensive and frequent notices of political gatherings including the names of participants. These listings allow for the identification of political affiliation for more than 80 percent of Albany’s slaveholders. As Table 3 reveals, a majority of Albany slaveholders affiliated with the more conservative Federalist party. Given John Jay’s support for gradual abolition, his party’s role in shepherding the bill through the legislature, and Federalists’ majority over Democratic-Republicans in the city, the dominance of Federalists among the manumitting remains unsurprising. Still, Federalists were not the only slaveholders manumitting slaves.

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TABLE 3:
Political Affiliation of Albany Slaveholders: 1799-1824

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Manumission on File</th>
<th>No Manumission on File</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federalist</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (women)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the passage of the gradual abolition bill in 1799, the state’s Democratic-Republicans used the legislation to attack or potentially divide Federalists who had gained control of state government in 1795. To sway proslavery Federalists over to their side, the Democratic-Republicans labeled the party as antislavery; and to prevent free blacks from becoming a Federalist voting bloc, the Democratic-Republicans criticized the dawdling pace of freedom offered by the gradual abolition bill. The Democratic-Republicans hoped that proslavery New Yorkers would perceive the Federalists as going too far, while New York’s free blacks would view them as not going far enough on the issue. The problem with the Democratic-Republicans’ strategy, like much political jockeying, came in the party members’ actions.

The gradual abolition bill had passed the legislature in 1799 with 63 votes in favor and 29 against. Those votes in the affirmative included 33 Federalists and 30 Democratic-Republicans. 14 Federalists and 15 Democratic-Republicans voted against the measure illustrating a near identical split in both parties on the issue of gradual

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abolition, and the non-partisan nature of the issue. While the Democratic-Republicans hoped to label the Federalists as the antislavery party, a majority of their own members had voted in favor of the measure. Furthermore, outside of the legislature, Albany’s Democratic-Republican slaveholders manumitted one or more slaves in a higher proportion than manumitting Federalists.

When comparing the number of Federalist and Democratic-Republican slaveholders in the city to the number of slaveholders to actually manumit one or more slaves, one finds nearly equal rates of manumission between the two parties. Among the city’s slaveholding Federalists, 39 percent manumitted one or more slaves, a number close to the 42 percent of manumitting Democratic-Republican slaveholders. Although labeled the antislavery party, Federalists manumitted one or more slaves in a lesser proportion, held more slaves than the Democratic-Republicans, and maintained those slaves longer. In 1800, Federalist slaveholders held 50% of the city’s slaves, 65% in 1810, and 45% in 1820. In comparison, Democratic-Republicans held 20% of the city’s slaves in 1800, 21% in 1810, and 19% in 1820. Thus, political affiliation alone fails to justify whether or not slaveholders manumitted.

The weak pull of political affiliation on a slaveholder’s manumission decision is evidenced in two letters written by Dirck Ten Broeck to his father, Abraham. The Ten Broecks occupied positions of prominence in both Albany and the Federalist party. Abraham, a slaveholder with nearly a dozen slaves in 1800, served five years as mayor of Albany. Abraham’s son, Dirck, held four slaves in 1800, as well as political office.

Serving as an Assembly member, Dirck rose to the position of Speaker and acted in that

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52 De Lorenzo, 319-320.
capacity when the gradual abolition bill passed.\textsuperscript{54} While Dirck remained a loyal Federalist, his family held large numbers of slaves, and his letters to his father detail his developing feelings, as well as his thoughts, about his colleagues on the subject of gradual abolition.

In 1796, the Assembly considered a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery. While the bill failed to become law, it served as the progenitor of the 1799 bill. In discussing the legislation, Dirck wrote, “…yesterday notice was given, that Tomorrow a Bill would be moved for, For the gradual abolition of Slavery in this state; this is a Bill of infinite importance, & excited the most pointed attention of our house – it will be strongly advocated, & also opposed, my part in the Scene I’ve not yet concluded upon…”\textsuperscript{55} But with the passage of a month, Dirck had developed feelings not only on the bill, but also on the issue of slavery. He wrote:

“… a detail of the proceedings of our House – since which, we have again been in a Committee of the whole house, on the Bill for the Gradual abolition of Slavery, this point is warmly advocated & as warmly opposed, copy of the Bill as introduced I herein inclose (sic) you – the bill will not pass in its present form, if it passes at all, which I much doubt, it will be upon the principal of compensation to the owner of the Slave, & the money to come from the State Treasury – all agree that a gradual abolition ought to take place, but I imagin (sic) the strong idea that the Legislature have no power to deprive their Constituents of their property without their consent in any instance, but where the public good absolutely requires it & then only on the stipulation of adequate compensation will prevail, & that no bill will pass this Session – however it is evident, that something of this kind will & must soon take place…”\textsuperscript{56}

Dirck’s letter not only described the debate that raged in the legislature over slavery and compensation, but also noted the change in thinking among Assemblymen. In addition, Dirck noted that an end to slavery, “must soon take place.” Nevertheless, Dirck Ten

\textsuperscript{54} Stefan Bielinski, “Dirck Ten Broeck,” The Colonial Albany Social History Project, August 30, 2006, \url{http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/t/ditbroeck37.htm}.

\textsuperscript{55} AIHA, Library, “Ten Broeck Family Papers,” “Dirck Ten Broeck to Abraham Ten Broeck” (AE117), Box 1, Folder 4, January 19, 1796.

\textsuperscript{56} AIHA, Library, “Ten Broeck Family Papers,” “Dirck Ten Broeck to Abraham Ten Broeck” (AE117), Box 1, Folder 4, February 7, 1796.
Broeck the politician and Dirck Ten Broeck the slaveholder failed to act in the same manner. While Ten Broeck’s slaveholdings dropped to three from four between 1800 and 1810, his decrease in slaveholdings came from his desertion of a slave and not manumission. Given his position in state government, Ten Broeck knew the steps required for manumission but failed to offer such an act to the slave he left in Albany upon moving to New York City. In 1818, Dirck certified that he had left his slave, Rop or Robert, in Albany when he moved to New York City, presumably before 1810. Now nearly a decade later, Ten Broeck offered a written manumission, which Rop likely requested in order to gain suffrage.

While Ten Broeck failed to reconcile his vote for gradual abolition with his own slaveholding practices, other Albany political leaders from both parties exhibited the same contradiction. In 1817, New York’s Democratic-Republican Governor, Daniel D. Tompkins, resigned his seat to become the nation’s sixth Vice-President under James Monroe. Before doing so, the Governor requested that the legislature enact legislation forever ending slavery in the state. The legislature responded with a bill that set the end of slavery for July 4, 1827. Yet, even with the calendar set to mark the institution’s demise, Albany slaveholders continued with the practice, not considering the hypocrisy of their actions, most likely justified by their view of northern slavery as milder than southern slavery.

57 ACHR p. 161,
58 When Democratic-Republicans reclaimed control of the state legislature, they introduced legislation requiring free blacks to produce written manumissions to qualify to vote in order to stem the support Federalists enjoyed from black voters. Black citizens unable to produce the documentation were prevented from voting. Albany’s manumission records contain several instances of slaves freed before 1811 seeking certifications of their manumission most likely to participate in voting. Gellman and Quigley, 64-66.
This idea of northern slavery as milder than southern slavery allowed northern slaveholders such as those in Albany to overlook the fact that they, too, enslaved persons. This idea is best expressed in the memoir of Anne Grant who grew up in Albany and recounted tales of life before the Revolution. On slavery, she wrote:

> In the society I am describing, even the dark aspect of slavery was softened into a smile. And I must, in justice to the best possible masters, say, that a great deal of that tranquility and comfort, to call it by no higher name, which distinguished this society from all others, was owing to the relation between master and servant being better understood here than in any other place. Let me not be detested as an advocate for slavery when I say that I think I have never seen people so happy in servitude as the domestics of the Albanians. 59

Considering the system of slavery existing within New York’s boundaries as more humane allowed New Yorkers to overlook the disconnect between freshly-won Revolutionary ideals and a system that enslaved nearly ten percent of the state’s population. 60 This belief so colored individual perceptions of slavery that when residents of Albany met to draft a petition seeking congressional eradication of slavery in southern states, even the slaveholders in attendance voiced strong support for the proposal and its incendiary language condemning slavery.

> On December 10, 1819, residents of the city and county of Albany met at the state’s Capitol to consider the spread of slavery into America’s new territories. The meeting, chaired by John Tayler, a noted Democratic-Republican from Albany who served as both Lieutenant and Acting Governor, with Teunis Van Vechten, an Albany Federalist, as secretary, illustrated both slaveholders’ beliefs that northern slavery differed greatly from southern, and that even the most ardent slavery detractors saw no problem in continuing the practice of slaveholding. In the few months following the

59 Anne MacVicar Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady, with Sketches of Manners And Scenery in America, as They Existed Previous to the Revolution.* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1841), 1:35.
60 Hodges, 169 & White, 32.
meeting, the 1820 census reported five slaves serving John Tayler’s household, an increase from three in the prior census. Van Vechten, having a total of three slaves in 1800, only held one slave in 1820.

While the exact number of residents to attend the meeting remains unknown, the meeting resulted in a list of resolutions, which were to be fashioned into an official document intended for the United States Congress. The meeting charged 19 of the attendees, almost all of them residents of the city, to draft the resolutions into a petition. In total, nine slaves were held by the men drafting a resolution to Congress to prohibit the spread of slavery. Beginning with, “…That the existence of slavery in the United States is a great political calamity, as well as moral evil, injurious to the existence of its free institutions, and repugnant to the spirit and principles of true religion,” the resolutions call on Congress to prohibit the spread of slavery, and for all states within the union to adopt, “the speedy abolition of slavery.”

Although the group desired no spread of slavery, they overlooked the inherent hypocrisy of this statement, as many in the group held slaves.

Political histories of New York look to the Federalists as the antislavery party, and not unfairly given John Jay’s leadership and the control of the legislature by Federalists when the gradual abolition bill passed. Yet, a review of Albany’s slaveholders shows nearly the same impetus toward manumission by both Federalists and Democratic-Republicans in their own lives. While the latter party likely wanted little antislavery association, their members in the legislature and their members among

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Albany’s slaveholding population proceeded toward manumission in the same proportion as Federalists.

**Religious Denomination**

Just as the city’s population grew during this period, so, too did Albany’s religious landscape. By 1800, Albany’s religious residents could choose between Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Quaker, or Methodist churches for Sunday worship services. Although the small city maintained a large diversity in the number of churches, the Dutch Reformed Church attracted the largest number of congregants, far outpacing the city’s new upstarts. By 1813, ten churches existed within the city consisting of the same denominations but with some operating more than one church, such as the Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian churches. By the time that slavery ended in New York State, thirteen churches of varying denominations served the city.62

While the number of churches grew, Albany slaveholders congregated into three main denominations: Reformed Dutch, Anglican, and Presbyterian. Much has been written on the attitudes of religious denominations toward slavery, with a bulk of the research focusing on the antebellum period preceding the Civil War. But what is lacking is attention to the effect of denominational action or inaction on slaveholders’ manumission decisions. One study of African Americans in the greater New York City region, including eastern New Jersey, found a greater likelihood for slave emancipations in areas with high populations of Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Quakers. Conversely, far fewer slave emancipations occurred in areas with high concentrations of citizens with

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62 By 1827, the Dutch Reformed Church operated two churches, and the Presbyterian Church had opened four churches. Tobias V. Cuyler, *T.V. Cuyler’s Albany Directory, For the Year 1827: Containing Alphabetical List of Residents Within the City.* (Albany: E. & E. Hosford, 1827) 98; McEneny, 113-114, Anne F. Roberts and Marcia W. Cockrell, eds., *Historic Albany: Its Churches and Synagogues;* (Albany: Communication Services, 1986), 3-5.
Dutch heritage, and thus strong ties to the Dutch Reformed Church. This finding correlates with Albany, in which nearly half of the city’s Presbyterian slaveholders manumitted one or more slaves, while only 40% of the city’s Dutch Reformed slaveholders offered manumissions.

Given New York’s Dutch origins, the Dutch Reformed Church in New York occupied a strong position in colonial and post-Revolution New York State. Even in the midst of the English takeover of the colony in 1664, the American Revolution, and the religious revivals drawing many to new denominations, the Dutch Reformed Church both in Albany and statewide remained strong in influence and in membership. In total, half of the 361 slaveholders identified in this project worshipped in the Dutch Reformed Church, and the largest segment of both manumitting and non-manumitting slaveholders (see Table 4) had ties to the church — a church that remained nearly silent on the practice of slaveholding.

**TABLE 4:**
*Religious Denomination of Albany Slaveholders, 1799-1824*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Manumission on File</th>
<th>No Manumission on File</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Reformed</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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63 Hodges, 165.

64 Fabend illustrates the strength of the church, especially in New York and New Jersey, and its members’ reliance on the church in the midst of several cultural shifts as the nation progressed toward an American identity. Firth Haring Fabend, *Zion on the Hudson: Dutch New York and New Jersey in the Age of Revivals*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 4-7.
During the colonial period, the Dutch Reformed Churches in America remained under the dominion of the mother church in the Netherlands. With that country so vested in the slave trade, especially with the Dutch West India Company importing slaves to the New York colony, the church, including its American branch, largely avoided the slavery question. This aversion continued even after European control of the church ended in 1772, likely due to the presence of slaveholders in numerous Dutch Reformed pulpits and pews.\textsuperscript{65} By 1800, nearly eighty percent of Albany slaves served slaveholders affiliated with the Church. These slaveholders included the Church’s pastors, Rev. John B. Johnson who held two slaves, and his successor Rev. John M. Bradford who held one slave.

While some Dutch Reformed slaveholders abandoned slaveholding in the years following the passage of the gradual abolition bill, divine motivations fail to present themselves in such actions. Albany’s mayor, Philip S. Van Rensselaer underwent a notable decrease in slaveholdings from six in 1800 to zero in 1810.\textsuperscript{66} Freeing two female slaves in July 1805, Van Rensselaer placed strict conditions on the manumissions requiring that 36-year-old Sarah and 38-year-old Marina leave Albany County within eight days and never return.\textsuperscript{67}

Although a majority of manumitting slaveholders aligned themselves with the Dutch Reformed Church, this majority failed to manumit slaves in large numbers, mostly freeing one slave; nor did the slave populations held by these individuals decrease rapidly. By 1820, nearly 20% of Albany slaves inhabited the household of a Dutch Reformed member who had previously manumitted one or more slaves. Thus, while some Dutch


\textsuperscript{66} This is likely an enumeration error as Van Rensselaer manumitted two slaves he held since the 1790s in 1811 and another slave in 1812. It appears that he ceased to hold slaves after 1812. ACHR, 120-121, 123.

Reformed members divested themselves completely of slaves, others, even when
manumitting one or more slaves, continued as slaveholders. As slaves in the greater New
York City region and Eastern New Jersey serving Dutch Reformed Church members
awaited manumission, so, too, did the slaves serving Albany’s Dutch Reformed
slaveholders.

While historian Graham Russell Hodges noted that slaves in southern New York
State and eastern New Jersey inhabiting areas of high Anglican populations often
experienced manumissions at greater rates, such a condition did not exist in Albany, with
its stronger connections to the Dutch Reformed Church. The Anglican Church, which
considered slavery a secular issue and not one requiring theological examination,
assumed the same silent position on slavery that the Dutch Reformed Church upheld --
and the silence is reflected in Albany’s manumission records. While nearly forty
Albany slaveholders belonged to Saint Peter’s Church, the city’s Anglican and eventually
Episcopalian church, only fifteen of these identified slaveholders manumitted slaves
during this period and did so with little speed. (See Table 4.)

For example, John Stevenson, a prominent Albany manufacturer and
communicant of St. Peter’s, held one of the city’s largest communities of slaves by 1800.
With a total of nine slaves, he manumitted one of his slaves, Maria, in 1807. Yet,
Maria’s freedom came gradually as Stevenson set Maria’s manumission on the condition
that she continue to faithfully serve the Stevenson family for an additional six years
before gaining her freedom. John Stevenson died in 1810, and Maria served until 1815
before gaining freedom, which constituted an additional two years of service.

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68 Biswajit Pierce and Clarence Bolden, “The Summative History of the Episcopal Church policies
Regarding Slavery and Segregation.” Last Modified: 2006.
Nevertheless, at the time of her manumission, Maria’s two children, Jack and Charles, became free as well, with John Stevenson’s son, James, manumitting the family. Perhaps Maria agreed to additional years of service to ensure her family’s freedom. While Stevenson remains one example, the other manumitting members of Saint Peter’s proceeded in a similar manner.

Although the Dutch Reformed and Anglican churches both in Albany and nationally avoided slavery-focused discussions, the new to Albany Presbyterian denomination considered the issue. The Presbyterian Synod of New York and Philadelphia began discussions concerning the church’s stance on slavery in 1774, but like many legislative bodies addressing the topic, the Synod left the question unsettled. By 1787, however, the Synod achieved consensus on a subdued denunciation of slaveholding which recommended, “in warmest terms, to every member of this body, and to all the Churches and families under their care, to do everything in their power consistent with the rights of civil society, to promote the abolition of slavery, and the instruction of negroes, whether bond or free.”

The Synod’s call for gradual abolition failed to make Presbyterianism an anti-slavery denomination, nor did it inspire congregants to visit city hall and manumit one or more of their slaves. In fact, two slaveholding ministers – Rev. Eliphalet Nott (1798-1804) and Rev. William Neill (1809-1816) – pastored First Presbyterian Church in the years following the Synod’s recommendation. Nevertheless, an examination of Albany’s slaveholding Presbyterians reveals a substantial decline in slaveholding among

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these individuals, a decline shared by no other denomination in the city. Between 1800
and 1810 the number of slaves held by identified Presbyterians dropped by 35 percent.
By 1820, only three members of First Presbyterian Church continued the practice.
Albany boardinghouse owner and onetime trustee of First Presbyterian Church, Robert
McClallan, serves as a prime example of members’ tendencies to decrease their
slaveholdings but without strong antislavery motivation. In 1802 McClallan manumitted
his 23-year-old female slave, Jude, in exchange for one hundred dollars and the promise
of an additional one hundred and fifty. Two years later McClallan freed his last
remaining slave, a female named Dean, for one dollar as a reward for her, “fidelity and
good behavior.”71

While religious affiliation cannot completely account for a slaveholder’s
manumission decision, the position of their churches – or lack thereof – on the issue of
slavery does appear to have spurred some action. While members of the city’s Dutch
Reformed and Anglican churches manumitted slaves, their churches’ inaction and silence
on the issue is reflected in the manumission records illustrating few manumissions and
manumissions resulting in slaveholders’ personal or financial gain. The Presbyterian
Church did call for an end to slavery, and even though many of the denomination’s
adherents, including pastors, held slaves, Albany Presbyterians manumitted their slaves at
a greater rate than their Dutch Reformed and Anglican contemporaries.

Residence

Nineteenth century artist and Albany resident James Eights produced fantastic
images depicting Albany at the turn of the nineteenth century that illustrated scenes from

71 Ibid, 84; ACHR, 15-16, 31.
the city’s streetscapes. While these images provide representations of Albany’s earlier
days, Eights’ drawings also provide insight into slaveholders’ manumission motivations.
Eights’ representations of Albany streetscapes illustrate more than just the close
proximity of homes within the city. Identifying the residences of slaveholders
demonstrates the effect of residence on a slaveholder’s decision to manumit.

Prior studies of slavery in New York have pointed to higher rates of manumission
in urban areas over rural areas. With rural slaveholders requiring cheap agricultural
assistance, slave labor proved more vital. Although this description of manumissions is
drawn largely from New York City and its surrounding areas, the same connection can be
made to slavery in Albany County. As noted in Appendix A, the city of Albany saw a
much sharper decline in slaveholding than its surrounding rural environs where
slaveholders and slaves farmed. Between 1800 and 1810 Albany’s slave population
dropped by 48%. At the same time the rural town of Coeymans saw its slave population
drop by 14%. From 1810 to 1820 Albany’s slave population decreased by 43% while the
neighboring towns of Guilderland and Watervliet experienced a 26% and 24% drop,
respectively. Although studies of slavery have noted the propensity for manumissions in
urban areas, little else has been studied. Specifically, which areas of an urban city
produced more manumissions?

The 1800 census enumerated Albany’s citizens by ward, with the first ward
encompassing both a majority of the city as well as the entirety of its southern border, the
second ward covering the city’s center, and the third ward stretching west from the city’s
northern waterfront. (See Image 1.) The largest populations of slaves inhabited the first
ward, as did a majority of the city’s white population. But what remains notable is the
large concentration of slaves and slaveholders in the city’s third ward. In 1800, more than forty percent of the ward’s white population lived in slaveholding households, more than double that of the first and second wards. Unfortunately, subsequent censuses failed to differentiate between wards, and the creation of fourth and fifth wards leave historians to rely on maps from the period, as illustrated below, to arbitrarily place the city’s residents.

Image 1: G.W. Merchant’s 1828 Map of the City of Albany

Compiling the addresses of Albany’s slaveholders from city directories has allowed for the placement of these individuals within the city’s five wards. The map

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above shows few changes from the wards as drawn in earlier maps, except for the creation of a fifth ward accounting for the city’s northern expansion, and the carving out of a fourth ward from the first ward’s eastern border. The creation of the fourth ward meant that many Albany residents who had been identified in the first ward in 1800 now inhabited the fourth ward. For the purposes of this study, these residents have continued to be identified in the first ward.

As Table 5 shows, the third ward accounted for the majority of manumitting slaveholders but also the second highest proportion of non-manumitting slaveholders. As slaveholders’ occupational data confirms, given the third ward’s riparian location, as well as being a large commercial center, slaves serving in this ward worked largely in maritime or commercial pursuits, and slaveholders likely maintained slaveholding for economic reasons.

### TABLE 5:

*Residence of Albany Slaveholders, 1799-1824*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Manumission on File</th>
<th>No Manumission on File</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in Appendix A, the 1800 census enumerated the fewest number of slaves in the second ward (128), as well as the smallest percentage of white residents inhabiting slaveholding households. This limited slavery may account for the second ward’s large percentage of manumissions. But the practices of slaveholders in the first ward provide further evidence of the impact of residence in that the ward had the highest percentage of
non-manumitting slaveholders as well as the smallest proportion of manumitting slaveholders (among the city’s original three wards). With the first ward having the highest population of slaves in 1800 (228) and a majority of first ward slaveholders not offering manumission, it is possible that the strong slaveholding nature of this ward led many of its slaveholders to forego manumissions.

While the arbitrary nature of slaveholder placement within wards fails to allow for significant conclusions concerning slaveholders’ manumission decisions, the ward placements do reflect the convergence of Albany’s slaveholders in the older section of the city, bordering on the Hudson River. Like the development of the state, and the failure of slaveholding to move into western portions of New York, slaveholding in Albany remained centered in the city’s eastern boundaries, suggesting that slaveholding remained robust in areas where it had existed but failed to take hold in expanding sections of the city.

Although the effect of one’s residence requires further evidence to determine its influence on a slaveholder’s manumission decision, the work of an Albany model maker may provide an initial clue. In the middle part of the twentieth century, Albany resident Paul Schrodt utilized James Eights’ paintings to design historical models of Albany. One such model illustrated Albany around 1805 and exhibited a city block as it had appeared. In addition to the model, the names of the homes’ inhabitants also appeared, and represented some of Albany’s most prominent slaveholders. Nearly every household on this block contained slaves, and nearly every one of the slaveholders failed to appear in Albany’s manumission records.73 As the concluding section on slaves will illustrate,

73 The model and accompanying names appear in Hilsop, 230-231.
perhaps the people around slaveholders, including their neighbors, had the greatest influence on the manumission decision.

**Slaves**

This study has moved beyond historians’ considerations of slave manumissions, which cited the gradual abolition bill and slave negotiations as significant motivators, to more fully consider the variety of factors moving slaveholders to manumit. Yet, an area that deserves further exploration concerns the slaves themselves. While personal characteristics influenced a slaveholders’ decision to manumit, the negotiating tactics of Albany’s slaves also produced manumissions.

Tom Townsides’ negotiation for his freedom appears very early in Albany’s manumission records. Townsides’ slaveholder, Gerardus Beeckman, lived in neighboring Rensselaer County, but filed Townsides’ certificate of manumission with the Albany clerk. Tom’s manumission required him to pay Beeckman £100 per year for four years plus any interest resulting from late payments. If not paid by the end of four years, Beeckman retained his right to enslave Tom until he received payment in full. By 1806, Tom had paid a total of $245 and received his freedom.74

Similarly, John Cullings recorded a manumission for his slave John, known as Yon. Purchasing Yon for $212, Cullings agreed to free him upon working off his purchase price plus interest. As part of the manumission, Cullings agreed that each year of work performed by Yon accounted for $100 payment. If Yon needed clothing or similar items, his manumission required him to receive the items in the company of a “reputable person,

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74 ACHR, 46-47.
who will appraise them.” With the appraisal, Cullings added the purchase price of the items onto the amount owed by Yon.75

These two manumissions point to slaveholder-slave negotiations for freedom. But with such burdensome requirements, one questions the level of slave agency present in these negotiations. Were these actual negotiations or just stipulations created by slaveholders and forced upon slaves like those offered by several female slaveholders? The level of slave power present in negotiations between slaves and slaveholders is best represented by an Albany slave named Gustus, who went to great lengths in ensuring his freedom from slavery.

On October 18, 1807, Albany slaveholder Peter Gansevoort, Jr. penned a letter to Judge William Walker in eastern Massachusetts informing him of his intent to sell his slave, Gustus. Purchased from another Albany County slaveholder, Benjamin Van Loon, Gustus told Gansevoort that he disliked his assignment of housework and had found someone willing to purchase him from Gansevoort. In the months prior, Gustus had visited the judge’s house and during such time convinced the man to purchase him. The following week, Gustus also wrote a letter to the judge inquiring about his intentions and whether he should seek someone else.

Walker’s answer appeared a month later; he offered to buy Gustus for Gansevoort’s price, $287.50 plus interest. But Walker stipulated that Gansevoort manumit Gustus and upon being freed, Gustus faithfully serve the Walker family as an indentured servant for seven years. Hoping that Gustus would reconsider his position, Gansevoort waited for nearly a month before responding to Walker’s letter. But, a month later Gustus remained unhappy and Gansevoort and Gustus, as noted by Gansevoort, agreed to Walker’s

75 ACHR, 132-133.
proposition. On December 17, 1807 Gustus departed from Albany for his new home in Massachusetts, “poorly clothed” as noted by Judge Walker, but arriving soon after the New Year. While Gustus noted that he was unhappy with the work he performed at Gansevoort’s home, he likely could have arranged for another Albany slaveholder to purchase him. But Gustus may have had ulterior motives for his move to Massachusetts. Peter Gansevoort, Jr. did not manumit any of the four slaves he held in 1800, and by 1810 he still held two of those slaves. Perhaps Gansevoort refused to manumit Gustus, and not wanting to live a life of slavery, Gustus sought placement in Massachusetts with its liberalized stance towards slavery.

While Gustus’ case necessitated negotiations between two white men, he remained responsible for the initial act. Due to his tenacity in both approaching Walker and writing to him, Gustus turned his bad situation at Gansevoort’s home into a more positive one by securing placement with Judge Walker. Gustus represented a class of slaves who negotiated their own freedom, as did slaves in other slaveholding locales. Yet, even with the negotiation skills shown by Albany’s slaves, one must remember that almost two-thirds of Albany slaveholders offered no recorded manumissions, questioning the success of slave negotiations in Albany.

Conclusion

On July 4, 1827 the black residents of Albany filled the streets to celebrate the end of slavery. Now free, the city’s former slaves experienced their first day of freedom as

Americans simultaneously celebrated more than fifty years of their own independence from Great Britain. But a majority of the free blacks celebrating that day had gained freedom in the years before. Between 1800-1824 nearly 240 slaves gained freedom through manumissions registered by the city’s slaveholders.

Following the introduction of a gradual abolition bill in 1799, slave manumissions statewide increased dramatically, leading historians to connect the two events. Arguing that the bill signaled to slaveholders the impending end of slavery, slaveholders either offered manumissions because of this realization, or after having negotiated with slaves who argued for freedom citing slavery’s encroaching end. While both of these explanations remain valid, they fail to account for the diverse and varied nature of slave manumissions.

As evidenced by an examination of more than 300 Albany slaveholders, social characteristics such as gender, occupation, political affiliation, religious denomination, and residence all influenced slaveholders in deciding whether or not to offer manumissions. These characteristics, sometimes individually, or in concert, influenced both manumitting and non-manumitting slaveholders. To truly understand slavery’s slow death in New York following passage of the gradual abolition bill, one cannot rely solely on the bill itself or on slave negotiations for explanation. Instead, full consideration of the range of slaveholders offering manumissions and their varied backgrounds presents the most accurate description of slavery’s end.
## APPENDIX A

1800 Albany County Census Returns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/Town</th>
<th>White Population</th>
<th>Free Black Population</th>
<th>Slave Population</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in slaveholding households</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in households with free blacks</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in households with slaves and freed blacks</th>
<th>Percent of freed black population residing in free black households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany: First Ward</td>
<td>2507</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany: Second Ward</td>
<td>1273</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany: Third Ward</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berne</td>
<td>3450</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>3466</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeymans</td>
<td>2962</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rensselaerville</td>
<td>4506</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watervliet</td>
<td>4535</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,528</strong></td>
<td><strong>259</strong></td>
<td><strong>1368</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1810 Albany County Census Returns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/Town</th>
<th>White Population</th>
<th>Free Black Population</th>
<th>Slave Population</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in slaveholding households</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in households with free blacks</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in households with slaves and free blacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>8601</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berne</td>
<td>5082</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>4184</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeymans</td>
<td>3441</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonie</td>
<td>1318</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilderland</td>
<td>2346</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rensselaerville</td>
<td>5889</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watervliet</td>
<td>2162</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>33,023</strong></td>
<td><strong>867</strong></td>
<td><strong>772</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1820 Albany County Census Returns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/Town</th>
<th>White Population</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
<th>Free Black Population</th>
<th>Slave Population</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in slaveholding households</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in households with free blacks</th>
<th>Percent of white population residing in households with slaves and free blacks</th>
<th>Percent of freed black population residing in free black households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>12231</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berne</td>
<td>5607</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>5113</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeymans</td>
<td>2865</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilderland</td>
<td>2258</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rensselaerville</td>
<td>3508</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watervliet</td>
<td>2714</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westerlo</td>
<td>3526</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>37,822</strong></td>
<td><strong>321</strong></td>
<td><strong>859</strong></td>
<td><strong>411</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i While the city of Schenectady and towns of Princeton and Duanesburg were included in the 1800 enumeration of Albany County, the three municipalities became part of Schenectady County before the 1810 enumeration and were excluded from this study. Their respective numbers were subtracted from the official published census enumeration.

ii The official tally of free blacks for the city of Albany is 501, but 502 appear in the census.

iii On page one, the number of freed black males between 14-26 is mistakenly reported as freed black males between 25-45, which is zero. On page five, the enumeration shows two free black females between the ages of 16-25, but only one is listed on that page. On page none, eight females under the age of 14 appear on the page, but only six are counted in the page’s enumeration. On page 30, there is one female slave over the age of 35, but the enumeration does not count her.

iv The manuscript of the 1820 census for Berne shows three freed black females between the ages of 14-26, while the tabulated results only reflect two.

v The enumeration of the 1820 census for Bethlehem contains many problems. On page one, the count for female free blacks is listed as 2 but only one is enumerated. A female free black over 45 listed on the page is mistakenly counted in that column instead of the respective column. On page 13 of the census the correct number of male slaves under the age of 14 is 15, yet 16 is reported in the printed results. Additionally, the enumeration of female slaves over the age of 45 contains an addition error in which eight female slaves are counted as nine.

vi The manuscript of the 1820 census for Coeymans shows six female slaves under the age of 14 but reports only five. Additionally, nine female slaves between the ages of 14-26 are listed in the manuscript but only eight are accounted for in tabulated results.
Page four of the 1820 census for Guilderland shows three female slaves under the age of 14, but the enumeration counts four. For the actual enumeration, the addition of the final tally omits the three male slaves under the age of 14 from page four which brings the total amount of slaves in this category to nine instead of six. While calculating the results for Guilderland on the final page of the Census, the enumerator failed to include the number of male slaves under 14, which made the enumeration incorrect for the following categories: all male slaves and female slaves between 14-26 and 26-45. The correct numbers are reflected in the 1820 chart.

The manuscript of the 1820 census for Watervliet shows 20 male slaves between the ages of 14-26 as opposed to the reported number of 19. Additionally, six male slaves over the age of forty-five appear in the census, but the reported number is five.

The manuscript of the 1820 census for Westerlo remains correct until page 6 when it appears that the enumerator has added previously counted individuals as new individuals. Thus, an extra free colored male under 14, a free colored male between 26-45, and a free colored woman over 45 are counted twice. Additionally, the total number of residents for the town had been underreported by 200 on the official census report.
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**Published Novels**


**Secondary Sources**


