

BROOKLYN

CONNECTIONS



SLAVERY, ABOLITION, AND FREEDOM IN BROOKLYN

PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name

INTRODUCTORY READING

Adaptation

Many Americans are not aware of the fact that slavery existed and thrived in Brooklyn, because so often a person thinks of slavery as an institution particular to the South. There were three periods of slavery in Brooklyn; under the Dutch, 1628-1661; under the English, 1664-1776 and under the newly formed American Government, 1783-1827.

Dutch: 1614-1664

The Dutch came to Manhattan and Brooklyn not to **colonize** but to earn fortunes with which they hoped to return to Holland. During this period of slavery Blacks were not the only people in bondage. Indians were enslaved and thousands of whites were indentured servants. These two forms of bondage provided the labor needed for economic progress and development in Kings County.

Slaves were well treated to insure their economic investment, yet discrimination did exist in Dutch religious edicts. Once Blacks learned that conversion to the Dutch Reform Church failed to bring freedom, some resorted to more aggressive actions. They sought freedom by running away. The English provinces of New Haven and Maryland encouraged slaves to defect, which came from their belief that the Dutch were simply squatters on English land.

English: 1664-1776

New York State played a significant role in the “Golden Age of the Slave Trade”—it was a primary port on the Atlantic Coast. Slavery flourished under English rule transforming it from a private to a public system of labor. The transfer of power also saw humane aspects of slavery slowly disappear. The Dutch West India Company was replaced by the Royal African Company. The company consisted of private individuals who invested large sums of money in building ships and financing slave expeditions. In 1665 the English made slavery a legal institution under the “Articles of Capitulation.” Through a gradual process, slavery was restricted to people of African origin.

During the eighteenth century, slaves in Kings County were taught many skills and trades. They worked as carpenters, shoemakers, blacksmiths, weavers, candle makers and many other occupations. They knew several languages and were able to conduct business in the city for their white masters.

The **slave codes** in New York State were brutal but enforcement was not as severe as it was in the Deep South. Many slaves fled Kings County and sought refuge among the Indians. The Indians seldom cooperated with white masters despite the offers of large rewards. Former slaves formed camps in the forests and congregated in bands, raiding and looting Dutch farms. Several fled to Canada and sought refuge among the French.

Americans: 1776-1827

During the American Revolution, there was much talk of equality and freedom, yet slavery was a living **contradiction** of those principles. On August 27, 1776 the first battle of the American Revolution took place in Brooklyn. In 1781 a law was passed that gave slaves freedom when they served in any of the armed forces for three years. By the end of the war, more than four thousand Blacks had served in the Continental Army.

Three years after the Revolution was over, the **abolition** movement began to grow. However it wasn't until 1799 when the legislature passed a **statute** abolishing slavery gradually. By 1820, 50 percent of the Black population in Kings County was free. Free black people were excluded from most of the skilled occupations. For the most part, Blacks could not secure work and remained economically deprived. Emancipation had freed them from control of individual masters but left them in bondage to white society.

CITATION: Van Derzee, Charlene Claye. *An Introduction to The Black Contribution to the Development of Brooklyn*. Brooklyn: New Muse Community Museum of Brooklyn, 1977. Print.

A BLACK WOMAN FOR SALE,
TWENTY-NINE years old, with her female child, eleven months old; she was brought up at Newtown, (L. I.) and is acquainted with all kinds of work. To save trouble, the price is 60 pounds. Inquire at the corner of Bowery-lane and Verplanck-street, opposite Vauxhall Garden. July 13. 58—14

STORES AND WHARF
At Brooklyn, directly South of the Old Ferry.

...of politics, advertisements, &c.—Elegantly printed on fine paper—Price two dollars per annum.

FOR SALE
BY the subscriber on reasonable terms a stout able-bodied,
NEGRO MAN,
who understands all kinds of Farming business, he is about 23 years of age, his master has no reason to suspect him of dishonesty or Intoxication, he expresses a wish to be set free at a certain age, but will be sold for Life, for further particulars enquire of the subscriber at Oysterbay Long-Island.
SAMUEL YOUNGS.
Dated June 9th, 1812. 3w.

1. How does DOCUMENT 1 describe the people for sale?

2. How old was the woman for sale and what kind of work did she do?

3. How old was the man for sale and what kind of work did he do?

4. Did either of the slaves express a desire to be free in the advertisement? Why might this information be important to a potential buyer?

SLAVERY HERE.

Right in Brooklyn and Out on Long Island.

The "Peculiar Institution" Seventy Years Ago Legalized in This State Until the Year 1825—Noted Negroes and Abolitionists—Lewis Tappan. Owen Lovejoy's Funeral.

Slavery existed on Long Island long prior to the revolution and was not wholly abolished for more than a quarter of a century from the triumph of the colonies. The slaves were generally employed in doing household work, they were in most cases kindly treated, and valued at \$120 to \$150 each. A negro burying ground stood on Chambers street, New York, in the rear of A. T. Stewart's downtown store, while negro meeting houses stood in various places. Records of an early period show that Elizabeth Carpenter, a widow, carrying on her husband's business, who was a well known butcher near "ye olde Long Island [Fulton] ferry," lost two of her most valuable slaves in the negro plot of 1741—one of whom was burned at the stake and another transported, while in 1756 she lost one by running away and again in 1759. Her son John, returned as a grand juror, is also stated as being the owner of three slaves in 1755.

An item of March 4, 1797 reads: "John Dougherty manumitted and set free his negro man Caesar Foster, aged 28 years," this being the first recorded act of manumission and which dates the beginning of emancipation in Brooklyn, but which was not wholly completed until about 1825, during which time many blacks were set free, but who may have been the instigator of this early abolition movement does not appear. The last public slave auction was at the Wallabout in 1773, when four slaves belonging to Widow Heltze Rappelye were sold. The sale was generally condemned, it being thought they should have been allowed to select their own masters and only to be sold when they expressed such a desire.

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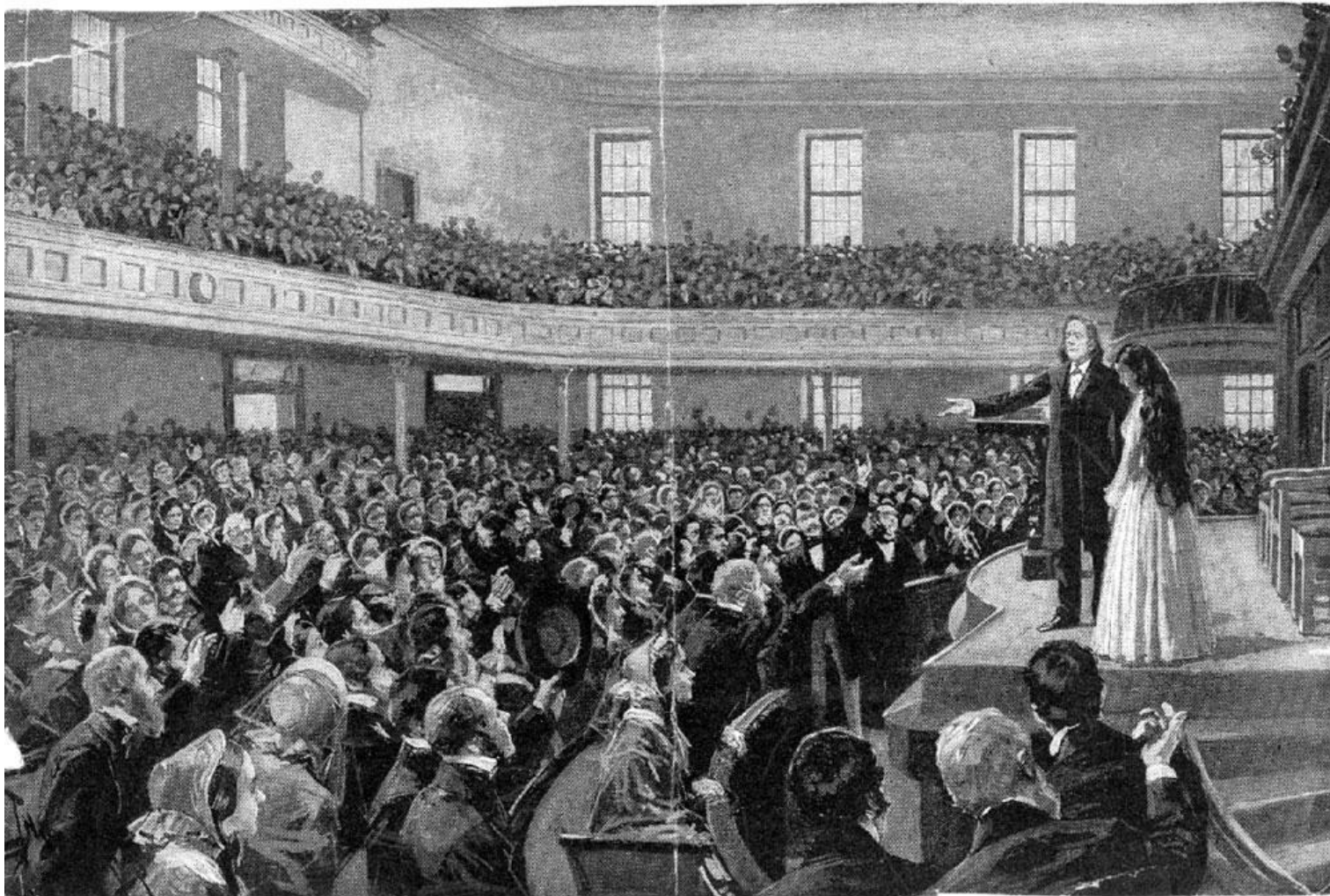
1. According to DOCUMENT 2, how much did a slave in Brooklyn typically cost? Compare this with the values listed for slaves in DOCUMENT 2. Are the prices in DOCUMENT 2 higher or lower than what DOCUMENT 10 reports? Why do you think this is?

2. Read the following quote from the article: "...[the slaves] were in most cases kindly treated..." Is this a fact or an opinion? Explain why.

3. Where and when was the last slave auction in Brooklyn?

4. Where was the "negro burying ground" located? Name the street and the borough.

Document 3: "Mr. Beecher Selling A Beautiful Slave Girl In His Pulpit." 1856. Brooklyn Daily Eagle Photographs, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



MR. BEECHER SELLING A BEAUTIFUL SLAVE GIRL IN HIS PULPIT.

1. Describe the scene in DOCUMENT 3.

2. Why do you think the preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, hold slave auctions?

3. Why do you think the crowd is so large?

4. Who do you think attended the auctions? What does this tell you about their beliefs?

Document 4 – Bill of Sale for Sally Maria Diggs aka Pink. 8 Feb 1860. Print. Brooklyn Collection
Brooklyn Public Library.

Transcription:

"To all persons whom it may concern:

Whereas on the fifth day of February in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher of the city of Brooklyn state of New York presented to the congregation of Plymouth church of said city of which congregation he is Pastor the case of Sally Maria Diggs-usually called Pink who was then a slave child offered for sale in the city of Washington District of Columbia and whereas the said Beecher and congregation were desirous that the said slave child should be set free in order that she might not be separated from her Grandmother with whom she had lived up to that date and Whereas a contribution of money was made by the said congregation on the day above mentioned for the purpose of securing the freedom of the said slave child which money was put into my hands by the said Preacher with instructions to take the manner of servitude or service to me-my Executors Administrators heirs and assigns forever.

In testimony whereof I have hereto set my hand and seal this Eleventh day of February one thousand eight hundred and sixty

Signed sealed and delivered in presence of

Charles Naylor

Thomas Donne

John F. Blake (SEAL)"

631x

To All persons whom it may concern.

Whereas on the fifth day of February in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher of the city of Brooklyn State of New York presented to the congregation of Plymouth church of said city of which congregation he is Pastor the case of Sally Maria Diggs - usually called Pink who was then a slave child offered for sale in the city of Washington District of Columbia and whereas the said Beecher and congregation were desirous that the said slave child should be set free in order that she might not be separated from her Grandmother with whom she had lived up to that date and

Whereas a contribution of money was made by the said congregation on the day above mentioned for the purpose of securing the freedom of the said slave child which money was put into my hands by the said Beecher with instructions to take the

1. Read DOCUMENT 4. When was Pink sold?

2. According to this letter, where would Pink live when freed?

3. Why do you think it was important to draft a letter stating Pink was free?

4. Where was Pink a slave?

Document 5: Application for Welfare. 1831. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

Gradual emancipation began in Brooklyn in 1799 and by 1820 half of the Black population in Kings County was free. However, Black freedmen were excluded from most of the skilled occupations, making extremely difficult to achieve economic success or even stability.

THE examination of *Michael Johnson* a Col^d man
taken in the town of *North Hemp^e* before
Joseph Doeg
Superintendent of the Poor of Queens County, the *23* day of *Dec^r*
1831 - Who says he was brought up in *Foster's* mea-
dow - and sold a slave to *John S. Bergen*
at *Gowanus*. he came free and came to
Spring field at *9* years ago - when his mother
then lived. he has ever since roved about
Coecenty, working wherever he could get em-
ploy - never had a family nor hired a house
~~nor a~~ and has no home in any particular
place. - appears not to understand the
obligations of an Oath and none has been
administered -

Transcription

[front side]

The examination of Michael Johnson a colored man taken in the town of North Hempstead before Joseph Dodger Superintendent of the Poor of Queens County, the 23 day of Dec.1831 – Who says he was brought up in Fosters Meadow – and sold a slave to John S. Bergen at Gowanus. He came from and came the Spring...(?)... at –9 years ago where his mother then lived. He has ever since moved about the County walking wherever he could get employ. Never had a family not had a House and has no home in any particular place. Appears not to ...(?).... The obligations of an Oath end (?) has been administered.

[back side – not shown]

Michael Johnson
4 January 1832
Pauper of the

Filed the 21 day of
February 1832
...(?)...

Upon due consideration of the facts and circumstances stated in the proceeding examination, the said Michael Johnson is adjudged and determined to be a pauper, chargeable to the 4 January 1832.

Sam Miller
S.C. Sn...(?)...
Joseph Dodger
Superintendents, County Poor

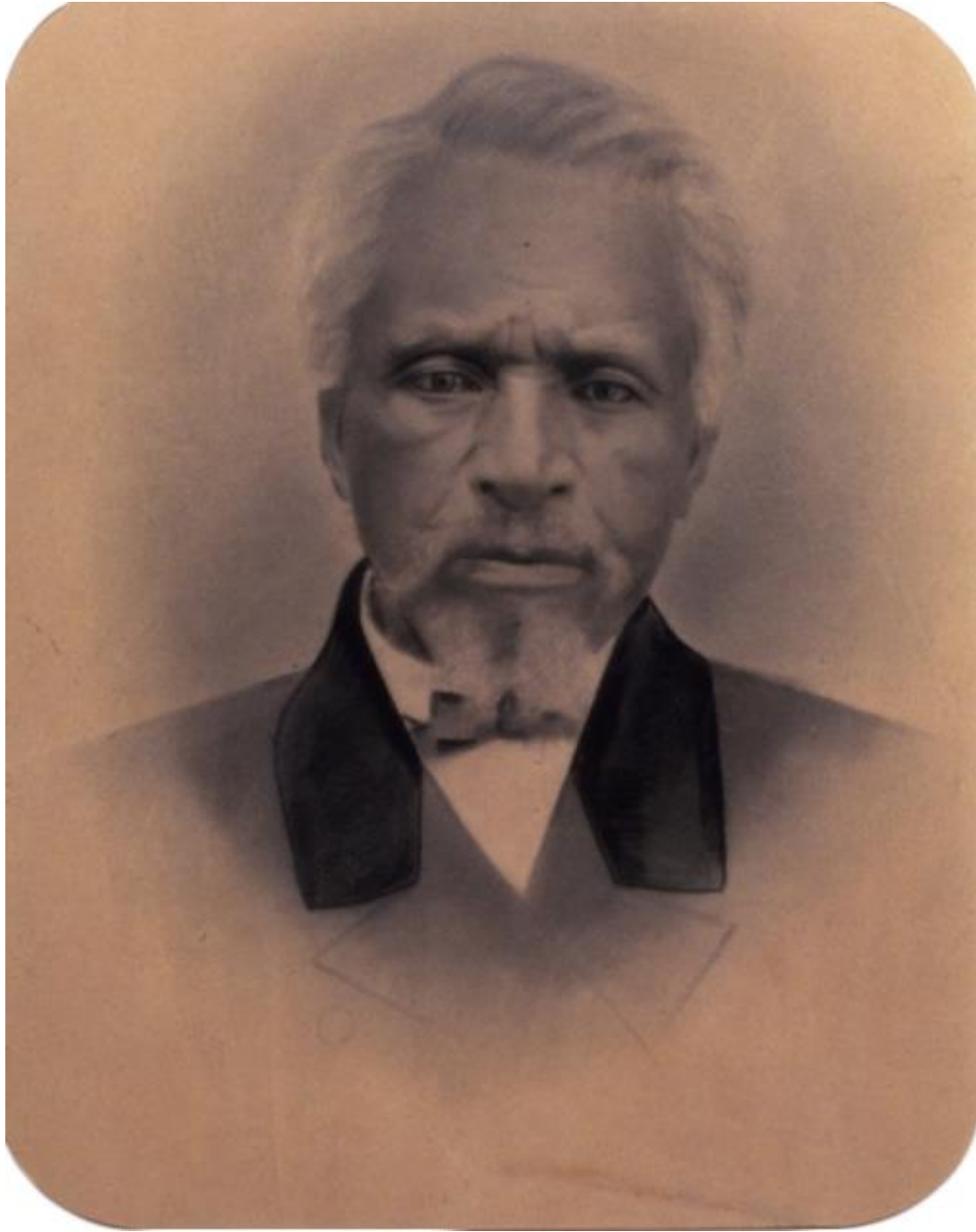
1. What was the purpose of DOCUMENT 5?

2. Who was Michael Johnson? List three things DOCUMENT 5 reveals about his life.

3. Who was Michael Johnson sold to in Gowanus?

4. Why would a former slave be applying for welfare benefits? What does this tell you about what life was like for former slaves?

Document 6: Photograph. "Sylvanus Smith." ca. 1870. Brooklyn Historical Society.



Free black Brooklynites, including Smith, founded the village of Weeksville (located in a small section of modern-day Bed-Stuy). In 1821, the New York State Constitution eliminated all property qualification for white men and introduced a \$250 property requirement for black men. Weeksville was established, in part, as an answer to this discrimination. Brooklyn's free black community created a landowning community that would support them as full citizens with voting rights.

Excerpt. "Land, Voting, Citizenship: Weeksville." In Pursuit of Freedom. Brooklyn Historical Society, 2012-2014. Web. Accessed 12 Nov 2014.

1. According to DOCUMENT 6, what was Weeksville? Where was it located?

2. Who was Sylvanus Smith? What was his role in relation to Weeksville?

3. Why do you think it was important for black people to become landowners?

4. What modern-day neighborhood was Weeksville located in? Do you think the establishment of Weeksville had a lasting impact on the community there today? Explain.

Document 7a: Colton, J.H. "Map of the Country Thirty Three Miles around the City of New York." 1852.



Document 7b: Weeksville Brooklyn Map.” *Weeksville, Brooklyn*, Wikipedia, 30 Aug. 2009.



1. Take a look at DOCUMENT 7A. What year is it from?

2. List 3 towns you see on DOCUMENT 7A:

-
-
-

3. Circle Weeksville on DOCUMENT 7A and describe where it's located:

4. DOCUMENT 7B is a modern map of Weeksville's location. What Brooklyn neighborhoods border it?

5. What do you think the "Hunterfly Road" track represents on DOCUMENT 7B?

Document 8a: Weeksville Lady Tintype, ca.1880. "Weeksville Bash at BAM." 9 Sept 1973. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



Document 8b: *Black History, A Celebration at the Brooklyn Museum.* Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



Anonymous couple. Photograph found during the Weeksville excavations.
By courtesy of The Weeksville Society and The Long Island Historical Society.

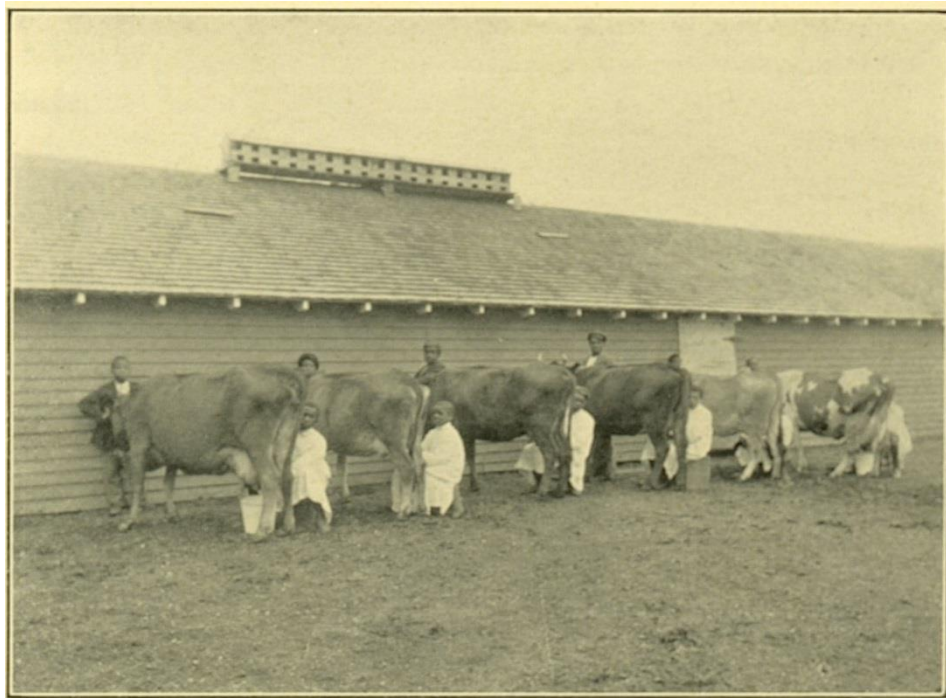
1. Describe the person in DOCUMENT 8A:

2. Describe the people in DOCUMENT 8B:

3. DOCUMENT 8A and DOCUMENT 8B are pictures of previous Weeksville residents. What can you infer about Weeksville based on the manner in which these individuals are dressed?

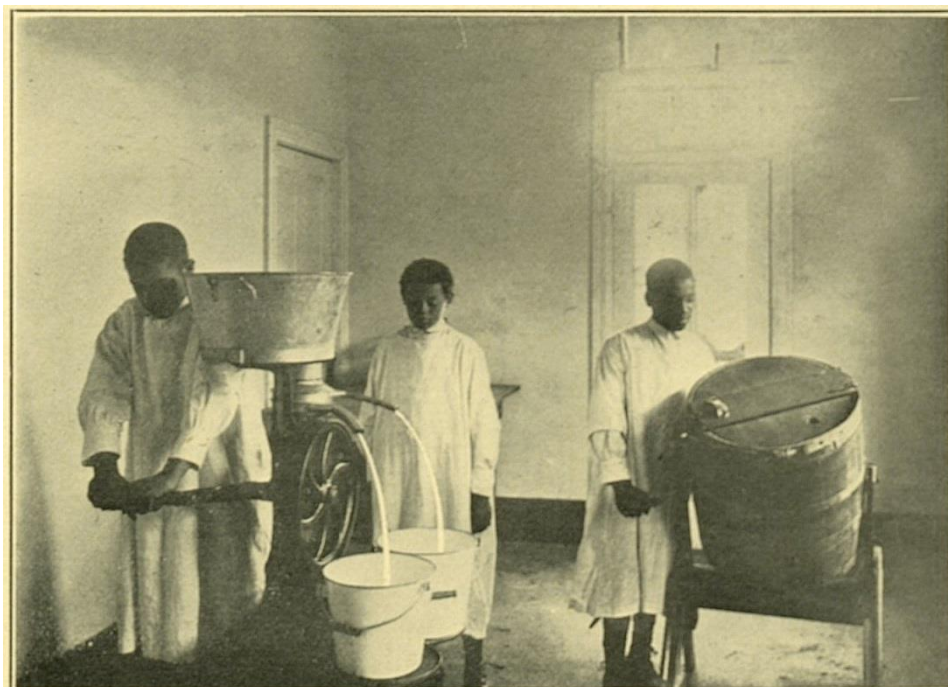
4. Are the people in the photographs dressed differently than people today? What has changed and what has stayed the same? Be specific.

Document 9A: "Boys Milking in Barn Yard." *Review Covering Forty-five Years of Work of Brooklyn Howard Colored Orphan Asylum. 1912.*



Boys Milking in Barn Yard

Document 9B: "Boys Separating Cream and Churning." *Review Covering Forty-five Years of Work of Brooklyn Howard Colored Orphan Asylum. 1912.*



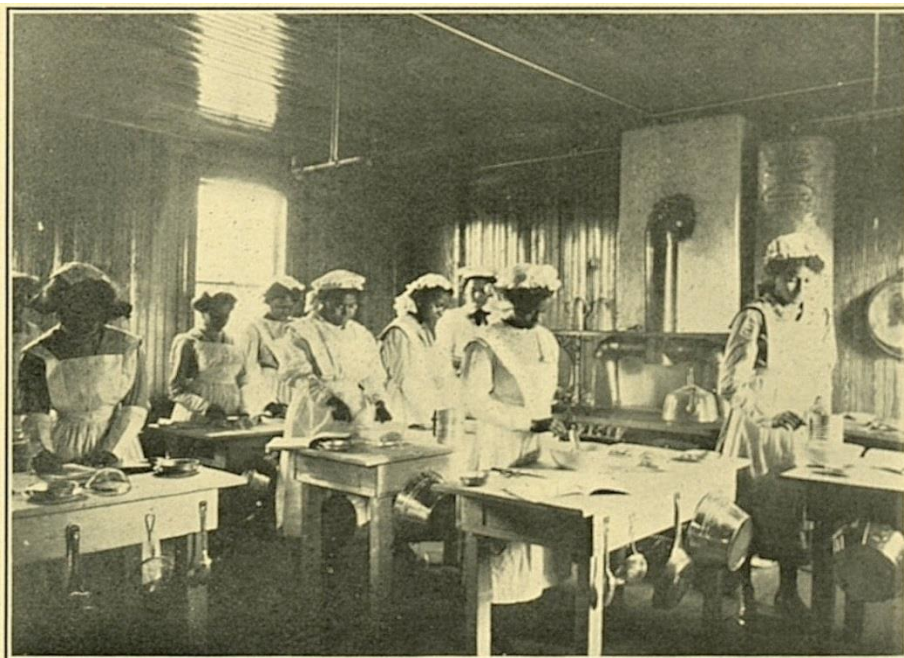
Boys Separating Cream and Churning

Document 9C: "Making Mats of Corn Shucks. Directed by Domestic Science Teacher." *Review Covering Forty-five Years of Work of Brooklyn Howard Colored Orphan Asylum.* 1912.



Making Mats of Corn Shucks. Directed by Domestic Science Teacher

Document 9D: "Cooking Class." *Review Covering Forty-five Years of Work of Brooklyn Howard Colored Orphan Asylum.* 1912.



Cooking Class

1. DOCUMENTS 9A-D come from an asylum, or an institution that offers shelter and support to certain types of people. What was the name of this asylum? Where was it located?

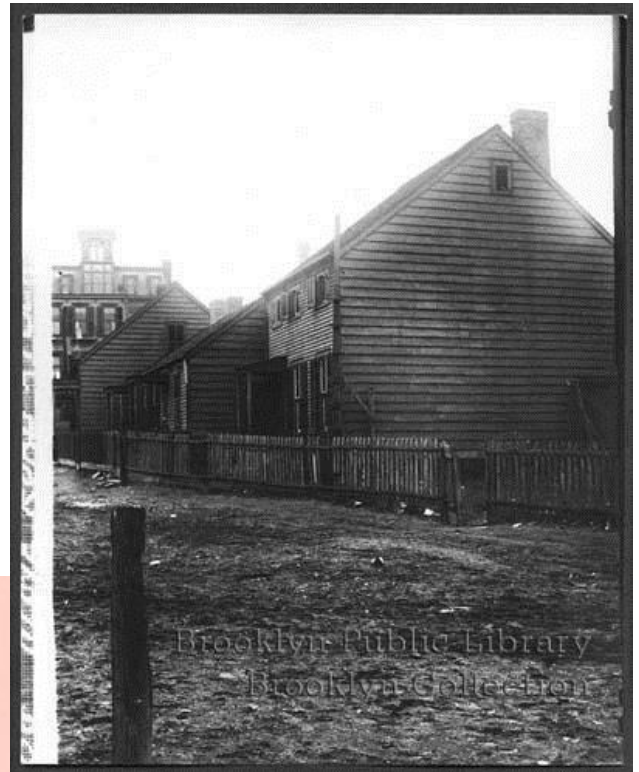
2. According to the images, who did this particular asylum serve?

3. What skills did the asylum teach the children?

4. Why do you think it was important to have an orphan's asylum in Weeksville?

Document 10A (right) - Austin, Daniel Berry. *Clove Road at Bergen St.* 190-. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn.


Document 10B (below) - *Save the Memories of Self.* Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn.




**Society for the Preservation of
WEEKSVILLE and Bedford-Stuyvesant History**

P.O. BOX 120, ST. JOHN'S STATION, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11213 TEL. 756-5250

Save the Memories of Self

Today there are four wooden buildings still standing along the former alignment of Hunterfly Road which were within the boundaries of old Weeksville. They are New York City Landmarks and are on the National Register of Historic Places in the United States. Since 1968, when Old Weeksville was rediscovered, the efforts to learn about this early community have included archaeology, oral history, curriculum development and filmmaking. 

The idea for making a museum of African-American History in the old houses came from the children of Public School #243, the successor of old Colored School #2 of Weeksville. Now after more than a dozen years of effort, the Weeksville Society owns the historic site, with one building housing its office, another completely restored and the remaining two undergoing restoration.

Children, senior citizens, parents, teachers, people from the neighborhood and outside the area, as well as private foundations and government agencies have been a part of making the dream a reality. 

The goal of the Weeksville Society is to restore these buildings for use as a museum of African-American History because it believes that knowledge of our culture, heritage and contribution to this society will enable us, especially our children, to grow with the pride, self confidence and dignity which is essential for the survival of the total society.

1. According to DOCUMENT 10B, what remains of Weeksville today?

2. This document was written by the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History. What does this society hope to build?

3. Why does the society think it's important to restore the Weeksville houses?

4. Why do you think it's important for people to know about Weeksville? What do you think Weeksville means to Black people living in Brooklyn today?

GLOSSARY

Abolition: the abolishing of slavery

Colonize: to send a group of settlers to a place and establish political control over it

Contradict: to be in conflict with; to state the opposite of a claim made by someone else

Manumit: to release someone from slavery; to set a person free.

Slave codes: a series of laws restricting slaves' behaviors, so as to prevent rebellion or escape

Statue: a written rule or law