

*Researching the  
Underground  
Railroad  
in Delaware*

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A Select Descriptive  
Bibliography  
of African American  
Fugitive Narratives

by  
*Peter T. Dalleo*

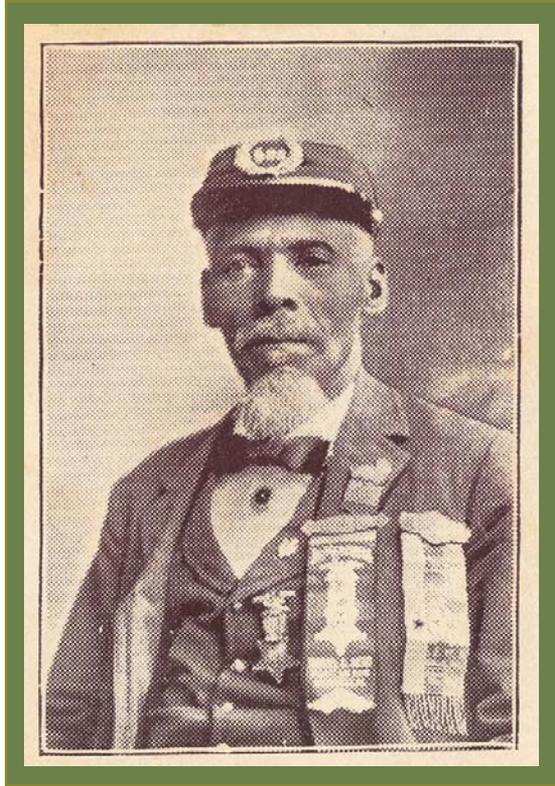
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*June 2008*



**John W. Tillman served as a Private in Co. C,  
127<sup>th</sup> Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry.**

*Image courtesy of Delaware Historical Society*



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Finally, I want to thank the University of North Carolina for developing the extensive electronic collection of narratives. The on-line availability of these narratives simplified my task and made it a more comprehensive product. Virtually all of the narratives listed within, unless otherwise noted, can be found at that site: (North American Slave Narratives in *Documenting the American South*, accessed 2007 <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit>>). These materials may be used freely by individuals for research, teaching, and personal use as long as this statement of availability is included in the text.

Peter T. Dalleo, PhD.  
2008

## Introduction

William Still, a member of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, used the term “Underground Railroad Literature” to describe the advertisements placed in newspapers by enslavers who sought to regain their property described then as a “fugitive from labor.”<sup>1</sup> We now characterize those people as “freedom seekers.” This booklet will deal with a related stream of that literature, which complements the newspaper ads, i.e., personal accounts in pamphlet form.<sup>2</sup> The authors of these multi-page, inexpensive paperbound booklets addressed themes that provide us with a fuller understanding of why and how the resistance of freedom seekers contributed to the demise of slavery in the United States. The pamphlets included information about the harsh and abusive side of enslavement that included physical and psychological torture, the reasoning behind self-emancipation of themselves and when possible, members of their families or their community, and the obstacles encountered on their journeys to freedom, which were sometimes ameliorated by Underground Railroad (UGRR) operatives. Some even wrote about the highlights of their post-enslavement lives. Referring to these pamphlets helps us understand better the courage and determination of freedom seekers, as well as the scope and complexity of activities taken by them and their “True Friends” who helped take them away from enslavement toward liberty.

The fugitive narratives and biographical sketches included in the bibliography were published during the years from 1730 to 1919. The primary focus of this essay is the half-dozen items authored by or about African Americans who lived and worked in Delaware and another sixteen who passed through the state on their journeys to freedom. Before presenting the individual narratives, it is necessary to cover themes related to enslavement and abolition in Delaware, which create a context for discussing their usefulness for researching the UGRR.

First, a comment about the nature of chattel slavery in the United States is necessary. Slavery unquestionably was a cruel, abusive, destructive, dehumanizing system, which poisoned the fabric of society at the time and still has a corrosive effect on our nation today.<sup>3</sup> John W. Tillman’s *Brief Sketch*, which appears in the attached bibliography, contains numerous examples of abuse by his enslavers, as evidenced in the following:

One hot sunshiney morning he got on one of his ways,  
then stripped off all my clothes, tied me to a post, and cut

me with the cowhide until the blood ran to my heels. Then he took a recess. He walked off and left me there for two hours in the hot sun . . . . Then he came back after a while, and said to me, - I was a small boy then . . . . “I have got rested now. I expect you have too.” Then he took his second turn on me, after which he took another recess and sat down close by me in the old shed and read a newspaper. Then he said to me: ‘I will finish up now.’ He took the third turn on me with the whip. Then he washed me down again in salt and water. After this cruelty I was very sore and could not lie down.

As horrible as what happened to Tillman was, physical mistreatment was not necessarily the worse part of enslavement. According to American historian Peter Kolchin, forced separation of family members was what people feared the most.<sup>4</sup> Solomon Bayley, whose *Narrative* appears in the bibliography, includes numerous instances of psychological stress related to his family, not the least of which was the auction of his son Spence. For those who want a more detailed account of the horrendous experience of enslaved people in Delaware two published monographs may be consulted.<sup>5</sup>

Second, researchers should consider the importance of Delaware's geographical size and location as well as the significance of its status as a slave state. The landscape did not include major physical obstacles such as mountains, and its proximity to waterways tended to facilitate rather than impede travel. Forests and cultivated fields also provided cover to freedom seekers. Delaware was only 96 miles in length and 35 miles at its widest point, and easy to travel through. The proximity of Delaware to Maryland and Virginia, the other slave states on the Delmarva Peninsula, and to the free states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, had a direct impact on the evolution and success of the UGRR in Delaware. Delawareans designed their laws to preserve slavery. The enslaved appeared to benefit from the practice of manumission. That trend, however, was tempered by delayed freedom and harsh laws that discriminated against people of African descent. For example, some laws which granted access to legal remedies protected the enslaved and the free black community, but a basic problem remained - they preserved the majority population's political and property rights and seriously disadvantaged free blacks. Those few favorable laws were unevenly enforced. Furthermore, African Americans, even when convicted of misdemeanors, found it difficult to pay fines and legal costs.

Because most lacked the resources to meet such payments, they were sold, sometimes out of state.<sup>6</sup>

Delaware's location, size and landscape proved attractive to freedom seekers, but also facilitated kidnapping, which threatened free and enslaved blacks as well as resettled freedom seekers.<sup>7</sup> When applied, Delaware law against kidnapping could be tough. Take, for example, the 1818 case against kidnapers who took the teenager Bathsheba from Appoquinimink Hundred. The official court record and private notes kept by one of the judges enable us reconstruct the incident. In 1816, Bathsheba Bungy, a 15-year-old free black girl testified that she was seized by white men when: "I went out for chips." They drove her in a carriage to Dixon's Tavern in Maryland. Fortunately, they brought Bathsheba back to Appoquinimink Hundred in Delaware before releasing her. A three-judge panel heard the case in the New Castle Courthouse before an all-white male jury. Because Delaware's legal system considered blacks free unless proven otherwise and because Jonathan Hunn confirmed Bathsheba's mother's testimony that she was free, the jury decided against the defendants. The kidnapers, one of whom was Jesse Cannon, were whipped in public, placed in the pillory "with both Ears nailed thereto and . . . shall have the soft part of both . . . Ears cut off . . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Despite such punishments, during the period under study, kidnapping remained a regular feature of life on the Delmarva Peninsula. Kidnapers abducted African Americans from wherever they were, whenever they could. Gang members usually did not distinguish whether or not someone was enslaved, a recaptured "fugitive from labor," a resettled freedom seeker, or a free black. Some writers use the term "the reverse underground railroad" to characterize these activities. One report contemporaneous to the period suggests what, perhaps, is a better choice: "We have not the least doubt that a great many slaves who have the credit of running away from this state, have been conveyed on the back track of the underground railroad going South instead of North."<sup>9</sup>

Abolitionists developed swift responses to meet the highly organized kidnapping rings. Kidnapers operated from within Delaware and from parts of Maryland that included Baltimore. Gang members roamed deeply into southern Pennsylvania. Their victims, once free or otherwise, were often sold to buyers in the "back country" or as far South as Mississippi and Louisiana. Some were even taken to the West Indies. Perhaps the most notorious of them, was Patty Cannon's gang, headquartered on the

Maryland-Delaware border. Stationed near Seaford, its members ranged as far as southern Chester County and into Philadelphia. Lesser known today, but in full operation in the late 1840s through the early 1850s, were those tied to Baltimore's infamous "slave pens." In Delaware abolitionists established action committees to combat kidnapers. They existed from the early 1800s until at least the 1850s. Sometimes white and black abolitionists in Pennsylvania and Delaware communicated quickly enough with one another and with like-minded supporters in Maryland and Virginia to protect and retrieve victims.<sup>10</sup>

Free black communities, which grew in number throughout the state during the first half of the 19th century, offset the threat of abduction. Within these settings, the development of vibrant institutions, especially independent churches, formed a natural base from which to rally their congregations and to pressure authorities.<sup>11</sup> Members of African churches included activists who involved themselves in the public struggle for political, economic, and social equality. They generally welcomed the support of the white community, especially, but not exclusively, those belonging to the Society of Friends. The Quakers, of course, began officially opposing slavery during the mid-18th century for ideological and religious reasons. And some free black church members participated directly in the UGRR or independently assisted freedom seekers who chose to travel to them.<sup>12</sup>

Three events during the antebellum period – the Ann Brown incident, the Thomas Mitchell affair, and the Thomas Stewart arrest – shed light on African American community resistance and hint at how the UGRR probably operated when it assisted freedom seekers.

The attempted abduction of Ann Brown from Wilmington, Delaware in 1849 illustrates the multiplicity of players and the range of resistance against kidnapping efforts. When a group of "slave-catchers" from Maryland attempted to grab Ann Brown, a free black, she physically resisted them. Her brother, Joseph Hyland, knocked down the "slave-catcher" Thomas McCreary, which prevented him from spiriting her away. John Wales represented Ann at the Mayor's Court, while Thomas Garrett publicized the event in a sympathetic newspaper, *The Blue Hen's Chicken*. An interesting comment about the Brown affair in the *Pennsylvania Freeman* referred to the continued existence and participation of the Acting Committee of the old Abolition Society that dated back to at least the early part of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Obviously the membership of the committee had changed over

the decades, but the methods taken against kidnapers remained much the same.

Second, earlier that summer, Delaware's abolitionists took up the plight of Thomas Mitchell, who had been taken by force during the night from his home near Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. Mitchell, a freedom seeker named Albert Ambrose, had settled and lived as a free black on a farm in Chester County for twelve years. Local Pennsylvanians immediately took measures to rescue him, part of which was to inform Thomas Garrett. The Wilmingtonian quickly telegraphed his long-time contact and co-religionist in Baltimore, John Needles. Garrett expected that the abductors and Mitchell were headed there by train. Needles passed on the information to fellow Baltimorean, Dr. J. E. Snodgrass, whom Garrett knew as a speaker at Delaware Anti-Slavery Society functions. Meanwhile, a second group of rescuers from Pennsylvania boarded the train at Havre de Grace and quietly traveled with the kidnapers and Mitchell to Baltimore.<sup>14</sup>

The third occurrence revolved around an arrest of a free black Wilmingtonian, Thomas Stewart. It took place in 1851 and was viewed by abolitionists as institutionalized kidnapping. Like the first two examples, the community response to it offers clues about how free black and white abolitionists collaborated in the more secretive operations that the UGRR carried out while assisting and protecting runaways.

The letter below, sent by Thomas Garrett to the *Blue Hen's Chicken*, described Thomas Stewart's violation of laws that put time limitations on blacks leaving and re-entering the state, his arrest and incarceration, and subsequent fine. In his report, Garrett detailed the level of aid offered by independent African church members.

Wilmington 9 mo. 17, 1851

. . . Thomas Stewart [colored] who was fined fifty dollars some three weeks since, for coming into the state contrary to the law of the late session, and committed to the jail at New Castle till the fine and costs were paid, has been discharged this day by order of Squire Jones, as the payment of the fine and costs, and giving him security that he would leave the state in five days; a copy of the receipt and fine and costs I give, so that those who were so liberal as to contribute to his release, may know how the money raised, was expended.

Resolved Wilmington, Sep 17th, 1851, of Thomas Stewart, F. N., per Thomas Garrett, fifty dollars, being the amount of fine imposed on him.

WM. HEMPHILL JONES, J. P.

\$25.00	State Treasury	
<u>\$25.00</u>	Thos Ritchie	
\$50.00	State of Delaware	
	Cost of commitment	\$ 5.00
	Advertising in papers	\$ 3.00
v	Hand Bills	\$ 1.00
	Thos. Stewart Sheriff putting bills up	\$ 2.00
	23 days of sustenance	<u>\$ 7.23</u>
		\$18.43

Received payment of Mr. Thos. Garratt [sic] SAMUEL G. CHANDLER, Sh'ff per Isaac Grubb

The charge of putting up bills and 23 days of sustenance strikes me as being high, but it might not be more than the usual charges in such cases. Thirty-seven dollars and eighty-four cents of the above sum was raised by members of the colored churches in this city by collections taken up in those churches. It is to be regretted that any white man, more especially a native citizen of this place, could be found mean enough to turn informer against a fellow belonging to this persecuted and despised race, for the paltry sum of \$25, when by doing so the probability was, for fine and costs, have been sold into slavery for life, or has been in this case, most of the money to redeem him, raised from a class of people, many of which with difficulty can procure the necessaries of life. Shame on a being in human form, that could stoop so low.

Yours, for oppressed humanity  
THOMAS GARRETT

Researchers should also consider how the UGRR changed over time in Delaware. During its early years, it probably functioned as a loose association of sympathetic blacks and whites who quietly and covertly assisted freedom seekers on an ad hoc basis. On occasion, participants openly supported alleged “fugitives from labor.” For example, if someone was arrested and jailed, abolitionists often provided public legal advice. At

this point, it was not even called the Underground Railroad. Gradually the sympathizers became more organized and in most situations continued to operate covertly. During the 1830s, it became more popular to refer to the undercover undertakings as belonging to an underground railroad. By mid-century, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, the actions of both freedom seekers and UGRR operatives became more overt. As its networking and organization became more obvious, so, too, was it better understood as an interracial and ecumenical movement.

In a private letter written in 1855, Garrett opined about what he saw as a major change in UGRR operations: “No less than 60 of God’s poor have passed here within the last three months, every one of whom were passed safely over what was formerly termed the Underground Railroad, but now, in many instances, I consider it safe to forward them in open day on their way North”. . . .<sup>15</sup> Garrett was not announcing the end of the line, but rather expressing his view that current demand necessitated the creation of a robust day-time schedule to accommodate freedom seekers. In any case, shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, advertisements for runaways in Delaware dropped off. In what may have been the last Delaware advertisement for a fugitive, Thomas Pickering of Lebanon offered a \$10 reward in *The Delawarean* of July of 1864 for “a negro girl named Maria Shockley, aged about 17 years, stout built, low stature, chestnut colored, bright looking, hair short; it is supposed she had on when she left a faded plain domestic dress.”

Scholars describing the undertaking have also shifted their focus from time to time to different sets of participants. Instead of being primarily interested in the whites who contributed to its success, today’s academicians and other interested parties are paying more attention to the role of those of African descent, which includes the freedom seekers themselves. After all, it was the courage and determination of the self-emancipated that was at the heart of the matter. As the following examples illustrate, it was not always clear whether or not assistance to freedom seekers was directly connected to the UGRR.

In 1856, William Cornish, a Maryland escapee, related how he relied on his wits and the ready assistance offered by the state’s inhabitants to get through Delaware:

I left the camp [meeting] on Saturday, and Saturday night I was up in the State of Delaware. I had no trouble

in getting here at all. A man took me in a wagon and carried me about 30 miles on Sunday night; another man took me in the daytime on Monday, about 12 o'clock, and he travelled with me until about a half hour of the sun, with a fast horse. He told me to go to another man, and I had to walk about two miles & a half, & stayed there all day Monday night and all day Tuesday. That night, he travelled with me about four or five miles on foot, and placed me about thirty miles that night, and then I go out and walked into Wilmington. There I took the cars, Wednesday, for Philadelphia. Eleven days after I started, I was in Canada.<sup>16</sup>

The experience of James C. Justice of Pennsylvania presents another example of the independence of freedom seekers. Justice, who was illegally abducted from Pennsylvania to Delaware, first extricated himself from his captors, but needed and then asked free black Delawareans for help. In 1832 he described what happened in a deposition:

James C. Justice being sworn, saith that he will be 20 years of age on the 10th of April, A.D. 1832. That on Wednesday evening, the 29th day of February last, he left the house of Thomas Porter, in Vine Street, No. 54, between the hours of 6 and 7 o'clock in the evening; that he was about turning into Coates alley, not quite a square from Mr. Porter's house, when he was seized by two men; that they put a plaister over his mouth and held both of his hands, and took him down into the hold of the sloop, took the plaister from his mouth and told him if he made a noise or halloed they would knock out his brains; that they pushed off the sloop immediately and went down the river; that they arrived at Delaware City about 12 o'clock; that there was a black man in the hold with him; that the sloop was made fast to the wharf, and he heard the men say that they would go to the tavern and get something to drink; that after the men had gone, the deponent and the black man broke open the hatchway and came on deck, got upon the wharf and ran off as fast as they could; that about 3 o'clock on the morning of Friday they got to Wilmington, and that they both came to the city on Friday in the Wilmington steamboat. That while on board the sloop he

heard the men say, 'we have got these two fellows tight enough.' That the black man told the deponent was brought there; that on the way from Delaware City they stopped at a house where some colored people lived, and stayed there some hours; that they were travelling all day on Thursday. That the men who took him had on black dresses and checked shirts; that they had on long coats and black hats; that he observed nothing in the hold of the vessel; that they had not light; that when himself and the black man made their escape, he first knew his companion to be black; that the black man did not tell his name.<sup>17</sup>

Henry Thompson's case may or may not have involved Delaware. His account not only reinforces the reality of the repressive nature of enslavement that drove people to seek freedom, but the fact that freedom runners accepted assistance where they could find it. This news item appeared in 1869 in the *Wilmington Daily Commercial*.

Thomas Garrett sends us some memoranda of the history of a colored man named Henry Thompson, who visited him, a few days ago. We print his memoranda as he sends them to us:

A short history of slavery by Henry Thompson now 63 years of age. He was the slave of Jack Coulson, of Hopkinsville, Georgia. When about 28 years of age, he ran off but was caught at Wilmington, North Carolina, about six months afterwards. He was taken up by a man of the name of Delemliee. He staid with his master about one year, then ran off again and got to Baltimore. There he was arrested by one McDaniel, an agent of Campbell, a dealer in slaves. He was then sold by Campbell to a slave dealer of the name of Lumkin, at Richmond, Va., who sold him to a contractor on the Savannah Railroad. From there he ran off, and reached West Chester, Pennsylvania, where he hired with James Emlen. He remained with him there and at Westtown Boarding School, four years, and then went with Clarkson Sheppard to Bridgeton, New Jersey. He soon after purchased a small property of Benjamin Sheppard, near Springtown, where he settled. At this place he was again arrested by a man of the name of Little, who

knew him as a slave of his first master, and took him back to Milledgeville, Ga. From there he escaped and joined the Union army as a soldier, where he remained until 1867. In one of the battles, he was wounded in his side and knee, the ball passing through the knee. From these wounds he still suffers. When he ran away the second time he got to Norfolk, and there met with a slave woman named Hetty Bell. He got her dressed in a full suit of men's clothes and took her with him safely to West Chester, where they were married, and they have several children. He informs me that his oldest son is now teaching in a school in Springtown, New Jersey. He states that Samuel Painter, of West Chester, Samuel Emlen, son of James, at Germantown, and Clarkson Sheppard, of Greenwich, New Jersey, will vouch for the truth of his statements. Surely this man must have found slavery oppressive, to have made such exertions to obtain his freedom.<sup>18</sup>

Before discussing the individual fugitive pamphlets in detail, a summary about the main points about Delaware and the UGRR is necessary. Delaware's location, landscape and population, frequently met the need of freedom seekers who sought to change their enslaved status. The state contained numerous whites and blacks, albeit a minority, who not only opposed enslavement for philosophical and religious reasons, but acted on those beliefs. They willingly worked with one another to achieve common goals. They often came from free black communities or from a Quaker background, but other groups and denominations also participated in the endeavor to get freedom seekers through and out of Delaware. The First State's legal structure, though weighted heavily toward perpetuating enslavement, contained some laws that black and white abolitionists and UGRR operatives used to support freedom seekers. Delawareans who participated on the UGRR had connections, sometimes familial, sometimes religious, that spanned territory from the free states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey to the other unfree states on the Delmarva Peninsula.

## THE FUGITIVE NARRATIVES

What about the pamphlets themselves? How credible are the authors? What influenced their writing? What difficulties of interpretation do they present? How can the writers' claims be verified? What can we learn about the UGRR from the pamphlets?

The secretive nature of the UGRR, its potential for high drama, and the subsequent myth making about its operations must be taken into consideration when assessing the writing of narratives. Certainly these same factors are influential in the current upswing in the popularity of the topic. Unfortunately, the destruction of many personal records, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, has reduced the amount of source material against which some myths could be compared.<sup>19</sup>

As with any personal account, one needs to be cautious when using memoirs and reminiscences. Narratives published close to the time of purported events may have been fresh in the writer's mind, but may also have been influenced unduly by abolitionists or an individual author's bias. On the other hand, those written long after events occurred, might suffer from the memory loss of the author. Those written after the Civil War, especially toward the end of the century, may mimic the exaggerated style of other literary trends at that time such as dime novels and books about African exploration.

Of course, paramount to historians is the integrity of information presented in the narratives. Fortunately, the length of pamphlets presents numerous opportunities to check information in them against other sources. To do so, researchers may refer to available private documents such as letters, journals, diaries, and even contemporaneous newspapers. They may also utilize government sources such as court testimony and judgments, censuses, ownership lists, tax lists and military records. Archaeological or architectural studies, often funded with public monies, have become increasingly available. Oral tradition may also be a useful source. Many people are uneasy with oral history, but it is not inherently inaccurate. Just as with any written source, one must approach an oral account objectively and cautiously.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, despite their shortcomings, fugitive narratives are useful for reconstructing the history of the UGRR in Delaware. They are first-hand accounts written by freedom seekers about their own experiences and

feelings. Among the common themes in fugitive narrative pamphlets that directly link personal quests for freedom to the UGRR include:

- Authors of narratives might not know their birth dates, but some knew their parents, siblings and relatives, some of whom lived nearby.
- Religion played an important role in their lives, if not before flight, then afterwards.
- Mistreatment and/or the threat of sale motivated freedom seekers to leave their previous life and sometimes their families behind. The system of slavery was psychologically demeaning often accompanied by physical abuse. Not surprisingly, freedom seekers frequently cited specific events such as the death of an owner, which the threatened break up of plantation and concomitant destruction of an enslaved family as a reason for flight.
- Freedom runners were determined, clever, courageous, and, at times, lucky. They sometimes had time to plan their departures. Multiple attempts to escape were not uncommon.
- Freedom runners often describe how the landscape they encountered facilitated or hindered their progress during their journeys.
- The types of assistance accepted by them varied at different stages of the journey. Near the point of self-emancipation, often family and/or friends of freedom seekers provided support. Less frequently, a family member of the deceased owner intervened in a meaningful way. Runaways often identify whites and blacks who assisted or obstructed them. Despite danger, many runaways were courageous enough to seek assistance from anyone whenever they needed it. Not infrequently they found protection and support from blacks and independent African churches as well as from whites, especially Quakers.

Once removed from area of enslavement and in free states, they tended to settle among other resettled freedom seekers and free blacks. There they found ways to support themselves, sometimes married and raised families, and even found other relatives or former acquaintances living nearby. Unfortunately, however, resettled freedom seekers had to remain alert to kidnapping threats.

## NARRATIVES BY THOSE WHO LIVED AND WORKED IN DELAWARE

### Richard Allen

*The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen to which is annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, written by Himself*, Philadelphia: Martin and Bolden, 1833, 60 pp.

The Rev. Allen established the independent African Methodist Episcopal Church or Bethel Church. No Underground Railroad connection is mentioned in this narrative, but there is useful information about his years of enslavement in Delaware.<sup>21</sup>

Born enslaved in 1760 in Pennsylvania, Richard Allen spent much of his youth in Delaware before he gained his freedom. He describes the difficulty of his early life near Dover, Delaware such as the sale of his mother and some of his siblings to cover his enslaver's family debts and the hard work he undertook to overcome the perception that religion was a distraction from required labor. Once freed, Richard worked at a range of occupations. Around 1783 he moved from Delaware to New Jersey and then soon returned to Pennsylvania. By 1793 Rev. Allen was able to boast that he was in great demand, "For there was no colored preacher in Philadelphia but myself."<sup>22</sup> (pp. 5-22)

### Solomon Bayley

*A Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents in the Life of Solomon Bayley, A Former Slave in Delaware, written by Himself to which are prefixed a few remarks by Robert Hunard*, London: Harvey & Darnton, 1825, 48 pp.

Solomon's Narrative was one of the earliest authored by an African American rather than an African. Solomon's account is an excellent resource for understanding the psychological stress of enslaved people. His tale is significant because Solomon, his parents and his siblings were taken out of Delaware sold illegally in Virginia by his enslaver and then dispersed to other parts of the country. Nonetheless, Solomon was able to return to Delaware, buy his own time and that of his immediate family. He helped

rescue his mother from Virginia to Delaware. The *Narrative* is also an example of the religious influence of the Methodist movement known as the Great Awakening. Although not mentioned in his narrative, Solomon had a strong relationship with the Quaker abolitionist Mifflin family.<sup>23</sup>

Since Solomon does not name those who assisted him on his 1799 flight from Richmond, Virginia to Camden, Delaware, it is not clear if they were members of the UGRR's predecessor. After being sold in Richmond, during the trip to his enslaver's plantation, Solomon freed himself by slipping out of a wagon and hiding in the woods. He went back to Richmond and then to Petersburg, where he found assistance. Solomon teamed up with another Delawarean in a similar predicament. They rafted down the James River to the Chesapeake Bay. From there Solomon went to Hunting Creek near Nandua in Accomack County, Virginia. It is unclear where he went into Maryland and where he entered the First State, but Bayley mentions that once in Delaware, he headed for Anderson's Crossroads, just south of Milford. By July 1799 Solomon had made it to Camden, Delaware.

Pursued by his former enslaver, Solomon managed to purchase his own freedom. He then bought his wife Thamar and one of their children from another enslaver and after that, the freedom of his son Spence at an auction. He and Thamar supported themselves by working at mills and as tenants on farms. Solomon's mother was also a freedom seeker. Assisted by her son, she returned from Virginia to Delaware and then went to New Jersey. After spending eighteen years across the Delaware Bay, she returned to the First State with Solomon.

Finally, in his *Narrative*, Solomon hints at his and Thamar's removal to Liberia, about which he authored a second pamphlet in 1833.<sup>24</sup>

## **Ezekiel Coston**

In Abigail Mott, *Narratives of Colored Americans*, New York: William Wood, 1875, 276 pp.

Ezekiel Coston is of interest because of his long-term relationship with the Warner Mifflin family and then with the Spencer Church in Wilmington. By the 1820s, Coston was in his early eighties when he related the information about his life to Samuel Canby, a Quaker abolitionist in Wilmington. The exact nature of Warner Mifflin's relationship to the

UGRR remains a question. It is not known if Ezekiel had any connection to the UGRR, but he was an original member of the Spencer Church.

Coston was one of about thirty enslaved persons kept by Warner Mifflin and his wife. Ezekiel had been born in Accomack County, Virginia and labored for Mifflin's father for twenty years, before being given as a gift to Warner. The younger Mifflin, who had moved to the Camden area in Delaware, decided for reasons of religion and humanity to manumit his bondmen. Ezekiel recounts his conversation with Mifflin about the decision to manumit him and why he decided after being manumitted to stay with his former enslaver for 14 years. After that Ezekiel left Kent County for Wilmington.<sup>25</sup> ( pp. 201-205)

### **Benjamin Johnstone**

*The Address of Abraham Johnstone, A Black Man, Who Was Hanged at Woodbury in the County of Gloscester, and State of New Jersey, on Saturday the 8th Day of July Last; To the People of Colour To Which Is added His Dying Confession or Declaration. Also a Copy of a Letter to His Wife, Written the Day Previous to His Execution, Philadelphia: The Purchasers, 1797, 47 pp.*

Benjamin was born a bondman near Johnny-Cake Landing Possum Town in Sussex County, Delaware. He eventually left the First State for New Jersey, where he assumed his brother Abraham's Christian name. This tale is illustrative of the tenuous nature of the lives of free and enslaved blacks in the late eighteenth century.

Benjamin relates how he was mostly mistreated by one enslaver after another until he found someone who appreciated his hard work. Furthermore, during an altercation, he saved that person's life. In gratitude, Johnstone's enslaver promised to let him to buy his time and liberty. Unfortunately Benjamin was unjustly jailed in Baltimore as a runaway. The authorities then moved the Delawarean to the county jail in Dover, Delaware. Despite the promise of liberty, he was sold as a bondsman to yet another enslaver, who soon agreed to manumit him for pay. At that point, Benjamin was kidnapped by a gang of Georgians but managed to escape from them. About 1792, with the help of the Quaker abolitionist Warner Mifflin, Benjamin was manumitted. His only son, born free, later lived with Daniel Mifflin.

Now known as Abraham, Johnstone moved to New Jersey. Abraham returned briefly to Delaware, gathered his wife, Sally, and took her across the Delaware River. Benjamin describes their new life in that State, which culminated in the circumstances which led to his eventual execution.

(pp. 32-36)

### **Thomas Morgan**

*A Brief Memoir of Thomas Morgan Coloured Man Convicted of Murder of Joseph Spencer His Brother-in-Law at the Court of Oyer and Terminer, held at New Castle, Delaware. In May 1839 with some account of his trial, Voluntary Confession, Wilmington, Delaware: J. N. Harker, 1839, 8 pp. Delaware Historical Society*

Although Morgan's *Brief Memoir* is not directly related to the UGRR, there is a note about his planning to attend an anti-slavery meeting at the Friends Meeting House on Fourth Street in Wilmington. The pamphlet contributes a detailed portrayal of a free black Wilmingtonian's attempt to create a life for himself and his family in a discriminatory setting. Thomas' earnings came mainly from his work in a brewery factory. He occasionally supplemented his income with wages from sailing on packet ships along the East Coast to places such as Baltimore, Maryland, Norfolk, Virginia, New York, New York, and Providence, Rhode Island. Thomas was successful enough to marry, build his own house, and raise a family.

Morgan explains the origins of the disagreement with Joseph Spencer, part of which resulted from a conflict with Wilmington's municipal authorities, which caused him to lose his house. Thomas' confession also reflects the religious fervor of the Methodist movement known as the Great Awakening. Finally, Morgan's *Brief Memoir* is notable as the only work containing a substantial piece by a black man that was copyrighted at the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware.<sup>26</sup>

### **Levin Tilmon**

*A Brief Miscellaneous Narrative of the More Early Part of the Life of L. Tilmon, Pastor of a Colored Methodist Congregationalist Church in the City of New York, Jersey City: W. W. & L. A. Pratt, 1853, 95 pp.*

In addition to writing about the abuses of slavery, Levin Tilmon's story is reflective of the widespread interracial and ecumenical nature of Delaware's abolitionists and UGRR. He writes bitterly about the cruel system of American enslavement and his eventual breakaway from his subservient situation. It is unique in that Tilmon's narrative, published before the Civil War, names some, but not all, who assisted him, some of whom are women.

Born in Maryland in 1807, at the age of eight, Tilmon was bound out to a northern Delaware Quaker until he was 21. His family hoped that he would learn about farming and obtain some schooling. Unfortunately, the Quaker left and rented out his farm to a series of tenants and included Levin in the arrangement. Levin suffered under a number of families who subsequently rented his time. Tilmon does include an anecdote about how one freedom seeker who came to Delaware was tricked into admitting his status, which led to that person's arrest. Around the age of 17, Levin had returned to his original Quaker owner, which prompted him to depart since he no longer wanted to be enslaved.

Levin first made the 10-mile journey to Wilmington where he found that he had to negotiate between white and black helpers and tricksters. An anonymous black woman warned him not to cross the Brandywine bridge because slave catchers carefully watched that direct route to Philadelphia. Instead she directed him to the port to look for "Captain Jackes."<sup>27</sup> The latter had him spend the afternoon at his residence before transporting him by boat to Pennsylvania. Not long after his arrival, in Philadelphia, Levin began working for wages. Recognized by relatives of the Delawarean Quaker from whom he had escaped, Levin was captured, taken to Delaware and returned to his old owner. He was then sold to a Baltimore "Negro-trader" who used a black woman at Hare's Corner as a conduit. Fortunately, when Tilmon arrived in Stanton, a woman named Molly Pierce intervened. She gave him a letter of introduction to Ziba Ferris, Joseph Bringhurst and Joseph Grubbs, Quaker abolitionists. They met at Ziba Ferris' shop in Wilmington and arranged for a hearing before Squire Craig. At that point Tilmon's enslaver relinquished all rights to Levin. Tilmon next went to live with Bringhurst, a druggist, for eight months, after which he went to Trenton, New Jersey. In the spring of 1831, he returned to Philadelphia where, for the first time in 18 years, heard about his mother in Maryland and with whom he began to correspond. By then he had joined the A.M.E. Church.<sup>28</sup> (pp. 5-26)

## John W. Tillman

*Biographical Sketch of the LIFE AND TRAVELS of John W. Tillman*, Doe Run, Chester County, Pennsylvania, February, 1896, 33 pp.

Originally named Caleb Duff, he adopted the name of one of his mother's husbands, John Tillman. His sketch covers the period from approximately the early 1830s until his death in 1904, and as such, complements Bayley's earlier work chronologically, geographically and topically.

Tillman was born enslaved in northern Kent County and lived temporarily with his mother and brother. Over time, the family was split up among different enslavers. Tillman depicts the hard labor and cruelty that he suffered at the hands of unscrupulous owners. He describes how his first attempt to gain freedom failed before detailing his successful escape. He explains his thinking about why he ran when he did, where he went and what he saw. In the early 1850s, after leaving the Smyrna area, he used a camp meeting near Port Penn as cover to travel and eventually made it to Wilmington. There Benjamin Medford, a black ostler, arranged for a Garrett carriage which took Tillman to Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Once across the Delaware-Pennsylvania border a series of Quakers, many with familiar names in Smedley, provided Tillman with shelter, work and protection.<sup>29</sup> Tillman went on to marry, survive kidnapping attempts<sup>30</sup> and service during the Civil War as a private in the 127th regiment U.S.C.T. out of Pennsylvania.<sup>31</sup> He writes about the significant features of his post-Civil War life, which included his pro-Republican Party activities, his renewed relationship with his mother, whom it turned out had found freedom in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and the excitement of finding other siblings and relatives on visits to Delaware and New Jersey.

Delaware Historical Society

## NARRATIVES BY THOSE WHO PASSED THROUGH DELAWARE

### Charles Ball

*Fifty Years in Chains, or, the Life of an African Slave*, New York: H. Dayton, 1859, 430 pp.

Charles Ball describes a brief encounter with a Delawarean freedom seeker. The author had been freed on the death of his enslaver in Maryland, but was then sold illegally, first to South Carolina and then to Georgia. He subsequently attempted to escape a number of times from the South until he was successful.

During his successful flight to freedom from Georgia, Ball encountered a freedom seeker from Kent County, Delaware, who himself had been freed upon his owner's death but then illegally sold in Newport, Delaware before being sent to the South. After leaving the Delawarean, Ball eventually regained his liberty by hiding on a vessel out of Georgia, which went to Philadelphia. (pp. 12-15, 103-107, 355-359, 418-426)

### Levi Jenkins Coppin

Bishop L. J. Coppin, *Unwritten History*, Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1919, 375 pp.

The author, who was born in 1848, depicts the lives of enslaved and free blacks in the border state of Maryland. He stresses the influence of neighboring Delaware and Pennsylvania, especially on Cecil County. He writes about the supporters of the UGRR such as "Thomie Garrett." In 1865 Levi became a Methodist and the following year was licensed to preach.

During the period of enslavement, runaways were treated harshly if caught. Since the borders were relatively unguarded near the end of the war, an acquaintance of Coppin moved to Wilmington, Delaware, to study under Frisby Cooper, who himself had been educated at the African School run by Quakers.<sup>32</sup> (pp. 16-18, 32-36, 132-136)

## Frederick Douglass

*Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage and His Complete History to the Present Time*, Hartford, Connecticut: Park Publishing Company, 1881, pp. 516.

Once enslaved in Maryland, Frederick Bailey, who adopted the surname Douglass, became one of the most prominent thought-provoking black activists as a writer, speaker and newspaper publisher. He also served as an UGRR operative.

In his *Life and Times*, Douglass delves deeply into the psychological state of enslavement on the Chesapeake Bay and in Baltimore that drove him to liberate himself. He provides a vivid description of his journey to freedom from enslavement on the Eastern Shore of Maryland to Wilmington and then onto Philadelphia.

Douglass writes about how and why in 1838 he dressed himself as a sailor, boarded a train in Baltimore and headed north. He describes the almost unbearable fear that gripped him because he recognized fellow passengers who knew him and who might reveal his identity. His anxiety was compounded by conductors who asked for his papers, which if carefully examined would reveal that they were borrowed. Douglass explains that stopping in Wilmington was dangerous, because it was well known that slave catchers waited there to capture fugitives. Despite such trepidation, Douglass not only managed to arrive in that city, but disembarked and obtained a steamboat ticket for a trip up the Delaware River to Philadelphia and freedom.<sup>33</sup> (pp. 197-201)

## Henry Highland Garnet

Rev. George Freeman Bragg, *Men of Maryland*, Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1914, 135 pp.

Alexander Crummell, *The Euology of Henry Highland Garnet*, New York, 1882, 8 pp. New York Public Library

Henry Highland Garnet is yet another formerly enslaved person who became a prominent spokesman for equal rights. *Men of Maryland*, compiled by the editor of *The Church Advocate*, contains a brief comment

about the Garnet family's departure from Maryland and its journey to freedom. Alexander Crummel, who grew up in New York City with Garnet, corroborates Bragg's statement.<sup>34</sup>

In 1824, when Henry was about three years old, the Garnet family escaped from Maryland. Henry's father first obtained permission to attend a slave's funeral, at which time he took the opportunity to transport his family to Delaware in a covered wagon. Once in Delaware they made their way to Thomas Garrett who helped them on their journey to Pennsylvania. The Garnets settled in New York City and Henry became a well-known black activist. (Bragg, pp. 54-55, Crummel, p. 8)

### **Jacob D. Green**

*Narrative of the Life of J.D. Green A Runaway Slave from Kentucky Containing an Account of His Three Escape in 1839, 1846 and 1849*, Huddersfield, Kentucky: Henry Fielding, 1864, 43 pp.

Green's first attempt at self-emancipation, which took him into Delaware, failed. His narrative, however, reflects how freedom seekers on the Delmarva Peninsula used the local landscape to hide and travel. It also illustrates their determination and creativity in overcoming multiple obstacles during such journeys.

Around 1813, Jacob Green was born a slave in Queen Anne's County, Maryland. He labored on a plantation near Centreville until sometime during 1839, when he became a freedom seeker. That year, after his enslaver sold Jacob's wife off the plantation, he decided to depart. First, he worked with a neighboring Dutchman to steal and sell small pigs and poultry, which allowed him to fund his escape.

Green rode to Baltimore on a horse that he had taken. In that city he overheard talk about a handbill that was circulating for a runaway from the Eastern Shore named Jake. Then he knew that his master was aware that he had fled. Being cautious, Jacob used a back road and traveled all night to Milford, Delaware. To avoid direct questioning by other travelers, he left the road for a swamp surrounded by small saplings. He then hid in a barn for the day. At night he regained the road and around 1 a.m. arrived at Milford. Unable to cross the bridge into town without being seen, Jacob continued on for about ten more miles in the direction of Wilmington. At

daybreak, he moved off the road and became trapped in a muddy marshy part of the woods. Extricating himself by laying hold of some willows, he went to a pond and washed his clothes and himself. He waited until nightfall before he resumed his walk.

When he came upon a farmhouse, Jacob decided to seek help. Two women helped him and gave him food and a pair of shoes. He became wary when he heard them talking about the \$200 reward for him. After one of the woman went outside, he tied the other to a chair, helped himself to victuals and left. He rubbed his feet in cow dung to distract bloodhounds. That night, under cover of a dark drizzling rain, he moved another 24 miles. In the woods, he encountered a black man who told him that Chester, Pennsylvania was only 26 miles away. He then met another freedom seeker, named Geordie, whom he knew from Maryland. At that point, bloodhounds caught and attacked them. While he dispatched two of the dogs, which he knew by name, other hounds caught and killed Geordie. Jacob managed to hide in a nearby barn until the next day.

Discovered in the morning by officers and taken before a magistrate, Jacob acted deaf and dumb. The magistrate released him, whereupon Jacob found a horse on the road. He rode it to Chester, where he met a man named Sharpless who took him to his house. The Quaker and his friends provided Green with clean clothes and a wagon to Philadelphia. He worked for five weeks in that city, but does not reveal his employer's name because he was still alive. Offered passage to Canada, he turned it down. Instead, Jacob opted to go to Darby. Jacob accepted employment from yet another white man, and for three years attended the African Methodist Free Church. Unfortunately, Jacob's sponsor went bankrupt and Green found himself unemployed. Under arrest he was imprisoned in Maryland and subsequently recovered by his enslaver. (pp. 1-8, 22-28)

## **Walter Hawkins**

S. J. Celestine Edwards, *From Slavery to Bishopric or The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins The British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada*, London: John Kensit, 1891, 176 pp.

Walter Hawkins was one of those freedom seekers who used a train to exit the South by going through Delaware and on to Pennsylvania. Hawkins was born around 1809 in Georgetown, Maryland.

Hawkins' journey to freedom, which probably took place in the mid-1830s, originated in Maryland. His comments reflect both the anxieties of traveling without proper free papers and of not knowing exactly how he might be assisted. Prior to his flight to the North, Hawkins had consulted with free black traveling preachers who passed on information about whom to contact once he arrived in Philadelphia.

Walter traveled by train from Havre De Grace to Baltimore without being challenged. At the city train station, he bluffed his way past the booking clerk and seated himself in "the proverbial black people's car . . ." He knew of Delaware as a place that had been among the first states where Quakers had freed their slaves. When the train stopped in Wilmington, since he did not know where he was, Hawkins spent the next forty-five minutes anxiously awaiting his fate. He was so nervous that he dared not disembark for food, nor even ask if it was Wilmington where the train had stopped. Just before the cars departed from that Delaware city for Philadelphia, two black women entered the compartment and informed Walter that they had been sent to assist him. Hawkins eventually went to cities such as Buffalo, New York and Bedford, Massachusetts before moving to Ontario, Canada. (pp. 27 and 52-68)

## **George Henry**

*Life of George Henry Together with A Brief History of the Colored People in America*, Providence: H. I. Gould & Co., 1894, 124 pp.

George Henry's narrative is representative of how prior to running away, enslaved persons could pick up information they later put to use to succeed on their journeys to freedom.

Henry's voyage as a mariner on the Delaware River in Pennsylvania encouraged him to leave enslavement. The atmosphere of freedom in Philadelphia attracted him. He describes how he familiarized himself with the geographical features of the area. When he left Maryland, however, he took a train, probably through Delaware, to Philadelphia. Once there, he found work as a crew member on a vessel headed to New England. George later traveled back to Pennsylvania to work and live.<sup>35</sup> (pp. 1-46)

## **Jarena Lee**

*Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee Giving an Account of her Call to Preach the Gospel*, Philadelphia, 1849, 59 pp. [www.rutgers.edu](http://www.rutgers.edu)

Jarena Lee was the first woman to preach from the pulpit of Richard Allen's Bethel African Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her narrative also demonstrates the impact of the Great Awakening on the Delmarva Peninsula. It shows how free black preacher, in this case a woman, moved about Delaware and Maryland making contacts and building relationships with those whom they met. It is not yet known if Jarena, like some of her counterparts mentioned elsewhere in this bibliography, imparted any information about UGRR contacts to those to whom she preached.

During the summer of 1823 in Delaware, Jarena visited Wilmington, Christina and New Castle before traveling to St. Georges, Port Penn, Canton's Bridge, Smyrna, Middletown and in Maryland, Elkton. She then returned to Middletown and Canton's Bridge. Seven miles from the latter, she found a sister from whom she had been separated for thirty-three years. Then she set out for Wilmington. During her visit to that city, she stayed with a black couple, Captain Jonathan Rial and his wife.<sup>36</sup> Throughout her trip, Jarena preached at private homes and places such as Wilmington's stone Methodist meeting house, the Bethel Church, a Presbyterian Church, and in the African school house. She also preached to groups at camp meetings. Although governmental authorities did not allow her to use the Court House in New Castle and church authorities denied her the use of the Methodist Church there, Jarena did preach at the Market House.<sup>37</sup>  
(pp. 25-28)

## **Isaac Mason**

*Life of Isaac Mason as A Slave*, Worcester, Mass., 1893, 74 pp.

Mason's tale is useful for its portrayal of the links that freedom seekers utilized between Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania. It shows the dangers of such journeys and how freedom seekers and their conductors adjusted to overcome local problems. His narrative is significant because it reveals the names of UGRR guides in Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania

and describes the flexibility that freedom seekers and those who aided them displayed. Women are among the unnamed assistants.

Isaac Mason was born enslaved in 1822 in “George Town Cross Oats” [Crossroads] in Kent County, Maryland. He was fortunate to spend much of his early life around his parents and relatives, some of whom were free and some who were not. His father, a freeman, was able to buy his mother and some of his siblings, but not Isaac. Hired out to a number of men and women near George Town and Chestertown, Isaac, sometimes called Will, worked as a domestic and a field hand. There were a few instances when difficulty on a plantation caused Isaac to run away and hide nearby. His relatives, including his grandfather helped him during such episodes. Each time he returned to his current enslaver, sometimes because relatives had interceded for him. To carry out jobs or to get away from trouble, Isaac also used or borrowed boats and horses from local men named Jim Frisby and Jim Willmer. Before he decided to run, Isaac was also told about the importance of the North Star by yet another acquaintance, Charley Miller. It is currently unclear if any of these men had UGRR connections.

Late in 1847, because of a conflict with one of his enslavers, Isaac decided that he did not want to chance being sold to New Orleans. So, he decided to run to freedom. In George Town, he contacted one Joe Brown to guide him and two other young men, Joshua and George, through Delaware into Pennsylvania. Mrs. Brown slept in the house while Isaac and his companions negotiated to pay Brown \$9.00 for his services. The latter took them from Maryland to an area about eight miles outside of Wilmington where the guide contacted another unnamed black man whom he knew. That person warned Brown and the others to take another route, because their intended path was regularly monitored by slave-catchers. The group back-tracked about eight miles, while Brown went into the city. Mason and the others waited in a forest. While hidden under a massive oak tree, they were surprised by a fox hunt, but not discovered. They soon rejoined Brown, who had returned with a Wilmington resident, Perry Augustus. Brown departed and Augustus took the freedom seekers across the Delaware-Pennsylvania border about 3:00 a.m. in the morning. They went to New Garden where Nelson Wiggins and his two unnamed daughters provided food and lodging. By 1848, after having gone to New Jersey and back to Philadelphia, Mason worked in the area of Doe Run. In the early 1850s, because of a kidnapping scare, Isaac went to Canada but eventually returned to the Philadelphia area and married. (pp. 1-51)

## **G. W. Offley**

*A Narrative of the Life and Labors of the G. W. Offley A Colored Man*, Hartford, Conn., 1859, 24 pp.

Offley's narrative shows how enslaved people overcame difficult situations and gained skills that could change their lives.

Offley, born in 1808, originally lived in Centreville, Maryland where he was enslaved with his parents. His father managed to buy numerous members of the family to prevent their being sold off. In the mid-1830s, when he turned twenty-one and was freed, G. W. moved to St. George's, Delaware. He boarded and worked there for a landlady who allowed him to make arrangements to exchange food with a young boy and his sister for lessons on how to write better and to cypher. About 1835, he left for Connecticut. (pp. 10-12)

## **Thomas Smallwood**

*A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood, (Coloured Man:) Giving an Account of His Birth- The Period he Was Held in Slavery- His Release- and Removal to Canada, etc. Together With an Account of the Underground Railroad. Written by Himself:* Toronto: James Stephens, 1851, 63 pp.

Thomas Smallwood's Narrative serves as an example of the Maryland-Delaware-Pennsylvania UGRR connection and highlights the interracial ecumenical nature of its operations in Delaware. It includes a brief note about assistance from Thomas Garrett and the usefulness of the Quaker's Pennsylvania connections.

Smallwood was a free black from Maryland who worked as a UGRR operative with the Rev. Charles Torrey. His narrative includes information about a visit they made to the home of "Thomas Garrott" who provided shelter for both men and information about whom to contact in Pennsylvania. From Wilmington, these men went to Kennett Square where they acquired horses and a wagon needed to transport freedom seekers. Smallwood later went to California.<sup>38</sup> (p. 38)

## James Lindsay Smith

*Autobiography of James L. Smith, Including, Also, Reminiscences of Slave Life, Recollections of the War, Education of Freedmen, Causes of the Exodus, Etc.*, Norwich: Press of the Bulletin Company, 1881, 150 pp.

Originally born enslaved in Virginia, in 1838, Lindsay and his companions liberated themselves by boat. They left Virginia and went to the Frenchtown area in Maryland before entering Delaware. They followed the Frenchtown Railroad tracks and were surprised by the train, which Smith claims he did not know about. Outside of the town of New Castle he was helped and fed breakfast by a white couple. When he returned to the road Smith reconnected with his companions. Undetected, they bought passage in New Castle on a vessel that carried them to Philadelphia via the Delaware River.<sup>39</sup> (pp. 42-48 and 127-128)

## Job bin Solomon

Thomas Bluett, *Son of Solomon, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa; Who was a Slave About Two Years in Maryland; and Afterwards Being Brought to England, was Set Free, and Sent to His Native Land in the Year 1734*, London: R. Ford, 1734, 63 pp.

The sketch by Thomas Bluett, a British abolitionist, concentrates on the tribulations of a Woloff-speaking Muslim abducted from the Senegambia region of West Africa. After selling slaves for his father in territory occupied by the Mandingo people, Ayub himself was taken prisoner. When ransom negotiations failed, he was taken to the coast and sold by them to a European trader.

Once in the colonies he was bound to a plantation owner on Kent Island in Maryland. He first labored in the tobacco fields, but then was put in charge of managing cattle. Although it is unclear how Ayub crossed the narrow channel that separated the island from the mainland, he walked off through the woods to Kent County on the Delaware Bay, which was then part of Pennsylvania, about thirty miles away. Because he lacked proper papers, Job was arrested and taken to a tavern, which also served as a jail. Bluett, who was visiting the courts in Dover, found another Woloff-speaker in the area to relate Job's story to him. Bluett eventually arranged for

Ayub's freedom and saw that the African was sent to England. From there he would return to Africa.<sup>40</sup> (pp. 16-34)

### **Sojourner Truth, Olive Gilbert, and Frances W. Titus**

*Narrative of Sojourner Truth; a Bondswoman of Olden Time, Emancipated by New York Legislature in the Early Part of the Present Century; with a History of Her Labors and Correspondence, Drawn from Her "Book of Life," Also, a Memorial Chapter, Giving the Particulars of Her Last Sickness and Death,* Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Office, 1884, 324 pp.

This publication is the immensely dramatic story of a woman's determination during enslavement, freedom and post-Civil War struggle for equality. Sojourner died in 1883. Sojourner only mentions that Delaware was one of the twenty-two states to which she traveled and lectured during her lifetime.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately she does not provide any detail about what she did, where she went or whom she saw in Delaware. (p. 308)

### **George White**

*A Brief Account of the Life, Experience, Travels, and Gospel Labours of George White, An African; Written by Himself, and Revised by A Friend,* New York: John C. Totten, 1810, 60 pp.

Originally from Accomack, Virginia, George White was born enslaved in 1764. His account includes a brief statement about two visits to Wilmington, Delaware as a Methodist preacher. It is unique to this set of narratives because it was written by someone originally enslaved in the South who was sold to an enslaver in the North, and returned to the Delmarva Peninsula as a free man to preach.

After being oppressed by a series of enslavers, who moved him from Virginia to Maryland and finally to New York around the age of 26, George attained his freedom. George adopted Methodism and earned a preaching license. He attended the Quarterly Conference in New York City, of April 13, 1808. His mission brought him to Wilmington where he spent one week preaching among what he called his African brethren before going to Baltimore, Maryland. On his return to Delaware, he spent several more

days in Wilmington before moving onto Philadelphia. Whether he imparted any helpful information to would-be freedom seekers about gaining freedom in the North is not yet known. (pp. 17-18, 37-38, 41-47)

## **James Williams**

*Life and Adventures of James Williams, A Fugitive Slave, with a Full Description of the Underground Railroad*, San Francisco: Women's Union Print, 1873, 108 pp.

The author describes his participation in the UGRR in Delaware and Pennsylvania and includes a valuable piece that directly links freedom seekers to the Big Quarterly.<sup>42</sup>

Originally from Elkton, Maryland, James fled to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. By 1838, he had found work with a series of farmers, some of whom were abolitionists. In 1845, he returned to a Quarterly in Delaware, but when discovered by his former enslaver, successfully evaded him. His narrative contains information about his association with and methods used to transport other fugitives while working as a UGRR operative, apparently sometimes in Delaware and sometimes in Pennsylvania. Around 1850, he left Philadelphia for the last time. (pp. 9-18)

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Still personally assisted freedom seekers and kept records, which he published in 1872, *The Underground Rail Road* (Philadelphia, 1872). It contains numerous brief sketches, narratives and correspondence by and about freedom seekers with occasional longer series about individuals or groups of runaways. Newspaper advertisements were not always clear about whether a person was a runaway or not – “Stolen, Stra’d or Run-Away... Betty, aged about 18 years. She is supposed to have been taken from hence by an Oyster-Shallop, Benj. Taylor Master, bound for Philadelphia, and may be sold on some Part of the River. John Finney [New Castle, Delaware]” (*Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 18, 1740).

<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Porter, ed., *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837*, (Boston 1971), p.

3. For a current view of fugitive narratives compared to captivity narratives and spiritual autobiographies, see Donna M. Campbell, “The Slave Narratives,” *Literary Movements*, [www.wsu.edu/campbelld/amilit/slave.htm](http://www.wsu.edu/campbelld/amilit/slave.htm).

<sup>3</sup> For a brief discussion of the racist and controversial language used during the 19<sup>th</sup> century related to the institution of slavery and the people it oppressed and today's sensibility to its harmful nature, see Kate Larson, *The Underground Railroad in Delaware, A Research Context*, Draft: January 17, 2007, typescript.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619-1877* (New York, 1993), pp. 125-130, 138-139 and 220-221.

<sup>5</sup> Patience Essah, *A House Divided Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1996) and William Williams, *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware, 1639-1865*, (Wilmington, Delaware, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> For a list of repressive Delaware laws, see Patsy Fletcher, “The Underground Railroad in Kent County Delaware: A Practice in Self-Determination,” *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society*, 22 (2003): 64-65 and Delaware Laws on Slavery from the Colonia Era to the Civil War at [www.slaveryinamerica.org/geograph/slave\\_laws\\_DE.htm](http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/geograph/slave_laws_DE.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Blair Bernhardt, “Follow the Drinking Gourd: Reconstructing the Fragmentary Landscapes of the Underground Railroad,” M. A. thesis, (Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware, 2003), Fletcher, “The Underground Railroad in Kent County Delaware,” pp. 61-74 and Robin Bodo, Cynthia Snyder, Anthony D’Antonio, Jr., New Castle Courthouse Historic Landmark Nomination, Delaware Cultural Survey No. 1290, October 25, 2001.

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce Dalleo et al., *Passing on the Story – African Americans in New Castle*, (New Castle, Delaware, 2002), pp. 21-22 and Court of General Sessions, December Term 1817, RG 2805.31, Delaware.

<sup>9</sup> *Delaware Republican*, cited in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, November 2 and *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 4, 1852.

<sup>10</sup> Carol Wilson, *Freedom at Risk: The Kidnapping of Free Black in America 1780-1865*, (Lexington, Kentucky, 1994), pp. 19-37; Todd A. Herring, "Kidnapped and Sold in Natchez: The Ordeal of Aaron Cooper, A Free Black Man," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 60 (1998): 341-353 and Stanton Tierman, "Baltimore's Old Slave Markets," [www.nathanielturner.com/BaltimoreSlavemarkets](http://www.nathanielturner.com/BaltimoreSlavemarkets).

<sup>11</sup> Bradley Skelcher, "Friends and Freedmen: Historical Geography of the Underground Railroad in Central Delaware, *JAAGHS* 22 (2002): 110-129 and Peter T. Dalleo, "'Thrifty and Intelligent, Moral and Religious: Wilmington's Free African American Community as Portrayed in the Blue Hen's Chicken, 1846-1852," *28 Delaware History* (1998): 39-70.

<sup>12</sup> Peter T. Dalleo, *Black Activists, Thomas Garrett and Social Justice in Delaware, c. 1822 - 1871*, unpublished typescript.

<sup>13</sup> Dalleo, *Black Activists*. For more information on the early abolitionist action committee, see Monte A. Calvert, "The Abolition Society of Delaware, 1801–1807," *DH* 10 (1963): 295-320.

<sup>14</sup> The Garrett-Needles connection may be traced back to the Patty Cannon era (Dalleo, *Black Activists*). As a result of this escapade Isaac Mason, a freedom seeker from Marylander who had passed through Delaware into Pennsylvania, left Chester County to hide in Philadelphia for a few months before returning to the countryside (Isaac Mason, *Life*, referenced in bibliography).

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Garrett to Eliza Wigham, December 15, in *James McGowan, Station Master on the Underground Railroad – The Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett*, (Jefferson, North Carolina, 2004), pp. 166-168.

<sup>16</sup> William Cornish interview, 1863, in James W. Blassingame (ed.), *Slave Testimony Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*, (Baton Rouge, 1977), pp. 423-426.

<sup>17</sup> *Liberator*, March 17, 1832.

<sup>18</sup> *Wilmington Daily Commercial*, March 3, 1869.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion about the negative influence of legend and melodrama on writing about the UGRR, see Larry Gara's *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*, (Lexington, Kentucky, 1961), and, a more recent argument on Fergus Bordewich's blog: "Underground Railroad: Myth & Reality," July 27, 2005 [www.fergusbordewich.com](http://www.fergusbordewich.com).

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<sup>20</sup> In the 1970s scholars struggled with the decolonization of the interpretation of African history and the contribution of oral history as a tool to reconstruct the experience of the peoples of that continent. See, Eric Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, U.K., 1983).

<sup>21</sup> Other fugitive narratives include passages about freedom seekers obtaining assistance at Allen churches in places such as Philadelphia and Upper Darby, Pennsylvania.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Spencer, once enslaved in Delaware and a co-founder of the first independent African church in the United States, did not produce a narrative. For a history of his church's development, see Rev. Daniel James Russell, *History of the African Union Methodist Protestant Church, Philadelphia, Union Star Book and Job Printing and Publishing House*, (Pennsylvania, 1920). For a recent history, see Dorothy E. Wilmore, *Peter Spencer's Movement: Exploring the History of the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church 1805-1899*, (Wilmington, Delaware, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Neall, whose mother was a Mifflin, scribbled a note along the margins of a letter that described Solomon as: "the childhood companion & friend of my mother" (Solomon Bayley to Daniel Neall, May 9, 1834, Neall Collection, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College). See also, Hilda Justice, *Life and Ancestry of Warner Mifflin Friend-Philanthropist-Patriot*, (Philadelphia, 1905).

<sup>24</sup> Peter T. Dalleo, "Persecuted but not forsaken. Cut down but not destroyed: Solomon and Thamar Bayley, Delawarean Emigrants to Liberia," *DH 31* (2006): 137-178.

<sup>25</sup> In 1841, Ezekiel died in Wilmington (Dalleo, compiler, "African-American Wilmington Residents *Journal of the Delaware Genealogical Society*," Selected Sources of African American History in Nineteenth Century Delaware," January 1998, bound typescript HSD).

<sup>26</sup> The *Delaware State Journal* of May 13, 1839 contains a first-hand account of Thomas Morgan's trial.

<sup>27</sup> This is quite possibly a member of the Jacques family. As early as 1824, Dr. Gideon Jacques is identified as a member of the Delaware Abolition Society. See, *The American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race: Minutes, Constitution, Addresses, Memorials, Resolutions and Anti-Slavery Tracts*, 3 vol., (New York, 1969), pp. 814-816.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Bringhurst and Benjamin Ferris, the son of Ziba Ferris were also known Abolition Society members, (*Ibid.*, Thomas J. Scharf, *History of Delaware*, (Philadelphia, 1888), 2: 826, and HSD genealogical card file).

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<sup>29</sup> Medford lived at Orange and Ninth Streets (1845 Wilmington directory). Among the Pennsylvania surnames in the Tillman narrative that match those in Smedley's work are Barnard, Darlington, Evans, Fussell, Lewis, Maris, and Vickers and West, see R. C. Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties in Pennsylvania*, (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1883), passim.

<sup>30</sup> For a recounting of the notorious and violent Christiana Riot in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which featured stiff resistance by free and self-liberated blacks against former enslavers, see William Parker, "The Freedman's Story in Two Parts," *Atlantic Monthly*, (February 1866: 152-166 and March 1866: 276-295, Boston, 1866, 26 pp.)

<sup>31</sup> Tombstone and grave site, African Union Church, London Grove, Pennsylvania, GAR marker. Recruiting for United States Colored Troop regiments took place in Delaware. Not surprisingly, since the state did not have its own African-American regiment, free blacks left Delaware to enlist elsewhere; some freedom seekers who were already living outside of Delaware such as John Tillman also enlisted. Other Delawareans named Tillman who enlisted in the Union Forces included Charles Tillman, a whitewasher from Wilmington, who served as a landsman and waiter in the U.S. Navy on the *U.S.S. Miami*. When he died his remains were buried in the Key West Cemetery in January 1864 (Anthony Atwood, *Five Blacks in Navy Blue: A Report on Civil War Sailors Buried in Key West Cemetery*, *Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal*, 15 (2004): 4-8). William Tillman or Tilghman, a steward from Milford, was involved in the daring recovery of the schooner *Waring* from a Confederate prize crew and took it to New York City. He may, however, not have been an enlistee (see *Life of George Henry*, referenced in bibliography and *Blue Hen's Chicken*, January 18, 1862). Whether or not these men were related to J. W. Tillman is not yet unknown.

<sup>32</sup> Cooper's mentor was Isaac S. Flint, the ardent abolitionist and UGRR operative (*The Christian Recorder*, December 20, 1888). Flint is perhaps best known for his rescue of Samuel D. Burris, a free black UGRR agent. In a letter written while incarcerated in the Kent County Jail, Burris offers his opinions about his arrest, treatment in prison and the anxiety about his impending sale (*Liberator*, June 3, 1848).

<sup>33</sup> Douglass also released editions in 1845, 1848, 1855 and 1892, with very much the same general thrust of his Delaware experience (see *Documenting the American South*). He was invited in 1848 to speak to the Delaware Anti-Slavery Society in Wilmington, but when municipal authorities denied that

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group the right to use Old Town Hall, Douglass refused to come. He did return to Wilmington to speak in 1865 (Dalleo, *Black Activists*).

<sup>34</sup> In his *Euology* (p.8), Crummell also mentions that Garnet in a public appearance in Wilmington thanked Garrett for assisting his family. Unfortunately, he did not give the date or any other details about the event.

<sup>35</sup> Other prominent freedom seekers who used trains, which probably passed through Delaware, wrote about their experience but did not include comments about the First State. See the narratives of William Box Brown and of William and Ellen Craft, *Documenting the American South*.

<sup>36</sup> Captain Rial's name appears in the 1814 Wilmington directory; a notice about the settlement of his estate appears in the *American Watchman*, March 21, 1823.

<sup>37</sup> Yolanda Pierce, *Hell Without Fires: Slavery, Christianity and the Antebellum Spiritual Narrative*, (Gainesville, Florida, 2005), pp. 64-86.

<sup>38</sup> An item in a West Chester newspaper toward the end of the century claims that Harlan Gause had provided the wagon and Mifflin Pyle the horses (*Daily Local News*, December 1, 1897). Unfortunately when Torrey returned to Maryland to pick them up, the authorities caught and jailed him in Baltimore. The wagon was burned. Torrey was held for trial, judged guilty, and later died in prison. See Joseph C. Lovejoy, *Memoir of Rev. Charles T. Torrey who died in the penitentiary of Maryland, where he was confined for showing mercy to the poor*, (New York, 1969[1847]).

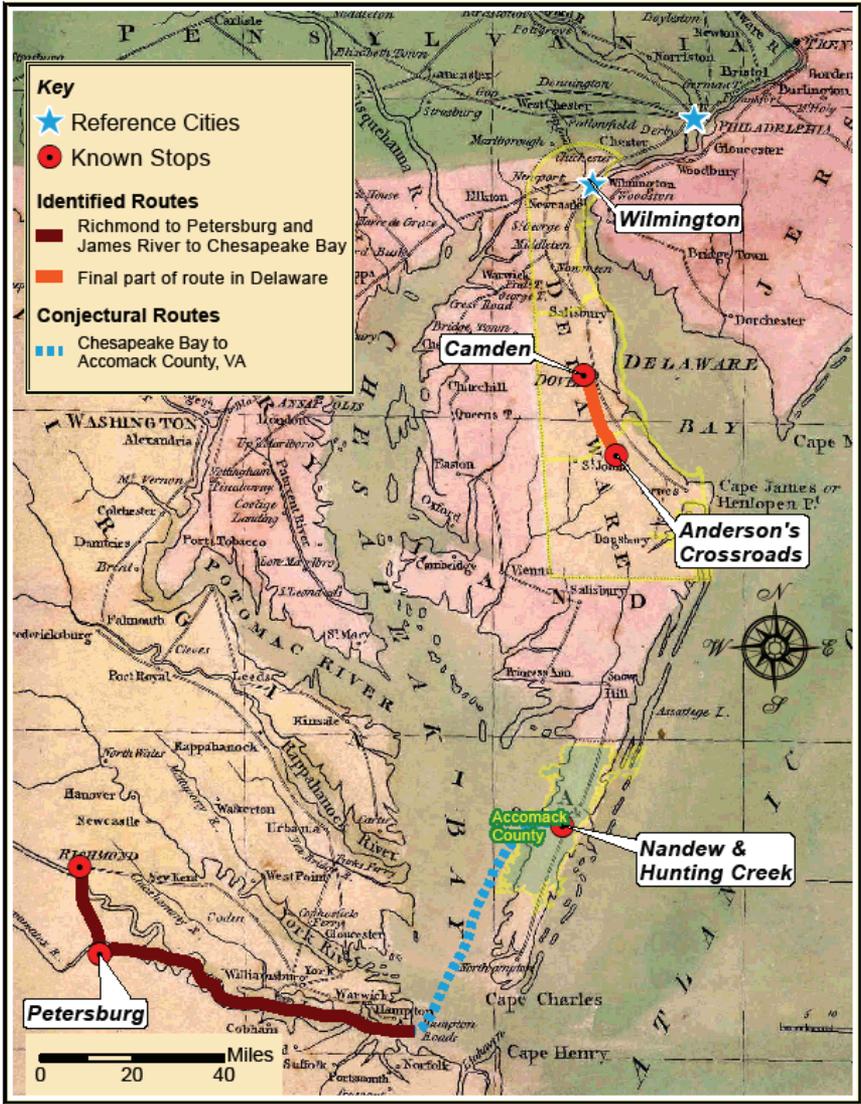
<sup>39</sup> Frank Newton of the Richards Maritime Museum has researched the Lindsay Smith narrative. He is somewhat skeptical of Lindsay's description of his encounter with the train outside of New Castle.

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed history of Job in his African and American setting, see Philip D. Curtin, "Ayuba Sulieman Diallo of Bondu," in *Africa Remembered Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, (London, 1965), pp. 17-59.

<sup>41</sup> In at least the mid-1850s, Sojourner did participate in yearly meetings of the Progressive Friends in Longwood, Pennsylvania, which were also attended by Quaker members such as Thomas Garrett (Albert Wahl, "The Congregational or Progressive Friends in the Pre-Civil-War Reform Movement," Phd. Dissertation, Temple University, 1951, pp. 60-63, 113 and 165-167). Perhaps it was during one of these visits that she came into northern Delaware.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin, *The Mark of a Man: Peter Spencer and The African Union Methodist Tradition*, (Latham, Maryland, 1987), *passim*.

# Solomon Bayley, Freedom Seeker on the Delmarva Peninsula, 1799



Historical Map Base: I. Luffman, 1813. Digital map scan provided by the Delaware Historical Society. Map is Number 21 in DHS collections.



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