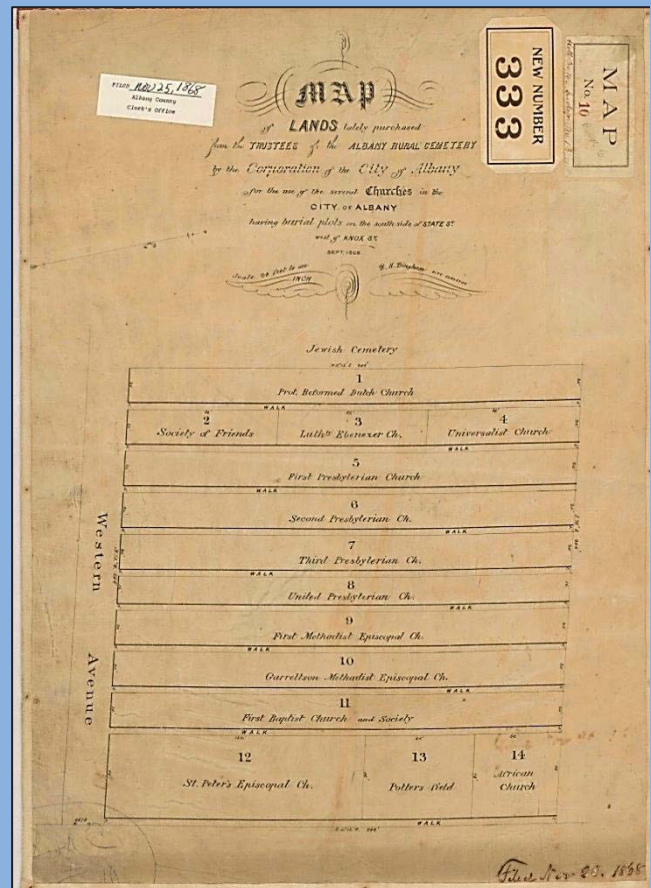
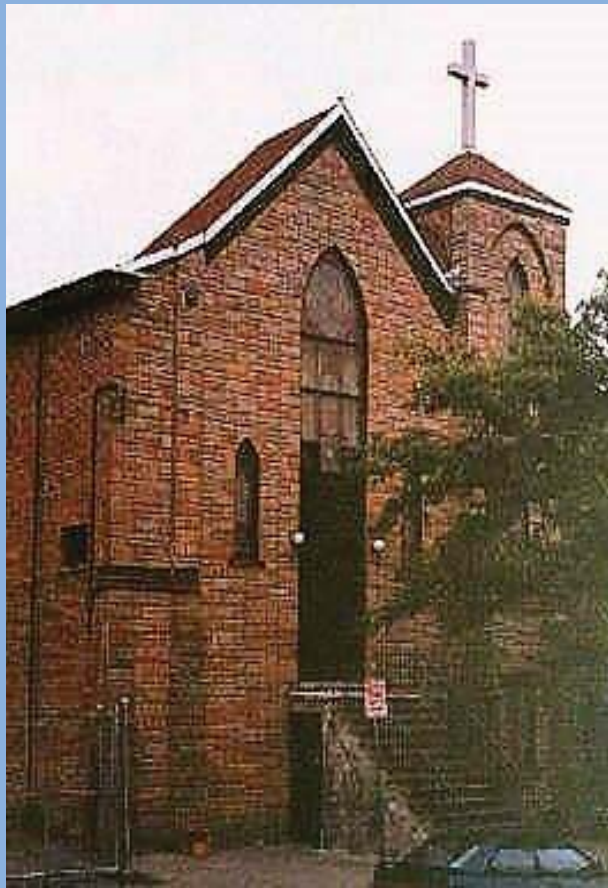


Hallowed Grounds:

Sites of African-American Memories



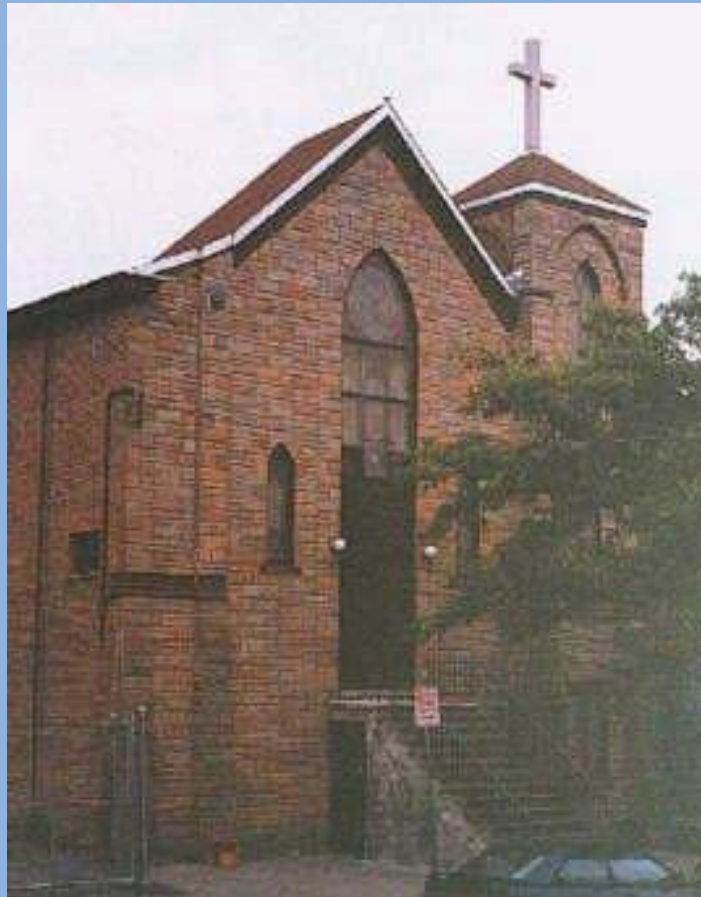
Courtesy of the archival collection at the Albany County Hall of Records

The history of African-Americans in the United States can be remembered not only through the individuals who helped to shape it, but the places in which the trials and triumphs of African-Americans occurred. The homes of famous abolitionists, churches that served as community centers and stops on the Underground Railroad, cemeteries where individuals were laid to rest, schools where African-American children were able to receive an education and settlements where African-Americans migrated and formed communities have become hallow, sacred sites that help individuals remember, reflect and preserve the struggles and feats of notable and everyday African-Americans in the past for present and future generations.

Albany contains several examples of such hallowed sites that can be documented in various records contained at the Albany County Hall of Records. There is a church patent for the Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first black church established in Albany, a stop on the Underground Railroad and a place where community meetings and gatherings occurred. Land maps, deeds and special Common Council reports detail the reintering of black parishioners from Israel AME Church into the 19th Century Church Ground portion of the Albany Rural Cemetery so that they could be remembered and cared for in a suitable and respectful manner. Chattel mortgages, a school petition record and city directories help provide deeper insight into the life of Stephen Myers, an Albany area black abolitionist whose home at 194 Livingston Avenue was a stop on the Underground Railroad. His earlier residences throughout the 1830s and 1840s also served as important locations where he likely conducted much of his work with the local vigilance committee and as publisher for the antislavery newspaper, *The Northern Star*.

To learn more about these hallowed Albany sites of African-American memories and one of the individuals that helped to sanctify them, read on!

Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church



Courtesy of IsraelAME.org

The Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Albany's first black church, was founded in 1828 by Rev. William Cornish. Cornish had been designated to oversee and serve the church by Bishop Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, the first black church in the United States. The creation of the AME church came about as a result of displeasure felt by Allen and other black parishioners at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church over its racist and segregated practices; restricting Allen to early morning sermons and forcing blacks to worship and pray in separate areas.

On April 25, 1829, the Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church was officially incorporated: "This is to certify that an association has been formed in the city

of Albany under the name and title of the “African Methodist Episcopal Israel Church” (County Clerk, Church Patents, 1784-1842, Volume 1, page 181).

Israel AME Church was first located in a school on State Street. In 1842 church trustees purchased a plot of land on Hamilton Street and built a church in 1844. The church burned down soon after it was built and in 1854 another church, designed by its pastor Thomas Jackson, was constructed in its place and is still in use by the congregation today, nearly 160 years later.

Beginning in 1829, the Israel AME Church served as a stop on the Underground Railroad and was visited by famous abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman. The church also housed the first school for black children, the Wilberforce School. In addition to serving as a stop on the Underground Railroad and as a school, Israel AME Church also held the first meeting of the Albany Chapter of the NAACP in February 1935.

In 1988 a state historic marker was erected in the church courtyard, recognizing it as the oldest black church in the Capital District.

Continued...

Israel AME Church – Church Patent

John Savage

Recorded and compared with the original
this 2^d day of December 1825

Lee S. Sleeck

This is to Certify that an association has been formed in the City of Albany under the name & title of the "African Methodist Episcopal School Church" and that the members thereof have held an election for Trustees of said association pursuant to the directions of an act of the Legislature of the State of New York entitled "An act to provide for the Incorporation of Religious Societies" passed April 5. 1813 and that at said Election William Cornish Samuel Streetor Amos Hitchcock Nathaniel Johnson Walter Jackson and Fortune Simpson were duly elected first Trustees of said association.

Given under our hands and Seals this twenty fifth day of April in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty five.

Witness
Can L. Howlsby

William Cornish
Samuel Streetor
man

Rec'd per John B. Be it remembered that on the twenty

182
11th day of April in the year of our Lord one
 thousand eight hundred and twenty nine persons
 appeared before me Stephen Lader one of the Comptrol-
 lers in and for the county of Albany the within
 named persons and severally acknowledged the execution
 of the within instrument to be their voluntary act
 and deed for the uses and purposes therein mentioned
 and intended. I allow it to be Recorded
 Stephen Lader
 Comptroller
 Recorded and Compared with the original
 the 25th day of April 1829
 L. A. Ten Eyck Clerk

87-08878 Albany County Clerk, Church Patents Volume I, 1784-1842.

The establishment of the Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church -the first church for black parishioners in Albany was incorporated April 25, 1829.

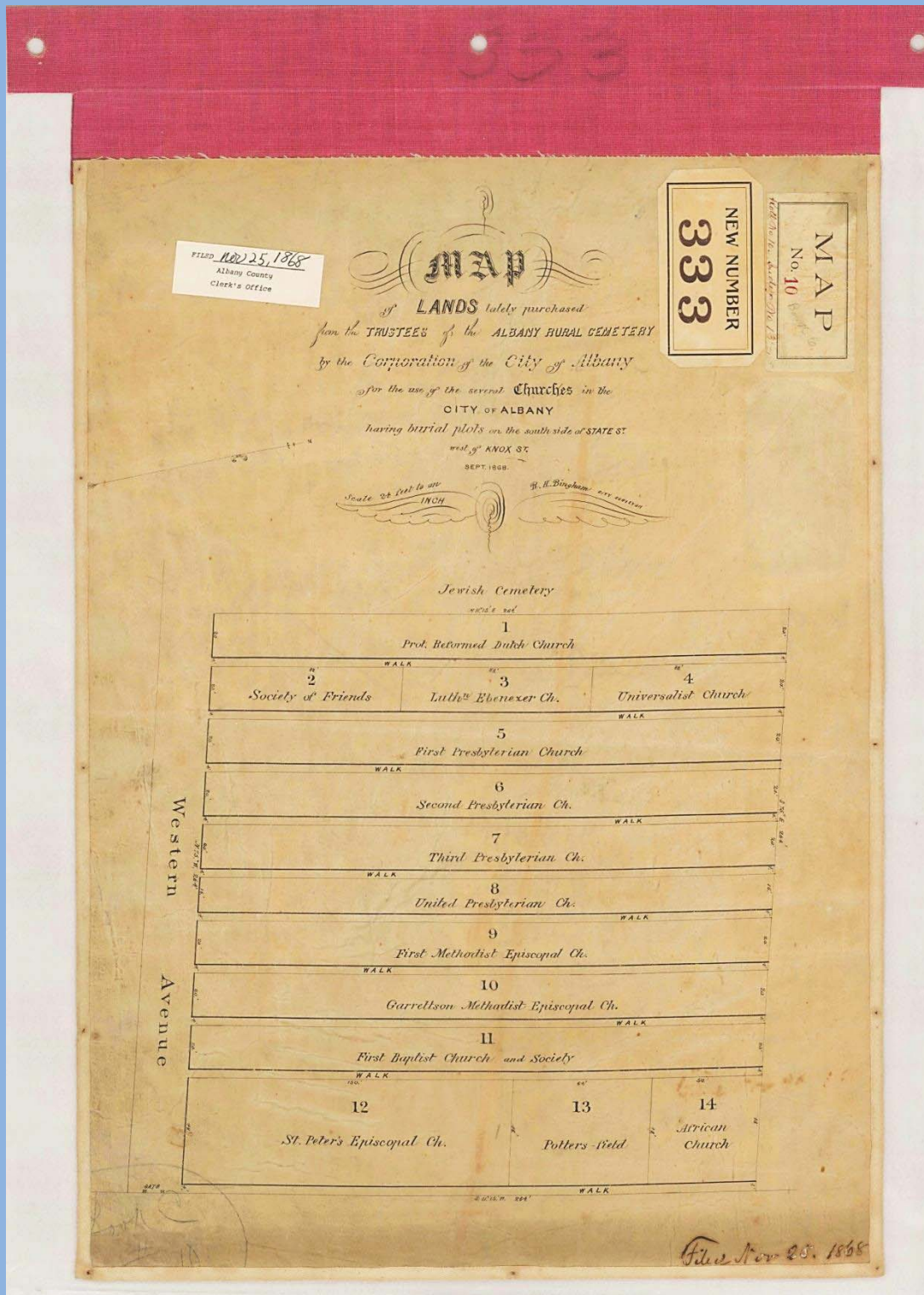
Beyond the Grave: Albany Rural Cemetery

State Street Burial Ground, located in present day Washington Park between State Street and Hudson Avenue, was a graveyard owned by the City of Albany that was erected in 1801. An alternative gravesite for the city's inhabitants to bury its deceased residents was needed as a result of encroaching urbanization and overcrowded churchyards. The State Street Burial Ground served as a nondenominational resting place for individuals of many different types of faiths: Protestants, Quakers, Methodist Episcopalians, Catholics, and more.

Due in part to an 1832 cholera outbreak, this burial ground too became congested just a few decades after it was established. As a result it was left unused and neglected; fences had been destroyed and the grounds used by cattle for pasturing. The site came to be viewed by many Albanians as a "desecration of so sacred a spot." On October 4, 1866 the Albany Common Council appointed a special committee to confer with church trustees and develop a solution. It was eventually decided that the bodies would be removed and reinterred at Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands. The Corporation of the City of Albany purchased a parcel of land from the Trustees of the Albany Rural Cemetery and in 1868, the bodies were transferred.

The Common Council hired individuals to copy the inscriptions on the old headstones of the bodies reinterred and took "every means in their power of discovering who...the actual tenants of these neglected domains [were]." One of the churches involved in the reintering of bodies from State Street Burial Ground to Albany Rural Cemetery was the Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Israel AME plot, along with several other denominations and a Potter's Field, were placed adjacent to each other in what is referred to today as the Church Grounds. Famous African-Albanians, such as Revolutionary War veteran Benjamin Lattimore, were laid to rest in the Israel AME plot. The memory of his and several other notable and everyday black citizens are forever preserved in the Church Grounds of the Albany Rural Cemetery.

Map 333 – Church Grounds



87-09663 Albany County Clerk Map 333 (Old Map 10). Lands purchased by city for burial plots for several Albany churches. Surveyor, Reuben H. Bingham Scale: 24:1.

Map 338 – Albany Rural Cemetery



87-09663 Albany County Clerk Map 338 (Old Map 223). Albany Rural Cemetery, 1845 Surveyor, George B. Douglas Scale: 100:1.

Special Committee on Burial Grounds

86

Stryker, Betsy, wife of Jas. P. Stryker, and daughter of Ebenezer and Louisa Bliss,	May 28, 1847, 28 years.
Squires, Stephen, (Erected by John Van Alstina.)	July 19, 1849, 25 years.
Van Allen, John A.,	July 17, 1836, 43 years.
Wagoner, Patronella and Margaretta,	1857.
Weaver, John,	Mar. 11, 1853, 19 y. 8 m.
Worth, Francis N., son of William E. and Frances,	Feb. 28, 1840, 11 m. 9 d.
Worth Amelia, daughter of William E. and Frances,	Nov. 16, 1847, 2 y. 2 m. 16 d.
Worth, Andrew C., son of William E. and Frances,	Aug. 24, 1829, 1 y. 8 m.
Worth, Frances E., wife of William E.,	July 16, 1849, 41 y. 4 m. 26 d.
Zeigenhorn, Randolph, (born in Germany), George Henry and Little Emma. J. H. and E. H.	April 15, 1855, 1821

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Bastien, Mary, wife of John,	Nov. 11, 1822, 31 y. 6 m.
Baltimore, Ellen, wife of James,	April 22, 1842, 56 years.
Ben, Susan, wife of Peter,	Dec. 30, 1837, 34 years.
Bryant, Sarah Maria, daughter of Nicholas and Harriet,	Dec. 20, 1841, 8 y. 2 m.
Bryant, Frances Amelia, daughter of Nicholas and Harriet,	Mar. 20, 1842, 6 y. 5 m.
Crawson, Mary, wife of Robert,	June 7, 1846, 59 years.
Crawson, John, son of Robert and Mary,	Feb. 22, 1846, 21 years.
Clawson, Robert A.,	May 18, 1853, 23 y. 8 m.
Denny, Peter,	Dec. 25, 1824, 24 y. 5 m. 4 d.
Edge, Samuel (born on the Island of Santa Croix, West Indies),	Oct. 29, 1846.
Flood, Hannah, wife of Francis F.,	Aug. 13, 1844, 72 years.
Gilbert, Sarah,	Oct. 10, 1849, 74 years.
Jackson, Henry Lovett, drowned,	June 11, 1840, 9 years.
Jackson, John J.,	Sept. 13, 1853, 47 years.
Jackson, Henry,	Sept. 10, 1854, 64 years.
Jackson, Eliza,	Sept. 2, 1851, 62 years.
Jefferson, Thomas,	May 22, 1852, 29 years.
Johnson, Ellen, wife of Capt. John, Sr.,	60 years.
Lattimore, Benjamin, a Revolutionary soldier,	April 28, 1838, 77 years.
Lattimore, Letetia Keeler, wife of Benj., Jr.,	May 1, 1826.

86-00724 Common Council, Proceedings of the Albany Common Council, Minutes and Reports, 1866-1867, *Report of a Special Committee on Burial Grounds*. On October 4, 1866 a special committee was appointed to confer with trustees of local churches in an attempt to identify graves that were not being cared for and remove "the remains of the neglected dead to cemeteries where they can be properly interred and cared for in a suitable manner." Here is a partial list of deceased parishioners reported by the Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Inquest of Henry Lovett Jackson

State of New York: Inquisition taken at the House of
 Albany County, 23rd Jns E Lovett in the City of Albany
 in the County of Albany this 11th day of June
 in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and
 forty before me, Calvin P. Stone, one of the
 Coronors for the County of aforesaid, on the evening
 the body of Henry a boy then and there
 dead upon the facts and information of the jur-
 whose names are hereunto subscribed, good and
 lawful men of the State of New York duly chosen
 and being sworn and these duties sworn and chan-
 ged to inquire, in the behalf of the said People
 of said State, where and when, how and after
 what manner the said Henry
 came to his death, do, upon their oath and
 information say that the said Henry
 came to his death on the day
 aforesaid by accidental drowning

In Witness Whereof, let the said Jurors
 as well as the Coronor aforesaid have to this
 inquisition set our hands and seals on the day
 and year and at the place aforesaid

Henry J. Shaw
 do B. G. G. G.
 J. L. L. L. L. L.
 John W. W. W.
 J. S. S. S. S.
 E. F. F. F. F.

C. P. P. P. P.
 F. F. F. F. F.
 G. G. G. G. G.
 J. J. J. J. J.
 J. J. J. J. J.

14-05693. Albany County Clerk. Coroner's Inquest for Henry Lovett Jackson, June 1840. Henry was a 9-
 year-old boy who accidentally drowned after falling off a dock. He lost his family due to the cholera
 outbreak of 1832 and was adopted by the Lovett family, with whom he resided until his death.

Stephen Myers

Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, are some of the more prominent names that come to mind when reflecting on the Abolitionist movement in our nation's history. The Capital Region can claim Stephen Myers as its own prominent leader in the emancipation of African American slaves. Born in Hoosick, New York in 1800 and freed from slavery at the age of eighteen, Stephen Myers was a critical actor in the abolitionist cause and Underground Railroad, providing a safe haven to many freedom-seekers through the use of his home in Albany, New York.

In 1827, Stephen married Harriet Johnson and together they raised a family of four children. Stephen Myers worked variously as a grocer and as a steward on steamboat vessels that sailed between Albany and New York City. Beginning in the 1830s, he and Harriet aided those seeking freedom with the use of their home as a stop along the Underground Railroad. The Myers' were also active in efforts to improve the Albany African American community, helping to found one of Albany's first black schools and in publishing the anti-slavery newspaper, *Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate*. Between the years 1855-1858, the Myers family lived at 194 Livingston Avenue (formerly Lumber Street). This residence also served as an office and meeting place for the *Vigilance Committee*, a leading local abolitionist group of which the Myers were members. The home is now on the National Register of Historic Places and is the residence for the *Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region*.

Until recently, no documentation had been found in ACHOR's holdings besides the *Petition of Stephen Myers for appropriation in aid of the Free School for Colored Children, June 15 1843*. In January 2016, while working on archival collections, Chattel Mortgages from the 1830s were found showing loan transactions between Stephen Myers and several Albany merchants. For what specific purpose these chattel mortgages were generated is not revealed in the documents, but they do contain an inventory of the contents of his home. Used as a form of collateral, the inventories give us insight into Myers' personal life.

In the 1833-34 City of Albany Directory, Stephen Myers is listed as a grocer. His chattel loan agreement at this time was for \$40 dollars from Isaac D. Elliott, a dealer in dry goods at 347 North Market Street. In 1837-1838, the Albany City Directories list Stephen Myers as living at 167 South Pearl Street. His chattel loan agreement at this time was for \$60 dollars from T.F. Bancroft, a grocer residing at 224-226 at the corner of Pearl and Schuyler streets. We cannot say with any certainty what both of these loans were intended for, but some assumptions can be made based on what is known about Stephen's life. Money necessary to provide aid to slaves on their journey to freedom as well as fundraising towards establishing a school for black children is plausible.

In both inventories, we are provided a small snapshot of Stephen's home and even personal interests. Some of the more interesting and intriguing personal items listed in these inventories include: a globe, wall maps of London, New York and Washington, as well as a painting of Miss McCrea. We assume that the 'Miss McCrea' listed in this inventory is none other than Jane McCrea, a young woman who was slain by Native Americans allied with British forces during the American Revolutionary War. Her slaying led to expressions of outrage and incited patriotic sentiment throughout the colonies. Over time, the story became legendary and contributed to popular ideals of freedom and equality. After the American Revolution, anti-slavery sentiment increased in part due to these same ideals of freedom and equality and the Gradual Emancipation Laws were passed in New York State to phase out slavery.

Although the Chattel mortgages presented in this exhibit predate the years when Stephen and his family resided at 194 Livingston Avenue, they are a wonderful addition to the history of Stephen Myers' remarkable life.

Continued...

The Petition of Stephen Myers

To the Honorable the Mayor and common council,
of the city of Albany.

We the undersigned citizens of Albany, having formed ourselves into an association for the purpose of establishing a free school for the benefit of the colored children of the city of Albany, do therefore solicit the attention of your Honorable Body to the importance of this subject, believing at the same time that as a body you are ever actuated by principles which have in view the moral and intellectual welfare of your fellow citizens, your Petitioners have already received the amount of two hundred and fifty eight dollars or to speak more correctly what has been received and subscribed would amount to that sum, and they are using every means and putting forth every effort to obtain the requisite amount.

The land upon which this House is building we are to pay five hundred dollars for and ~~the cost of~~ the cost of the House is estimated at ~~three~~ hundred & eighty dollars. Your Petitioners therefore pray your Honorable Body to assist them in the sum of three hundred & eighty dollars or as much as to your Honorable Body shall seem proper.

Stephen Myers Superintendent
of the free colored school,
Thomas Paul Teacher Secretary
for the association,

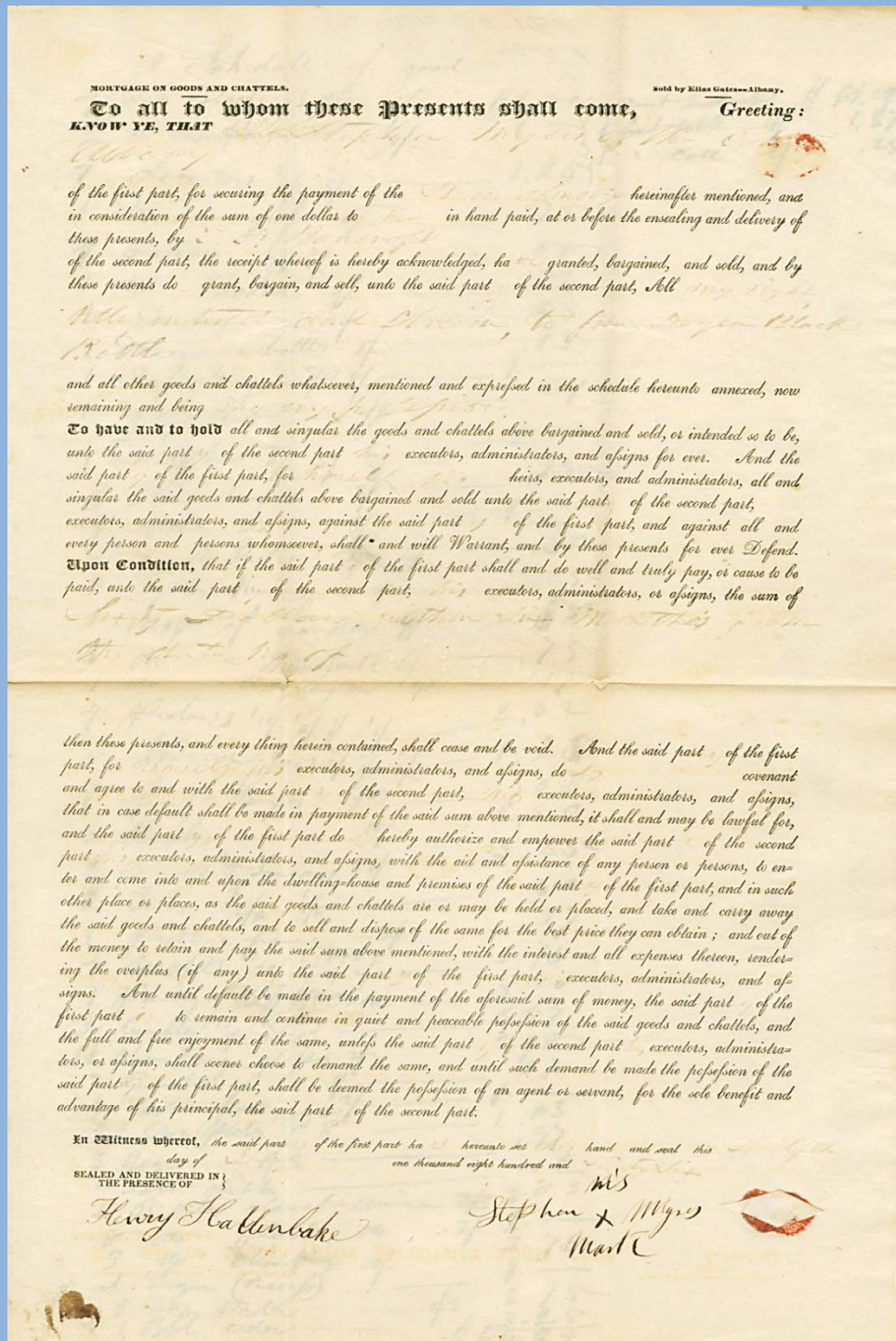
1843
June 15

To the Signatures of white Citizens to
such as may feel friendly to the education of the
colored children

H. Stickschesser	Deputy King
Henry Greene	W. G. Jones
W. Bayard	Philip Heiple
Mr. Keane	John A. Flagler
A. Lattin	C. Scovil
Ch. L. Austin	Jim Jones
A. H. Hammond	Robt. Crookham
Thos. D. Hays	Ernest A. Pease
E. J. Johnson	Wm. F. Boardman
Thos. Hays	James A. Gray
W. L. Webb	Wm. M. Starr
William Davis	Samy. Stecker
James Davis	Wm. Williams

90-00188 Albany Common Council, Petition of Stephen Myers for a Free School for Colored Children, 1843. Requesting financial assistance of the Common Council, this petition adds the signatures of white citizens "such as may feel friendly to the education of colored children."

Chattel Mortgage



97-00734. Albany County Clerk, Chattel Mortgages, 1834-1837. File 816: Stephen Myers to T.F. Bancroft, Mortgage of Personal Property, 1836. A Chattel Mortgage is a temporary and conditional pledge of personal property to a creditor as a security for the payment of a debt or the fulfillment of an obligation.

Chattel Mortgage

A Schedule of goods

4	Dos Black Bottle	1/	\$2.00	amt brot up	\$67.29
2	do Champagne do	2/	1	1 fruit table - 1/	1.37
7	decanter	2/ 2/ 3/	1.25	1 case 2/	.25
1	Dos wine glass	of	.75		
4	Pitches	2/ 2/ 2/	.88		
1	tea Board	5/	.62		
1	Dreaner	5/	.63		
1	Dos wine bottles	of	.75		
1	Reflecting lamp	8/	1.		
1	glass lamp	2/6	.31		
4	Demajohns	2/ 5/ 3/	2.50		
3	Stone lamps	5/	.75		
1	Globe do	8/	1.		
2	Candle sticks	2/	.50		
2	Oyster knives	1/	.25		
1	Map of London	4/	.88		
1	do " New York	6/	.75		
1	do " Washington	1/6	.19		
7	Pictures	10/ 6/ 1/ 1/ 1/	2.62		
5	Spice jars	2/ 2/ 2/ 3/	1.25		
7	fruit Boxes	700	.63		
2	Tables	10/	2.50		
2	Blinds & Screens	13/	3.25		
2	Tubs	2/ 1/6	.50		
1	Picture frame	3/	.37		
7	Maps	10/ 1/ 1/ 1/ 1/	5.75		
1	Painting of Miss Worcester		5.00		
30	tumble	18/ 10/ 5/	3.47		
14	Champagne glasses	2/	2.98		
5	Benchos	1/2/	.57		
4	Carthenbas	1/2/	1.		
2 1/2	Dos Plate	10/ 15/	1.63		
3	Jags	1/5	1.77		
1	Alt dish		1.12		
11	Bottles claret-wine	2/3	3.03		
8	do Port do	2/	2.		
3	do Champagne	10/	3.75		
1	Lign (recup)		1.		
2	Dos plates	1/3	3.75		
1	Bbl cider		3.25		
			\$64.29		