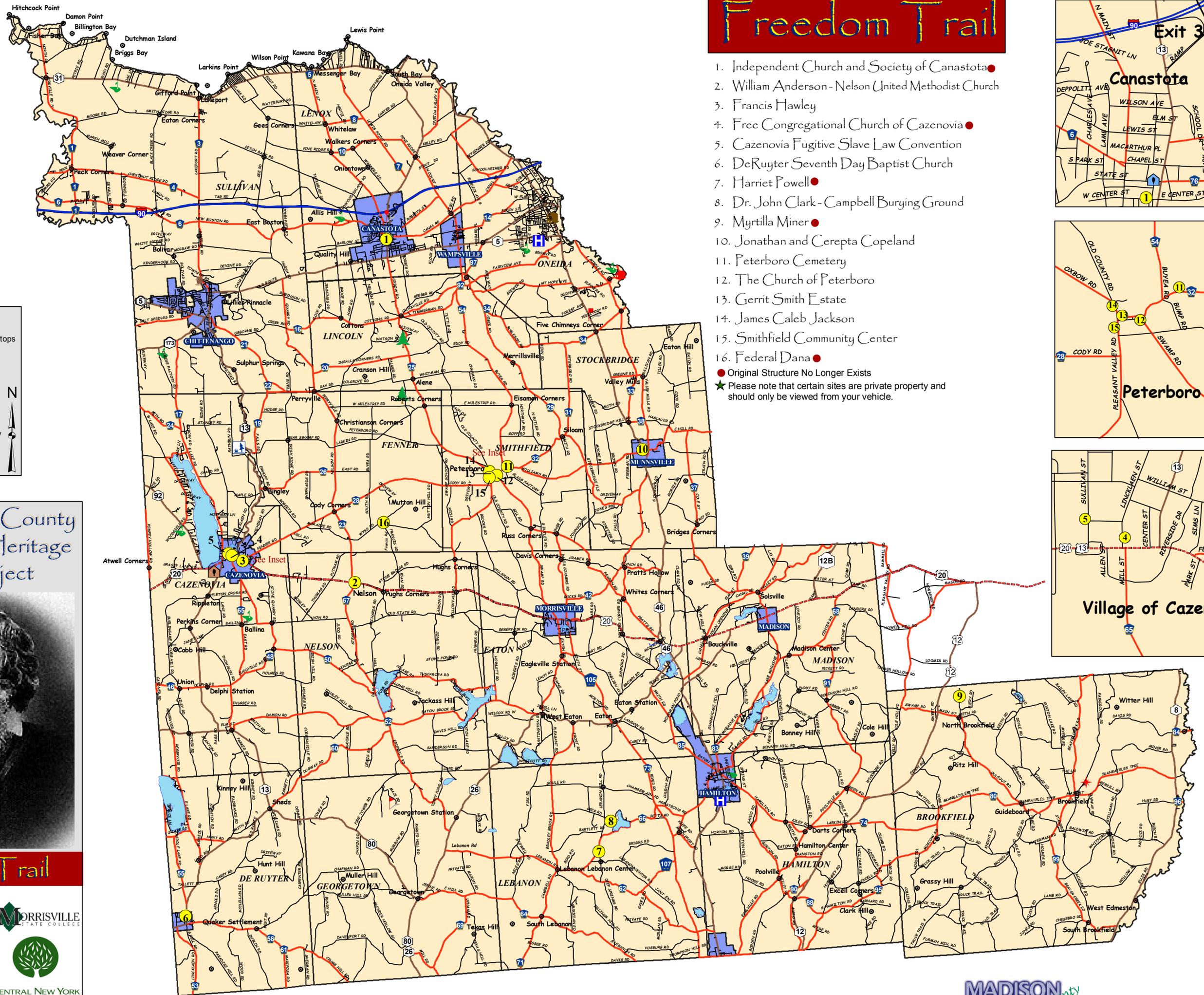
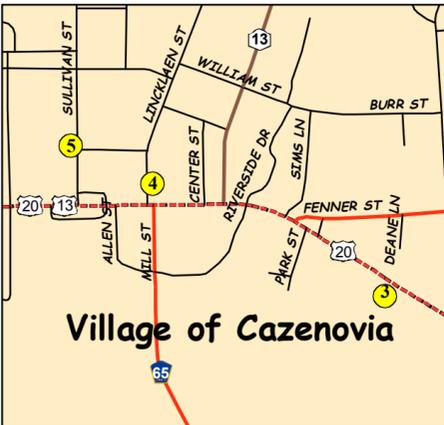
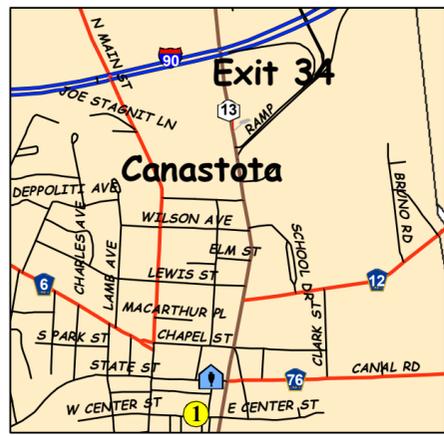


Freedom Trail

1. Independent Church and Society of Canastota ●
 2. William Anderson-Nelson United Methodist Church
 3. Francis Hawley
 4. Free Congregational Church of Cazenovia ●
 5. Cazenovia Fugitive Slave Law Convention
 6. DeRuyter Seventh Day Baptist Church
 7. Harriet Powell ●
 8. Dr. John Clark-Campbell Burying Ground
 9. Myrtilla Miner ●
 10. Jonathan and Cerepta Copeland
 11. Peterboro Cemetery
 12. The Church of Peterboro
 13. Gerrit Smith Estate
 14. James Caleb Jackson
 15. Smithfield Community Center
 16. Federal Dana ●
- Original Structure No Longer Exists
 ★ Please note that certain sites are private property and should only be viewed from your vehicle.



Legend

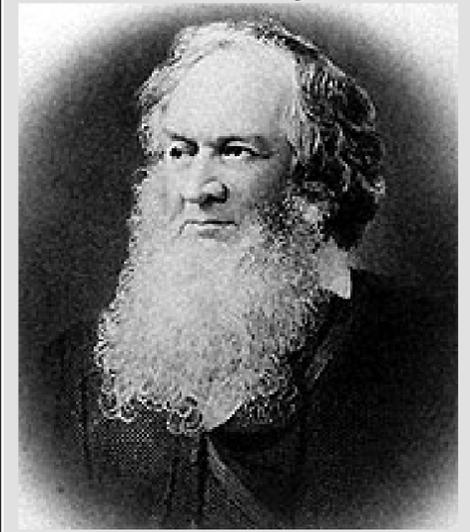
- Freedom Trail Stops

Roads

Road Type

- US Highway
- Interstate
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Local Road
- Waterbodies

2006 Madison County Bicentennial Heritage Trails Project



Freedom Trail

AFRICAN AMERICANS ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM IN MADISON COUNTY

There have always been African Americans in Madison County, but, all too often, they have been “anonymous” to history. They received little mention in county histories and newspapers, were rarely photographed, and were frequently buried in unmarked graves. The sketches provided below illustrate for each town in Madison County that African Americans visited here, worked here, lived and died here. These are just a few of the African Americans who deserve to be *called by name*.

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD

Laban Olby was born about 1785 in Connecticut. In 1815 he settled at North Brookfield, where he learned the blacksmithing trade and later operated a general store and hotel. In an unknown year, strangers entered Laban’s hotel and attempted to kidnap him with the intent of selling him into bondage. Townsmen working in a nearby field saw Laban being taken away on horseback. They gave the alarm and other local residents joined in the pursuit. The kidnappers escaped, but Laban was rescued.

According to census records, Olby and his known wife Jane, (Jennie), were both married twice; he had nine children and she four. Jennie was born in Columbia County, New York or Vermont. She bought hops from local farmers, made her own beer, and then traveled around the area selling it from a horse and wagon. She died on December 18, 1866 and may be buried at North Brookfield.

By one of his wives, Laban Olby had a daughter, Catherine, born about 1814 in Oneida County. She married Daniel Robbins, and they settled in Peterboro. One other record for Olby has been found: In 1867 when he sold land in Brookfield, he was living in Oxford, Chenango County, New York.

TOWN OF CAZENOVIA

John Tyler was born on a plantation near Baltimore, Maryland, perhaps in November 1812, although census records vary widely as to his age. About 1840 an abolitionist agent hired by Gerrit Smith, but disguised as a cattle drover, came to the plantation. He told John that he was there to help him escape. Eventually, there would be eleven freedom seekers in the group. As they began their flight, they hid in the woods, avoiding their master and fifty men who were searching for them with clubs and dogs. Thomas Garrett, the well-known Underground Railroad stationmaster at Wilmington, Delaware, helped them get into Pennsylvania, where other run-aways joined them.

After his arrival at Cazenovia, John made his living as a laborer. He married Marinda, who was born about 1835 in Madison County. Following the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, the couple sought security in Canada, where at least four of their children were born. When the Civil War ended, the family returned to live in Smithfield. Marinda died there between 1875 and 1880. She was probably the mother of John’s 13 children, who included Sarah, Frances, Joseph, May, Ellen, Emeline, John, Caroline, Sidney, Marinda, and Charles.

By the time of the 1880 census, John had remarried Fidelia, the widow of Elias Johnson of Smithfield. She was born in September 1828 in Madison or Oneida County. The Tylers moved to Cazenovia about 1882 and lived on Park Street. Following Fidelia’s death (possibly in 1914) John went to live with his daughter, Carrie Baker, in Canastota. He died there on December 4, 1915 and was survived by Carrie and another daughter, Frances West, also of Canastota.

TOWN OF DERUYTER

Philip Pledger was born in the early 1830s in South Carolina. He first appeared in DeRuyter in 1860, giving his state of birth as “unknown.” In 1865 Philip, employed as a barber, declared that he was born in “South Carolina.” Now that the Civil War was officially over, he could tell the truth without fear of arrest and a return to slavery.

Pledger served in the war as a private in Co. B, 20th United States Colored Troops. The regiment was organized at Riker’s Island, New York Harbor on February 9, 1864 and mustered out at Nashville, Tennessee on October 7, 1865.

Although no further record of Philip Pledger has been found in Madison County, he was married when he lived in DeRuyter. His wife, Clarissa, was born in the County about 1835. In 1870 she was working as a domestic servant for William Hamitty in the Town of Sullivan.

TOWN OF EATON

Elisha Charles was born about 1800, evidently in Madison County. He was a resident of the Town of Eaton from as early as 1840 through the year 1860. In 1850 there was another Charles family in Eaton headed by a black man named “Miny,” age 40, possibly Elisha’s brother. Five years later only Elisha remained in town. In 1860 he lived in the Village of Morrisville.

Elisha’s wife, Mary, was born about 1805 and died before 1855. Their children included Mary, Jerome, Marietta, Lovisa (Mrs. Henry Cook), Dewitt, Laura, Nancy, Orison, and Amelia.

Elisha Charles was employed as a laborer when he lived in the County. We don’t know if he remained here, but there was a 72-year-old African American hostler by this name living in the Town of Erin, Chemung County, New York in 1870.

TOWN OF FENNER

Lewis G. Clarke, abolitionist, lecturer, and author, was born a slave in Madison County, Kentucky in 1815. He initiated his own escape in 1841 and was soon reunited with his brother Milton, also “self-emancipated.” Together they would later write a narrative of their experiences. Lewis Clarke was the model for the character George Harris in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Lewis Clarke lectured in Madison County in September and October of 1843. His itinerary included every town in the County, but the Town of Fenner extended him a special invitation:

We say to friend Clark, come on! We will find work for you, and pay you in

something better than cat’s claws and beef brine.

We won’t strip you, and wound you, and leave you half dead.

But will clothe you, and feed you, and find you a bed.

Lewis was the guest of William P. Barrett, a Fenner resident, who subscribed to abolitionist newspapers, signed an anti-slavery petition in 1838, and was a Madison County delegate to the National Anti-Slavery Convention in 1841.

Lewis Clarke lived at Windsor, Ontario, Canada for many years. Following the death of his wife in 1875, he and his children moved to Oberlin, Ohio. He died at Lexington, Kentucky in 1897. By order of the Governor, his body lay in state at the City Auditorium, the first African American in that state to be so honored. He was buried at Oberlin.

TOWN OF GEORGETOWN

Timothy Brushell was born in September 1831, probably in Oneida County, and is listed as black, mulatto, or Indian in various census records. It is possible that his parents were Nancy Welch and one of her husbands, Samuel Brushell or Henry Brushell, who may have been African Americans. Nancy was a Brothertown Indian, born in 1809 in the Town of Marshall, Oneida County, New York.

About 1851 Timothy was married for a second time to Mary, who was born in August 1828 in Dutchess County, New York. They had three children: Malvina, Sarah, and Aaron Samuel. The couple also had a farm of 40-plus acres on Lot No. 77, located on Muller Hill near the village of Georgetown.

Mary Brushell died in 1903 and Timothy in 1906. They are buried at the Hillside Cemetery, Georgetown. As late as 1920, their extended family continued to reside in the town.

TOWN OF HAMILTON

Cyrus Clarke was born about 1820 in Madison County, Kentucky, the youngest of ten children of Daniel Clarke, born in Scotland, and Letitia Campbell. “Letty” was the daughter of the plantation owner, Samuel Campbell, by his slave, Mary. When Letty married, her father told her that she and any children born to her would be granted their freedom in his will. This promise was not kept. Even before Campbell’s 1831 death, Letty and her nine surviving children had been claimed by Campbell’s white children or sold away. In July 1842 freedom seeker Lewis Clarke (see Town of Fenner) returned to Kentucky to get his brother Cyrus, who was later joined by his wife and her three children from a former marriage.

Two years later, Cyrus Clarke, now a resident of Hamilton, attempted to vote at a town meeting. A local judge insisted that Clarke was a “colored” man and not worth \$250, so therefore could not vote. Clarke, who like his siblings, could pass for white, insisted that he was whiter than the judge. He won the argument and voted!

In 1846 Cyrus was still living in Hamilton, when his brothers published their Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke. That same year all three were recipients of “Timbuctoo” lands in the Adirondacks, the gifts of Gerrit Smith.

Cyrus Clarke’s wife, Martha, was also born in Kentucky about 1820. One of her children was Milton, who was born about 1840 and may have been adopted by Cyrus. Clarke left Madison County before 1850 and settled in Detroit, Michigan, where he worked as a barber. In 1851, he was a member of a vigilance committee in that city. These groups were organized specifically to help fugitives escape.

TOWN OF LEBANON

James, Ben, and Jane were the slaves of Margaret Smith of Lebanon. When she wrote her will in March 1807, she gave her slaves to her daughter, Anne Masters, “until they are 25 years old,” when they were to be set free. This was just one year after the formation of Madison County, and in 1810 there were still 36 slaves in the county. It was not until July 4, 1827 that slavery would be completely abolished in New York State.

At the time Mrs. Smith’s will was written, the three slaves were living with Margaret’s son, Col. William Smith. Col. Smith was a graduate of Princeton and an aide to Generals Sullivan, Lafayette, and Washington during the Revolution. Following the war, he served as Secretary of the U. S. Legation to London, where he met Abigail, daughter of John Adams, who would later become the second President of the United States. William and Abigail married in 1786.

In 1807 Smith moved to Smith’s Valley in Lebanon, following a string of bad business dealings and a scandal and trial for violating the Neutrality Act. Lebanon was one of six towns that had originally been patented to him. In advance, he had sent his brother Justus B. Smith to act as agent for the sale of the lands. Their mother and several other siblings, including Anne Masters, joined them.

Justus B. also owned slaves, and a black man, Jerry Franks, managed his farm. William Smith and his brother Justus both died in 1816 and are buried at the Sherburne West Hill Cemetery, as is their mother. Anne Masters was still living in Hamilton in 1840. With her were four free “colored” persons—perhaps related to James, Ben, and/or Jane?

TOWN OF LENOX

Scipio Morehand was born a slave on a Missouri plantation about 1836. When the Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863, it only applied to those states that were in rebellion. Since Missouri had never left the Union, it was a loyal slave state. Therefore, when Morehand decided to escape in that same year, he was taking a huge risk. Acting as an attendant to European American Louise Jarvis, he made his way through the Rebel lines to Canastota. He may have started from New Madrid County, which lies on the eastern border of Missouri. Many escapes were made from border counties, and New Madrid was the probable residence of Louise’s future husband, Louis P. Fay. Louise was also the daughter of Dr. Milton Jarvis, credited as being an Underground Railroad stationmaster at Canastota.

After his arrival in Madison County, Morehand worked as a laborer or farmer. He and his wife, Josephine, who was born in the County about 1846, had four sons: George, Frank, Fred, and Charles.

The Morehands’ tenant house was destroyed in the Canastota fire of October 1873. Later Scipio acquired a house on North Canal Street in the village. Josephine died on February 26, 1879. After Scipio’s death on July 19, 1887, his funeral was held at the Presbyterian Church in Canastota.

TOWN OF LINCOLN

Cezar Moody was born between 1774 and 1780 in Connecticut. If born enslaved, he was probably a freeman when he accompanied the Palmers and Randalls from the Stonington, Connecticut area to New York State. The families settled in the southwest part of Lenox, near the Mile Strip, and also near the crossroads that would later be called Alene. This area would be included in the Town of Lincoln, which was formed from Lenox in 1896.

On Decemer 20, 1810, Moody was one of the organizing members of the First Baptist Church of Lenox, located at Clock-ville. Later, Moody had his own house and made his living as a weaver. The last official record for Cezar Moody shows him as a resident of the Madison County Poor House in 1860.

TOWN OF MADISON

David Titus was born about 1820 in Broome County, New York. In 1850 he and his family resided in the Town of Madison. Prior to that year, he was in Chenango County, New York and his two eldest children were born there. Following his arrival in Madison County, Titus changed his town of residence in every census record. His occupation also fluctuated with his moves; he was a general laborer, farm laborer, or farmer.

David’s wife, Triphena, was born between 1823 and 1826 in Chenango County. The couple’s three children were Frederick, Mary, and Allen. Triphena died of a fever on March 6 1865 in the Town of Eaton.

In 1870 Titus, age 50, worked as a hostler at a hotel in Sherburne. Ten years later, he had returned to Madison County. He and his son, Allen, were living with his other son, Fred, in Hamilton.

TOWN OF NELSON

Plymouth Freeman was born in Connecticut about 1742. Whether he was enslaved or free is not known. Because he appeared in the 1800 Cazenovia census without a surname, he may have been born a slave and later adopted the surname of Freeman. In that year, there were seven “free persons” in his household.

Freeman was married; a local account written in April 1807 mentions his wife’s death but not her first name. The relationship of the 26 to 45-year-old “colored” female living with him in the 1820 Nelson census is not clear.

Plymouth made his living as a farmer. When he was no longer able to work, he applied for a pension based on his Revolutionary War service. It is estimated that 5,000 African Americans fought for the patriot cause with the promise or hope of freedom motivating those who were slaves. In Connecticut, there were as many as 400 black soldiers. Freeman’s papers indicate that he was a private in the 3rd Regiment of the Connecticut line between the years 1777 and 1783 and that he was discharged at West Point. The application was accepted, and his pension began on April 6, 1818.

Plymouth Freeman died on August 25, 1829, and is probably buried in Nelson or Cazenovia.

CITY OF ONEIDA

William F. Logan was born a slave at Fredericksburg, Virginia in August 1852. In the 1870 census for the Town of Lebanon, “Willie” Logan, age 17, was living in the home of local church deacon Cooley Gray and his wife, Abby. A later record would state that Willie was “adopted” by Cooley Gray, who may have been one of the many active Lebanon abolitionists.

On January 1, 1877 at Bouckville, William Logan married Chloe Ralph. She was born in April 1859 in Oneida County, the daughter of Jerome and Jennette Ralph. The Logan’s first child, Walter, was born on May 5, 1879 in Hamilton. Their other children were Florence, Floyd, Grace (Mrs. James Jennings), and Duane.

Logan was first employed as a farmer and later a tinsmith. The family resided in Vernon, New York for a time but later moved to Oneida, where William was a trustee of the A. M. E. Zion Church. The family first lived on Midland Avenue and then at 37 Lexington Avenue. William died on June 19, 1911. In 1920 Chloe Logan was living in Syracuse with her daughter Florence and her grandson, Walter Jennings.

TOWN OF SMITHFIELD

Lewis Washington was born enslaved about 1800 in Maryland. He is believed to have escaped in 1843 and eventually made his way to Albany, New York, where he was associated with the abolitionist Baptist minister Abel Brown. Washington later lived in Troy and was an agent for the Liberty Party. In 1846 Gerrit Smith, in conjunction with his Adirondack land gifts to African Americans, deeded Peterboro property to Washington, who moved his family to the hamlet.

Lewis’ wife, Catharine, was born in Virginia between 1815 and 1820. They had a son Lewis who had been born in the District of Columbia. Their daughter, Julia, was born in Peterboro on April 5, 1847. That same year, Washington lectured against slavery throughout New York State. Although he could not read or write, he was described as an eloquent speaker who could “hold an audience with deep interest.”

By June 1848, Washington had sold his Peterboro property and moved to Waukesha, Wisconsin. He continued as an anti-slavery speaker, sometimes meeting with hostile receptions and once being called an impostor. Nonetheless, he remained in Wisconsin, where two more children, Charles and Rebecca, were born. In 1860 and 1870, Lewis Washington was a farmer in Pierce County.

TOWN OF STOCKBRIDGE

J. Baldwin (John), G. Fidler, N. Pendleton (Nathan), H. Welch (probably Henry), and other “free colored persons” were listed in the 1810 Smithfield census. They lived on the New Guinea tract, which was located south of Munnsville and became part of Stockbridge when that town was formed in 1836, partly from Smith-field.

Madison County histories state that New Guinea was a tract of 300 acres in the south part of the Indian Reservation in Stockbridge, “the use of which was given to the Mohawk Valley slaves” by the Stockbridge Indians. African American families said to have been settlers here included Baldwin, Cook, Fiddler, Mitop, Pendleton, and Welch.

Although not as numerous as those on Long Island and the Hudson Valley, there were African American slaves in the Mohawk Valley, and Indians sometimes did offer shelter to runaway slaves. In 1785, the Oneida Indians likewise gave refuge to the Stockbridge Indians from Massachusetts. In 1788 they took in the Brothertowns, a tribe of mixed lineage, also from New England. The Stockbridge and Brothertowns settled mainly in what would later become the Town of Stockbridge. They remained until 1822 when, due to increasing encroachment by white settlers, most moved to Wisconsin. About this same year, the New Guinea tract was sold to the State of New York.

African Americans did intermarry with Indian tribes (see Town of Georgetown). Prior to 1796, James Pendleton, whose father was African American and whose mother was half white and half black, married Sarah Potteogue, a Brothertown. There were also New Guinea descendants who remained in Madison County: A (younger) Nathan Pendleton died in Stockbridge on December 5, 1847, aged 27.

TOWN OF SULLIVAN

Mary Robinson (her married name) was born a slave in Pennsylvania possibly in July 1821. Even though Pennsylvania passed a gradual emancipation law in 1780, loopholes in and interpretation of the law meant that slavery continued for many years. Mary may not have known her real age as it varied with each census. Her husband James was born about 1825 in Maryland. The couple first lived in Mary’s home state, where their only child, Margaret, was born in October 1852. Two years later the Robinsons came to Madison County, settling in Cazenovia, Fenner, Lenox, and finally, Sullivan.

The daughter, Margaret, was probably married twice, first to Elias Hill, and second to Enoch H. Bennett, son of Benjamin and Mary Bennett of Sullivan. The father, James, was employed as a farm or day laborer. In the 1865 census, he is listed as being in the Army in an “unknown regiment” and may be the James Robinson, age 44, from Lenox, who served in the 16th Regiment. He last appeared with his family in the 1870 census.

In her later years, Mary Robinson lived with her daughter in Chittenango, New York. Following her death on October 25, 1910, she was buried at Oakwood Cemetery in the Village, where the Bennetts would later join her.