

Contextual Research on the Free Black Woman Whose Name Was Once Known
and Other Laborers at Cedar Grove
A Continuation of Research Developed by 2021 Cole Fellow Adaeze Dikko

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This report is broken up into the following sections:

1. Representational Research on Slavery in the Hudson Valley
2. Population Data and Disparities
3. Laboring at Cedar Grove as a Free, Black Woman Between 55-99 Years of Age
4. Life and Community Outside of Cedar Grove
5. People Enslaved by the Thomsons (in Demerara and Catskill)
6. Additional People Who Labored for the Thomson/Bartow/Cole Families

Representational Research on Slavery in the Hudson Valley

- I. Note that the information below contains historical examples on the lives of both enslaved and free Black individuals in the 18th and 19th centuries. As cited in Adaeze Dikko's research, the institution of slavery permeated emancipation in New York State. The Fugitive Slave Law fiercely affected Northern States. In her autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs called New York City, just 100 miles south of Catskill, the "city of kidnappers."¹
- II. During the 18th century, the TransAtlantic Slave Trade caused a surge to the enslaved population in New York.
 - A. More than half of New York's enslaved population lived and worked in the Hudson Valley.
 - B. "New York's black population doubled between 1723 and 1756 and tripled during the six decades between 1731 and 1790, jumping from 7,231 to 25,983 persons, making the province the largest slave society north of the Chesapeake."²
- I. Enslaved women were often involved in a wide range of domestic and agricultural work.
 - A. "In a household, whether on a small farm or attached to one of the more prominent manors/ estates in the valley, female slaves were often found in the kitchen as cooks, cleaning house, washing, caring for their owners' children, and integrally involved in the production of linens and woollens for home consumption and the colonial markets."³
 - B. Edith Cole Silberstein, great-granddaughter of Thomas and Maria Cole, described how involved laundry day was in the home: "On ironing day, usually Tuesdays, (Mon. was wash day) they used to put the flatirons on the stove to heat, and kept changing them for the chore. Amazing all the linens, tablecloths, sheets, hand towels done—and huge linen napkins."⁴
 - C. Women also labored in agricultural work, at times sharing the same jobs as men. Sojourner Truth, who lived and worked just 40 miles south of Catskill in Ulster County, carried grain bags on foot over Old King's Highway to the gristmill of Colonel Charles Hardenburgh's homestead where she was enslaved.⁵

Next Steps: Compile representative examples on Hudson Valley and West Indies from William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator*. * Below is a December 2, 1859 advertisement of a "Young woman from Demarara":

"ADVERTISEMENT – A young woman from Demarara, who has lived several years in this country, wishes to return to her native land; and, in order to support herself there and help her mother, she has a very earnest desire to learn the milliner's trade. Her brown complexion has hitherto frustrated all her efforts for that purpose. Is there any one, who has sufficient good sense and good feeling to rise above this absurd prejudice, and aid her in her laudable undertaking?.....If

¹ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), 210. For Adaeze's research see, *Regarding the Free, Black woman documented as a Cedar Grove resident, 1840 Census* at https://thomascole.org/wp-content/uploads/Report-Free-Black-Woman_A-Dikko.pdf.

² Michael E. Groth, *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017), 4.

³ A.J. Williams-Myers, *A Portrait of Eve: Towards a Social History of Black Women in the Hudson River Valley* (New Paltz, NY: Center for the Study of the African Presence in the Hudson River Valley, 1987), 1.

⁴ Jean C. Dunbar, *Furnishings Plan* (Catskill, NY: Thomas Cole National Historic Site, 2011), 133.

⁵ Ibid, Williams-Myers, 5.

she cannot learn a trade, she would like a situation as parlor girl, or chamber maid. Please give an early reply to L. MARIA CHILD, Wayland, Mass (Liberator, Dec 2, 1859, pg 3)”⁶

*Thomas Thomson enslaved people in Demerara; consult digitized collections of pages relevant to Catskill on General Share drive.

⁶ “Young Woman from Demerara,” The Liberator Files, Boston African American National Historic Site, accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.theliberatorfiles.com/young-woman-demarara/>.

Population Data and Disparities

- I. In *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley*, Michael E. Groth discusses how geographic and population differences in New York affected the ability of enslaved individuals to connect with each other.
 - A. “Low population density and dispersed settlement isolated many black residents from one another, and slaves in rural regions lacked those social and cultural supports available in urban centers.”⁷
- II. It is worth noting the inconsistency of census and population records prior to 1840. There were rampant anti-Black policies existing at the time, and incorrect assessments were frequently made of the age, nationality, and intelligence of Black individuals.
 - A. From 1800-1840, the individual permitted to speak to the census taker on behalf of the household was limited to a free person over 16 years of age. This meant an enslaved person could not provide that information.⁸
 - B. Phrenology, the study of the brain and its connection to intellect, became a popular subject in the United States during the 1830s and 1840s, and one Thomas Cole showed interest in himself. There were physicians who used phrenology to make a case for slavery, wrongfully arguing that people of African descent were of an inferior intellect based on the shape of their skull.⁹
- III. Represented below is population data for Catskill and Greene County, NY from 1840.
 - A. The total recorded population of Greene County, NY in 1840 was 30,446 persons.
 - B. **In 1840, Black residents made up 2.9% of the recorded population of Greene County.**
 - C. In 1840, the total recorded population of Catskill was 5,339 persons.¹⁰
 - D. The 1840 Compendium lists 893 “Free Colored Persons” as residents of Greene County in New York’s Southern District. Of those, **34 free, Black women were listed as being between 55-99 years of age.**¹¹
 - E. In 1840, the total recorded number of free, Black residents in Greene County was 893 persons. Of those, 446 were free, Black men and 447 were free, Black women.
 - F. The total number of white residents in Greene County was 27,453 persons. Of those, 12,972 were free, white men and 14,481 were free, white women.
 - G. Zero enslaved people were recorded as living in Greene County in 1840.

***Next Steps:** The fully evaluated document, “1840 Census: Sixth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States” is not available digitally. This may include subdivisions/townships for

⁷ Michael E. Groth, *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017), 1.

⁸ Claire Prechtel-Klusens, “Who Talked to the Census Taker?,” National Archives, NGS NewsMagazine, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2005): 32-35, <https://twelvekey.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/ngsmagazine2005-10.pdf>

⁹ K. Titowsky, “Phrenology and ‘Scientific Racism’ in the 19th Century,” Real Archeology, Vassar College, March 25, 2017, <https://pages.vassar.edu/realarchaeology/about/>.

¹⁰ US Census Bureau, “1840 Census: Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States,” Census.gov, March 31, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1841/dec/1840c.html>.

¹¹ US Census Bureau, “1840 Census: Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States,” Census.gov, March 31, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1841/dec/1840c.html>.

each county, including Catskill, NY. Contact the United States Census Bureau to see if in-person viewing is available: <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1841/dec/1840a.html>

- I. It is possible the free, Black woman cited as living at Cedar Grove in 1840 continued to reside in Greene County following the 1840s. Below contains the population data from the 1850 census.¹²
 - A. In 1850, the total population of Greene County measured 33,126 residents.
 - B. In 1850, the total population of recorded Black residents in Greene County was 895 persons.
 - C. The total number of recorded Black women was 454 persons. The total number of recorded Black men was 441 persons.
 - D. The population of Catskill in 1850 reached 5,454 people.
 - E. The total number of recorded Black residents in Catskill, NY in 1850 measured 306 persons. Of this, 167 were free, Black women and 139 were free, Black men.
 - F. The total number of white residents in Catskill, NY in 1850 measured 5,148 persons. Of this, 2,549 were white men and 2,599 were white women.
 - G. Comparatively, **Black residents made up 5.6% of the recorded population of Catskill, NY in 1850.**
- II. Agricultural data from the 1850 census could be useful in understanding the labor of farm workers at Cedar Grove: <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1853/dec/1850a.html>
 - A. I.e. Greene County produced 1,236,777 lbs of butter ending June 1, 1850

¹² US Census Bureau, "The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850 - New York," accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1850/1850a/1850a-22.pdf>.

Laboring at Cedar Grove as a Free, Black Woman Between 55-99 Years of Age

I. Basement space

- A. Initially, I considered that the free, Black woman living at Cedar Grove in 1840 may have labored as a household cook for the family based on reports in the *Furnishings Plan*. Due to the extensive nature of kitchen work, it is productive to consider the alternate work she may have carried out in the household as a 55-99 year old woman.
- B. Because of her age, she may have engaged in lighter tasks that didn't involve the lifting of heavy cast iron pots and kitchen equipment. It is important to note that she still may have been tasked with laborious work. Households in the Hudson Valley desired the hire of Black women who had an expansive knowledge of skills or years of experience in one trade, typically learned while they were enslaved. Less intensive work may have been cleaning the home, laundering, caring for the children, or dairying.¹³
- C. A recipe for griddle cakes does not contain particularly unique information, but it shows that the household carried 'Indian meal', flour, eggs, milk, and salt probably regularly.¹⁴ The frequent nature of patrons visiting Thomas Cole in the home suggests tea was frequently an accommodation and made at the ready. Preparing food for 11 people in the home, in addition to its laborers, may have required the hands of many. The 20-29 year old white woman listed in the 1840 census, who may have been a servant or cousin of the Bartows, and potentially the Bartow women themselves, may have assisted in these tasks.
- D. A milk room in the home was in close proximity to the stairwell, a space where she may have slept under the basement stairs.¹⁵ The Hudson Valley had a rich presence of dairying and many enslaved women were sought after for their knowledge in this. Alternatively, some women were also skilled in animal husbandry, a trade that was largely experienced by enslaved men. An article from December 6, 1803 "listed for sale a **forty year old black** woman who was 'well acquainted with the management of cows'. With the activity on the farm, this may have been work she was engaged in.¹⁶ In the 1805 inventory following Dr. Thomas Thomson's death, "two old cows" are listed under the names of Cloe and Bill, two individuals enslaved by the Thomsons. It would be beneficial to affirm if the farm property involved the management of animals, and cows specifically, after 1805 into the 1840s.¹⁷
"Advertisements for female slaves [in the Hudson Valley] enumerated skills in baking, cooking, ironing, knitting, needlework, scrubbing, sewing, spinning, starching, and washing. **Butter and cheese were important commodities in local trade, and ads routinely identified slaves' skills in dairying, milking and butter making.**"¹⁸

II. Caring for Theddy and Mary Cole, two years of age and one year of age respectively in 1840

¹³ A.J. Williams-Myers, *A Portrait of Eve: Towards a Social History of Black Women in the Hudson River Valley* (New Paltz, NY: Center for the Study of the African Presence in the Hudson River Valley, 1987), 1.

¹⁴ Recipe for griddle cakes, n.d., c.1831, Box 1, Folder 82, Thomson Family and Cole Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.

¹⁵ Jean C. Dunbar, *Furnishings Plan* (Catskill, NY: Thomas Cole National Historic Site, 2011), 111.

¹⁶ A.J. Williams-Myers, *A Portrait of Eve: Towards a Social History of Black Women in the Hudson River Valley* (New Paltz, NY: Center for the Study of the African Presence in the Hudson River Valley, 1987), 6.

¹⁷ Inventory of Dr. Thomas Thomson, 1805, Box 7, Folder 2, Thomson Family and Cole Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.

¹⁸ Michael E. Groth, *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017), 8.

- A. "Family, as well as servants, moved constantly among the house's upper floors and ground level. The two high chair that sat in the Basement Room must have accompanied the succession of Cole infants and toddlers."¹⁹
- B. Once escaped to the North, Harriet Jacobs found work as nurse while securing the freedom of her own children. Prior to her escape, Jacobs was proposed her freedom multiple times on the condition of continuing to work for a family who was otherwise vile to her: "Your labor shall be light, such as sewing for my family. Think what is offered you, Linda—a home and freedom!"²⁰

III. Working alongside and being managed by the Bartow sisters

I. **"The kitchen was a place where classes and ages mixed."**²¹

- a. In TCNHS Furnishings Plan, Jean Dunbar assesses that the kitchen was occupied by many members of the household. Notably within this grouping was the Bartow sisters who assisted in various domestic responsibilities and inherited the home upon the death of their uncle, Alexander Thomson. Dunbar's study of the household inventory and furniture items was deeply useful in understanding which individuals occupied what space.
- b. "The five chairs the 1846 appraisers found [in the kitchen] accommodated more workers than the Thomson-Coles had domestic servants—suggesting that several were used by female family members."²²
- c. The house likely upheld a social system for what kind of labor the Bartow women engaged in as the white women of the household, and assistance from the household's hired laborers was likely an expected request:

Entry from Maria's Diary, Tuesday, November 1, 1842: **Maria seeks help from a "man," presumably a farm laborer:**

"I have scarcely done any thing to day. for I have been almost the whole day **[waiting for a man to help me set some [shrubbery]**. I at last succeeded in getting a part done. **took up the Dalias & put them in the Cellar**. They have enormous roots and I hope **we** may succeed on keeping them through the winter."

¹⁹ Ibid, Dunbar, 116.

²⁰ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), 95.

²¹ Ibid, Dunbar, 129.

²² Ibid.

Life and Community Outside of Cedar Grove

Adaeze Dikko posed the question, what was life like for a free, Black woman living in Catskill? What sorts of things did she enjoy outside of her labor?

- I. Pinkster Festival: A spring celebration of Dutch origin adopted by African Americans as a reprieve from work that was celebrated with vibrant dress, games, and music of African and European origin.²³
 - A. “By the early 1800s Pinkster was considered an African American holiday, with big celebrations in New York City and on Albany’s Pinkster Hill, now occupied by the State Capitol. During the 1700s, slave owners grew more fearful of slave rebellion, and Pinkster was outlawed by the 1810s.”²⁴
 - B. Fear also grew out of instances of enslaved people taking leave for the festival and not returning to the plantation.²⁵
 - C. Reestablished in Albany in 2011, New York State Parks created programming inviting attendees to learn and participate in events that center on the historic Pinkster festival.
 - a. “Board games like Mancala and Nine-Men’s Morris, Draughts (checkers), other games like marbles, string games, cards, running games like tag, all the way to wrestling were just a few games children and adults enjoyed during Pinkster.”²⁶
 - b. Though Pinkster was outlawed in the 1810s, these games and traditions may have been enjoyed and continued to be played by Black communities into the 19th century.
 - c. Further reading: “Rediscovering a Hudson Valley Folkloric Tradition: Traces of the ‘Pinkster’ Feast in Forgotten Books,” by Jeroen Dewulf: <https://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/documents/401021/1608258/HRVR+34.2%2C+Spring+2018/e2bb1a78-5d04-4b06-846e-a86ecb764764>

Next Steps:

- I. Look through St. Luke’s Episcopal records at the Vedder Research Library; contacted St. Luke’s Episcopal Church to see if a free Black person could attend a service in the 1840s. Fr Martin Yost explained “there would have been no canonical obstacle to any person being baptised or being registered as a confirmed communicant in the Episcopal Church.”
- II. Dutch Reformed Church records, search for last name “Thomson”: https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/catskill_dutch_reformed_church.htm
- III. Contact Lavada Nahon, a culinary historian and interpreter of African American history for advisement/future consultation. Nahon specializes in 17-19th century culinary traditions in the Mid-Atlantic region. She might have insight into whether or not a free, Black woman over 55 years of age would be involved in preparing food for the household, if not for the advisement on the sort of cooking happening in the household generally: <https://lavadanahon.com/contact/>
- IV. Arrange an introduction to Sylvia Hasenkopf, ask Heather for an introduction. See if she has any suggested avenues for researching Black history in Catskill. Sylvia wrote an intriguing article about

²³ “What is Pinkster?,” Historic Hudson Valley, May 9, 2018, <https://hudsonvalley.org/article/what-is-pinkster/>.

²⁴ David Levine, “African American History: A Past Rooted in the Hudson Valley,” Hudson Valley Magazine, February 23, 2022, <https://hvmag.com/life-style/history/african-american-past-hudson-valley/>.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Lavada Nahon, “Reviving a Dutch Holiday with African Flavor,” New York State Parks Blog, May 25, 2021, <https://nystateparks.blog/2020/06/01/reviving-a-dutch-holiday-with-african-flavor/>.

African American soldiers from Catskill who fought in the Civil War and are buried in the Thomson St. cemetery: <https://www.porcupinesoup.com/greene-countys-african-american-civil-war-soldiers>²⁷

- V. Closer look at excerpts from *The Liberator*: a protest in Catskill occurred in 1833 on “the subject of colonizing the people of color on the coast of Africa” with Catskill residents Mr. Robert Jackson serving as chairman and Mr. Martin Cross as secretary (General Share > Liberator Articles Catskill > Protest to Colonization 1833)
- VI. Recommendations by Heather Paroubek: see if there’s a way to find Catskill’s subscribers of *The Liberator*: <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/collections/commonwealth:9w032b61n>
 - A. Jonathan Palmer’s recent article, “Jim Planck uncovers Catskill’s activist barber” has useful insight into Catskill’s abolitionist activity prior to the Civil War. He makes mention of residents like Martin Cross, a Black barber who had a storefront in Catskill, and a “Colored Temperance Rally held at Catskill in July of 1844 [that] allegedly attracted almost 3,000 Black reformists...”

“It turns out that Black members of the community in Catskill were far more involved, outspoken, and politically active than any written account until now has grasped. Men like Martin Cross held influential social positions in the community - his barber shop was quite literally opposite the bank at the center of town and catered to all members of the community. Cross, Robert Jackson, and other Black Catskillians were organizing political meetings and publishing resolutions in the newspaper as responses to community debates and lectures on Abolition which refused to recognize their collective voice.”²⁸

²⁷ Sylvia Hasenkopf, “Martin B. Cross: Catskill resident and soldier in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment,” *Tracing Your Roots in Greene County*, Porcupine Soup, August 11, 2021, <https://www.porcupinesoup.com/greene-countys-african-american-civil-war-soldiers>.

²⁸ Jonathan Palmer, “Jim Planck uncovers Catskill’s activist barber,” *The Noon Mark*, Porcupine Soup, April 22, 2022, <https://porcupinesoup.com/jim-planck-uncovers-catskill-s-activist-barber>.

People Enslaved by the Thomsons (in Demerara and Catskill)

- George, James, Linda, Cloe, and Pably are mentioned in a letter from Priscilla Mary Thomson in Demerara to Thomas Thomson²⁹
- Jack, Sam, Tegarro, Simon, Linda, and Toney; sold in South America for \$8,500 prior to the Thomsons moving to Catskill³⁰
- Bill (William) Thomson
- Cloe*
- Pably*
- George*
- James*

*No known record of sale in South America

In Maureen Hennessey's *Life at Cedar Grove* report, the names George, John, Josephus, Robert, William, and James were presumed to be the names of six individuals enslaved by Alexander Thomson in 1820 based on an unsourced note in the Thomson Family Papers at TCNHS penned by late historian Raymond Beecher. After revisiting this note, it is not definite that these individuals were enslaved by the Thomsons in 1820.³¹ See Appendix for image of unsourced note and footnote for clarity.

²⁹ Priscilla Mary Thomson to Thomas Theodore Thomson, May 1815, Box 6, Folder 1, Thomson Family Papers, NYSL, Albany, NY.

³⁰ Playter and Leach to Thomas Theodore Thomson, Nov. 6, 1815; Nov. 30, 1815, Box 6, Folder 2, Thomson Family Papers, SC10637, NYSL, Albany, NY.

³¹ Unsourced note containing the names of six individuals, Box 7, Folder 15, Thomson Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY. According to other handwritten notes on the page, Ray Beecher was possibly noting census data of the Thomson household, which included a record of enslaved people. The names of George, John, Josephus, Robert, William, and James stick out as names not like the Thomson relatives, which may have informed the assumption that these were the names of individuals enslaved by Alexander Thomson in 1820. The names of George and James are indeed familiar and documented as individuals who were enslaved in the May 1815 letter from Priscilla Mary Thomson in Demerara to Thomas Thomson in Catskill; the name of William, possibly Bill, for short, appears in 1805 inventory of Dr. Thomas Thomson and the account book of Alexander Thomson, listed in the following section. It is best not to use this note as a source going forward, but further investigation of the Thomson Family Papers at the NYSL, which Beecher may have been referencing, would be worthwhile.

Additional People Who Labored for the Thomson/Cole Families

I. Cloe (Chloe) (b. 1774)

- A. Mentioned in letter dated May 1815 from Priscilla Mary Thomson in Demerara to Thomas Thomson in Catskill
- B. The 1805 inventory of Dr. Thomas Thomson (d. 1805) lists “1 negro wench named Cloe aged 31 years.” This would place her date of birth in 1774.³² (see Appendix)
- C. September 4, 1810, “Certificate of the Court of Sessions respecting a slave,” a court document exonerating John A. Thomson and Catherine T. Thomson of hiring Cloe³³ (see Appendix)
 - a. Court document references “an act of the legislature of the state of New York paper the 8th of April 1801 entitles an act concerning slaves and servants” which may be reference to Virginia’s 1705 Act concerning Servants and Slaves, relevant if the Thomsons had any involvement in Virginia: <http://explorehistory.ou.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/An-act-concerning-Servants-and-Slaves.pdf>
 - b. It’s unclear what specific New York legislation is referred to here surrounding the date of April 1801. The following acts may be applicable:
“An act of Congress passed in 1800 made it illegal for Americans to engage in the slave trade between nations, and gave U.S. authorities the right to seize slave ships which were caught transporting slaves and confiscate their cargo. Then the "Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves" took effect in 1808.”³⁴
 - c. Find a consultant to explain the details of such court document (Jonathan Palmer was a consultant—Jean-Marc Superville Sovak would be another helpful consult)
 - d. This may have been part of the manumission process, validating that Cloe was adept to care for herself independently. In 1801, fearing formally enslaved people would overburden the public, New York placed a law that would not allow the manumission of an enslaved person without proof of their ability to support themselves.
- D. According to unsourced notes penned by Raymond Beecher, Cloe may have died sometime surrounding the date of June 2, 1815, a date that may be in reference to a journal entry from Thomas Thomson.
 - a. “Death of one of my slaves Chloe at Dewary? June 2, 1815” (“Dewary” here may mean Demerara (in Dutch: Demerary)³⁵

II. Bill (Thomson) (b. 1785)

- A. Listed in 1805 inventory of Dr. Thomas Thomson (d. 1805) as “1 negro boy Bill aged 20 years”³⁶ (see Appendix)

³² Account book of Alexander Thomson, Florence Cole Vincent Collection, c. 1770-1915. Vedder Research Library, Greene County Historical Society, Coxsackie NY.

³³ Court Document Concerning Enslaved Woman Cloe, Box 7, Folder 2, Thomson Family and Cole Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.

³⁴ “Educator Resources: The Slave Trade,” National Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, reviewed January 7, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/slave-trade.html>.

³⁵ Raymond Beecher notes on Thomsons, Manuscript Box 32, Folder: Ray Beecher Research on Thomson Brothers, Thomson/Cole Family General Reference Collection. Vedder Research Library, Greene County Historical Society, Coxsackie NY. Beecher's notes are possibly in reference to the Thomson Family Papers at the New York State Library.

³⁶ Inventory of Dr. Thomas Thomson, 1805, Box 7, Folder 2, Thomson Family and Cole Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.

- B. 1806 account book of John Alexander Thomson lists “1 pr shoes for Blk boy bill”³⁷
 - C. April 30, 1816, “Bill Thompson” appears in a court document stating his eligibility to vote as a free person. Heather Paroubek consulted and transcribed, “It states that he showed up and gave this proof of his freedom which was satisfactory to judge Abeel; you needed to do such a thing to participate in local elections if you were formerly enslaved.”³⁸
- III. George C. Scovill
- A. Hired as a farm laborer for one year by John Alexander Thomson
 - B. May 12, 1828, “Agreement between Thomson & Scovil for labor” in TCNHS Archives³⁹
- IV. Clara Doner
- A. As referenced in the Furnishings Plan, she may have been a hired launderer. She “bills ‘Mr. Cololess (sic) for washing, asking that the money be sent to her via Gilbert Doner.”⁴⁰
- V. Payments to individuals for their labor, possibly involved in building structures for the Thomson’s farm, general carpentry, brick stores, or even the Main House⁴¹
- I. July 1812, Account book of Alexander Thomson (see appendix)
 - “Paid Ham & Mr. Farlain for sawing”
 - “Paid Nixon Blk man for labour”
 - “Paid Tyler for labour”
 - P. Dederick
 - Denis Wright
 - The names of Nixon and J. Girth are repeated throughout the ledgers

Next Steps:

- I. Bring ‘Full House’ content onto the main page of thomascollection.org/. List biographical details about the laborers where we can. Even where information is scant, this could be a useful method to implement. Monticello poses a great example: <https://www.monticello.org/slavery/people-enslaved-at-monticello/>
- II. Locate certificates of manumission in Records Management at the Greene County Building (unfortunately, many records were destroyed in a fire years back) and the Vedder Research Library.
- III. For future research, what was it like working for a gentleman farmer? This could be a unique blend of environmental and labor history in the Hudson Valley. This could be a good opportunity to showcase why the region continues to be sought after for its farmland. A good reference point would be Cole Fellow Marissa Hamm’s 2019-2020 report, “Changing Hands, Changing Lands: The History of the Cedar Grove Property, 1848-1961.”
- IV. Further reading: *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780–1860* by Martin Bruegel
- V. *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth Century America* by Steven Soll

³⁷ Account book of Alexander Thomson, Florence Cole Vincent Collection, c. 1770-1915. Vedder Research Library, Greene County Historical Society, Coxsackie NY.

³⁸ Bill Thomson record, Miscellaneous Records Book A, pg 71, Office of Greene County Clerk, Catskill, NY.

³⁹ S:\Thomas Cole, House & Studios\Laborers\Farmhands & Labor Agreements

⁴⁰ Invoice, Mr. Cololess (sic) from Clara Doner, n.d.; Box 1, Folder 54, Thomson Family and Cole Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.

⁴¹ Account book of Alexander Thomson, Florence Cole Vincent Collection, c. 1770-1915. Vedder Research Library, Greene County Historical Society, Coxsackie NY.

- A. "True, some people had begun to question the meaning of progress. Henry Thoreau's aestheticism and Thomas Cole's dismal prophecy in the Course of Empire...resonated among those who believed that wildness formed in an invariable standard. Romantics invented 'Nature' as a refuge from 'Civilization.' Farmers, on the other hand, had no time and no mind for the stark dualities of these intellectuals."⁴²
- VI. Investigate the name Thorp/Thorpe in census records; a 'Mrs. Thorp' appears in the following letter
 - A. Compared to the attending land lady of Maria and Thomas's trip to the Adirondacks: "Our Land Lady a real industrious woman – the head maniger I imagine. — a good deal such a woman as Mr. [sic] Thorp only altogether neater."⁴³

Interpretation On Site:

Secured high resolution reproductions of 1799 and 1817 Gradual Abolition and Fugitive Slave Law documents. A copy of the 1840 census is now included in our tour dialogue.

Next Steps:

- I. Include other topical publications by African-American writers from the 19th century i.e. Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" and excerpts from *The Liberator* or "Colored Conventions" speeches in or around Catskill
- II. Further reading: *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century* edited by P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson

Useful Resources on Researching African-American Genealogy:

- "Federal Records that Help Identify Former Enslaved People and Slave Holders": <https://www.archives.gov/files/calendar/genealogy-fair/2018/2-kluskens-handout.pdf>⁴⁴
- "Tracing Your African-American Genealogy": <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/african-american-genealogy>⁴⁵

Suggested Reading:

- *Spaces of Enslavement* by Andrea C. Mosterman
- *Long Hammering* by A.J. Williams-Myers (reach out to the African Roots Center in Kingston, NY)
- *Slavery in Albany, New York, 1624-1827* by Oscar Williams
- See also W/Hole History Book Resource List on General Share > Education > Interpretation ON SITE > 2021-23 WHOLE HISTORY> Laborer Installation 2023
- See also Dr. Myra Armstead's Comments on Beth Wynne Report for Thomas Cole NHS on General Share > Education > Interpretation ON SITE > 2021-23 WHOLE HISTORY > Research > Beth Wynne research > Free Black Woman and Other Laborers

⁴² Steven Soll, *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 65.

⁴³ Maria Bartow Cole to Emily C. Bartow, June 24, 1837, Box 4, Folder 1 [missing], Manuscripts and Special Collections, Thomas Cole Papers 1821-1863, SC10635, Cole Family Letters, New York State Library, Albany, NY.

⁴⁴ Claire Kluskens, "Federal Records that Help Identify Former Enslaved People and Slave Holders," The National Archives, The National Archives and Records Administration, December 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/files/calendar/genealogy-fair/2018/2-kluskens-handout.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Leslie Albrecht Huber, "Tracing Your African-American Genealogy," Family Search Blog, Intellectual Reserve Inc., July 26, 2019, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/african-american-genealogy>

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Appendix

The free, Black woman listed in the 1840 census was recorded as being between 55-99 years of age. This would put her date of birth approximately between 1741-1785. The following names of Black women living in Catskill and Greene County are compiled from the 1850 New York census accessed through Ancestry.com. Compiling their names is a means of cross-checking other documents with mention of certain people aligned with household tasks. With this said, it is important to note that these women lived out individual lives, and while their histories may be viewed through a shared experience as seen through being free, women of color living in Greene County, they were singular persons with various home and social circumstances.

The names of Black women born between 1741-1785 exclusively in Catskill, Greene County, NY *Born some years after 1785	The names of Black women born between 1741-1785 with the last name Thomson/Thompson in Greene County and surrounding parts *Few spellings of Thomson w/o the 'p' appear
Dinah Von Loan b. 1780 Lived with two other black residents with the last name Von Loan	Dianna Thompson b. 1771 Home: Schodack, Rensselaer, NY Lived with three other Black residents, last names Jacobs and Rouse
Cathrin (Cottum) Lale b. 1784 Lived with eight other Black residents with the last name Cross	Scrislene Thompson b. 1770 Home: Clifton Park, Saratoga, NY Lived with two other Black residents, last names Rumpus, two white residents, last names Sanford
Jane Brown b. 1785 Lived with one other Black resident, Rans Brown	Hager Thompson b. 1770 Home: Wilton, Saratoga, NY Lived with three white residents, last names Friar and Emerson, one other Black resident, last name Anthony
Phebe Foote b. 1775 Lived with three other Black residents, last names Foote and Hicks	Mary Thompson b. 1775 Home: Athens, NY Lived with eight white residents, last names Deom
*Harriet Brown b. 1788 Lived with three other Black residents, last names Brown	*Dinah Thompson b. 1790 Home: Kinderhook, Columbia, NY Lived with five other Black residents, last names Vanalen
*Dinah Tenbrook b. 1790 Lived with three other Black residents, last names Tenbrook and Busley	*Dianna Thompson b. 1790 Home: Stillwater, Saratoga, NY Lived with six other Black residents, last names Tenbroek and Smith

<p>*Hannah Ann Vichten b. 1795 Lived with five other Black residents, last names Vichten and Williams</p>	<p>Chloe Thomson b. 1748 Appears in NYC Almshouse record, admitted in 1844, listed as born in Catskill, NY</p>
<p>*Dinah Williams b. 1793 Lived with three other residents, last names Williams</p>	
<p>*Sarah Pearce b. 1798 Lived with five other Black residents, last names Smith and Post</p>	

46

⁴⁶ National Archives and Records Administration, "1850 United States Federal Census," Ancestry®, accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8054/images/4197483-00292?ssrc=&backlabel=Return>.

Cedar Grove

Medw. Lindsay Patent 1773
- who owned the stone house on Catkill Creek
set barn & Lard house

Lot # 3 Martin Van Bergen
Lot # 4 James Barker
Cedar Grove built on lot # 4

1790 Census Catskill
Thomas Thompson
16 or more male 1
under 16 male 2
females 5
slaves 4

1810 John A. Thompson 4

1817 Village Census
J. A. Thompson
8 persons
2 free blacks
2 slaves

1820 Thompson, Alexander
George, John, Josephus, Robert, William, James

Unsourced Note Containing the Names of Six Individuals Thought to be Enslaved by the Thomsons in 1820⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Unsourced note containing the names of six individuals, Box 7, Folder 15, Thomson Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.

1812																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																											</
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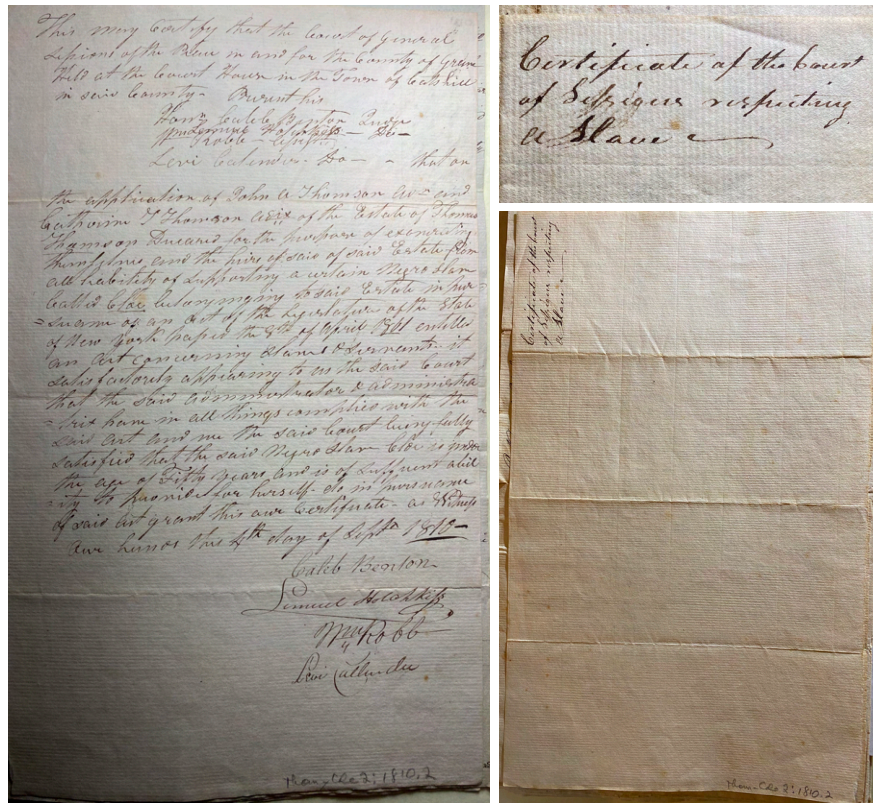
1 Saw & Pigs		3.
1 Negro Wench named Cloe aged 31 years		90
1 Negro Boy	Bill 20 years	200
2 Old Cows		
1 Wagon Screw Jack		
1 Bed & Bedding		

The names of Cloe and Bill, two people enslaved by Dr. Thomas Thomson, appear at the bottom of a personal inventory following his death in 1805, listed under "2 old sleighs," a pitchfork, shovels, and "1 old bay mare."

1805 Inventory of Dr. Thomas Thomson (d. 1805)⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Inventory of Dr. Thomas Thomson, 1805, Box 7, Folder 2, Thomson Family and Cole Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.

Court Document Concerning Enslaved Woman Cloe⁵⁰



Front:

This may certify that the Court of General Sessions of the Brave in and of the County of Greene held at the Court House in the Town of Catskill in said County –

Hon^r Caleb Benton Judge
Mr Samuel Holchkiss – Do –
Robb – [illegible]
Levi Calender – Do –

—that on the application of John A. Thomson ad^r and Catherine T. Thomson ad^{ix} of the Estate of Thomas Thomson Deceased for the purpose of exonerating themselves and their heirs of said Estate from all liability of supporting a certain Negro slave called Cloe belonging to said Estate in pursuance of an act of the legislature of the state of New York paper the 8th of April 1801 entitled an act concerning slaves and servants, it satisfactorily appearing to us the said Court that the said administrator & administratrix have in all things complied with the said act and we the said court being fully satisfied that the said Negro slave is under the age of fifty years and is of sufficient ability to provide for herself – do in pursuance of said act grant this our certificate as witness our honor this 4th day of Sept^r 1810 –

Caleb Benton
Samuel Holchkiss
Mr. Robb
Levi Callender

Back: Certificate of the Court of Sessions respecting a slave

⁵⁰ Court Document Concerning Enslaved Woman Cloe, Box 7, Folder 2, Thomson Family and Cole Family Papers, TCNHS, Catskill, NY.