

# **Buried Secrets of Menotomy's Slaves**

**By Beverly Douhan**



**Photo: B. Douhan**

**The Old Burial Ground Arlington, Massachusetts**

## **Buried Secrets of Menotomy's Slaves**

“There have been many negroes in former times in the Precinct. Some were slaves.”<sup>1</sup>

Benjamin and William R. Cutter

Driving around present day Arlington I like to imagine what life was like in rural Menotomy in the 1700s. The corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Prentiss Road, today, gives no hint of what it looked like many years ago. The old Cutler Tavern (first called The Great Tavern and later the Tufts Tavern) occupied that space in former times and was a prominent gathering spot for many years. It is a bit easier to imagine life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by visiting the Jason Russell House at 7 Jason Street. This house was built in 1740-50 by Jason Russell for his bride, Elizabeth Winship, and their subsequent children. Many Arlington residents know this place as the site of the bloodiest battle on the first day of the American Revolution (April 19, 1775). The oldest house in Arlington stands at 64 Old Mystic Street. It was built in 1706 and has been occupied ever since. Why am I so interested in life in our town back in the days when it was called Menotomy? It all began a few years back when I discovered Kate, Rose, and Flora.

Kate, Rose, and Flora were slave women living in colonial Menotomy – Kate at the Jason Russell House, Rose at the Cutler Tavern, and Flora at the Fowle/Reed/Wyman House on Old Mystic. While we know little about them and all the other slaves who lived in Menotomy, we do know a few tantalizing details.

Fortunately, Benjamin and William R. Cutter wrote *History of the Town of Arlington* in 1880. Some of the genealogical material in their book came from the ministerial journals and diaries of the Rev. Samuel Cooke and the Rev. Thaddeus Fiske. They, also, drew information from the Rev.

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Cutter & William R. Cutter. *History of the Town of Arlington, Massachusetts. Formerly the Second Precinct in Cambridge or District of Menotomy, afterward the Town of West Cambridge 165 – 1879, with a Genealogical Register of the Inhabitants of the Precinct.* Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1880, p. 278.

Dr. Paige's book *History of Cambridge, 1630-1877* and from *History of Charlestown* by Thomas B. Wyman. Another source is Chas. S. Parker's *Town of Arlington – Past and Present 1637 – 1907*. It is from these documents that we know about colonial-era Arlington.

To date, no slave writings have surfaced. Neither has much information about the slaves in the written records of the colonists living in Menotomy been discovered. Thus, not only their secrets but most of the facts of their lives were buried with them in Arlington Center's Old Burial Ground in unmarked graves near our Town's founding families, or in places unknown.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce you to Kate, Rose, and Flora and the other enslaved Africans who lived in Menotomy during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. They walked the dirt paths of our town. They lived with their owners in small farmhouses working everyday from dawn to dusk. And on Sundays they attended public worship in the meeting-house. They, too, are part of our town's history.

The Rev. Samuel Abbot Smith wrote that the British who died on April 19<sup>th</sup> 1775 “were buried near the wall and close to the brook which runs through the old grave-yard, in the spot used for the burial-place of the slaves.”<sup>2</sup>

There were colonists living in the northwest part of Cambridge (west of the Menotomy River – nowadays called Alewife Brook), in 1635. This area of Cambridge eventually becomes present-day Arlington, but was commonly referred to as “Menotomy” throughout the colonial era. The residents in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were predominately farmers, millwrights, millers, and tavern or innkeepers. There were also a few carpenters, coopers, weavers, and tailors. Approximately one hundred and fifty people were living in this part of Cambridge during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

Two Negro slaves, owned by Samuel Maverick, a Boston merchant, lived in Massachusetts Bay Colony as early as 1624.<sup>4</sup> Slavery began, in

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Abbot Smith. *West Cambridge 1775*. Self-published by the author in 1864 and republished by the Arlington Historical Society in 1974. p 53.

<sup>3</sup> MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report for Arlington, 1980. Page 3.

<sup>4</sup> Lorenzo Johnston Greene. *The Negro in Colonial New England 1620-1776*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1942. Page 16.

earnest, with the Massachusetts ship *Desire* returning in 1638 from the West Indies with “cotton, tobacco, and negroes”.<sup>5</sup> We don’t know when the first slaves arrived in Menotomy.

By 1725 the people living on the westerly side of the Menotomy River wanted easier access to public worship. Traveling to Old Cambridge (Harvard Square) for Sunday worship services was difficult. They petitioned the General Court to allow them to become a separate precinct so they could have their own meeting house. Their petition was denied. A second petition had positive results and on December 27, 1732 the Massachusetts legislature allowed a new precinct in Cambridge to be set off. The new precinct was called the Second Precinct and/or the Second Parish. Early on, the people living in the part of Charlestown that was west of the Menotomy River joined the fledgling Second Parish. The meeting-house for the Second Parish was built in 1734 at a site approximately where the present day Unitarian/Universalist Church stands today. The building’s dimensions were 46 by 36 feet and it stood for seventy years. Until the first full time pastor, the Rev. Samuel Cooke, arrived in 1739, visiting local preachers filled the pulpit for Sunday worship services.<sup>6</sup>

An early, if not the first, acknowledgement of Menotomy’s slaves comes from a report on the meeting of Freeholders and Inhabitants of the Second Parish on April 2, 1755. It was voted “to make new seats over the gallery stairs for the Negroes to sit in.”<sup>7</sup> The seating of Negroes in the meeting houses in New England varied, but always they were set apart from the white congregants, often in a corner at the rear of the room or on benches in the gallery.<sup>8</sup>

The inhabitants of the Second Precinct of Cambridge and the inhabitants of Charlestown living on the westerly side of the Menotomy River were formally incorporated into a District called Menotomy in June 1762.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Menotomy, the traditional informal name for our town became official. Menotomy was renamed West Cambridge in 1807. West Cambridge was renamed Arlington in 1867.

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<sup>5</sup> Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle, editors. *Journal of John Winthrop 160 – 1649*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996., Page 246e

<sup>6</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 2 – 25.

<sup>7</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Greene, p. 283.

<sup>9</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 3.

However, it is important to remember that the people who lived in the District of Menotomy, legally, were residents of either Charlestown or Cambridge. This fact makes it difficult to ascertain the exact population of Menotomy and, important for this study, difficult to know exactly how many people of color lived in Menotomy.

For example, in 1754, William Shirley, the Governor of the Province, ordered an enumeration of all slaves, male and female over sixteen years of age, to be compiled by all towns in Massachusetts. 2720 slaves were noted in these reports from 119 towns. The records of some towns, including Charlestown, were not preserved for reasons unknown, or possibly, some towns did not comply with Governor Shirley's order. Cambridge did file a report stating that there were 33 male slaves over 16 and 23 female slaves over 16.<sup>10</sup> How many of these adult people of color were living in Menotomy District in 1754? The genealogical records published in the Cutters' *History of Arlington* suggest the following: 3 named female Negroes (16 and older), 10 unnamed female Negro mothers (16 and older), and 5 named male Negroes (16 and older)<sup>11</sup>

In the first census of all people, 16 years of age and over, living in Massachusetts - the 1765 Colonial Census – the inhabitants of Menotomy District were still counted as residents of Cambridge or Charlestown. This census revealed that there were 1571 people living in Cambridge and 90 of them were colored people (Negroes, Indians, and Mulattos).<sup>12</sup> In Charlestown<sup>13</sup> there were 2031 people and 136 of them were colored people.<sup>14</sup> We should not assume that all the people of color were slaves. Approximately 500-600 people lived in the Menotomy District in 1765.<sup>15</sup> At the time of the census in 1765, it is my best estimate that there were 11 (4 females; 7 men) people of color 16 years of age or older living in Menotomy.<sup>16</sup>

Students of the American Revolutionary War know about two free men of color from Menotomy: David Lamson and Cato Wood. Some may

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<sup>10</sup> W. Dean Eastman. *The 1754 Slave Census*. PrimaryResearch.org article dated May 22, 2007. The Census was obtained from the Massachusetts State Archives.

<sup>11</sup> From author's reading of the genealogies.

<sup>12</sup> Chickering, Jesse. *A Statistical View of the Populations of Massachusetts from 1765 – 1840*. Boston: Charles C Little and James Brown, 1846, pp. 54 & 114.

<sup>13</sup> See Table at the end of the paper for comparable statistics for other neighboring towns.

<sup>14</sup> Chickering, pp. 54 & 114.

<sup>15</sup> MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report Arlington, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> From author's reading of the genealogies and Vital Records.

have also heard of Ishmael Cutler, Prince Cutler, and Cuff Whittemore, all of whom were slaves who most likely obtained their freedom because they fought in the War.

**David Lamson** has been described as a mulatto man of approximately thirty-years of age on April 19, 1775. He was born in Cambridge and fought in the French and Indian Wars as a Private. It is known that in 1767 he was living in the home of P. Tufts, Jr. in Medford, MA. By 1769 he was living in Reading. His claim to fame in Menotomy is that on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1775, he led a group of twelve “exempts” (the old men in town who were not deemed suitable Minute Men or militia material) who stopped a British supply wagon from proceeding through town on its way to Concord. Lamson went on to fight other battles during the next two years until he was discharged on 29 November 1777.<sup>17</sup> We know he was living in Menotomy in 1781 because he paid a poll tax and a town tax.<sup>18</sup> The 1790 census lists him as living in Charlestown, alone, as a free man head of his household.

**Cato Wood** was described as a Negro. His name appears on every list of soldiers of color who fought on Battle Road (the route of the British soldiers to and from Boston on April 19, 1775). Nothing is known about him other than he had the rank of “Fifer” and was listed on the roll of Capt. Benjamin Locke, head of the Menotomy Minute Men in April 1775 and in May 1775 on the roll of Capt. Edward Blake. Wood, while he fought in Menotomy is listed as living in Charlestown.<sup>19</sup> It is useful to remember that a portion of Charlestown joined the District of Menotomy in 1762. Cato Wood most likely lived in that section of Charlestown.

## **Menotomy’s Enslaved Africans**

**Kate** - Jason Russell’s Negro child. She was baptized on 17 March 1754 at age 3 months.<sup>20</sup> The Rev. Cooke recorded in his journal that she was a gift to Jason. In 1770, Menotomy’s assessors recorded that Jason Russell owned one slave.<sup>21</sup> Presumably, that slave was Kate who would have

<sup>17</sup> George Quintal, Jr. *Patriots of Color*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Gardner, Maine, 2007. p 147.

<sup>18</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> Quintal, p. 224.

<sup>20</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 287.

<sup>21</sup> 1770 Menotomy Assessors Record located in Box labeled “Menotomy Northwest Precinct” in the Archives, Arlington Historical Society. It can be assumed that only slaves 16 years and over were listed.

been 16 years old. No information about when and where she died has been found.

However, on March 23, 1878 Russell Teel (Jason's and Elizabeth's great grandson) wrote an interesting letter to a Mr. Damon, a son of a former minister of the parish, "to prove the mild condition of Slavery that our New England Fore Fathers had among them." He wrote about a free black man from Boston who came courting Katy. "Mr. Russell told Katy she could do as she pleased. She could leave him and have her freedom and marry the man. Or stay at home with her old master. Katy said, 'Master I am not going to leave you, but shall stay with you and die with you', and she did. A few years later she died." The incident happened, Mr. Teel wrote "long before the Revolution." Mr. Teel writes in this letter that Mr. Jason Russell had two female slaves. No evidence of this has been found. However, one does wonder who nursed the baby Kate and who cared for her if not a slave woman living in the household. The Russells did have a young white servant girl, Elizabeth Johnson, who died while living with them in 1751 at age 17. One wonders how much of this letter is an accurate record of Kate and life in the Russell household, or how much of it are filtered memories of days gone by.<sup>22</sup>

**Negro Child** in the Daniel Russell household died 22 January 1755 at 6 mos.<sup>23</sup>

**Negro Nurse Child** from Boston died 28 December 1767 at one year of age at Seth Russell's house.<sup>24</sup>

This means, most likely, that a Bostonian wanted his slave to go back to work after the birth of her baby and he sent the baby to Menotomy to be nursed by a rural slave. Thus, the Boston slave, who most probably worked as a house servant would not be distracted from her duties by the needs of her child. If the slave baby had lived it might have been sold, given away, or brought back to the Boston household.

In colonial days "wet nursing evolved into a cottage industry in some rural communities...the best evidence of these New England wet nursing

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<sup>22</sup> Teel – Damon Letter, 1878, in Jason Russell Family Correspondence Folder. BMS/43 Subseries D. Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>23</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 293.

<sup>24</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 295.

enclaves comes from the death records for the ‘nurse children’”.<sup>25</sup> Author Janet Golden writes extensively about the history of wet-nursing in Colonial America but does not deal specifically with wet-nursing practices within the slave population.

In addition to the above mentioned Negro Nurse Child, there were other “nurse” children who died in Menotomy during the 1700s. Their deaths are recorded in *Vital Records of Arlington to the Year 1850*, in the section reserved for unidentified deaths. Not all of these children were slave babies. They died in the households of John Swan, Walter Dickson, Stephen Stearns, Thos. Whittemore, William Dickson, Widow Butterfield, Isaiah Stearns, Jonathan Cutter, Aaron Teel, John Cutter Jr., Seth Russell, and Joseph Shaw.

**Rose** – maidservant of William Cutler, innkeeper. **Rose** married **Punch**, slave/manservant of Samuel Brooks of Medford on 3 June 1754. Rev Cooke officiated and charged them 10 shillings. **Rose** and **Punch** were both baptized by the Rev. Cooke on 15 December 1754. A Negro child of Rose (and Punch, presumably) was born on 2 February 1755 and died 4 days later. On 9 December 1759, a daughter named **Venus** was baptized. And, a third child, **Prince**, was born on 8 August, 1762 and baptized on 12 September 1762. When **Punch** died in May 1767 he was identified as the Negro servant of Widow Brooks. **Rose**, subsequently, married **Scipio Pool** of Medford on 1 September 1768. She died 11 months later on 29 August 1769 at age forty-eight.<sup>26</sup> **Scipio** “the late servant of Pool died of palsy on 15 December 1789 at age 56.”<sup>27</sup>

**Venus** –Rose’s daughter and William Cutler’s Negro – was baptized on 9 December 1759.<sup>28</sup> Thus, she was 10 years old when her mother died and sixteen on the eve of the Revolutionary War.

**Prince** – Rose’s son and William Cutler’s Negro– born 8 August 1762 and baptized on 12 September 1762.<sup>29</sup> Prince was only 6 years old when his mother died and thirteen on the eve of the Revolutionary War. Just a few years later he was a very young soldier in the Revolutionary War.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Janet Golden. *History of Wet Nursing in America*. Ohio State University Press, 2001, p 22, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 211.

<sup>27</sup> *Vital Records of Medford, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*. in the section entitled Negro deaths.

<sup>28</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 211.

<sup>29</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 212.

<sup>30</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 212.



He is listed as such in *Forgotten Patriots*.<sup>31</sup> In the 1790 US census, there is a Prince Cutler listed as head of household and living with four “free other (read nonwhite) persons” in Woburn, MA.

**Ishmael** – “rated in Menotomy in 1781 was probably a servant of William Cutler.”<sup>32</sup> He was also a soldier in the Revolutionary War.<sup>33</sup> “Ishmael Cutler, Negro slave of William Cutler married **Nancy**, Negro slave of Elizabeth Nutting, on November 14, 1778.”<sup>34</sup> From these published facts it can be assumed that Ishmael was a slave who fought in the War and became a servant of William Cutler upon his return. Rated was a term used to denote that he had paid a poll tax. He would not have paid a poll tax if he were a slave at the time.

There is an anecdote about Ishmael in Samuel Abbot Smith’s *West Cambridge 1775*, published in 1864 that gives us an interesting view into life in Menotomy on April 19, 1775. In writing about that day Smith says:

“As we sum up the anguish and distresses of that day, we must not think that those who actively engaged in the conflict were the only sufferers. It may be that the wives and mothers of our town suffered yet more. From their places of safety on the hills they could hear the din of the battle, and they knew not but each sharp volley, each cannon shot, carried death to him they loved. All sorts of exaggerated and unfounded reports reached them of the doings of the day. Vague rumors were afloat of plots and conspiracies. The report was spread abroad that the slaves were intending to rise, and finish what the British had begun by murdering the defenceless women and children. It excited great consternation, therefore, among the women gathered at George Prentiss’s upon the hill, when they saw Ishmael, a Negro slave belonging to Mr. Cutler, approaching the house. They thought their time had come, but one, a little braver than the rest, summoned up the courage to ask, ‘Are you going to kill us, Ishmael?’ ‘...no ma’am’ said the astonished black. ‘Is my missis here?’<sup>35</sup>

**Dinah** – “Negro girl of William Cutler was baptized 17 October 1756 at age 2.”<sup>36</sup> She would have been 21 years old on April 19, 1775. She was not Rose’s and Punch’s daughter, so does this mean there was an unnamed

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<sup>31</sup> Eric G. Grundset, Editor. *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War: A guide to Service, Sources and Studies*. Washington, DC: Published by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 2008, p. 107.

<sup>32</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 212.

<sup>33</sup> *Forgotten Patriots*, p. 107.

<sup>34</sup> *Vital Records of Cambridge, Massachusetts to the Year 1850* in the section entitled Negro marriages.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Abbot Smith. *West Cambridge 1775*. Arlington Historical Society edition, 1974, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 212.

enslaved African woman living in the Cutler household who gave birth to her? Or, was Dinah a “gift” as was Kate?

**Tobey** – “black slave of William Cutler, died 16 April 1774”<sup>37</sup>

**Flora** - Seth Reed’s Negro servant died on September 23, 1791 when she was sixty years old. Slavery was outlawed in Massachusetts in 1783. But that did not necessarily mean that all Massachusetts slaves received their freedom in 1783. The law was not without its loop holes and the emancipation of slaves was gradual.<sup>38</sup> Free or not, Flora most likely stayed on with the Reeds at least until their deaths (Seth in 1783 and Lydia in 1789). The 1770 Assessors Report indicates that Seth Reed had one slave.<sup>39</sup> What happened to her after 1789 is unknown. She gave birth to six children whose birth dates, but not their names nor the names of their fathers, were recorded in Rev. Cooke’s diary. First, a son on 4 Sept 1763, then a daughter born in June 1765, a child born in 1768, a child in 1770, a child born 3 Nov 1773 who died on 9 Nov 1773, and then another child born in 1779.<sup>40</sup>

The house where Flora lived with the Reeds still stands, albeit with additions – on the corner of Old Mystic Street and Hutchinson Road. This house has an interesting history. It was built in 1706 by John Fowle who probably never occupied the house. Instead, he sold it to Daniel Reed (Seth’s father) within a year. Daniel Reed was a farmer and lived off the land until 1738 when he divided his land between his two sons, Daniel and Seth. Seth and Lydia, his wife, lived in the house until the Reeds sold the property to Daniel Wyman in approximately 1778. Thus, this house is known as the Fowle/Reed/Wyman House.<sup>41</sup> It is unknown where the Reeds and Flora lived after they sold this house to Daniel Wyman.

**Pegg** - woman servant of Capt. Philip de Carteret died 10 December 1757. Capt. Philip married Elizabeth, daughter of Jonathan Dunster, in November 1727 and they lived in a house on Decatur Street overlooking the Mystic River. They had four daughters, three of whom died in young

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<sup>37</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 212.

<sup>38</sup> Joanne Pope Melish. *Disowning Slavery: gradual emancipation and “race” in New England, 1780-1860*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998, p.76.

<sup>39</sup> Archives, Arlington Historical Society.

<sup>40</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p.288.

<sup>41</sup> Les Masterson. *Town’s Oldest Dwelling reaches 300<sup>th</sup> Milestone*. In the *Arlington Advocate*, February 2, 2006.

adulthood. Their fourth daughter, Abigail, married William Whittemore in 1758.<sup>42</sup>

Pegg (also known as Peg or Peggy) originally, was one of Elizabeth Dunster Wade Thomas' slaves. Elizabeth was a daughter of Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard College and she was the third wife of Major Jonathan Wade of Medford who died in 1689. She married again, years later, in 1714 (Col. Nathaniel Thomas) and she died in 1729.<sup>43</sup> In her Will, signed Elizabeth Thomas, she speaks about her slaves and what is to happen to them. I quote here what she says about Peggy:

“I give to Jack (apparently, Pegg's husband) and Peggy one half of all the Provisions in the House at my decease and they have the liberty to pasture a cow and to get one load of Hay for their cow for three years after my decease...My will is that my negro man named Jack shall live with his wife and Children he paying to my nephew Mr. Henry Dunster fifteen pounds in one year after my decease...I also give Jack the liberty to improve one acre of Land for three years in my field and also the liberty he and his wife to live in the chamber that is mine for three years. Also, the Improvement of one half of the Garden...for three years and to return to my heirs.” “ My mind is That Toney (another Thomas slave) and Peggy shall have half the Indian Corn and half the Barly..... Peggy shall have the great Pott and the little Brass Skillet and the old Brass kettle that was my dear Child's, one Pewter Dish six Plates marked E.W.”<sup>44</sup>

In his book, Samuel Dunster makes some very interesting comments about Pegg and the Carterets worth quoting in full:

“Peggy seems to have lived with ‘Aunt Carteret’. (Elizabeth Dunster Carteret, wife of Captain Philip de Carteret) In Mr. Cooke's Records, 2n Church, Cambridge, are these entries: ‘Carteret, Pegg, woman servant of Capt. C. died Dec. 10, 1757.’ Also, ‘Negro boy of Capt. Carteret died April 12, 1747;’ and ‘Negro Child (girl) of Capt. Carteret died [Cutter says this girl was born on] August 15, 1753.’ (Honest Mr. Cooke, he wrote in common language, which enthusiasts of this day have intentionally perverted to mean something worse.)”<sup>45</sup>

Might this imply that the four Negro children (directly below) in the de Carteret household were the children of Jack and Peggy?

<sup>42</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 202.

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Dunster. *Henry Dunster and His Descendants*. Central Falls, RI: E.L. Freeman & Co., 1876, p.28, 29.

<sup>44</sup> Dunster, p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> Dunster, p. 33.

**Negro Boy** of Capt. de Carteret died on 12 April 1747 at six years of age.<sup>46</sup>

**Negro Girl** of Capt. de Carteret was born in July 1751.<sup>47</sup>

**Negro Girl** of Capt. de Carteret was born 15 August 1753.<sup>48</sup>

**Negro Girl** of Capt. de Carteret was born in 1754<sup>49</sup>

**Tony** – Widow Elizabeth Carteret deeds to Tony, her Negro man, his liberation on June 30, 1772.<sup>50</sup> In the 1770 Assessor Report, Widow Carteret was recorded as having 2 slaves. Probably, Tony and perhaps one of the Negro girls mentioned above, born in 1751, 1753, or 1754. Cuff Cartwright was most likely William Whittemore’s slave by 1770.<sup>51</sup>

Samuel Dunster goes on to say, commenting on other slaves, “One of these unfortunates has made his mark in history. He was probably the son of Jack and Peggy.”<sup>52</sup> It turns out that he was speaking of Cuff Cartwright or Cuff Whittemore as he was known at the time of his death.

This presents an interesting situation. Did Pegg and Jack have lots of children in the 1740s and 1750s and none between 1720 (the year of their marriage) and sometime in the 1740s? While it is not known when Pegg was born, it was reported in *Vital Records of Medford* that she and Jack married in 1720. Apparently, they lived with Elizabeth Dunster Wade Thomas in Medford and perhaps for up to 3 years after her death in 1729, per permission to do so in her Will. Then, Pegg, at least, presumably went to live in Menotomy with “Aunt Carteret” or “Aunt Cartwright” as she was sometimes called.

One can speculate that Pegg might have been 15 when she married in 1720 and thus, when she died in 1757 she would have only been 42. Certainly, young enough to have given birth to some or all of the Negro children mentioned in the de Carteret household, including Cuff Cartwright who reportedly was 77 years old when he died in 1826. Samuel Dunster

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<sup>46</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 202.

<sup>47</sup> Vital Records of Arlington, Massachusetts to the Year 1850 in the section entitled Negro births.

<sup>48</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 202.

<sup>49</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 202.

<sup>50</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 203.

<sup>51</sup> Dunster, p. 33.

<sup>52</sup> Dunster, p. 34.

implies that she and Jack were the parents of these children. The question is did Samuel Dunster know this, or was he speculating. Elizabeth Thomas, in her Will writes about Jack and Pegg and their children. These, presumably would have been children born before her death in 1729. There are no children of Jack and Pegg recorded in the *Vital Records of Medford*; however, there are two children (twins – Hannah and Job) recorded that were born on May 23, 1725 to a Jack and Margaret. Might Hannah and Job be Pegg’s and Jack’s children? Or, might Hannah and Job be the children of Jack and Margaret, Elizabeth Thomas’ mulatto woman? The Will states, “I give to my mollato [sic] woman Margaret all her Children free from any claim of any body of my heirs.”<sup>53</sup> Lots of buried secrets in this story.

Another interesting Samuel Dunster observation concerns Elizabeth Dunster Wade Thomas’ slaves, in general: “These ‘freedmen’ came into her possession by marriage. There is abundant evidence that President Dunster never owned a slave. His whole life would refute such an inference. Her wishes appear to have been fully carried out. Although they seem to have continued to live in the families to whom she was related, they were brought up in moral and religious instruction, and treated as ‘a brother beloved.’”<sup>54</sup> Might Mr. Dunster’s observations be similar to those of Mr. Teel when he wrote to Mr. Damon about the mild condition of Slavery in New England?

Why Samuel Dunster called the Thomas slaves freedmen is unclear. It is true that one or two of Elizabeth Thomas’ slaves were given their freedom per directions in her Will upon her death, but not all of them.

**Cuff (Cartwright/Whittemore)** – Cuff died on 25 Jan 1826 at age 77. He was Capt Philip de Carteret’s (Cartwright) slave, but at some point he was sold or given to William Whittemore who married Capt Carteret’s daughter Abigail Carteret on 12 Oct 1758.<sup>55</sup> He was called both Cuff Cartwright and Cuff Whittemore.<sup>56</sup>

The following story, told by Colonel Ebenezer Thompson who in his prime was the captain of the “Menotomy Light Horses”, is quoted by Chas. S. Parker in *Town of Arlington – Past and Present 1637 – 1907*.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Dunster, p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> Dunster, p. 33.

<sup>55</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 202.

<sup>56</sup> Note: the family name de Carteret was often shortened to Carteret and/or misspelled as Cartaret. And, then most member of this family used Cartwright as their family name.

“Cuff Cartwright, a colored man, was the slave of Master William Whittemore a graduate of Harvard College and a local school teacher who had married a member of the de Carteret family. Cuff was on the hill with the Menotomy militia, of which Solomon Bowman was lieutenant and on the opening of the fight at that point, which was evidently near the house of Jason Russell at Arlington, the Negro acted cowardly and in his alarm turned to run down the hill. But the lieutenant threatened to shoot him with a horse pistol, and pricked him in the leg with the point of his sword. This brought Cuff to his senses, and the negro “about facing” fought through the contest, as the colonel said, like a wounded elephant, making two “cuss’d Britishers” bite the dust. Cuff continued in the army and afterwards was taken prisoner by the British. While acting as waiter to a field officer he was ordered to take 2 fine horses to water at a stream running between the camps of the two armies, and instead of returning to the British camp, forded the stream under a shower of bullets and reported himself and two horses in sound condition to the officer of the continental, by whom he was liberally rewarded.”

Part of this story was also told and recorded in the Cutters *History of Arlington*, by J.B.Russell who refers to Cuff’s life after the War:

“He (Cuff) used to work by the day among the farmers, slept in barns and lived almost anyhow. One of his stories was that he was a servant to General Burgoyne, and that just before the capture of the latter at Saratoga, he was ordered to take the General’s favorite horse one morning to the brook to water. The American and British armies lay on each side of it, half a mile or so apart. After the horse had drank sufficiently, Cuff concluded to join the Americans, and dashing through the brook, while the British bullets flew thick at him, reached our lines.”<sup>58</sup>

Samuel Dunster wrote “Old Cuff was a great story-teller, and many in Arlington now remember him. . . He was the last representative, I believe, of the Carteret family in Arlington.”<sup>59</sup>

While there is no evidence of any formal manumission, we can assume he became a free man following the Revolutionary War. Cuff Whittemore received a pension from the government for his service.<sup>60</sup>

**Dinah** - Negro servant of William Whittemore had a child born on 2 March 1771.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Chas. S. Parker. *Town of Arlington – Past and Present 1637 – 1907*. Arlington, MA: C.S. Parker & Son, 1907, p. 196, 197.

<sup>58</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 202.

<sup>59</sup> Dunster, p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> Quintal, p. 219.

<sup>61</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 318.

**Roger** - Negro boy of Daniel Brown died on 1 April 1754 at 8 years old.<sup>62</sup> In the 1770 Assessors Record, Daniel Brown reported he had one slave.<sup>63</sup>

**Negro Boy** - "Mr. Ebenezer Bowman's Negro had a son, b. 18 May 1752."<sup>64</sup>

Mention of Mr. Ebenezer Bowman appears in an interesting letter dated Feb. 1847 to Isaac Hill from John Adams, son of Thomas Adams, quoted in Cutters' *History of Arlington* in which he says the following:

"My father, again a widower, remained so in Worcester four years; then having an opportunity, sold his place to Dr. John Green, and bought a tavern stand in West Cambridge, near the old meeting-house, and with his children moved to his native place. Soon after he married, for a third wife, the widow (of Ebenezer) Elizabeth Bowman. She had three children by her first husband, and owned a black wench and a little brat."<sup>65</sup>

The boy and his mother (unidentified female enslaved African) were the "wench and little brat" who Ebenezer Bowman's widow inherited when he died in 1753. She brought them with her when she married Thomas Adams in Sept 1754.<sup>66</sup>

**Jack** - Negro boy of Thomas Adams died in N.W.Pct. 29 May 1755 at age 6.<sup>67</sup>

**Ambrose** - Negro boy of Thomas Adams baptized on 17 October 1756 at age 5.<sup>68</sup> The 1770 Assessors' Record indicates that Thomas Adams had one slave.<sup>69</sup>

**Negro Slave** of Widow Ann Wright. This unnamed slave is recorded in the 1770 Assessors' Report. Widow Wright died in February 1772 at age 80. She owned a house, barn, and pasture in 1770, as well as the slave.

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<sup>62</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 198.

<sup>63</sup> Archives, Arlington Historical Society.

<sup>64</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 195.

<sup>65</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 151.

<sup>66</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 184.

<sup>67</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 189.

<sup>68</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 189.

<sup>69</sup> Archives, Arlington Historical Society.

**Caesar** was a servant of John Cutter who hanged himself on June 26, 1743.<sup>70</sup>

**Caesar** was a servant of George Cutter who died on July 25, 1777.<sup>71</sup> In the 1770 Assessors Record, George Cutter reported he had one slave; no doubt the slave was Caesar.

**Experience** was a mulatto brought up by George Cutter. She was baptized on November 23, 1783.<sup>72</sup>

**Negro Child** in George Cutter's household died on August 31, 1751 at 6 weeks old.<sup>73</sup>

**Negro Slave** in the household of Samuel Cutter, Jr. Reported in the 1770 Assessors Record.<sup>74</sup>

**Flora** - "the negro child of David Dunster was baptized on June 13, 1742." David Dunster was the grandson of Henry Dunster the first president of Harvard College. Shortly after Flora was baptized David and Mary Dunster and their family moved to Westminster, MA, possibly taking Flora with them.<sup>75</sup>

**Daniel** – In her Will Elizabeth Thomas mentions **Daniel** – "I give to my Nephew Mr. Henry Dunster [who lived in Menotomy] one years service of my Negro Boy named Daniel he using him well and giving him two suits of Cloaths at the years end."<sup>76</sup>

**Nancy** – In Henry Dunster's (grandson of President Henry Dunster, and nephew of Elizabeth Thomas) Will he gives to his wife, Martha Russell, many things, including "...the whole service and improvement of my Negro Woman Nancy During my sd [sic] wife's Life." He also says "Furthermore I Give & Bequeath to my above named Beloved Son Jason Dunster my above sd negro woman Nancy to him & his heirs after my sd wife's decrease..."<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 214.

<sup>71</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 216.

<sup>72</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 216.

<sup>73</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 214.

<sup>74</sup> Archives, Arlington Historical Society.

<sup>75</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 234.

<sup>76</sup> Dunster, p. 30.

<sup>77</sup> Dunster, p. 37, 38.



**Tony** - “a Negro who belonged to Jason Dunster died on March 4, 1745 at age 90.”<sup>78</sup> Tony (Toney) did not belong to Jason, however, as the Cutters thought. He lived in Jason Dunster’s household as a free man.

Before Tony lived in Jason’s household he belonged to Jason’s great aunt, Elizabeth Thomas. She speaks of Toney in her Will:

“I give to my Negro man named Toney his freedom, being a faithful servant for forty years. I also give him ten pounds in money and a cow and the liberty of one acre of my marsh for to mow for three years after my decrease and also to pasture his cow three years and the liberty to live in that Chamber that is mine for three years and also to have half the Provision in the House at my Decrease and also to improve one acre of land in my field for three years. I also give him the liberty of the Chamber for his life if he need it.”<sup>79</sup>

Further, she writes:

“my will is that my heirs shall see that Toney be relieved at all times as his need requires...my mind [is] That Toney shall have a Black Coat and Toney shall have the Frying Pan two old Pewter Dishes, the biggest Brass Skillet, the old Chairs in the Kitchen, the old saddle and Bridle the little Pot and a pail and his chest and further my mind is that he and Peggy shall have half the Indian Corn and half the Barly and he – that is Toney – a Hogg and Pigg.”<sup>80</sup>

Author Samuel Dunsters comments, “Toney’ whose welfare seems to have been the burden of her mind, lived and died in the Dunster family, and reposes in the same cemetery with them, and the record is: “Toney Dunster died March 4, 1745 aged 90 years.”<sup>81</sup>

**Negro Girl** at Jason Dunster’s house was born on March 17, 1747 and died on March 24, 1747 at 7 days old.<sup>82</sup>

**Negro Child** died at Jason Dunster’s house on April 2, 1750.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 235.

<sup>79</sup> Dunster, p. 32.

<sup>80</sup> Dunster, p. 33.

<sup>81</sup> Dunster, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 235.

<sup>83</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 235.

**Negro Child** of William Dickson died on February 9, 1753 at 7 months old.<sup>84</sup>

**Negro Child** of Widow Swan died on January 3, 1753 at 2 years old.<sup>85</sup>

**Negro Boy** at Ebenezer Elliot's house died suddenly on November 6, 1756 at 7 months.<sup>86</sup>

**Warrior** – “son of a negro born 7 June and died 10 June 1741 at 3 days.”<sup>87</sup>

**Violet** - Joseph Wellington's “negress” was baptized privately on December 3, 1772 and died on December 3, 1772 at either 14 or 16 years old.<sup>88</sup>

**Emmon** - the manservant of the widow Ann, was baptized at age 27 on July 25, 1742. Ann was married to Samuel Cutter who died in 1737. She then married again in 1743 and went to live in Mason NH. However, when she died she was buried in the Old Burial Ground in Menotomy.<sup>89</sup>

**Hannah Daniels** - “adult mulatto, baptized 9 August 1741.”<sup>90</sup>

**Negro Boy** died June 1791 at age 12.

**Thomas**, a Negro man age 80 died on 11 October 1794.

**Mulatto Girl** died at the poor-house on 14 Jan. 1819 at 4 years.<sup>91</sup>

Because nothing much is known about the lives of the enslaved Africans in Menotomy we are left to make assumptions from what is known about slaves in neighboring towns. Several books have recently been written about slaves in Concord, Lexington, and Medford as well as slavery, in

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<sup>84</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 233.

<sup>85</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 305.

<sup>86</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 236.

<sup>87</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 313.

<sup>88</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 314.

<sup>89</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 213. Note: it may not be that Emmon was an enslaved African. Emmon was not a common slave name, but neither was it a common name for a white colonist.

<sup>90</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 229. Note: she may not have been an enslaved African.

<sup>91</sup> Cutter & Cutter, p. 278. The author cannot locate any other information about these three. They all died after 1783 when slaves in Massachusetts were freed.

general, in New England, or Massachusetts. These books are listed at the end of the paper for those interested in further study.

The purpose of this paper, as noted above, is, mainly, to acknowledge the enslaved and the freed Africans who lived in Menotomy long ago – to put their names on paper and to tell the little that is known about them. And, to remember that there were many unnamed adult slaves living and giving birth to unnamed babies identified in the ministerial records. While at this moment in time there are few specific things known about the lives of Menotomy's slaves, there is hope that with additional research more can be discovered about

Kate, Rose, Punch, Scipio, Venus, Prince, Ishmael, Dinah, Tobey, Flora, Pegg, Jack, Cuff, Tony, Dinah, Roger, Jack, Ambrose, Caesar, Experience, Caesar, Flora, Daniel, Nancy, Toney, Warrior, Violet, Emmon, Hannah, and Thomas in whose memory this paper is dedicated.

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Beverly Douhan  
Arlington, MA  
August 2011

**Extrapolated Statistics from Chickering's Table VIII (Population of the  
Towns in Massachusetts) and Table XVII (Colored Persons in the  
Towns and Counties)\*\***

**1765 Census**

<u>Town</u>	<u>Total Popl.</u>	<u>Colored Persons</u>
Cambridge	1571	90
Charlestown	2031	136
Concord	1564	27
Boston	15520	848
Medford	790	49
Lexington	912	44
Watertown	693	11
Woburn	151	39

\*\*Chickering, Jesse. *Statistical View of the Population of Massachusetts from 1765 to 1840*. Boston: Charles C Little and James Brown, 1846. Table VIII, page 54. Table XVII, page 114.

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Vital Records of Arlington, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850.

Vital Records of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850.

Vital Records of Medford, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850.

Wyman, Thomas B. *The Genealogies & Estates of Charlestown, Massachusetts 1629 – 1818*. Boston, 1879.

## Jason Russell House



Courtesy of the Arlington Historical Society

Photo: circa 1884

## The Cutler/Tufts Tavern



Courtesy of the Arlington Historical Society

Photo: circa late 1800s

## The Fowle-Reed-Wyman House



Courtesy of the Arlington Historical Society

Photo: circa 1895

## The de Carteret-Dunster House



Courtesy of the Arlington Historical Society

Photo: circa late 1800s





