

*Shared Bodies: Social Patterns in Rural East Jersey and the Formation of an African  
American Community*

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**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14713/njs.v8i2.287>**

*This study uses two complementing data types to a). challenge the standard definition of the direct enslaver-enslaved form of bondage in rural Bergen County, New Jersey, and b). hypothesize about the formation of a free Black community around Dunkerhook Road in the same location. The first data type, labeled the “social record,” is the combination of nineteenth-century membership records from the Church of Paramus and personal documents, such as diaries and genealogical data. These data are comparatively analyzed against “official” tax and will data. This study proposes that some of New Jersey’s enslaved Black population were part of a complex social web sharing or renting their bodies and labor to maintain conservative rural Dutch culture. This system benefited white families such as the Zabriskies, Terhunes, and Hoppers during New Jersey’s slow path to emancipation. The surveillance of Black lives by the Dutch family network and limited employment opportunities for the formerly enslaved are possible factors contributing to the rise of the free African American community on Dunkerhook Road, New Jersey.*

**Introduction**

The landscape along Paramus Road, a four-mile stretch of two-lane highway passing through Paramus, New Jersey, is typical of a Greater New York Area suburban community. Middle-class homes offset by spacious green lawns line the north-south-oriented thoroughfare once traversed by Munsee Lenape Indians. Places of religious worship, schools, and small businesses complete the suburban character. However, the observant driver will periodically notice structures unique to the suburban landscape. Dressed red sandstone buildings, often smaller than

their neighbors, demarcated with signs announcing the names of their builders, break up the homogenous character of the area. This study's investigation focuses on the white Dutch descendant builders of these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century structures and the enslaved labor supporting some families' farmsteads.

Contained in the period's historical record are the tax, will, census, genealogical, and church membership data of the area's inhabitants. The uniqueness of the church records presents an opportunity to interpret the social and physical spaces occupied by the white families and how this environment shaped the lives of enslaved and free African-descended people in rural Bergen County in the early nineteenth century. White society's surveillance and control of Black lives were part of a power structure economically and socially supporting the ethnically Dutch community. This paper suggests that racial discrimination, control, and prevention from competing for jobs contributed to the formation of a free African American community in Dunkerhook, New Jersey. This approach, however, is a very narrow lens through which to understand the enclave and does not perceive the opposing force of Black self-determination contributing to the community's self-sufficiency and prosperity.

As a gateway bridging communities across the Saddlebrook River, Dunkerhook Road was located on the trade route between Saddlebrook and New Barbadoes Townships and adjacent to the north-south-orientated Paramus Road. In the twentieth century, the transference of land to public ownership forming park space and the private development of modern McMansions along the road<sup>1</sup> have effectively erased the history of the African American community once living there.

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<sup>1</sup> One of two historical buildings was destroyed in July 2012 to make way for new construction. 273 Dunkerhook Road, a building on the National Register of Historical Places (NRHP), was covertly torn down in the middle of night, despite community efforts and negotiation to relocate the structure to nearby Bergen County Community College. A description of the efforts made to save the building is available at <https://www.preservationnj.org/listings/zabriskie-tenant-house/>.

Using the scholarly writings of researchers such as Graham Russell Hodges (1997, 1999), Edgar J. McManus (2001), Leon F. Litwack (1961), and James J. Gigantino II (2010) as a sociological and historical foundation, the documentary evidence is contextualized against our present understanding of slavery in the North. The white enslaving class supplies much of the documentary evidence analyzed. However, this study's design intends to draw the reader's attention to the narrative's holes and negative spaces. Within the void is a community's foundation comprised of enslaved and freed African Americans whose identities are commonly erased by the surrounding white society. Recreating Dunkerhook's nineteenth-century social environment is achieved not by listening to what is said, but what is implied by the enslaver's evidence.

Wherever possible, the following pages avoid referring to enslaved African Americans by the noun *slave*. Alternatively, the choice of nouns used intends to present individuals as African Americans subjected to slavery. Using the term *slave* diminishes individual and group identity by perceiving people by the crimes committed against them. Similarly, the terms *owner* or *master* describing individuals who committed these crimes will be avoided. In the author's opinion, the humanity of slavery's victims becomes obfuscated by analytical and objective language. Therefore, the term *enslaver* has been chosen to describe persons who placed others into bondage and exploited their labor, bodies, and souls.

The era of this study's investigation is the latter half of Dunkerhook's archaeological Phase 1 designation (1750–1820).<sup>2</sup> There is a duality of purpose for this limited time window. First, in America's formative years after the revolution, the institution of slavery underwent numerous changes. The rise and relatively slow decline of slavery, particularly in New Jersey, will be argued as an intrinsic force economically and socially shaping the free community living in Dunkerhook

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<sup>2</sup> Eric D. Johnson and Christopher Matthews, "Dunkerhook Archaeological Survey: Report on The Island Lot Cottage," *Site Report*, (2019): 1.

post-1820. Secondly, the research design intends to complement the ongoing (in 2022) archaeological investigations by Montclair State University. The narrow focus and complementary voice join the broader Dunkerhook conversation communicated through existing material artifacts and extensive documentary research.

Primary sources, such as official ship manifests and bills of sale, provide us with a quantified and objective perspective of the slave trade from a white and European viewpoint; however, these sources exclude Black voices and experiences.<sup>3</sup> In this investigation, these data are a device for framing the broader conversation of slavery and provide a national and transnational backdrop to slavery in East Jersey. Official data is not without its flaws and limitations. The motivation for enslavers to maximize economic gain by manipulating records has been repeatedly observed (see for example Gigantino, 2010; McManus, 2001; Hodges, 1997). It was not uncommon for even the most “reputable” captains of slave vessels to covertly disembark portions of their cargo in Long Island or New Jersey to avoid paying New York’s tariffs.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, official records also contain “holes,” leading the observer to speculation. We see evidence of data discrepancy in the statistics of New Jersey’s total Black population between 1810 and 1820. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman (cited by Gigantino, 2010) note that the total free African American population in New Jersey did not match the declining number of enslaved in the same period.<sup>5</sup> We can attribute this discrepancy to loopholes in the failed law designed to prevent the exportation of enslaved persons to the deep South.<sup>6</sup> One example of an enslaver fearing economic loss is judge Jacob Van Wickle, who “took the crying of a six-week-old slave for a term [as] approval of a life

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<sup>3</sup> Frederick W. Lange and Jerome S. Handler, “The Ethnohistorical Approach to Slavery,” in *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life*, ed. T. Singleton (New York: Academic Press, 1985), 15–32.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar J. McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 38.

<sup>5</sup> James J. Gigantino II, “Trading in Jersey Souls: New Jersey and the Interstate Slave Trade,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 77, No. 3 (2010): 295.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

of unfreedom in the Deep South.”<sup>7</sup> Hodges (1997) provides an additional example. Samuel Thompson of Monmouth County, also in East Jersey, convinced a mother of two sons to travel to Louisiana under the auspices of eventual freedom. In actuality, Thompson stole any chance of the boys’ freedom by transporting them to the Southern states.<sup>8</sup> Perpetrators of slavery distorted and stretched the law’s limit in the quest for greater profits. It is not unreasonable to assume enslavers throughout rural East Jersey also partook in similar reinterpretations of the law or tax-avoidance measures.

Relying solely on the official record for research potentially distorts how America, and especially the Northeast, understands its relationship with slavery. The standard narrative overlooks slavery in the North;<sup>9</sup> the significance and societal impact of the institution is diminished by the culturally normalized perspective that slavery was a Southern manifestation, vehemently eradicated from memory by the victorious North during America’s Civil War.<sup>10</sup> Underreporting of enslaved persons or the creative bookkeeping previously exemplified legitimizes a Northern identity of innocence based on the absence of evidence.

Church records complicate the narrative formed by official records. When we factor the enslavers’ social relationships into our historical perception of slavery, we see social lives layered over the economics of slavery—revealing slavery’s more profound complexity. This alternate perspective goes beyond slavery’s standard definition of direct enslavement or ownership to see its victims also as a shared or rented resource, a far more insidious form of bondage. This arrangement provided the enslaver class with social and economic capital. It supported and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>8</sup> Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 150.

<sup>9</sup> Litwack (1961) in his preface summarizes the contrast between slavery and social attitudes in the North versus the South created by a dramatized Confederacy/Union dichotomy.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Gold, “The ‘Gift’ Of Liberty: Testamentary Manumission In New Jersey—1791–1805,” *Rutgers Race and the Law Review*, No. 15 (2014): 1–72. See also Marc Ross’s discussion on Northern slavery denial and avoidance. Marc H. Ross, *Slavery in the North* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2018), 83.

maintained the culture of white landowners. The concept of labor as a shared or rentable resource, the geographic location of “the island”<sup>11</sup>—otherwise known as Dunkerhook—and the social ramifications of manumission laws will be factored together to provide a societal impression of the Dunkerhook community in the early nineteenth century.

### Slavery in New Jersey

The institution of slavery was recognized and legally demarcated in nearly all 13 colonies.<sup>12</sup> In New Jersey, these laws, directed by the Royal Crown, actively promoted the importation of enslaved people to “contribute to the advantage of the colony.”<sup>13</sup> Settler colonialists were incentivized to relocate to New Jersey by granting them free land. Immigrating planters, many from the Caribbean, were granted 75 acres of land per enslaved person before January 1, 1665. The amount of land given dropped to 60 acres the following year and 45 acres per enslaved person in the third year after the concessions were enacted.<sup>14</sup> In addition, New Jersey’s import tariff competitiveness with neighboring New York and Pennsylvania established the state as a prominent entry point on the East Coast for slave ships before 1762.<sup>15</sup>

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, multiple intersecting factors contributed to the slow decline of slavery in the North. By 1770, the massive scale of the African diaspora had depopulated the West Coast of Africa, forcing a human-chattel price increase of up to 100 percent.<sup>16</sup> The North’s manufacturing and commerce economy and small-scale agriculture

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<sup>11</sup> Christian A. Zabriskie’s 1767 will described a portion of the Dunkerhook area as “the island,” presumably because of the land’s raised features surrounded by low-lying areas of swamp (New Jersey State Archives, *Volume XXXIV, Abstracts of Wills, 1771–1780* (Trenton: John L. Murphy Publishing Company). See also, Zabriskie, *The Zabriskie Family*, 23.

<sup>12</sup> Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Henry S. Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1896), 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>16</sup> McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 30.

compounded these costs, rendering slavery less profitable than in the plantation economy of the South.<sup>17</sup> Counterintuitively from a contemporary ethics perspective, pervasive racism also contributed to shifting the needle toward gradual abolition. The motivation for slavery's abolition in the colony was not, as Cooley (1896) informs us, prompted by moral reasoning. Instead, the design of the 1714 law imposing a £10 tariff on imported enslaved persons was so "that the Colony might become better populated"<sup>18</sup> by white laborers. Pennsylvania<sup>19</sup> and New York<sup>20</sup> enacted similarly racially based economic laws. A New Jersey 1767 act motivated by the experiences of several neighboring colonies applied additional duties of £10 upon imported enslaved people. The racial tone of this law favored "sober, industrious foreigners as settlers" who promoted the "spirit of industry."<sup>21</sup> The cumulative effect of economic policies and racism was a near-collapse of the Atlantic slave trade coming into the Northeast around 1770 (Figure 1, next page).

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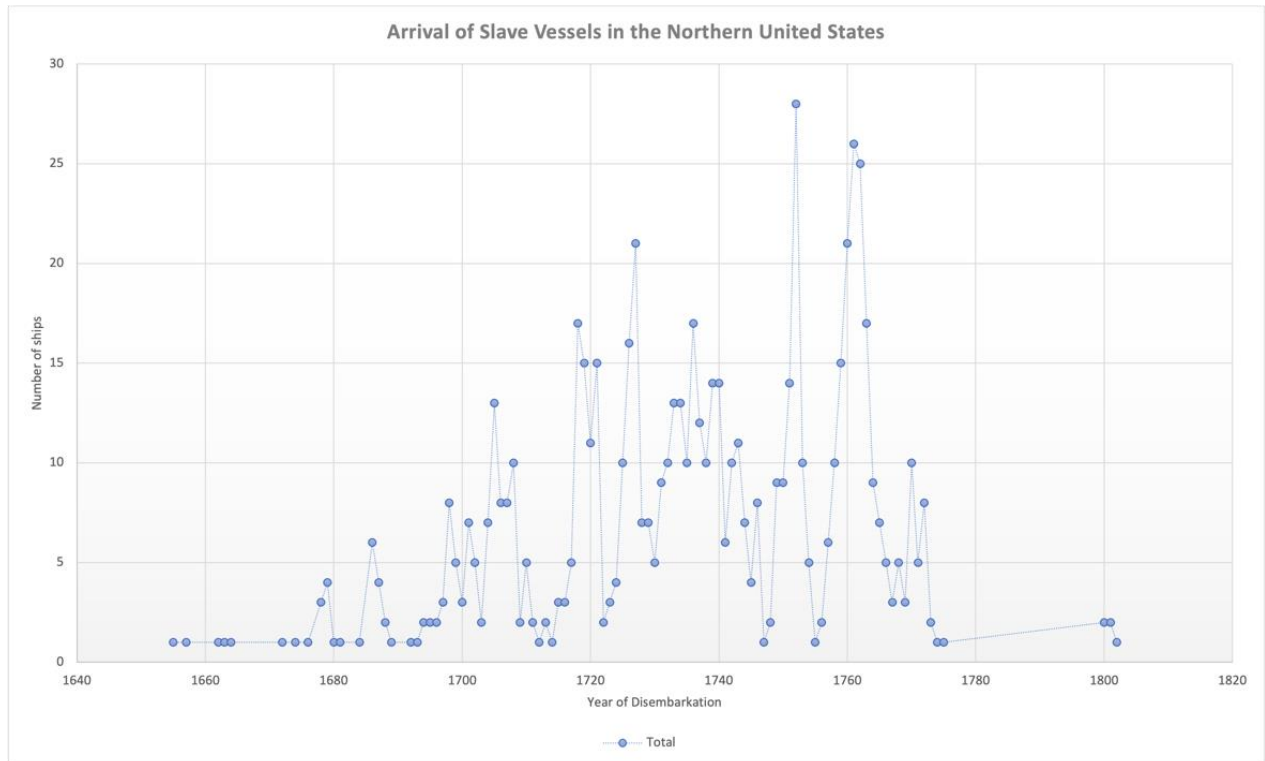
<sup>17</sup> Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey*, 17.



**Figure 1. Data showing the number of ships carrying enslaved individuals arriving in the Northeast by year (Slave Voyages 2021)**

The end of imported enslaved Africans did not signal the immediate demise of slavery in New Jersey or the other colonies. Cooley (1896) emphasizes that any laws passed in opposition to slavery were not made from an ethical standpoint; instead, economics motivated the era's decisions.<sup>22</sup> New Jersey laws enacted in 1786 placed further restrictions on the importation of enslaved people. A penalty of £50 was levied against enslavers bringing their chattel into New Jersey taken from Africa since 1776,<sup>23</sup> and those brought into the state illegally remained captive.<sup>24</sup> Freedom would not be found through the courts. The law's language describing the "barbarous Custom of bringing the unoffending Africans from their native Country"<sup>25</sup> has

<sup>22</sup> Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Graham Russell Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North—African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665–1865* (Oxford: Madison House Publishers, Inc., 1997), 115.

<sup>25</sup> The 1786 law named, *An ACT to prevent the Importation of Slaves into the State of New-Jersey, and to authorize the Manumission of them under certain Restrictions, and to prevent the Abuse of Slaves*, also sought to remove



allusions to abolition; however, fines had the resemblance of tariffs, and punishment of ship captains was slight.<sup>26</sup>

In New Jersey, laws did little to assist the plight of captive African Americans. We see how little the emancipation needle shifted when viewing the state's demographics. The first New Jersey census of 1726 shows that approximately 10 percent of the population were enslaved Africans and African Americans.<sup>27</sup> In the first federal census of 1790, the percentage of the enslaved population dropped to 6.2 percent.<sup>28</sup> While these numbers show an improvement, looking deeper into the geographic division of slavery exposes a deeper problem.

In the eighteenth century, an ideological division separated New Jersey into a predominant Quaker pro-abolition West Jersey and a conservative East Jersey. These differences were heightened in the last decades of the eighteenth century following the Revolutionary War. Black support for the British during the revolution fueled anti-Black sentiment, and Quakers were accused of conspiring with African Americans to seize control of the state.<sup>29</sup> As early as 1776, the Friends, or Quakers, denied membership into their society individuals enslaving others.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the Quakers' political efforts have been attributed to the implementation of the 1769 anti-importation laws.<sup>31</sup> The activity of county-level abolition societies, providing legal protection for African Americans, and state and federal petitions for ending slavery<sup>32</sup> edged West Jersey toward abolition.

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manumission restrictions for enslaved peoples between the ages of 21 and 35. March 2, 1786, Acts 10th G.A. 2nd sitting, ch. CXIX, 239–242.

<sup>26</sup> Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 115.

<sup>27</sup> Gold, "The 'Gift' Of Liberty," 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Graham Russell Hodges, *Root and Branch African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613–1863* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 163.

<sup>30</sup> Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy Hack, "Janus-Faced: Post-Revolutionary Slavery in East and West Jersey, 1784–1804," *New Jersey History*, 127, No. 1 (2012): 2.

The ideological division between East and West Jersey is reflected in slavery's statistics for the closing years of the eighteenth century. As stated above, 6.2 percent of New Jersey's population was still enslaved by 1790; this percentage represented 11,423 individuals. East Jersey's number of enslaved people far outweighed the state's western counties, with 71 percent of the total population held in bondage or 8,196 individuals living in the east.<sup>33</sup> Of these roughly 8,000 persons, Bergen County held 7.7 percent and Monmouth 18 percent.<sup>34</sup> Between 1772 and 1800, the number of enslaved individuals doubled in Bergen and Monmouth Counties.<sup>35</sup> Bergen's 203 enslavers in 1784 jumped to 413 by 1800.<sup>36</sup> Like other localities with a Dutch majority, such as Queens and Kings Counties in New York, slavery flourished;<sup>37</sup> the labor and bodies of African Americans supported rural life. These numbers stand in contrast to the 1800 census data showing 507 enslaved people living in the western counties of New Jersey.<sup>38</sup> Cooley (1896) and Hack (2012) both attribute this difference to the political and social actions of West Jersey's Quakers.

### **1804 Laws—Gradual Emancipation**

Eight states of the Northeast—Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Massachusetts,<sup>39</sup> and New Hampshire—instituted gradual or immediate abolition laws between 1777 and 1804; New Jersey was the last to commence phasing out slavery, in 1804.<sup>40</sup> The functioning principles of each state's laws were similar: Those already in bondage when laws were enacted remained in bondage. Only the children of enslaved individuals would receive

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<sup>33</sup> Gold, "The 'Gift' Of Liberty," 12.

<sup>34</sup> Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 164.

<sup>35</sup> Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 164.

<sup>38</sup> Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Vermont was the first to enact immediate abolition as part of its state constitution in 1777, followed by Massachusetts in 1783 (Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 134).

<sup>40</sup> Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, "Philanthropy at Bargain Prices: Notes on the Economics of Gradual Emancipation," *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 3, No. 2 (June 1974): 381.

manumission, and freedom was not immediately granted at birth.<sup>41</sup> Each state released children from bondage at different ages, depending on their gender. New Jersey's definition of "born free" described children's labor and bodies as the property of the mother's enslaver until males reached the age of 25 and females 21.<sup>42</sup> However, enslaved persons born before July 4, 1804, would remain in bondage for the rest of their lives.<sup>43</sup> Ownership of children born into bondage remained absolute, and the slaveholder reserved the right to abandon the child to the state after one year<sup>44</sup> at a cost to the state while continuing to exploit their labor.<sup>45</sup> It was this provision in the drafting of the gradual emancipation law that guaranteed the passing of the act.<sup>46</sup>

When viewed through the enslaver's lens, gradual abolition supported white society economically and politically. The terms of freedom prolonged the extractable wealth from the enslaved. Built into the gradual emancipation process was also the notion of "managing"<sup>47</sup> those receiving manumission. Without control over people of color, white Northerners believed ex-slaves would become a burden or problem. Fifty years of racist narrative following emancipation transformed slavery into a racialized conversation about the "condition" of free people of color.<sup>48</sup> What Joanne Melish proposes happened during these changes in conversation about slavery and race was a societal redirection or general amnesia to the North's relationship with forced labor. Northern history was reenvisioned to view free people of color as permanently marooned,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>42</sup> Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey*, 26.

<sup>43</sup> Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 135.

<sup>44</sup> The Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, February 15, 1804, Acts 28th G.A. 2nd sitting, ch. CIII, 251–254, required the enslaver to file notice of intent with the clerk of the township or county. Failure to do so resulted in the slave owner being liable for the maintenance of the child; Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey*, 26–27.

<sup>45</sup> Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 136; Fogel and Engerman, "Philanthropy at Bargain Prices," 393.

<sup>46</sup> Hodges (1997) delves into the outcome of the of the 1804 act: By 1808, the maintenance of abandoned children by their mother's captor consumed 30 percent of the state's annual budget, or \$12,000 (136).

<sup>47</sup> Joanne Pope Melish, "The 'Condition' Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 1999: 651–672.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 654.

unaccountable strangers<sup>49</sup> disassociated with slavery. Free of moral baggage, the North's virtuosity legitimized its position against the immoral slaveholding South. The same distortion of history outlined by Melish continues its effect on communities of color today. Eliminating or diminishing slavery's presence in the North perpetuates the exclusion of Black identity from contemporary society and weakens knowledge of how early African American communities formed.

This brief description of slavery's history in the northeastern United States and New Jersey was selectively presented to illustrate the economic motivations of emancipation laws. On the surface, New Jersey's abolition laws appear intended to free African Americans from bondage. Further scrutiny reveals its function was to protect the enslavers' property rights and social capital,<sup>50</sup> offsetting the expense of manumission onto the enslaved.<sup>51</sup> Reemphasizing slavery and emancipation's economic roots narrows the study's focus on the role economics played in forming the Dunkerhook community. The lives of formerly enslaved people were bounded by economically motivated laws favoring white landowners.

### **Background of the Zabriskies and Dunkerhook Road**

Several origin stories exist for the Zabriskie family founder, Albert Zabriskie. One commonly held narrative has Albert Zabriskie (circa 1638–1711), an immigrant of Polish origin, setting sail from Amsterdam, Holland, in May 1662 on a ship called *The Fox*. It arrived off Sandy Hook on August 31, 1662. He was described as one of the largest landowners among the original settlers in Bergen County.<sup>52</sup> Albert Zabriskie "procured" a 2,100-acre tract from Native American sachems by collecting on an earlier debt for a different tract of land and a different group of

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 655.

<sup>50</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (Westport: Greenwood, 1986), 21.

<sup>51</sup> Fogel and Engerman, *Philanthropy at Bargain Prices*, 378; Gigantino II, *Trading in Jersey Souls*, 281–302.

<sup>52</sup> Harvey C. Burnham, *Genealogical History of Hudson and Bergen Counties, New Jersey* (New York: The New Jersey Genealogical Publishing Company, 1900), 50.

sachems.<sup>53</sup> Known as the New Paramus Patent, this land was “bounded west by the Saddle River, North and East by Claes Jansen Romeyn, and south by Albert Zabriskie.”<sup>54</sup> The same name (Albert Zabriskie), bordering the southern portion of the New Paramus Patent, indicates Albert also owned the lands from Arcola to Saddle River Village, a distance of seven miles.<sup>55</sup> In total, Albert Zabriskie acquired over 4,000 acres in Bergen County.<sup>56</sup>

The property was subsequently subdivided among Albert’s children with Andries (Andrew) Zabriskie (1728–1819), the grandson of Albert, inheriting the Dunkerhook Road area and the family farm on the eastside of Paramus Road. Andries’s son, named Christian A. Zabriskie, after his grandfather (1751–1813), died before his father and the Dunkerhook property passed directly to Andries’s grandson, Cornelius C. Zabriskie (1784–1865). The Zabriskies, like many other families along Paramus Road, were primarily small-scale farmers, cultivating farmland slightly larger than the region’s 58.3-acre average.<sup>57</sup> Properties along Paramus Road were dispersed,<sup>58</sup> and in addition to agricultural production, some families engaged in light industry such as gristmills and sawmills.<sup>59</sup> The wills and tax records of Christian A. Zabriskie<sup>60</sup> and Andries Zabriskie<sup>61</sup> corroborate a smaller production capacity compared to Southern plantations, yet slightly larger than average Northern farms.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>55</sup> George O. Zabriskie, *The Zabriskie Family* (Salt Lake City: Publisher’s Press, 1963), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Burnham, *Genealogical History of Hudson and Bergen Counties, New Jersey*, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 26; Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 4; Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 165.

<sup>58</sup> Although chronologically out of this study’s scope, the 1840 United States Coast Survey prepared by Hugo L. Dickens illustrates a uniform distribution of residences along Paramus Road.

<sup>59</sup> Zabriskie, *The Zabriskie Family*, 19; Peter O. Wacker, “New Jersey’s Cultural Resources: A.D. 1660–1810,” *New Jersey’s Archeological Resources* (1982): 205.

<sup>60</sup> This individual is Andries’s father and is not to be confused with the other Christian A. Zabriskie, Andries’s son. In his February 7, 1767, will he divided the property around Dunkerhook Road into 14-acre parcels, describing them as meadows. *Volume XXXIV, Abstracts of Wills, 1771–1780*.

<sup>61</sup> Tax records indicate between 1780–1800, Andries operated farmland that increased in size from 90 to 100 acres, three to six horses and four to twelve cattle. *U.S., Census Reconstructed Records, 1660–1820*.

Under Christian A. Zabriskie (Andries's son), the properties at 263 and 273 Dunkerhook Road possibly served as the location for Christian's merchant operations.<sup>62</sup> During Cornelius C. Zabriskie's (1784–1865) ownership, around 1830, Dunkerhook Road emerged as a community of free African Americans. Listed in the 1855 census is a Black resident named Sam Bennett. The name Sam appears in the Bergen County Manumissions records as being emancipated by Cornelius C. Zabriskie in 1831. This coincidence suggests that persons formally enslaved by the Zabriskie family continued living at Dunkerhook Road or moved into the area after their manumission. The Black Dunkerhook community continued to grow through the rest of the nineteenth century. By 1860, 43 residents in six households were living in the area, and in 1867, the Dunkerhook AME church was established.<sup>63</sup> In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Black population of Dunkerhook diminished, replaced by immigrating families from Norway and Holland. Research suggests the AME church was demolished in the 1930s.<sup>64</sup>

Some local historians have referred to Dunkerhook as a “former slave community,”<sup>65</sup> and a historical marker at the entrance to the modern-day park announces the structures were built for those enslaved by the Zabriskies. The inaccuracy of these claims will become evident through this study and supporting literature. It is impossible to say that no enslaved individuals resided on the property before 1830; however, the tax, will, and legal documents of the Zabriskies presented below do not support the claim that Dunkerhook was a “slave community.” However, the free Black community residing at Dunkerhook after 1830 lived in the shadow of a racist white society.

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<sup>62</sup> Christian's 1790 tax records list “one merchant” among his assets. Johnson and Matthews (2019) also suggest Christian engaged in Wampum production or traded from the property (Johnson and Matthews, *Dunkerhook Archaeological Survey*, 4).

<sup>63</sup> Peggy Norris, “Historic Houses Endangered,” *Bergen County Historical Society: In Bergen's Attic* (2010): 1–20.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson and Matthews, *Dunkerhook Archaeological Survey*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Fred Bogert claims in his book (Bogert, *Paramus—A Chronicle of Four Centuries*, 40) that Dunkerhook Road “was the original location of slave houses built sometime before 1800” and that “three homes which were formerly the quarters of negro slaves” stand along Dunkerhook Road.

The discussion will show how racist environments exert power and social control, and New Jersey's version of slavery, "apprentices for life," persisted until the signing of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865.<sup>66</sup> Nineteenth-century laws prohibiting Black movement and a possibly regionally specific system of slavery sharing Black bodies and labor among familial and social groups—a critical argument of this paper—collectively contributed to the restriction of Black economic and social freedoms. The impact of these restrictions continued into the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond into the twentieth century.

## Methods

Data critical to this study's production originates from the records of the Church of Paramus republished in 1859. The church is now known as the Old Paramus Reformed Church,<sup>67</sup> located in Ridgewood, New Jersey. The contents of the records provide valuable insight into the finances, organizational structure, and the church congregation. Church member information recorded between 1799 and 1828 includes members' names, marital relations, and positions within the church's organizational structure. Additionally—and most important to this study—the document also contains the names of enslaved persons and who their enslavers were. This personal information, along with the dates of enslavement, was recompiled into a tabular format for further analysis. The relationships between the enslaved and enslavers were made more appreciable by parsing the data through an organization visualization tool. With data in this format, further insight into white intergroup relationships and the connections between the white families and the

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<sup>66</sup> James J. Gigantino, "Freedom and Unfreedom in the 'Garden of America': Slavery and Abolition in New Jersey, 1780–1857" (PhD diss., The University of Georgia, 2010) 13.

<sup>67</sup> The original church was built in 1725; by 1800, the building was in poor condition. In the month of April or May that year, demolition began with a plan to enlarge the structure, leaving three of the walls standing. Ultimately the building was razed, and a new church was built in its place. Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus* (New York: Hosford & Co. Stationers and Printers, 1859), 49.

enslaved was made possible. To better distinguish between the data types, this data, together with diary and genealogical references, is referred to as the “social record.”

The social record’s lack of recorded economic value contrasts with its counterpart, the official record. Runaway slave advertisements,<sup>68</sup> tax records, ship manifests, wills, and other legal documents provide a mechanical, quantitative perspective of slavery by its perpetrators—this data group is collectively labeled the “official record.” The church documents, or the social record of this small area in Bergen County, New Jersey, provide a possibly rare window into slavery. The availability of data documenting the relationships between enslavers and whom they enslaved recontextualizes the analytical perspective provided elsewhere in the documentary record by humanizing history’s actors. The uniqueness of the Church of Paramus’s data is the social aspect—it reveals patterns of behavior potentially obscured by economic activity in official documents. White church members documented in the data were less likely to incur economic penalties for disclosing their chattel in a social setting. Instead, bringing their captive workers to church possibly carried social value, a statement of wealth or prestige.<sup>69</sup>

## Findings and Discussion

### Impact of the Social Record

How big of a window into East Jersey slavery do the church records provide? According to the records, in 1810, the church supported 300 families who came from at minimum four miles away.<sup>70</sup> Using tax and property data from across New Jersey, Gold (2014) calculated that 15 percent of households engaged in slaveholding.<sup>71</sup> According to this percentage, 45 families at the

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<sup>68</sup> An excellent example of this data was compiled by Hodges and Brown (1994). *“Pretends to Be Free”*: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey, is a compilation of 662 advertisements collected from New York and New Jersey newspapers.

<sup>69</sup> McManus in *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 46, states that in the rural gentry, owning slaves carried with it a badge of distinction. The value of slavery was as much social as it was economic.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>71</sup> Gold, “The ‘Gift’ of Liberty,” 13.



Church of Paramus should have been enslavers. This number is approximately in line with the 59, or 19 percent of, recorded slaveholders in the church's community. The difference of 14 families may in part be attributed to the availability of short- and long-term rented slave labor, which will be discussed in detail. Alternatively, we could view the difference between the official record and the church's social record as the product of the previously discussed tax and tariff avoidance measures. Are we possibly seeing an underreported number of enslaved people illuminated by the social record? The 81 persons in bondage recorded divided among the 59 enslavers represents nearly 1.4 people in bondage per enslaver. The odds that several enslaved individuals shared the same name are high but likely not significant enough to distort this study's findings.

### **Church and Society**

The exclusion of free and enslaved African Americans from white churches in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has resulted in scarce documentary evidence of their presence in church.<sup>72</sup> Reasons for prohibition had commonalities between the Anglican and Dutch Reformed Churches; however, attitudes about who could be enslaved distinguished the Anglicans. According to the Anglican faith, the baptized could not be enslaved.<sup>73</sup> However, the Anglicans overcame this obstacle by reconciling ancient texts with slavery.<sup>74</sup> Regardless of denomination or cultural origin, many English and Dutch feared church membership would lead to emancipation<sup>75</sup> or erosion of their class status over Black people.<sup>76</sup> When we consider the data available from the Church of Paramus relative to the era's prevailing attitudes, the information appears very remarkable.

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<sup>72</sup> Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (Yale University Press, 1997), 189.

<sup>73</sup> Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 28; Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 189.

<sup>74</sup> Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 28.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>76</sup> McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 73.

Racism in the Dutch community rationalized the exclusion of Black people from churches. Hodges (1990) describes Dutch attitudes at the end of the nineteenth century, stating that some Dutch believed that “Africans lacked souls,” and opposition to church membership and baptism was vehemently pervasive among their congregations.<sup>77</sup> Hodges’s impression of Dutch racial attitudes is confirmed by the Church of Paramus’s pastor Wilhelmus Eltinge (1778–1851). His description of Paramus’s Black population, as he took over the parsonage in 1801, was as poor heathens with neglected souls, “living in the grossest ignorance and the most horrid enormities.”<sup>78</sup> Eltinge petitioned to include the enslaved in church services, a position he claims was “violently opposed by many.”<sup>79</sup> To understand Eltinge’s morality and position on the institution of slavery, he is observed as being the enslaver of Phebe and Syer in 1802.

The church’s importance in the community and Eltinge’s leadership is understood by the function churches and religion served in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rural societies. Due to the dispersion of residences in rural Bergen County, social agglomeration tended toward locations with specific social functions, such as churches, meetinghouses, schools, and stores.<sup>80</sup> Upton (1997) emphasizes the importance of churches, specifically in the earliest period of the Virginia colony: “A civil society—an ordered, disciplined society defined by political authority, a legal code, and a moral one—required a Church, and settlement strategies always provided for powerful religious authority.”<sup>81</sup> Although the colonists and their descendants in East Jersey were culturally Dutch, we interpret the mechanisms and requirements for colonization the same as in Virginia. Churches provide the social and physical environment to support relationships spread across rural

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<sup>77</sup> Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 124.

<sup>78</sup> Citing Eltinge, 1801 in the Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, 50.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>80</sup> Wacker, *New Jersey’s Cultural Resources*, 200–205.

<sup>81</sup> Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 4–5.

areas; they help establish or maintain social relationships tradable for other forms of capital.<sup>82</sup> The social capital created within the church community is multiplied and concentrated in groups by the members' commitment to the institution.<sup>83</sup> In the context of the Church of Paramus, we understand that this process reinforces white supremacy and power.

Churches such as the Church of Paramus also reinforced social hierarchies. They often functioned as the community's "meetinghouse," providing a social and civic space for resolving land disputes and civil disagreements.<sup>84</sup> In eighteenth-century Virginia, the seating arrangement, size, comfort, and design denoted a parishioner's social standing.<sup>85</sup> Inside the Dutch Reformed Church, a similar social function is evident. The enslaved were seated in the galleries, away from white families and the center of power: the pulpit (Figure 2). The closer one was to the pulpit, the higher the occupant's perceived importance in the community. Seating in the galleries was of little to no cost. The lack of economic value reinforced the seating's low social value, thereby serving as a mechanism of social stratigraphy. The social capital embedded in church seating could be passed on as inheritance, reproducing class privilege.<sup>86</sup> Andries Zabriskie is noted in his father's 1774 will as the beneficiary of inherited social capital through church seating.<sup>87</sup> These pews ranged between \$4 and \$52.<sup>88</sup> The near-complete auctioning of pews at the new 1800 church<sup>89</sup> is indicative

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<sup>82</sup> Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 22.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>84</sup> Gerard P. Scharfenberger, "Upon This Rock: Salvage Archaeology at the Early-Eighteenth-Century Holmdel Baptist Church," *Historical Archaeology*, 43, No. 1 (2009): 12.

<sup>85</sup> Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 178–179; Citing Mason (1940) in Scharfenberger, *Upon This Rock*, 12.

<sup>86</sup> Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 21.

<sup>87</sup> As was previously noted, Christian A. Zabriskie's 1774 will included a lengthy mention of his pew allocation to his heirs. "Son, Hendrick, a seat in the Church of Paramus, and one to Albert, on the east side of the pulpit, and one to Jacob, on the east side of the door, on the south side of church; and to son, Andries, one on the west side of the pulpit, and to son Jacob's eldest son, a seat on west side of pulpit, he paying [sic] for the same 18 shillings to Albert's oldest son. To Hendrick's oldest daughter, a seat, if she pays 18 shillings to Albert's oldest daughter." New Jersey State Archives, *Volume XXXIV, Abstracts of Wills, 1771–1780* (Trenton: John L. Murphy Publishing Company).

<sup>88</sup> "Old Paramus Reformed Church—History," *Old Paramus Reformed Church*, accessed April 21, 2021, <http://oldparamus.org/history/history.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, 45.

of their significant social importance. Generational white privilege and power were reinforced by the inheritance of economic and social capital, and by the dichotomy of who occupied preeminent seating and those who lacked social capital at the Church of Paramus.



**Figure 2. Panorama photograph of Old Paramus Reformed Church showing the gallery seating, where enslaved individuals attended church**

### **Official Record of Andries Zabriskie**

Northern homesteads and farming operations were typically smaller than in the South, where plantation-style capitalism determined land usage.<sup>90</sup> The economics of large-scale slavery and the relatively smaller-sized Northern landholdings made Southern-style slavery economically unviable,<sup>91</sup> resulting in the enslaved possessing more diverse skill sets. Roles ranged from tending livestock and fields to farm maintenance projects.<sup>92</sup> Data examined from the Church of Paramus and the small farm holdings described in Andries Zabriskie's tax records reflect the above economic environment. Of the 59 slaveholders recorded in church records, the average number of bondsmen per enslaver was approximately 1.4.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 4.

<sup>91</sup> McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 45.

<sup>92</sup> Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 82 and 102; Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 45; Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 4.

<sup>93</sup> One factor distorting this number may include slave owners who only have domestic slaves versus farm laborers. McManus (1966) and Gold (2014) indicate that many enslavers had one to two people in bondage performing farm labor and usually only one domestic helper. Additionally, as will be further argued, the enslaved individual might

The scale of Andrew (Andries) Zabriskie’s agricultural operations is detailed in his 1779–1802 tax records. The size of his enterprise appears slightly larger than the average landholding in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century New Jersey; however, his enslaved workforce is slightly lower than the region’s average.<sup>94</sup> In 1780, he owned 170 acres of improved land and two enslaved people. By 1784, his holdings appeared to have diminished. Tax records show a reduction to 100 acres of improved land and a slightly fluctuating number of enslaved people. Seventy acres were possibly transferred to his son Christian. In 1780, Christian A. Zabriskie reported zero improved acres; however, his 1790 taxes show 70 acres, the amount Andries’s holdings reduced by between 1783–1784. In most years post-1784, only one enslaved person was reported in Andries’s records, and on five occasions, none were reported (Table 1). However, there is a four-year gap in the tax records, illuminated by the social record from the Church of Paramus.

Year	1779	1780	1781	1782	1784	1785	1786	1788	1789	1790	1791	1792	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1802
Acres	170	170	170	170	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Horses		5	4	6			4	5	6	6	3	3	4	2	4	3	4	4
Cattle		8	11	10			4	12	14	12	10	15	6	6	6	6	6	6
Hogs		5	8	9														
Slaves	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1		2	1				1		1	1

**Table 1. County Tax Ratables for Andries C. Zabriskie documenting farm property and the number of African Americans held in bondage (New Jersey State Library 2021)**

temporarily be associated with the white enslaver through a system of renting or hiring labor from the legal owner of the enslaved person.

<sup>94</sup> The average number of enslaved persons held by Andries averaged 1.38 and the average improved acres was 115 acres for the 23-year period. The average farm size in Bergen County in 1794 was 58.3 acres (Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 26) and the average number of bondsmen in East Jersey was 2.3 per household (Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 15).

### The Social Record of Andries Zabriskie

When viewing Andries Zabriskie’s social record detailing the number of individuals he enslaved, we witness a slightly different economic environment than what is portrayed in the official record. In 1800, Andries was recorded as having one individual in bondage. This number jumps to four in 1801 (Table 2). These two years, 1800 and 1801, are part of a four-year gap of missing documents in the official tax records displayed in Table 1.

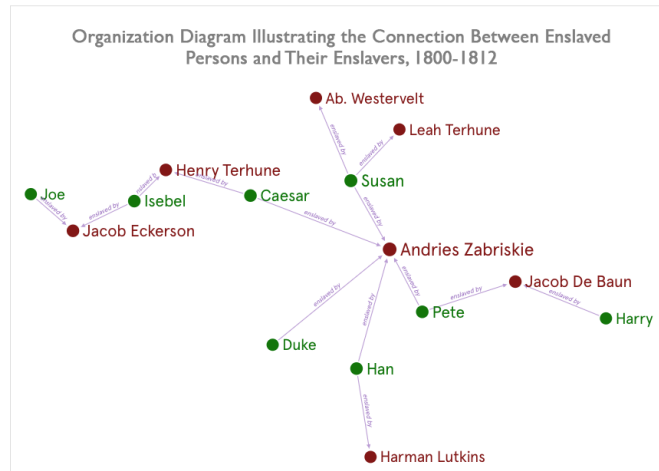
Enslaved Name	1800	1801
Caesar	1	
Duke		1
Han		1
Pete		1
Susan		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 2. Social record data from the Church of Paramus for 1800 and 1802 documenting the number of enslaved individuals held by Andries Zabriskie (information courtesy New Jersey State Library, 2021)**

The name of one enslaved individual, Susan, appears in the Church of Paramus records three times between 1801 and 1803. Her first recording in 1801 shows Andries Zabriskie as her enslaver. The following year, the name is associated with an Ab. Westervelt, and lastly, in 1803, she is listed as the property of Leah Terhune (Figure 3). The abbreviation of “Ab.” is understood to represent Abraham Westervelt. The initials AB are used consistently throughout the document in context with his alternate addresses: Mr. Westervelt., Ab. Westervelt, and Abraham Westervelt.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> On page 40 of the *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, the names Ab. Westervelt and Mr. Westervelt are used interchangeably in the discussion of land purchased on behalf of the church in 1801. The names Mr. Westervelt and Abraham Westervelt were again jointly used in the negotiations of another transaction in 1805 on page 54.



**Figure 3. Organization diagram showing the connection between Susan, Ab. Westervelt, Leah Terhune, and Andries Zabriskie. The nodes of enslaved individuals are in green with their first name, and enslavers are red with first and family names (information courtesy Church of Paramus Consistory, 1859).**

Connecting Andries Zabriskie with Ab. Westervelt and Leah Terhune are church business and genealogical records. Ab. Westervelt and Andries's father, Christian A. Zabriskie, were responsible for negotiating a land lease in 1801 on behalf of the church from Peter Swin.<sup>96</sup> Again in 1805, Christian A. Zabriskie and Ab. Westervelt worked together to secure land for the church's parsonage.<sup>97</sup> The documentation of these dealings indicates a lasting business relationship between the families. Andries was equally involved as his father in church business; Andries's and Westervelt's paths frequently crossed as church elders in the 1790s.

Andries Zabriskie's niece Leah Terhune (nee Zabriskie), became the enslaver of Susan in 1803. Her father, Hendrick C. Zabriskie, farmed "about a mile north of Arcola,"<sup>98</sup> placing the two brothers in the Dunkerhook vicinity. Leah married Samuel Terhune, and their three children were all christened at the Church of Paramus.<sup>99</sup> The familial and economic relationships of Westervelt, Zabriskie, and Terhune exist in the social record, with Susan as their shared connection. We could

<sup>96</sup> Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, 40.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>98</sup> Zabriskie, *The Zabriskie Family*, 36.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

argue that the network of white enslavers orbiting the enslaved contributed to a community-based surveillance system shaping and controlling Black lives. An individual exposed to multiple enslavers would require less supervision than a person suffering the scrutiny of one captor.

The experience of African Americans such as Susan in and around Dunkerhook is metaphorically analogous to Jeremy Bentham's nineteenth-century panopticon, the prison reform concept. Bentham's prison design featured a circular prison with a single central guard tower with a 360-degree view. The surrounding cells are open to the guard tower and backlit, exposing the inmates to perpetual observation. Foucault further describes the effects of the panopticon: "to induce in the inmate a sense of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."<sup>100</sup> The threat of surveillance from a white monolithic base of power—in the context of slavery in East Jersey—reinforces compliance of and domination over the enslaved. The effects of this power are permanent even if it is discontinued.<sup>101</sup> Glover (2018) extends Foucault's interpretation of the power drawn from constant surveillance to include the racialization of criminality by law enforcement in contemporary America. The "permanent visibility" of people of color reinforced by actions such as racial profiling exerts a form of power similar to the panopticon.<sup>102</sup> The emancipation of enslaved Blacks in the nineteenth century did not mean absolute freedom. A society-wide white gaze exercised control over African Americans; one way that power manifested itself was possibly where African Americans formed communities. The formation of a free African American community at Dunkerhook could have been, in part, the result of racialized social control. Dunkerhook was an area free Blacks could be monitored by racist white society.

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<sup>100</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 201.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>102</sup> Karen S. Glover, "Surveillance and Governance: Crime Control and Beyond," *Surveillance and Governance: Crime Control and Beyond*, 10 (February 2008): 243–244.



**Tom, Gin, and Phillis: A Pattern of Shared Connections**

A similar pattern of individuals trapped in a hegemonic web is visible between three enslaved persons—Gin, Tom, and Phillis—and a broader group of white enslavers from the Church of Paramus’s congregation. This pattern shows a frequency of exchange between enslavers similar to the Zabriskie, Westervelt, and Terhune model. Gin’s name appears between 1800 and 1803, and in each of the three years recorded, her name is associated with two different enslavers (Table 3). Furthermore, in 1800, 1801, and 1802, she was held in bondage by two different enslavers each year—a pattern replicating Susan’s experiences. While it is impossible to confirm that the name belongs to just one person, it is reasonable to speculate, given the narrow period and geographic area the name appears within, that it belongs to one person.

	1799	1800	1801	1802	1803	1804	1805	1807	1812	1815	1825	1828	18--	181-	Total
<b>Gin (enslaved)</b>		2	2	2											6
Ab. Haring			1												1
Albert Terhune				1											1
Henry A. Hopper		1													1
Jacob Demarest			1												1
John D. Berdan				1											1
Nicholas Hopper		1													1
<b>Phillis (enslaved)</b>		1	2									2			5
Ab. Cadmus		1													1
Antye Bogert			1												1
Hassel Garretson												1			1
J. Demarest												1			1
John Bogert			1												1
<b>Tom (enslaved)</b>	2					2			1					1	6
Albert Terhune	1														1
Benj. Zabriskie	1														1
J. Banta						1									1
Jacob Banta						1									1
John C. Post													1		1
John H. Hooper									1						1

**Table 3. Data showing the years the enslaved persons Gin, Tom, and Phillis were mentioned in the Church of Paramus membership records and beneath their names who their enslavers were. This data segment is filtered to show enslaved individuals with four or more associations with enslavers. Information courtesy Church of Paramus Consistory, 1859.**

In the first year of the name's appearance, 1800, Gin is connected to Henry A. Hopper and Nicholas Hopper. The family connection between these two Hoppers is challenging to establish; however, church membership and family genealogical records show a Nicholas "Nicausey" Hopper was married to Maria (Marytje, nee Zabriskie) Hopper.<sup>103</sup> Nicholas and Maria, both born in Paramus, were members of the Church of Paramus congregation in 1799. In 1812, they helped establish the Dutch Reformed Church at Saddle River<sup>104</sup> in the township of Upper Saddle River. On December 31, 1839, Maria died at her daughter's house in Hoppertown (now Ho-Ho-Kus), 1.3 miles north of Paramus.<sup>105</sup> From this information, we could infer that Maria returned to the town of her family's namesake when her husband died in 1836. Hoppertown, a short distance from the Church of Paramus, was possibly where the couple lived in 1799. It is reasonable to speculate that Gin also lived in the Hoppertown area at the end of the eighteenth century. Using this location as a starting position, future research should plot the movement patterns of her other enslavers. Additional research aggregating enslaver data—where they lived, when, their holdings, and industry—might restore, in part, an identity intentionally obscured from history.

Continuing the pattern of shared connections, the record of Tom's captivity (Table 3) follows a similar pattern to Gin's, a commonality critical to the argument of shared or rented enslaved labor. In 1799, he was held by Albert Terhune and Benjamin Zabriskie, then five years later, in 1804, by two members of the Banta family, J. Banta and Jacob Banta.<sup>106</sup> Marriage closely linked the Terhune and Zabriskie families, the same as it did for the Hoppers. Children of both

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<sup>103</sup> Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, 95; Zabriskie, *The Zabriskie Family*, 43, 85.

<sup>104</sup> Genealogical Society of Bergen County, "GSBC Family Files," last modified July 2017, <https://www.njgsbc.org/files/familyfiles/g0/p947.htm#i39509>.

<sup>105</sup> Martha Ann Zabriskie, *Martha Ann Zabriskie's Memorandum Book* (Bergen County Historical Society, 1992), 33.

<sup>106</sup> The author acknowledges it is possible these two persons are the same individual. However, given that both Bantas appear sequentially on page 100 of the Church of Paramus records, and the name Jan Banta is registered as a church elder from 1773 (83), it seems likely Tom encountered two distinct individuals.

Andries and Jacob C. Zabriskie married daughters of the Terhunes. Both Tom's and Gin's names are woven into the Hopper, Terhune, and Zabriskie family structure within a limited number of years. The study's narrative of Tom and Gin in transition from one farm to another supports the hypothesis of how Susan was enslaved and the account of her labor and body as a resource fulfilling the domestic needs of Westervelt, Terhune, and Zabriskie.

Phillis's data complicates the model of the enslaved transitioning from one family to another. Her name first appeared in 1800 and again in 1801 in connection with Antye Bogert and John Bogert (Table 3). Antye (or Antje, nee Zabriskie) was the widow of John Bogert.<sup>107</sup> However, there is a three-year discrepancy between Antye's recorded death in 1798 and her mention in the church records as the enslaver of Phillis.<sup>108</sup> Records show Antje died on March 23, 1798,<sup>109</sup> and John around 1795. Given the age of the 1859 handwritten data the document was transcribed from, and an observation of the data made at the end of the historical document accounting for inaccuracies due to carelessness of recording,<sup>110</sup> it can be assumed the dates recorded contain some variability. Regardless of minor date inaccuracies, the transition of Phillis from John to his widow, Antye, illustrates an example of human property and capital as an inheritable form of capital, a practice more common in East Jersey.<sup>111</sup> Not only was there a financial value attached to the lives of those enslaved, but the labor used to physically maintain and accommodate white slaveholders on their land remained within families.

The enslavement of Gin, Tom, and Phillis by families connected through intermarriage and economics in single years creates a complex web of captivity entwining lives and economics into

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<sup>107</sup> Zabriskie, *The Zabriskie Family*, 78.

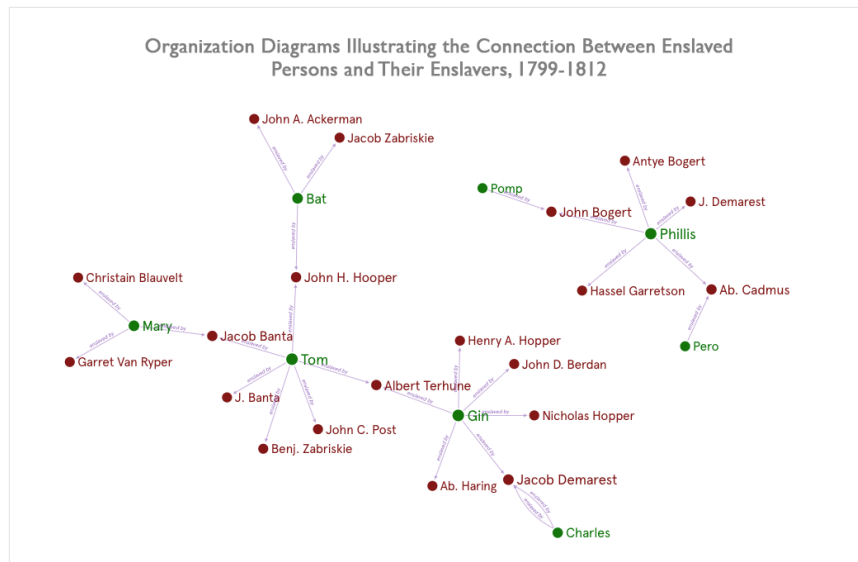
<sup>108</sup> This difference is attributed to the age of the two unique sources; a margin of error is likely when authors compile genealogical data from various family sources.

<sup>109</sup> Zabriskie, *The Zabriskie Family*, 78.

<sup>110</sup> Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, 107.

<sup>111</sup> Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 10; see also Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 144.

a system serving white society. A plotted representation of their enslavement (Figure 4) visualizes the argument that the enslaved were entrapped in the networks of white families. Gin’s, Tom’s, and Phillis’s connections with their enslavers created a social web economically reinforcing the Dutch community<sup>112</sup> at the expense of Black bodies and labor, benefiting generations of Dutch landowners. From Andries Zabriskie to his niece Leah, Black lives provided economic stability to white families, enabling the reproduction of white culture. The material researched in this study—the diaries, church records, legal documents, and more—were all enabled by the labor of Black lives.



**Figure 4. Organization diagram showing the connection between Tom, Gin, and Phillis and their enslavers. The data represents 13 years, from 1799 to 1812. The nodes of enslaved individuals are in green with first name only. Enslavers are red with first and family names. Information courtesy Church of Paramus Consistory, 1859.**

In the years following New Jersey’s gradual emancipation act of 1804, the slow path to freedom was stymied by terms of freedom favoring white landowners<sup>113</sup> and widespread racism preventing African Americans from competing with whites for jobs.<sup>114</sup> For African Americans in

<sup>112</sup> Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 10.

<sup>113</sup> Marc Ross, *Slavery in the North*, 75.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

and around Dunkerhook—and possibly other towns throughout the North—the white former slave-owning families were likely the most reliable source of employment. Communities like Dunkerhook might have evolved because of relatively easy access to work.

### **Evidence of Rented Labor and Lives**

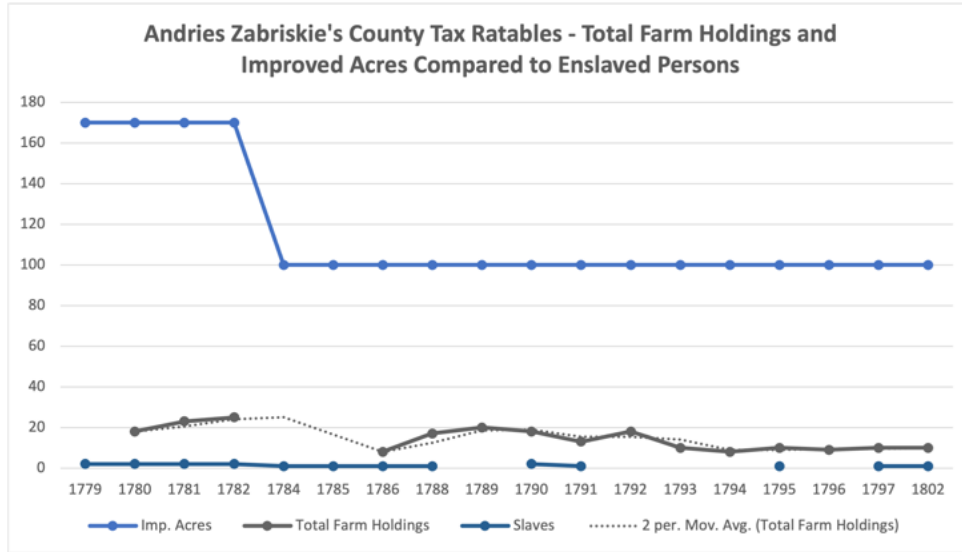
From 1780 to 1784, yearly tax records show Andries Zabriskie as the enslaver of two unnamed individuals. When he reduced his land holdings by 70 acres in 1784, Andries's farm operations correspondingly diminished; the number of enslaved individuals paralleled the downward trend viewable in Figure 5 and introduced yearly gaps where no enslaved people were reported (Figure 5).

What comes as a surprise and perhaps looks anomalous, given the period's relatively low farm holdings and labor requirement, is the appearance in 1801 of four enslaved people (Table 2). In the following year, 1802, according to county tax ratables, the number of enslaved persons held by Zabriskie returned to one (Figure 5 and Table 1). It seems unlikely Zabriskie purchased these additional lives. The financial outlay required to invest in human lives was considerably high; between 1780 and 1800, the price of a human life ranged from \$100–\$300.<sup>115</sup> For a cost comparison, the entire budget for constructing the new church in 1800 was \$1,375.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Gold, "The 'Gift' Of Liberty," 25; Gigantino II, *Trading in Jersey Souls*, 285.

<sup>116</sup> Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, 48.



**Figure 5.** A graphed view of Andries Zabriskie’s County Tax Ratables (tabled above in Table 1). The horse, cattle, and hog data have been aggregated into “Total Farm Holdings” (New Jersey State Library 2021).

The possibility of rented labor is an alternate hypothesis for the appearance of additional enslaved people in Andries’s social record. Prior to the Revolutionary War, the number of enslaved people available for hire roughly equated to the number for sale.<sup>117</sup> Following the economic devastation caused by the Revolutionary War, agriculture in the North witnessed an increase in “slave for hire” advertisements.<sup>118</sup> This trend paralleled what McManus (2001) observed in New York City, where the demand for rented slave labor exceeded availability.<sup>119</sup> Renting enslaved people through short-term written or oral contracts was an option for those without economic capital to exploit Black lives. In rural areas where labor requirements vacillated with the seasons, renting enslaved people was also a conservative fiscal approach,<sup>120</sup> enabling landowners to avoid incurring maintenance costs, such as clothing or feeding bondsmen during inactive periods.<sup>121</sup> As

<sup>117</sup> McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 52.

<sup>118</sup> From the period of 1764–1783 to 1784–1803, according to data aggregated by Hack (2012), New Jersey saw an almost 82 percent increase in slave-for-hire-type advertisements. See Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 8–9.

<sup>119</sup> McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 52.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

was previously noted, the land Andries farmed was more extensive than typical Northern farms but did not warrant the large, permanent labor force seen on Southern plantations. Was it possible the scale of Andries's operations teetered on the edge of becoming a plantation, never requiring the commitment of a sizable year-round labor force?

To the slaveholder with significant capital, renting out human chattel produced substantial returns on their investment: between 40 and 60 percent of the enslaved person's market value each year.<sup>122</sup> Considering mid-eighteenth-century interest rates of 7 to 9 percent plus bondsmen's maintenance costs, exacerbated by periods of inactivity, it seems unlikely Andries purchased these lives. Instead, he possibly rented the labor from another enslaver or was part of a complex interfamily labor-sharing or ownership arrangement.

### **Interfamily Shared, or Collective Ownership**

When we consider the enslavers' familial, social, and business connections, the purely transactional argument of rented slave labor becomes complicated. Leah Terhune's close family ties with and physical proximity to Andries Zabriskie is a significant relationship in the context of their connection to Susan. Adding to this complexity is Westervelt and Zabriskie's business collaboration, an enterprise benefiting the social epicenter of the white community: the church. An alternate scenario describing Susan's captivity is the possibility of group ownership. Dividing the burden of outright ownership by collectively renting or purchasing a human life would economically benefit the white families<sup>123</sup> and distribute labor as needed.

Any of the above scenarios explaining the enslavement of African Americans would be plausible in a close-knit agricultural community. The frequency of white interfamily marriage

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<sup>122</sup> McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 54.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

reinforced the community's homogeneity and close connections,<sup>124</sup> and the reciprocal obligation to exchange goods and services strengthened family bonds.<sup>125</sup> When a family member, such as Leah Terhune, required additional domestic help, Andries Zabriskie might have obliged her requirement by supplying the labor of Susan. Connections created through their primary social institution, the community's church, reinforced Dutch ethnic identity. Close blood ties could lead etic observers to speculate that the community considered preserving and solidifying their identity highly important. The Dutch Reformed Church assisted in maintaining implicit conservative values and promoted a rigid patriarchal family structure demanding order and obedience to the master.<sup>126</sup> The use of forced and shared labor would be compatible with their conservative patriarchal social agenda.

### **Application of the Rented Slave Hypothesis**

At this point in the discussion, it is essential to emphasize that rented, shared, and collectively owned theories of enslavement do not exist in absolute terms. Likely, the varying economic, social, and labor circumstances of each enslaver or network of enslavers required them to seek out parallel forms of slave labor. However, the construction of the new church in 1800 and the accompanying church records detailing the anomalous three extra bondsmen mentioned in this study's section, "The Social Record of Andries Zabriskie" (Table 2), provide the opportunity to test the rented slave labor hypothesis.

Duke, Han, and Pete were enslaved alongside Susan in 1801. Being all males, it is unlikely they were domestic workers. According to McManus (2001), the skills of many enslaved African

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<sup>124</sup> A clear example of intermarriage can be observed in the marriage of the brothers Andries, Albert, and Jacob. Each of them married an Ackerman. Jacob and Andries married daughters of Garret Ackerman.

<sup>125</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 30.

<sup>126</sup> Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 24.



Americans matched those of the best white artisans.<sup>127</sup> Unlike the labor conditions of the Southern plantations, the manufacturing and commerce economies of the Northern states resulted in a diversification of skills. Enslaved Blacks in the North occupied roles including blacksmiths, weavers, bolters, goldsmiths, and carpenters.<sup>128</sup> The question is, why did Andries require a short-term influx of labor? The original 1735 church was demolished in April or May 1800,<sup>129</sup> and the new church was completed in September.<sup>130</sup> The appearance in 1801 of three additional bondsmen associated with Andries may be attributed to a portion of the church's construction, perhaps the minister's residence or a stable. The Church of Paramus's historical records attributes much of the building labor used in the church's 1800 construction to local artisans and carpenters.<sup>131</sup> The contractual and labor requirements of eighteenth-century Virginian church construction are treated analogously to the process in New Jersey. Groups of skilled enslaved and free Black workers typically supported the lead builders on church projects.<sup>132</sup> Duke, Han, and Pete could well have been Andries's contribution, an act socially benefiting him.

An equally plausible hypothesis asks if the additional enslaved labor appearing in Andries's social record was instead working along Dunkerhook Road. The former structure at 273 and the remaining house at 263 Dunkerhook Road were built at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>133</sup> The timing of Duke, Han, and Pete appearing in the social record and the houses' construction appears to be more than a coincidence. Did Andries Zabriskie rent enslaved labor to

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<sup>127</sup> McManus, *The History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 47.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 47; see also Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 4; Cooley, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey*, 55; Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 45.

<sup>129</sup> Church of Paramus Consistory, *Manual and Record of the Church of Paramus*, 49.

<sup>130</sup> NJ Historical Committee, *Old Paramus Reformed Church the Years 1725–1975* (Ridgewood: Old Paramus Reformed Church, 1975), 30.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>132</sup> Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 25.

<sup>133</sup> Frances Niederer, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form" (Building Survey, Bergen County, 1983), 10.

assist with the construction on Dunkerhook Road? This suggestion shifts and complicates the contemporary understanding of the houses as places built *for the use* of those enslaved by the Zabriskies.<sup>134</sup> Instead, this study proposes that 263 and 273 *were built by* enslaved African Americans forced to work for the Zabriskies.

## Conclusion

The interfamily renting or sharing of African Americans in East Jersey reinforced the white population's economic and racially defined status. This study theorizes that labor was possibly brought onto farms during periods of peak production; sent to support family members, such as Andries's niece, in times of need; and hired to complete community and personal construction projects, such as the church or houses along Dunkerhook Road. Additionally, in the example of John and Antye Bogert, the enslaved supported the social and daily lives of the widowed. In conjunction with the terms set by the deceased male, the economics of slavery supported the conservative patriarchal system operating in Bergen County; it provided widowed whites the means and capital to continue living in their communities during difficult periods.

The forms of enslavement discussed contributed to the closeness of white families; labor is an exchangeable commodity, and assisting your neighbor by providing them with economic support reinforces relationships. We can connect the names belonging to white enslavers and visualize interfamily structures with some effort and research. The church records have been a beneficial starting point for this endeavor. The records offer more than just a genealogical record or a tool for examining the enslaving class; they also question our accepted understanding of the number of enslaved people. However, I would argue that the white families we have a record of

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<sup>134</sup> The historical marker at the present-day park entrance reads "This old colonial lane was named Dunkerhook meaning Dark Corner by the Dutch who settled the area in the early eighteenth century. Along this road, the Zabriskie family, who bought the land from the Indians in 1702, built houses and a school for the use of their slaves."

are mostly the church's socially important members. Rural farms were not independent ventures. They required the assistance and cooperation of a community, a support system likely radiating beyond the farms' immediate physical boundaries. This suggestion expands the complexity of the surveilling and forced labor system, implicating a broad section of white society.

Slavery's organization in Bergen County possibly contributed to the formation of African American communities in the area. Transitioning between farms and laboring in varied capacities for white enslavers familiarized bondsmen with the white families and their labor requirements. This employment might have been the only option available in a hegemonic racist society limiting the movements of African Americans. Additionally, the panoptic surveillance system's residual power manufactured by associating enslaved persons with multiple white enslavers would have restricted movement and indirectly forced people into one area: Dunkerhook. Farm proximity and interaction with others held in similar circumstances promoted relationships between African Americans. The expansion of slavery in East Jersey reduced the distance between slave-owning households from six miles in 1745 to four miles in 1800,<sup>135</sup> further increasing connections between those held in bondage. Some bondsmen, as has been discussed, attended the white church. We could speculate their presence at church contributed to building familiarity with others also held in bondage. Social connections resulted in marriages; an institution not dissuaded by slaveholders. Marriage was considered a form of "domestication," disincentivizing a would-be runaway from fleeing their captor.<sup>136</sup> Hack (2012) provides an example of marriage prevalence among the enslaved. In his research, he aggregated the number of marriages performed at one Dutch

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<sup>135</sup> Hack, *Janus-Faced*, 15.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Reformed congregation in Monmouth County; only 12 were performed between 1740 and 1780; however, the number rose to 21 between 1784 and 1804.<sup>137</sup>

Communities of free African Americans arising against the backdrop of a racist white society faced challenges and roadblocks; those experiencing “freedom”<sup>138</sup> were unequally part of local economies. The North’s painfully slow process of gradual abolition reflects white society’s ambivalence to emancipation and acceptance of Black people into society. Aside from the legal shackles placed on freedmen, traveling outside the area they were known carried risks and exposure to racially based aggression. The predominantly racist white society desired nothing more than to rid their cities of their former chattel. Fear fermented by multigenerational racism and the belief that formerly enslaved people posed a security risk resulted in efforts to remove African Americans from Northern cities. Organizations such as the American Colonization Society—established by elite whites—proposed resettling Black Americans in West Africa.<sup>139</sup>

The ideas presented in this study are not a conclusive or definitive model of slavery in East Jersey or how communities of freed African Americans evolved and came together. What has been presented is a small window on a small community in a distant and often deliberately obscured past. Starting with an equally small yet important social institution, the community’s church, the author has attempted to reveal the processes leading to the formation of Dunkerhook and like communities. What this study does not consider are the methods of resistance used by African Americans in their struggle. Nor does this study want to diminish Black agency and efforts of self-emancipation. How African Americans liberated themselves is an important conversation, but it is

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>138</sup> Henry Scofield Cooley in his 1896 examination of slavery goes through an explanation of the evolution of slavery laws from the colonial period and through to the Civil War. In his book *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey* (1896), he places specific attention on how the language of freedom and manumission were distorted to satisfy the economic wishes of property and slave owners.

<sup>139</sup> Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 20–24.

unfortunately out of this study's limited scope. Behind this study are the documents and theories speculating how white perpetrators of slavery benefited and a free Black community formed—this is an essential backstory. It is a story of resilience against a system and society orchestrated against Black lives. Despite obstacles, people came together in their own place of worship, in their own community, and, we can assume, celebrated. To wrestle away a piece of land, if only temporarily, from a dominant group and sustain themselves on “the island” until the early twentieth century is something that should be discussed; knowing the social forces bringing them together amplifies our appreciation of their struggle.

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*The author would like to extend their gratitude to Dr. Chris Matthews of Montclair State University for his advice and guidance during the research and writing of this article. They would also like to acknowledge their colleagues and instructors from the 2021 Dunkerhook field school for sharing the Dunkerhook story. And lastly, thanks to the anonymous reviewers at New Jersey Studies for their feedback benefiting this article.*