

Slavery and its Aftermath in Cambridge

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director
Cambridge Historical Commission

January 13, 2021



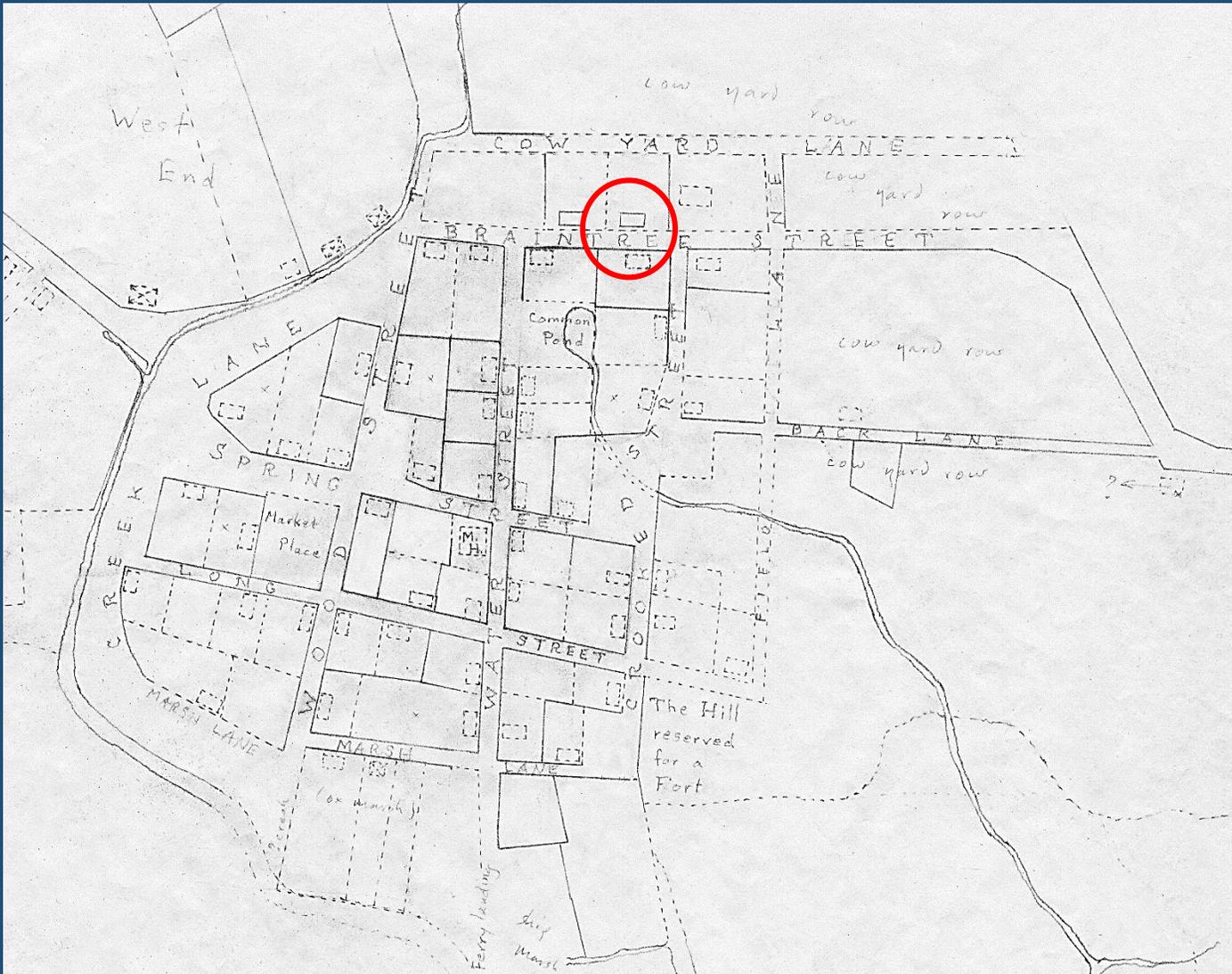
Boston and Cambridge,
ca. 1770

Lt. John Hills, "Boston, with
the surrounding, &c.," (detail)
Library of Congress



Winthrop-Woods Map
of Massachusetts Bay,
ca. 1633–37 (detail)

Red circle: Newtowne (Cambridge)
Blue circle: “Indians”



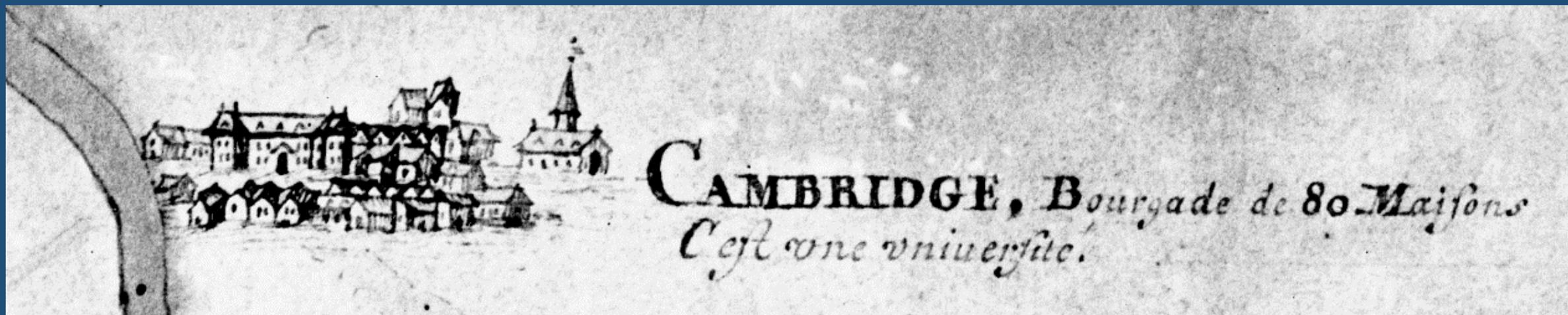
Harvard Square in 1635; Eaton house circled



Bronze plaques marking the foundations of Harvard's Eaton and Goffe houses



The first recorded African in Cambridge was a “Moor” caught sleeping in a student’s bed in Harvard Professor Nathaniel Eaton’s house in 1638.



First known view of Cambridge, 1693

“Cicely, Negro, Late Servant of Rev. William Brattle”



Headstone of Cicely,
“Negro, late servant of
Rev. William Brattle,
died April 8, 1714
being 15 years old”

William Brattle (1662-1717),
Harvard College class of 1680,
was a Tutor, Fellow, and Treasurer
of Harvard College and minister
of the First Parish from 1696 until
his death.

Town of Cambridge Tax Valuation Sheet, 1749

A List of the Estate Real and Personal of the several Proprietors taken (pursuant to an Act of the General Court of the Rateable Estate of the Province, passed in the twenty-second Year duly elected and sworn, Viz.

Men's Names.	Number of Polls rateable.			Rent of Real Estate high.	Superficial Feet of Wharffe, Mill, Fulling Mills and Saw Mills.					Coaches and Charfoits.	Chaises.	Acres of Orchard.	Barrels of Cyder.	Tillage Land.	Bushels of Corn or Grain.	Warehou.	Pounds of Flax.	Mowings.	Tons of Hay.	Tons of Salt Hay.	Acres of Pasturage.	Number of Cow-Leaves Pasturage.	Vetels failed to return.	Slaves between 12 & 50 Years of Age.		Indian, Negro or Mulatto.	Horses and Mares three Years of Age.	Oxen.	
	No.	No.	No.		l.	s.	d.	No.	No.															No.	No.				No.
Francis Wells	1	1	1																					1	2	4			
Thomas Hawking	3	1	1																					1	2	4			
Will ^m Fletcher	6	1	1																					1	0	2	4		
W ^m Jones	0	1	1																					1	2	4	10		50
Math ^w Cuninghame	1	1	1																					1	3	0	1		
Daniel Dana	1	1	1	00	00																			1	0	1			
Sam ^l Shipp	3	1	1																					1	2	0			\$2000 ad taxed
Solonian Robbins	1	1	1	ad taxed																				1	1	0			
Joseph Aspinwall	1	1	1	ad taxed																				1	1	0			
John Cline	1	1	1																					1	1	3			
Sarah Smith	0	1	1																					1	1	3			\$10
Thomas Shwing	2	1	1																					1	1	3			
Drea Shwing	0	1	1																					1	2	2	8		\$100
Abijah Leach	1	1	1																					1	2	0	3		
Thomas Dana	1	1	1																					1	1	1			
Abraham Pettig	1	1	1	\$60-00																				1	1	5			
Will ^m Brown	1	1	1																					1	1	0	3		
John Brown	1	1	1																					1	2	2	5		
Noah Sparhawk	1	1	1																					1	2	2			
Nathan Sparhawk	1	1	1																					1	1	2	2		
Benozet Smith	1	1	1	\$205																				1	1	1			
John Smith	1	1	1																					1	1	0	3		
Andrew Sever	1	1	1																					1	1	2	4		
Madam Brown	1	1	1																					1	1	0	4		\$100
Will ^m Dana	1	1	1																					1	2	2	2		
Abiel Richardson	2	1	1																					1	1	1			
Edwan Shwing	1	1	1																					1	1	2	5		68
...	3	1	1																					1	1	0	2		

Tons of Meade

Tons of Salt Ha

Acres of Pasturage.

Number of Cow-Leases
Pasturage.

Vessels sailed to Foreign Parts.

Slaves between 12 & 50 Years
of Age.

Indian, Negro or Molatto for
Term of Years.

Horses and Mares three Years

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y, Inu

SLAVE OWNERS IN THE FIRST PARISH OF CAMBRIDGE, 1749

		<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Slaves Aged 12–50</u>
Patriots	William Angier	tanner	1
	Moses Bordman Jr.	tanner	1
	Elizabeth Nutting	unmarried	1
	Stephen Prentice	cordwainer	1
	Jonathan Sprague	?	1
	Lieut. [Ebenezer] Stedman	innkeeper	1
	Edmund Trowbridge	judge	1
	Abraham Watson	tanner	1
	Deacon [Samuel] Whittemore	storekeeper	1
Tories	Francis Foxcroft	judge	1
	Henry Vassall	merchant	4
	[Mrs. John] Vassall	widow	1
	Total		15

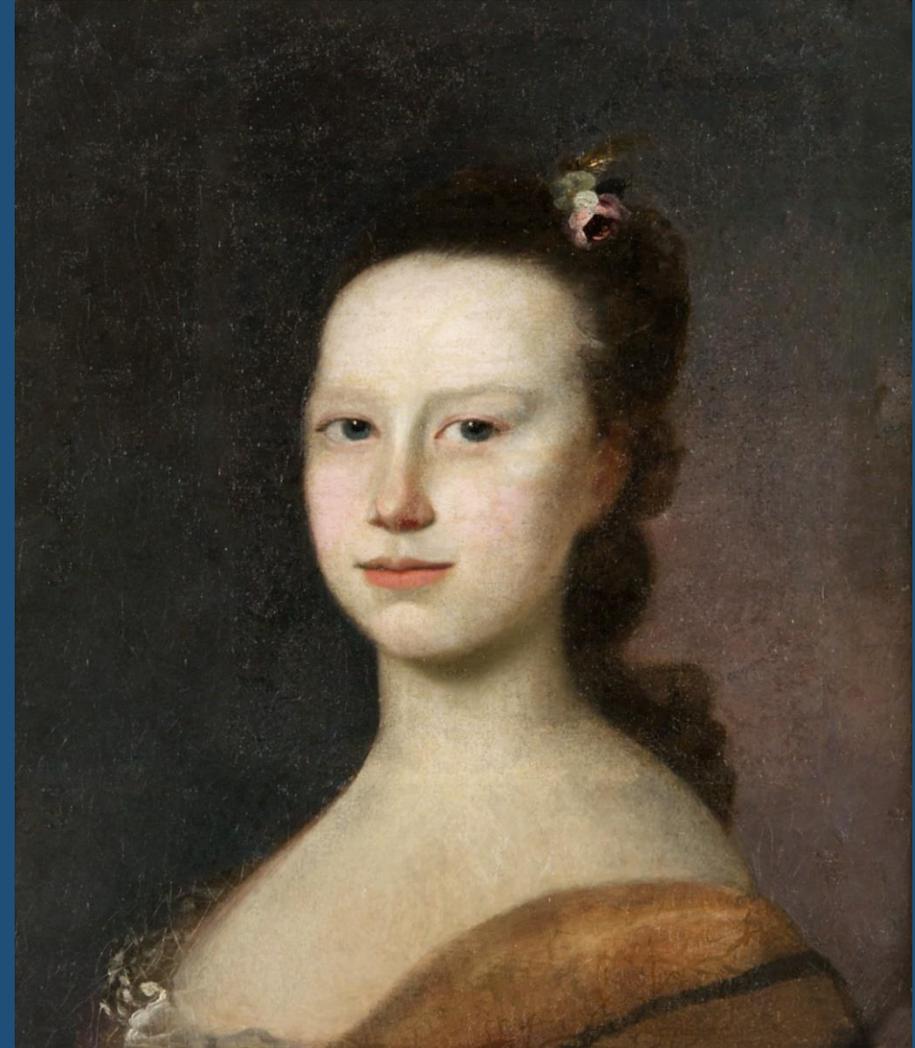
Sources: Town of Cambridge Tax Valuation Sheet, 1749; Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 1877; Massachusetts Vital Records

Slave Owners in Cambridge



Samuel Whittemore house, 64 J.F. Kennedy Street, ca. 1725; demolished 1900

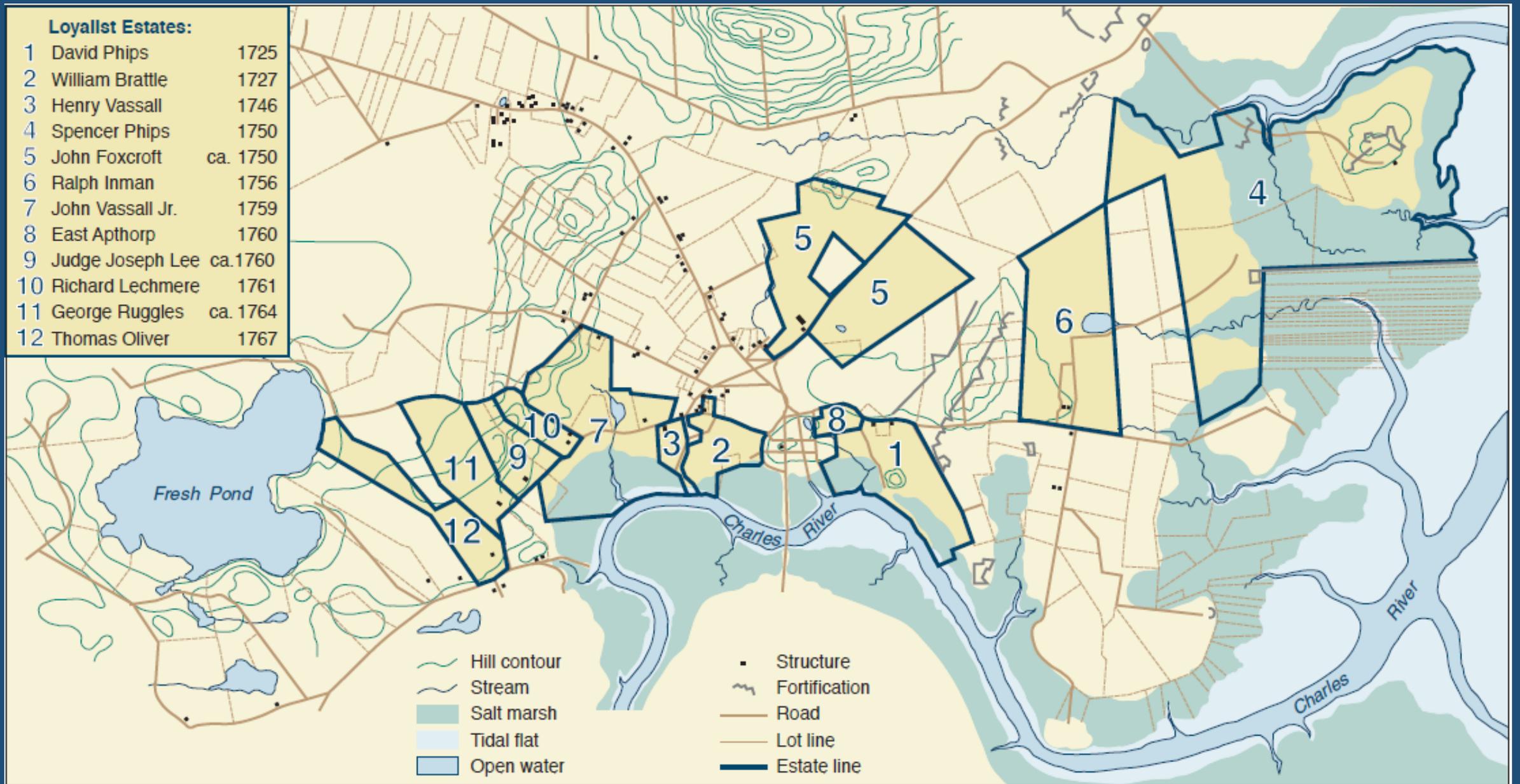
Slave Owners in Cambridge



Colonel Henry Vassall (1721-1769) and Penelope Royall Vassall (1724–1800)
Married 1742



Henry and Penelope Vassall house, 94 Brattle Street



Loyalist Estates in 1775



John Vassall Jr. house (Longfellow House National Historic Site), 105 Brattle Street (1759)

John Vassall's claim to the British government after his holdings were confiscated in 1778 reported an annual income of £150 from his farm and itemized its "sundry stock:"

A Negro woman, Cuba £40

A Mulatto Man, Malcolm £50

A Mulatto Boy, James £30

A Negro Man, William £20

A Negro Woman, Dinah £30

Two small Boys £30*

Two yoke of oxen £50

Six cows £24

A Pair Steers £6

Two heifers £5

Two Yearlings £3

A Bay Mare paid sheriff for £40

A Bay Mare £10

Two horses from England £100

Four colts £25

*One of these boys would have been Darby Vassall (1769-1861)



Tomy Vassal, a slave once
belonging to the proscribed Royalist
of that name - Born in their
Mansion House, and promised the
right of burial in their tomb, under
Christ Church, which was faithfully
carried out. Toney lived in a small
& old Cottage, - owned by him - being
the present corner of North Avenue
and Shepard Street, he probably
planted the noble horse chestnut
Tree in front of the cottage and
adjoining the curbed open well, with
well sweep and old oaken bucket

Anthony Vassall (1713-1802) at 73 = Cuba Vassall (1723-1812) at 87
Darby Vassall (1769-1861) at 92

Doll of Darby Vassall made by Mary Saunders, 1850

Longfellow-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site

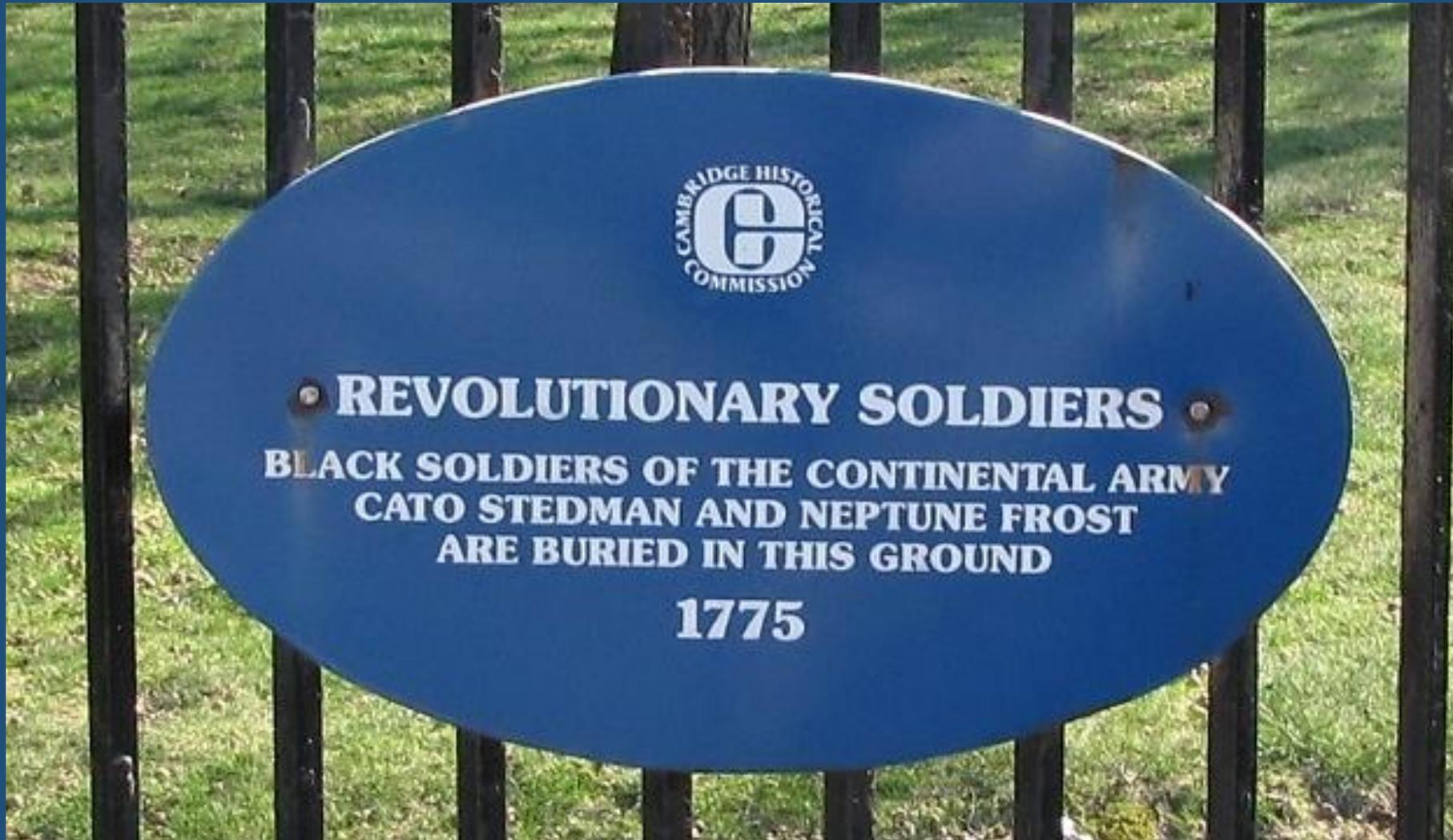


Tory Row in 1775,
looking east along
Brattle Street

Lechmere-Sewell
estate in the
foreground, with
the John Vassall
estate beyond

Attorney Jonathan Sewell represented James, a slave, who successfully sued Richard Lechmere for his freedom in 1769 on the grounds that persons born in the province were free.

Black Soldiers of the Revolution



Cato Stedman and Neptune Frost, Old Burying Ground, Harvard Square

Slavery ended in Massachusetts after 1783,
when Quock Walker and others successfully
sued for their freedom on
the grounds that the Massachusetts constitution of 1780
(drafted in the Cambridge meetinghouse)
held that all men were created equal.

African Americans as a Percentage of Cambridge Population

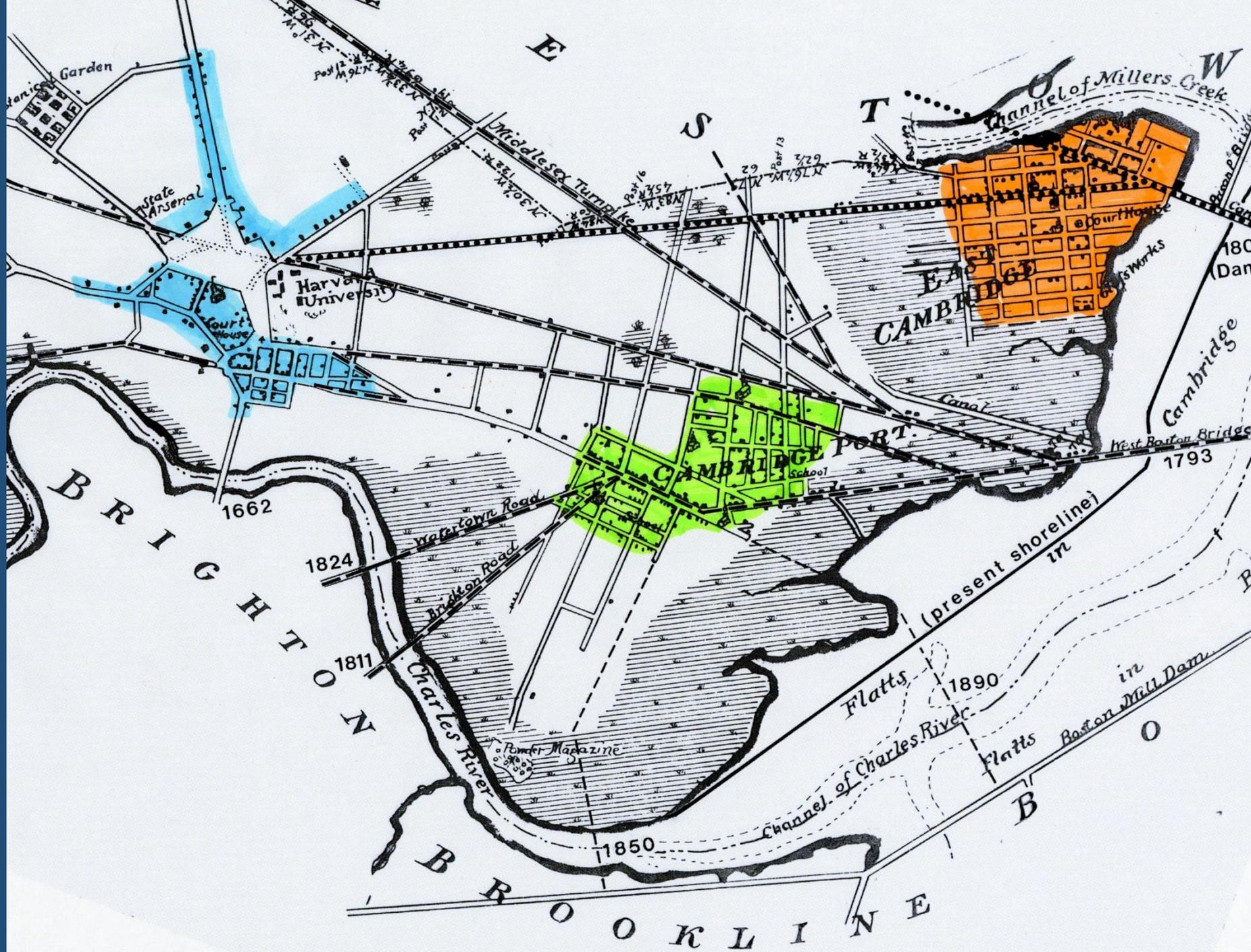
Year	African American	Total Population	Percent
1749	15*	1200**	1.3%
1765	90	1571	5.6%
1790	60	2,115	2.8%
1800	25	2,453	1.0%

*Slaves aged 12-50

**Estimated. Cambridge includes present Arlington and Allston-Brighton until 1807.

West Boston (Longfellow) Bridge, 1793, makes Cambridge a suburb of Boston

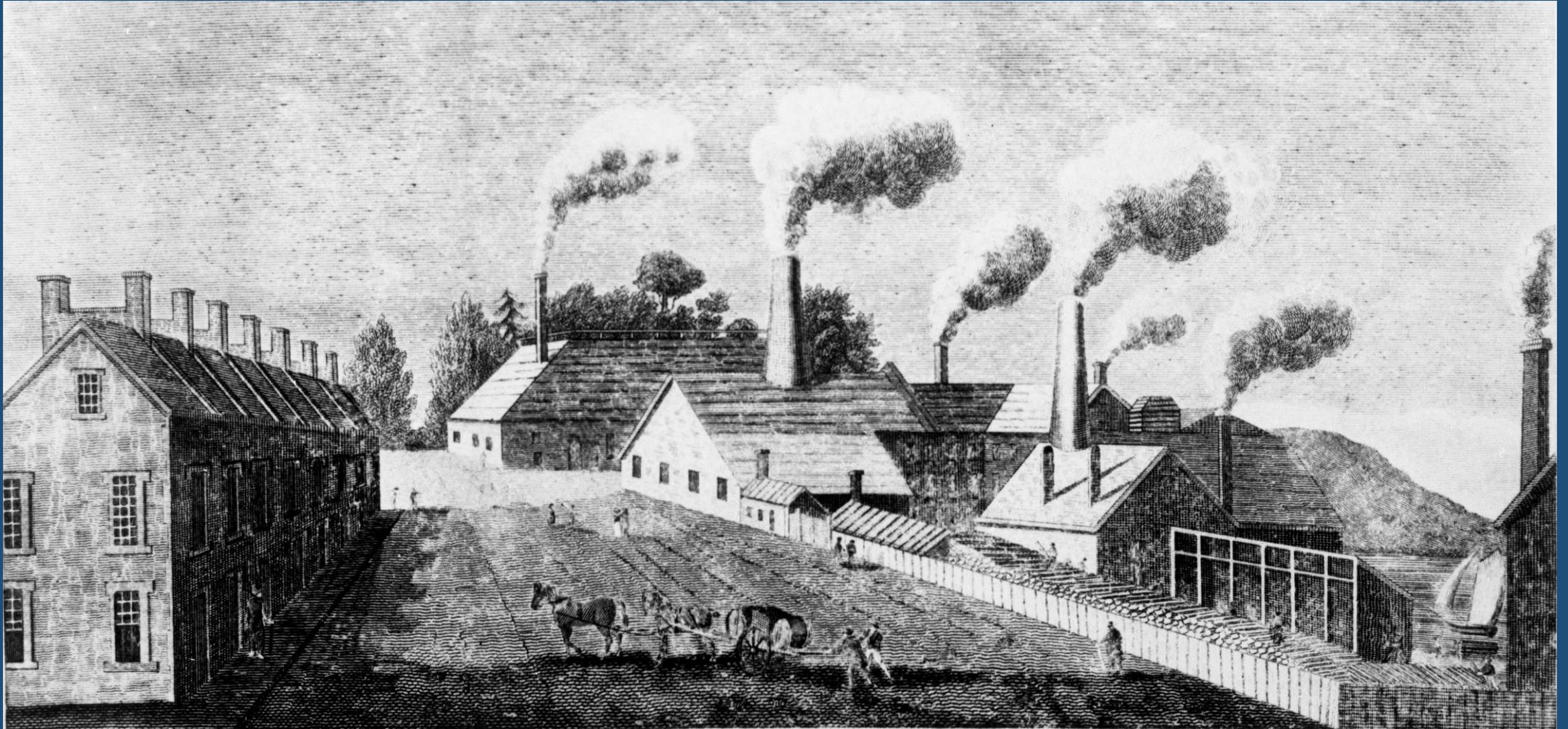




Three villages
connected by
new roads,
1830



Lafayette Square,
Cambridgeport,
looking east toward
the intersection with
Main Street, ca. 1825.



New England Glass Works, North Street, East Cambridge, ca. 1825

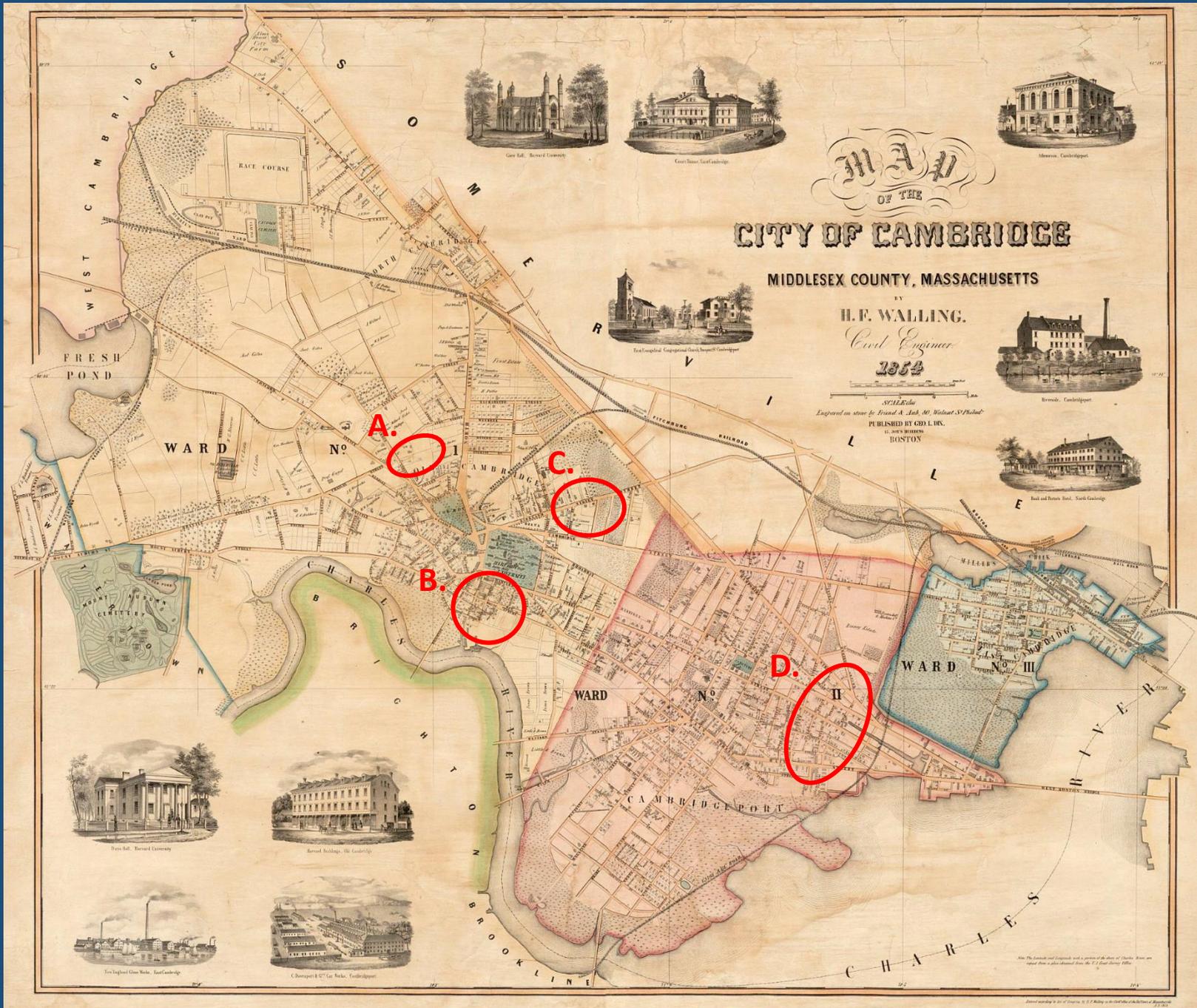


The village in
Old Cambridge
(Harvard Square),
1833

African Americans as a Percentage of Cambridge Population

Year	African American	Total Population	Percent
1800	25	2,453*	1.0%
1820	53	3,295	1.6%
1840	77	8,409	0.9%
1860	354	25,706	1.4%

*Includes Arlington and Allston-Brighton before 1807

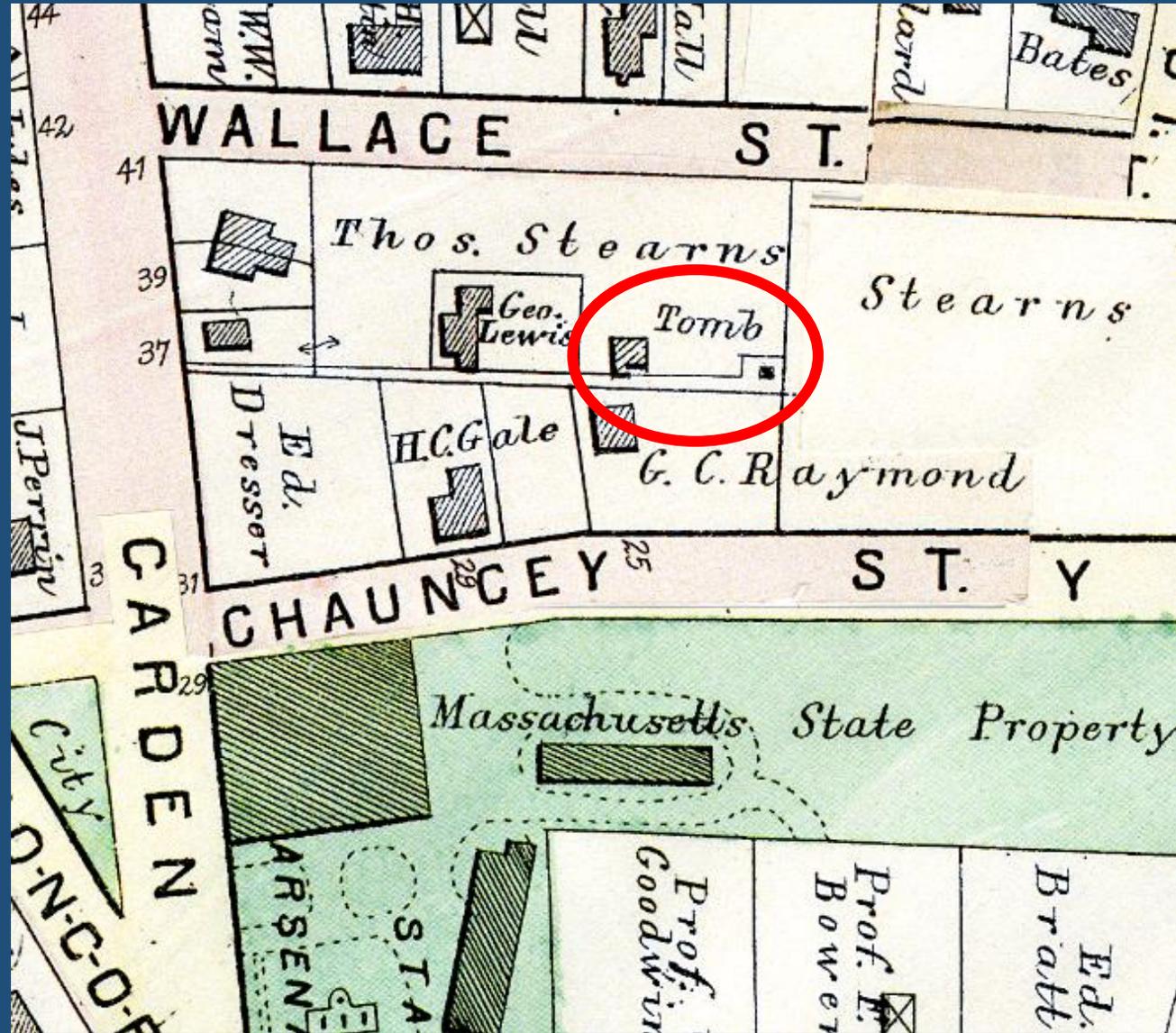


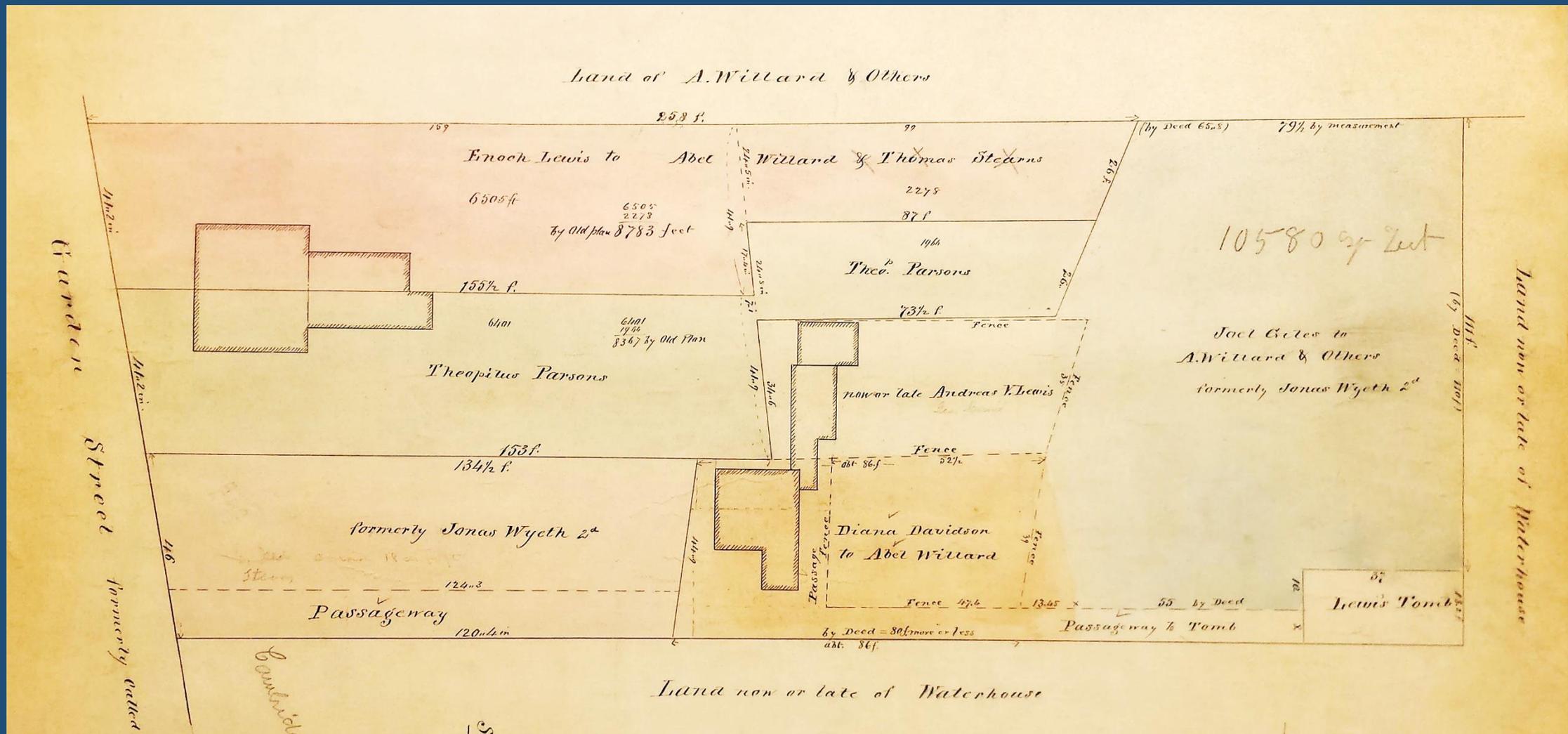
Known minority communities,
ca. 1800-1860

- A. Lewisville
- B. Harvard Square
- C. Harvard Hill
- D. Lower Port

Henry F. Walling,
"Map of the City of Cambridge ...
Massachusetts," 1854

Lewisville, ca. 1800-1880





Part of Lewisville, showing Enoch and Samuel's house on Garden Street, William Bassett's house, and the Lewis family tomb, as surveyed in 1869.

THE SKATING RINK TROUBLES.—Thomas Hall, one of the firm of Rindge & Hall, proprietors of the Cambridge Skating Rink, was before the Police Court of this city, on Wednesday last, on two complaints made in behalf of the Commonwealth, for refusing to admit two colored young men, named Manuel D. Hewlett and **George Lewis, Jr.** to the rink, on the fourth day of the present month. Robert Morris, Esq. of Boston, appeared for the Commonwealth, and there was no appearance for the defendant, it being his intention to appeal should the case be decided against him.

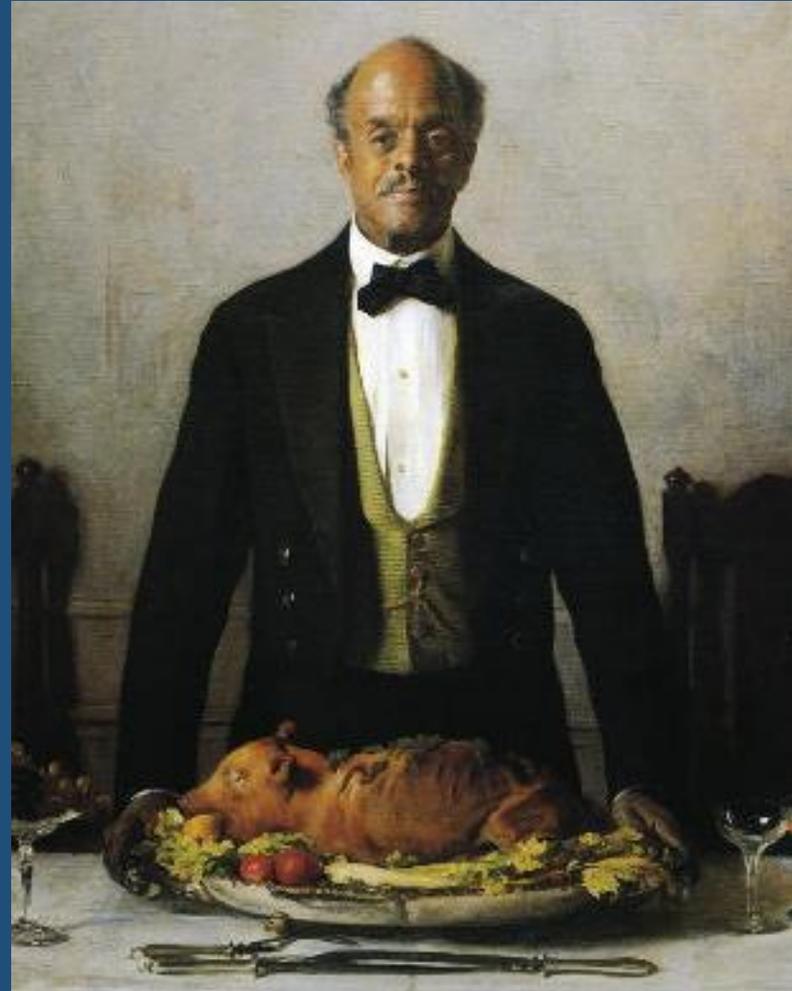
Cambridge Chronicle, Feb. 15, 1868

It is evident that the proprietors of the skating rink have made a great blunder in their action in regard to admitting colored persons, and we are confident that they are pretty well satisfied of that fact by this time, themselves.— It is rather late in the day, when they are elected to various offices, and allowed all the legal privileges of white folks in the Commonwealth, in our cars, churches, lectures, theatres, and all other public places, to refuse to admit them to a skating rink. They have always been loyal, have bravely fought and shed their blood for our rights in contending against traitors and rebels, are orderly and well behaved citizens, and should enjoy all the rights and privileges which are enjoyed by every other race.

Stewards of the Porcellian Club



George Washington Lewis Sr. (ca. 1824-1876)
1852-1876



George Washington Lewis Jr. (1848-1929)
1876-1920



George Washington Lewis Jr. family at 47 Parker Street (1890). Photo ca. 1900



JEROME T. LEWIS, associate director of the Cambridge Library, has announced the establishment of a new scholarship for Cambridge public high school students who have made significant contributions to the city's black community.

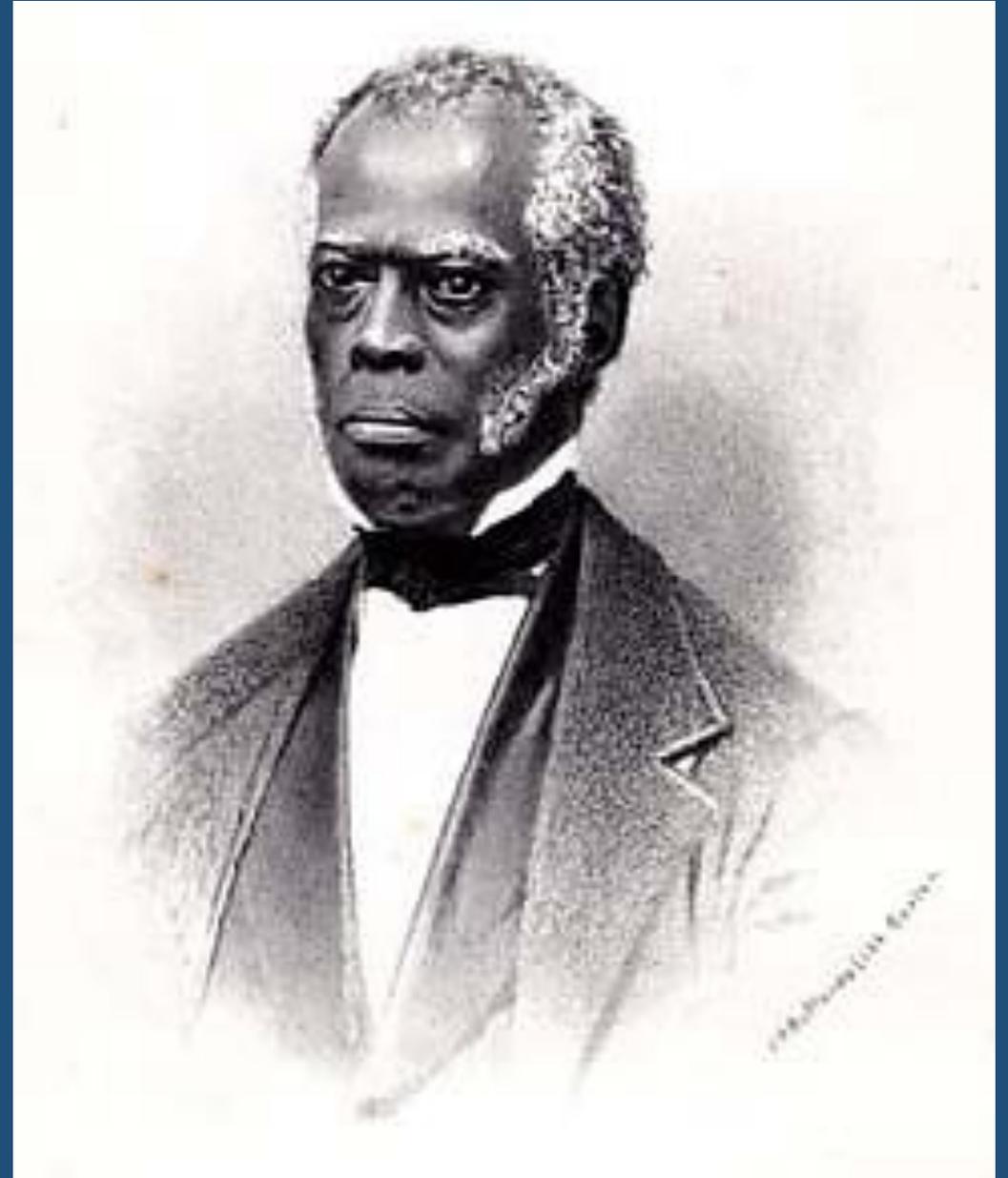
Jerome T. Lewis (1922-1976)
grandson of George Washington Lewis Jr.

Antebellum Newcomers to Cambridge

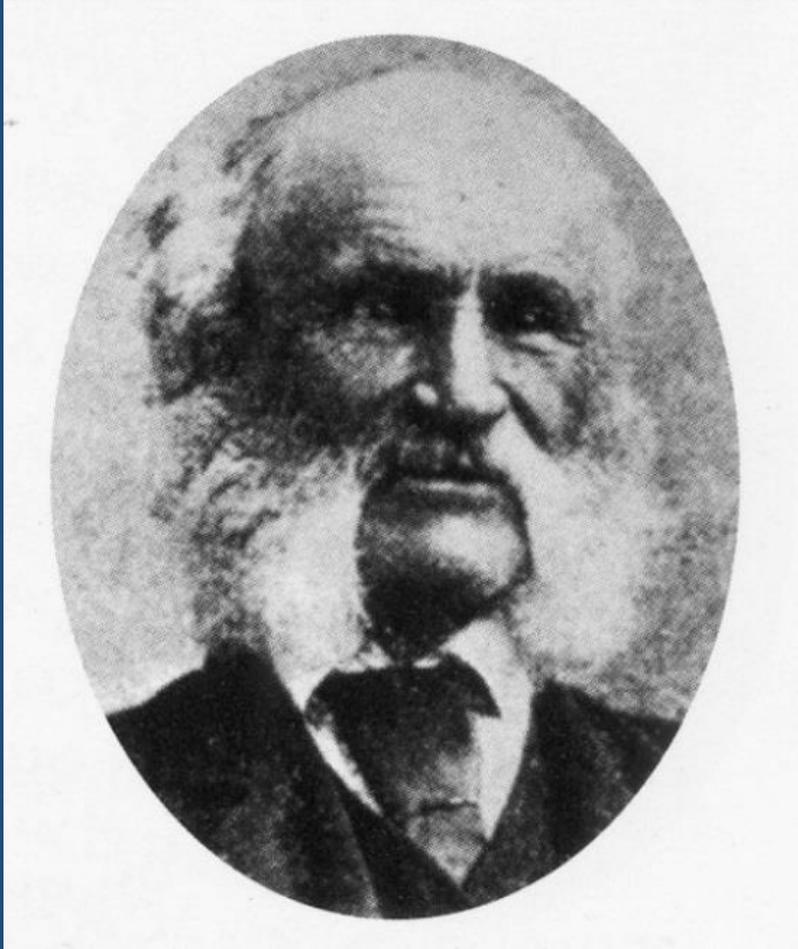
Lunsford Lane (1803 – 1879),
born in Raleigh, N.C.

Former slave, businessman, author
44 Webster Avenue, 1844-1860

Moved to Cambridge while Boston
segregated its schools



Antebellum Newcomers to Cambridge



Lewis Clarke (1818 – 1897)
J. Milton Clarke (1820-1902),
born in Madison County, Kentucky

Former slaves, authors and lecturers

2 Florence Place, 1851-1902

Common Councillor J. Milton Clarke

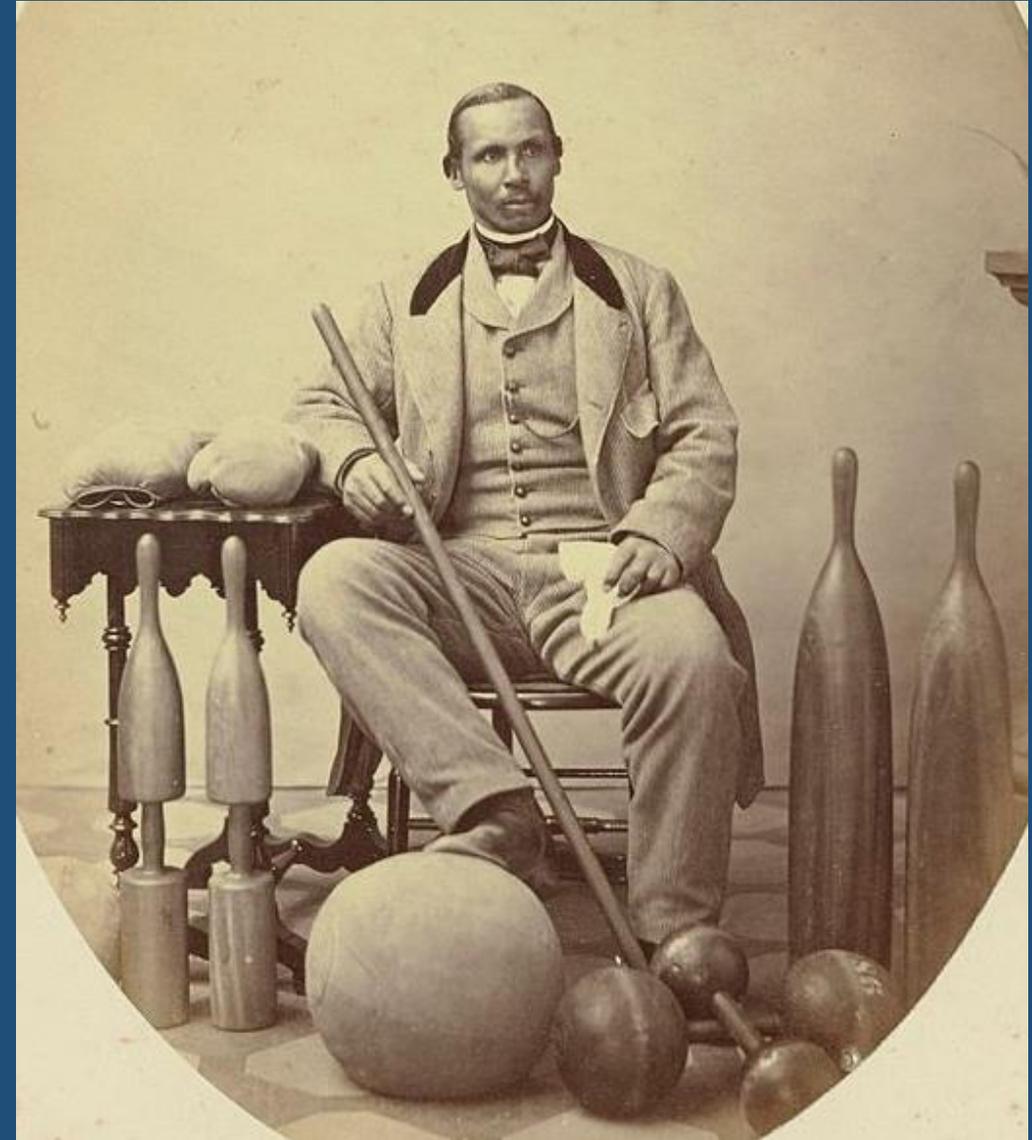
First African American elected to public office in Cambridge, 1870

Antebellum Newcomers to Cambridge

Aaron Molyneux Hewitt (1819-1871)
Born in Queens County, N.Y.

First African American instructor at Harvard University
Superintendent of the Gymnasium, 1859-1871

69 Dunster Street, 1859-1871

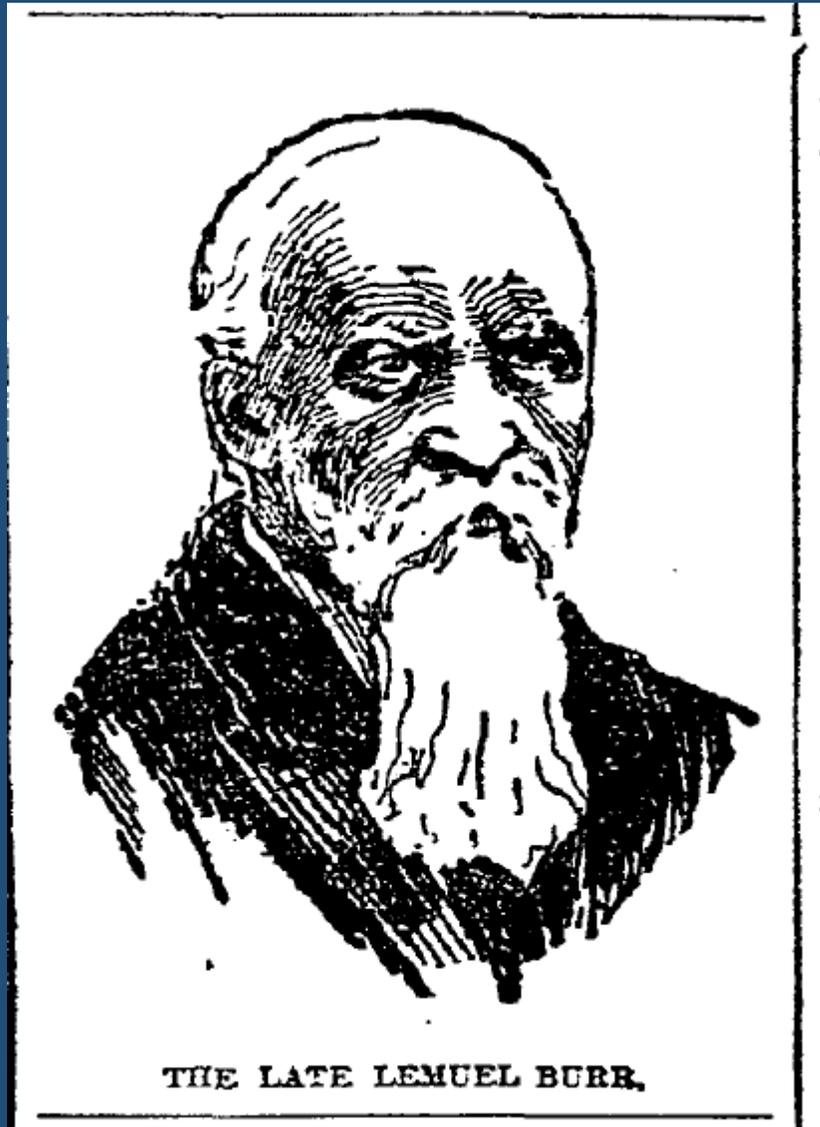


Marginalized Communities



Thirteen Goodies outside Harvard Hall in 1862.

Native Americans



Lemuel Burr, 1814-1900
Born in Canton, Massachusetts

Abolitionist, community activist
Mixed-race member of the Ponkapoag Tribe

45-47 Hampshire Street, 1860-1900

African Americans as a Percentage of Cambridge Population

Year	African American	Total Population	Percent
1860	354	25,706	1.4%
1880	1,504	52,669	2.8%
1900	3,888	91,866	4.2%
1920	5,334	109,694	4.9%
1940	4,858	110,879	4.4%

Postwar Participants in Community Life



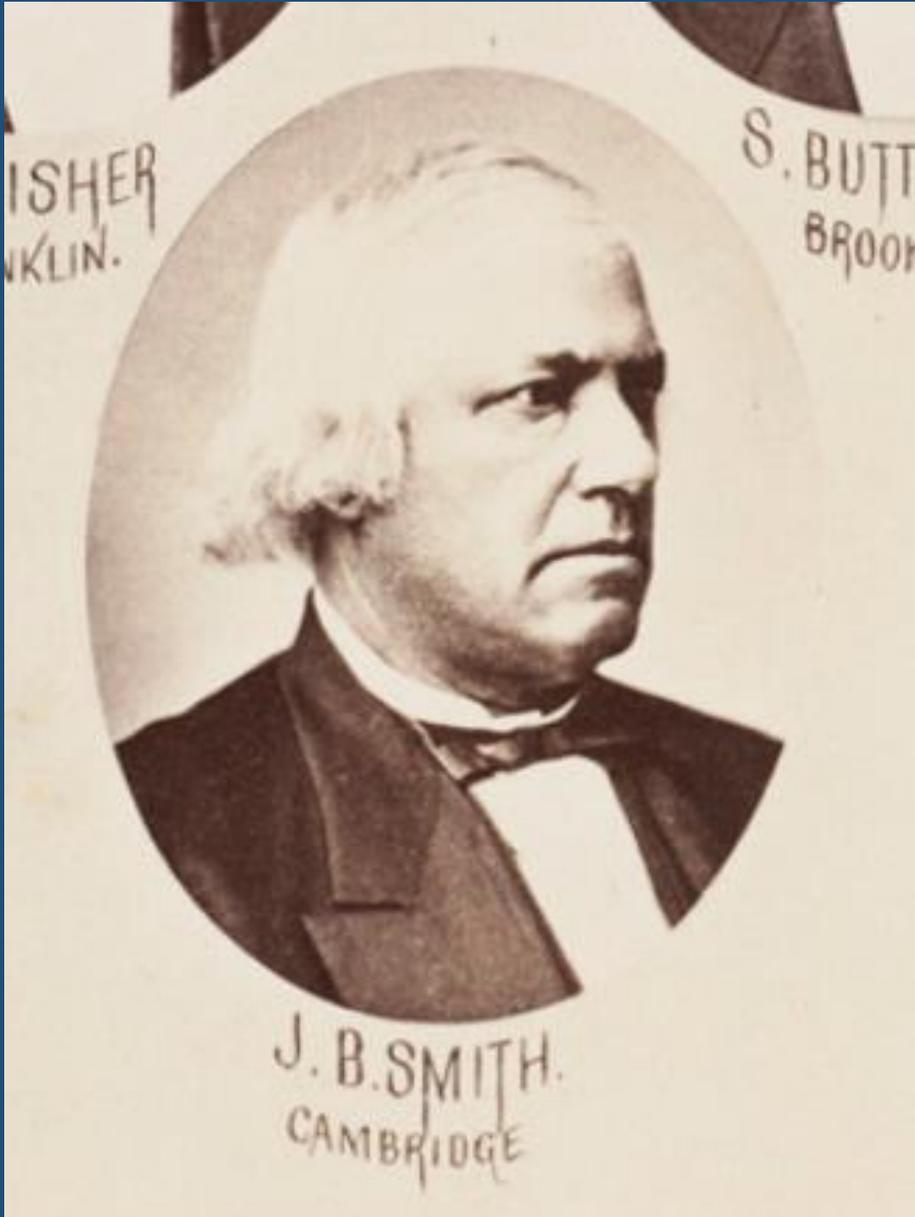
Harriet Jacobs (1815-1897)
born in Edenton, N.C.

Former slave, author of
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861)

10 Trowbridge Street, 1869-1873
17 Story Street, 1873-1876



Postwar Participants in Community Life



Joshua Bowen Smith (1813 – 1879),
born in Coatesville, Pa.

Businessman, abolitionist,
State representative, 1873-1875

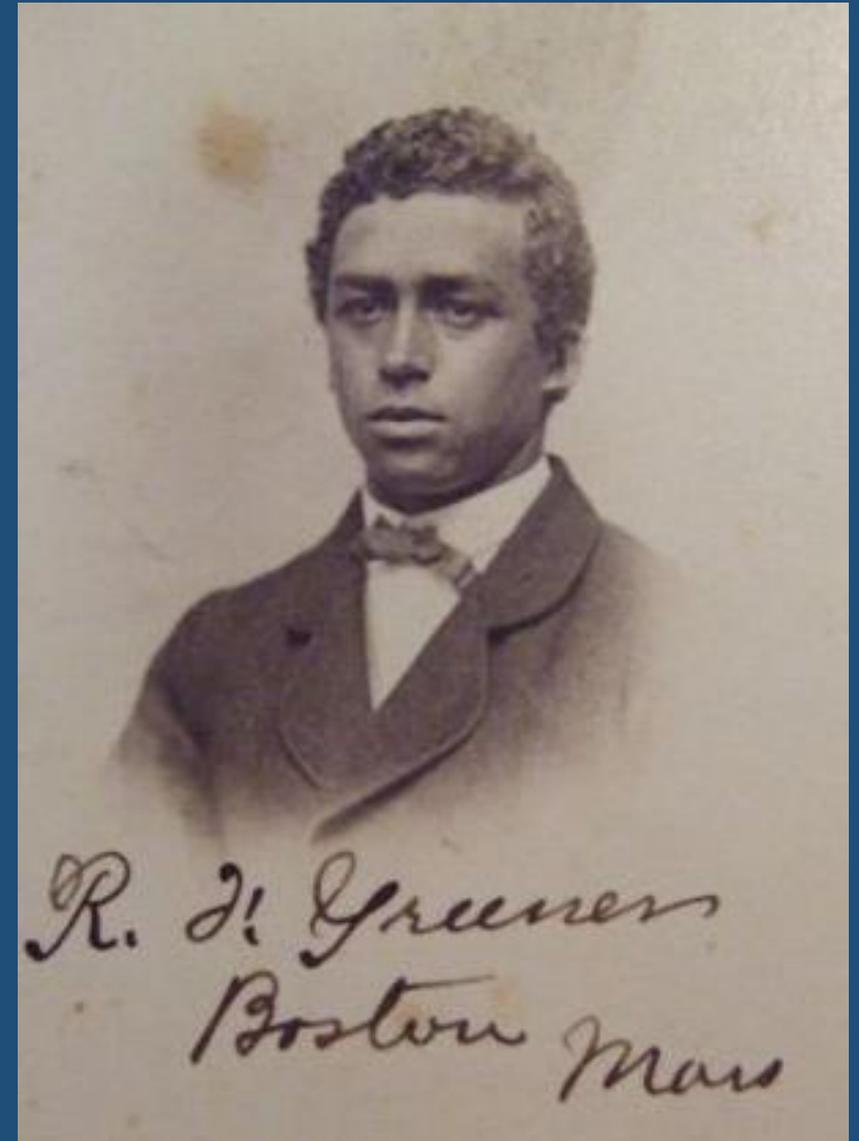
79 Norfolk Street, 1852-1879

Postwar Participants in Community Life

Richard T. Greener (1844-1922)
Born in Philadelphia, Pa.

First African American graduate
of Harvard College, 1870

25 Washington Street, after 1859
College House, after 1865



Postwar Participants in Community Life



Maria Baldwin (1856-1922)

Born in Cambridge

Graduate of Cambridge High School and
teacher training program

Teacher and master, Agassiz School, 1889-1922

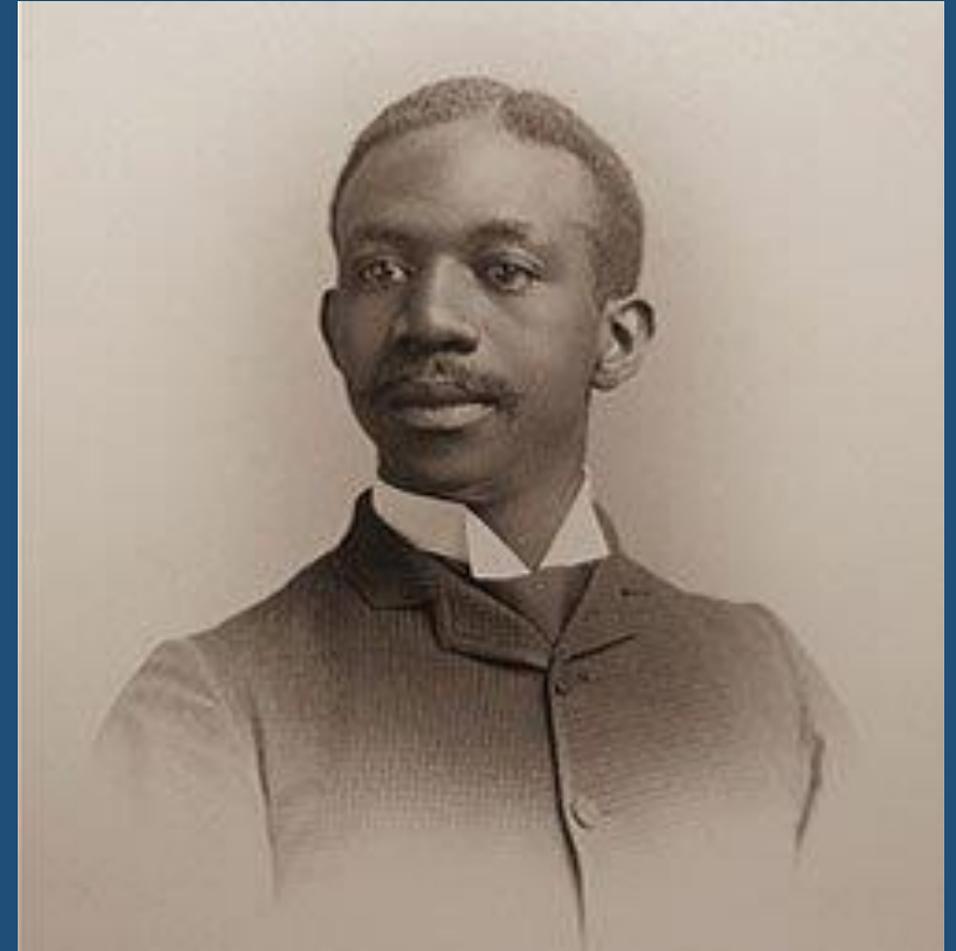
196 Prospect Street

Postwar Participants in Community Life

Clement Morgan (1859-1929)
born in Virginia

Harvard College 1890, Law School 1893
First African American Cambridge Alderman, 1897-1899

265 Prospect Street, 1898-1922



Postwar Participants in Community Life



1906 Niagara Movement Conference in Harper's Ferry, Va.

Gertrude Wright Morgan (1861-1931)
Born in Springfield, Illinois
Married Clement Morgan in 1897

Prominent in the Niagara Movement,
the establishment of the NAACP, and
the suffrage movement to adopt the
19th amendment

265 Prospect Street, 1898-1922

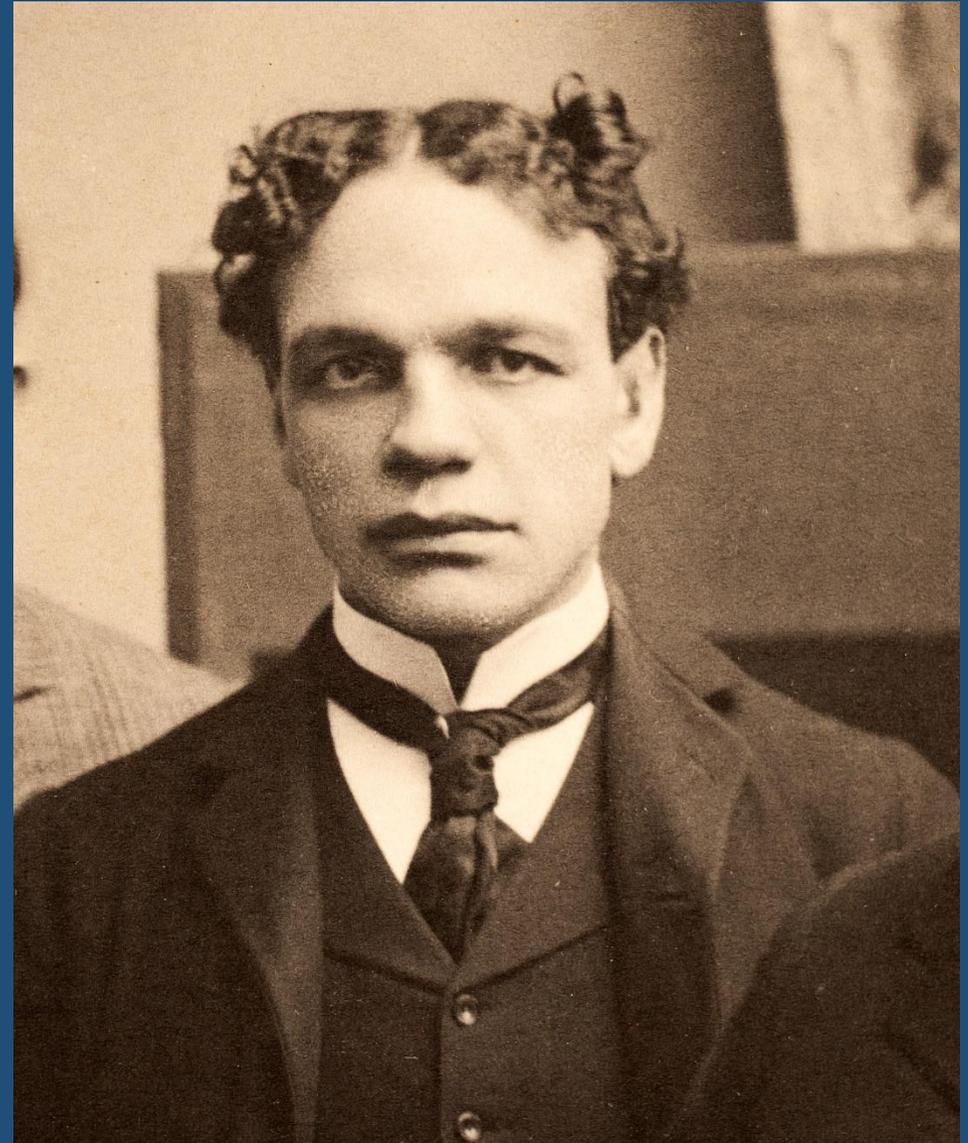
Postwar Participants in Community Life

William H. Lewis (1868-1949)
Born in Berkeley, Virginia

Amherst College, 1892
Harvard Law School, 1895

Cambridge Common Council, 1899-1901
U.S. Attorney, 1903-1913

226 Upland Road, 1902-1930



Marginalized Communities



African American waiters at Memorial Hall, 1875

"Color Line Not Drawn," 1903

COLOR LINE NOT DRAWN AND MERIT RECOGNIZED.

Cambridge Voters and Institutions Accord Honor to Prominent Negroes — Many Positions of Trust Have Been Held by Members of Colored Population.

The following interesting and thoroughly comprehensive story of the part



JOSHUA B. SMITH,
Representative.



JOHN J. FATAL,
Common Councilman.



P. H. RAYMOND,
Chief Engineer.



HORACE J. GRAY,
Past Commander Post 20.



ARTHUR ROBINSON,
Patrolman.

Do you know any American city where there is now or has been within a few years—

A black alderman, sitting in a board with 10 white colleagues and elected by voters 96 per cent. of whom were white?

Two negro representatives in the Legislature, chosen by constituencies in which the colored vote was relatively small?

Seven members of the common council of African descent?

A negro chief of a fire department in which he was the only man of color?

A black policeman, patrolling streets occupied mostly by white residents, for 19 years in succession?

A negro at the head of the city department of bacteriology?

A negro member of the public library trustees, with all white associates?

A black commander of a white post of the Grand Army? And—

A woman of nearly pure African blood acting as principal of a grammar school in a fashionable district, with six white teachers and several hundred white pupils under her charge?

This remarkable record is that of Cambridge, Mass., and nobody has seemed to think it worth making a special article about until now.

Cambridge Chronicle, August 29, 1903

Partisan Era Begins, 1902

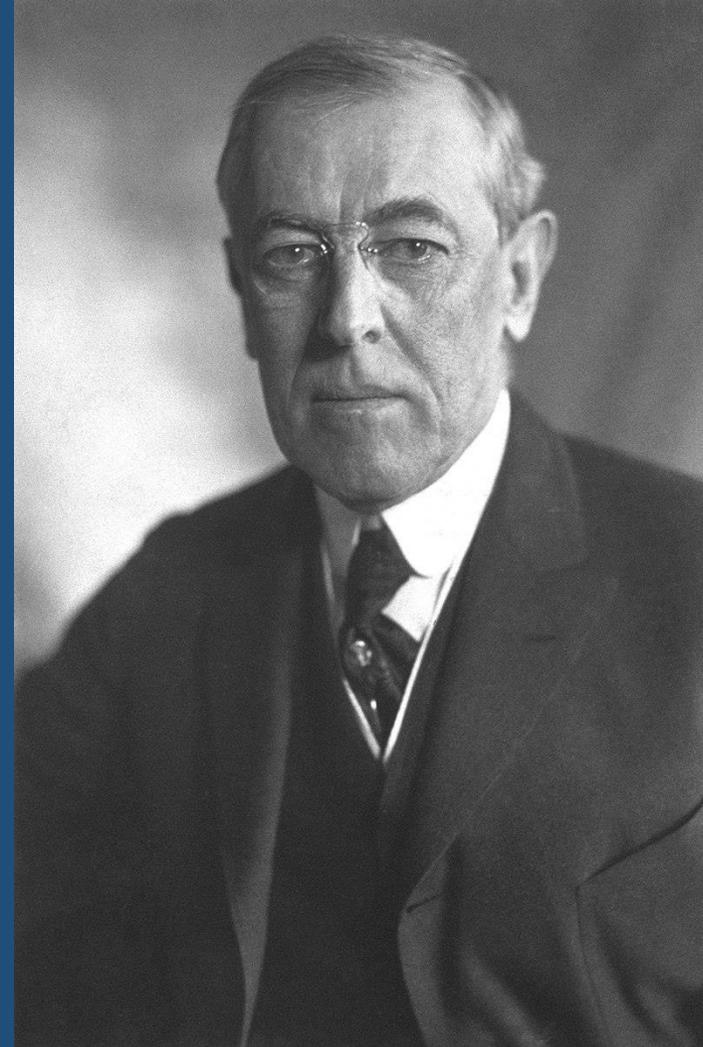


John H.H. McNamee (1853-1936)
Cambridge's first Democratic mayor, 1902-04

Color Line Drawn, 1913



John H.H. McNamee (1853-1936)
Cambridge's first Democratic mayor, 1902-04



Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924)
U.S. President, 1913-1921

“Colored Citizens”

Cambridge's Colored Citizens

They Have Distinguished Themselves
In Both War and Peace

By RAY W. GUILD

The history of the colored citizens of our city is an interesting one and happily we can relate as far back as man's mind runs not to the contrary. Mary (Lew) Rollins Banks, now for many years member of the Republican City Committee and prominent church, civic, and social worker, tells about her great grandfather, on her father's side, of Brazil Lew, who came from Haiti, settled in Dracut, fought in the French-Indian Wars, later came to Cambridge and was in the ranks of the Colonial patriots when Gen. George Washington took command here. Her great grandfather, on her mother's side, Sampson Talbot, was also a Revolutionary soldier.

Along about this early period, Prince Hall, lived in Cambridge and dealt in real estate. After being made a Mason by some of Gen. Gage's British soldiers, he went back to the West Indies, later returned and became the founder of colored Masonry in this country by establishing the Grand Lodge of Prince Hall Free and Accepted Masons.

When the fraternal order of Odd Fellows split, one of the most colorful events of our city was the annual parade of Harvard Lodge, colored, who had their meeting hall in Central Square. Pocohontas Lodge of this city, though in existence

our group is Lt. Col. Larkland Hewitt, prominent civic and social leader, who went off to France in World War I a private, became a sergeant and has the distinction of being one of the very few, up to that war, who was commissioned a Second Lieutenant on the battlefield. Lt. Col. Hewitt, is now commanding officer of the 27th Infantry Massachusetts State Guard.

Three Heroic Dead

Among the heroes commemorated by the 395 Gold Stars on the service flag in front of city hall are those of three Cam-

student and Sergeants Collymore and Layne.

76 Years Ago

To go back over seventy years, we find a prominent "gents furnishing store" owned and operated by Virgil Richardson, who came here from the South determined to establish a business so as to leave his children something; in the day he worked for Hawley, Fulson and Rominus, a Boston men's furnishing concern, put a pack on his back at night and peddled his wares, so that when he felt he had enough money and a goodly credit from his former employees, he established the store at corner of Main and Portland streets. His was one of the largest businesses of its kind here. Customers came from far and near for suspenders, shirts and the like, and Virgil also had time to sire and raise

Cambridge Chronicle, December 12, 1946

African Americans as a Percentage of Cambridge Population

Year	African American	Total Population*	Percent
1940	4,858	110,879	4.4%
1960	5,671	95,778	5.9%
1980	10,418	82,888	12.6%
2000	12,079	86,692	13.9%
2019**	11,500	104,338	11.0%

* Excludes persons in group quarters (dormitories) after 1950

** 2019 estimate from Cambridge Community Development Department