National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Salem Maritime National Historic SIte
160 Derby Street
Salem, MA 01970

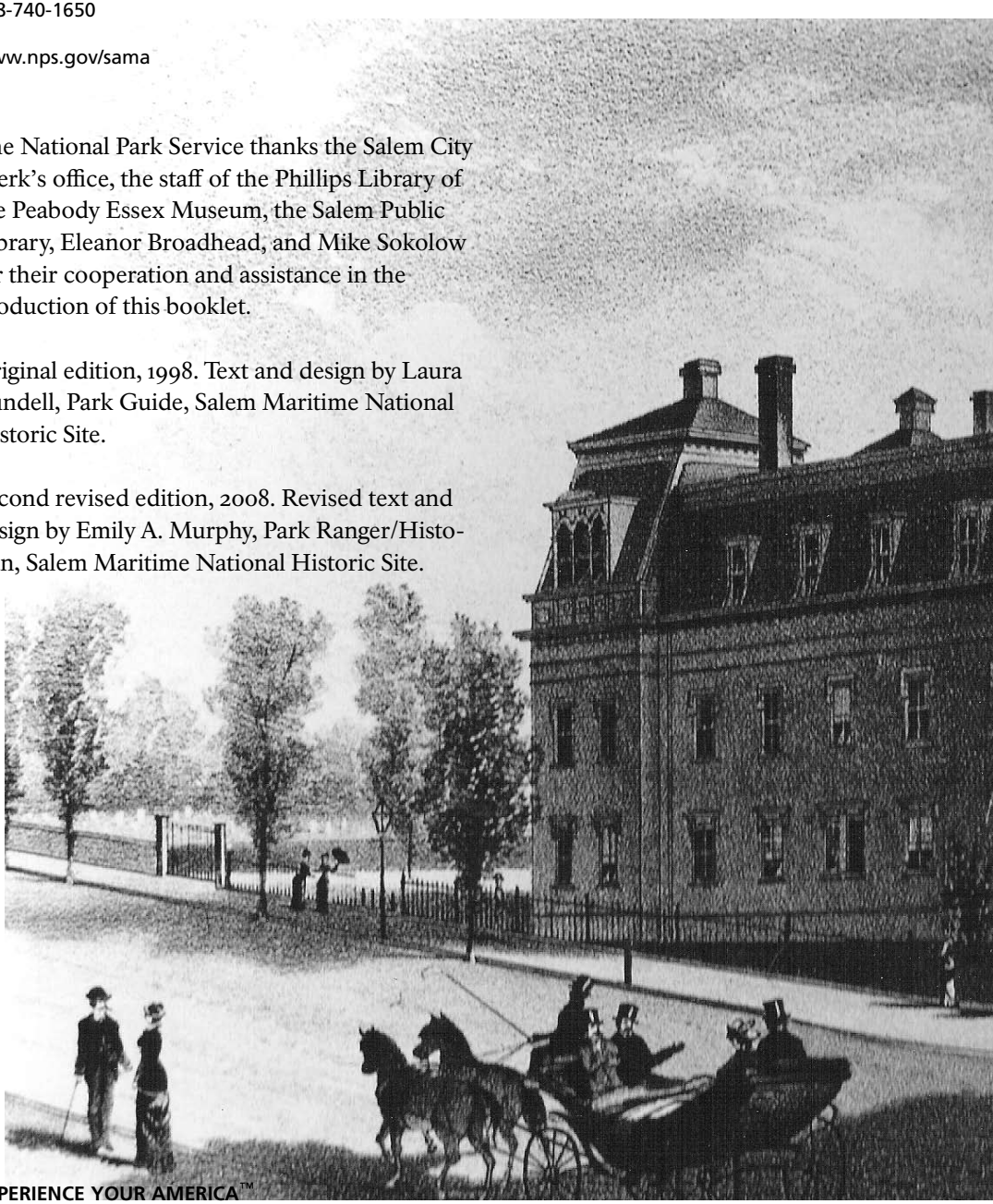
978-740-1650

www.nps.gov/sama

The National Park Service thanks the Salem City Clerk's office, the staff of the Phillips Library of the Peabody Essex Museum, the Salem Public Library, Eleanor Broadhead, and Mike Sokolow for their cooperation and assistance in the production of this booklet.

Original edition, 1998. Text and design by Laura Rundell, Park Guide, Salem Maritime National Historic Site.

Second revised edition, 2008. Revised text and design by Emily A. Murphy, Park Ranger/Historian, Salem Maritime National Historic Site.



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Salem, Massachusetts

African American Heritage Sites in Salem
A Guide to Salem's History

The African American Experience in Salem

As slaves, as free men, as soldiers, and as activists, African Americans have been an integral part of Salem's culture and economy since the founding of the city in 1626.

Slavery and Salem

Salem was founded as a port, and for its first two centuries, the economic prosperity of the town was tied to the slave culture of the British Atlantic, through transportation of slaves or support of the slave economy through the supply of dried cod as a protein source for the slaves on Caribbean plantations. As early as 1638, the first enslaved Africans were brought into the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the Salem-owned vessel *Desire*. Slaves worked as servants and skilled labor in the homes businesses of Salem throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

Slaveholding in Massachusetts was abolished in 1783, but some Salem merchants and captains continued to profit by shipping slaves throughout the Atlantic. Few records have survived about Salem's slave trading, but glimpses can be seen in newspapers, personal papers, and diaries, usually when a voyage went badly. In 1789, Captain William Fairfield was killed by a slave uprising on the *Felicity* as the ship was sailing from the Ivory Coast to Cayenne in South America. The surviving crew members were able to regain control of the ship and eventually sold the Africans.

Cultural Expressions

Election Day was a holiday for slaves in 18th century New England, and usually included an "election" of a governor. In Salem, the slaves held their election in one of the fields around the town, and spent the day eating, dancing, singing, and meeting relatives from surrounding communities. This tradition was carried on in the 1920s, when black churches from the greater Boston area began holding an annual picnic at Salem Willows Park. Today, African Americans with roots in the Boston area still come from all over the United States to Salem Willows Park for an annual picnic.

On the cover:
The Salem Normal School, c. 1880
Peabody Essex Museum

The 18th Century Free African American Community

Salem also had a community of free African Americans in the eighteenth century, and the population grew after 1783 as freed slaves moved to the city looking for work. By 1790, free blacks made up almost 2% of Salem's population. However, most of the African-American families were poor, and like poor whites, blacks were in danger of being "warned out of town" if they could not support themselves. In 1790, the town meeting warned out almost 100 African American families and 300 white families. The African Americans, however, were forced to leave Salem in December, while the white families were allowed to wait until May to find somewhere else to live.

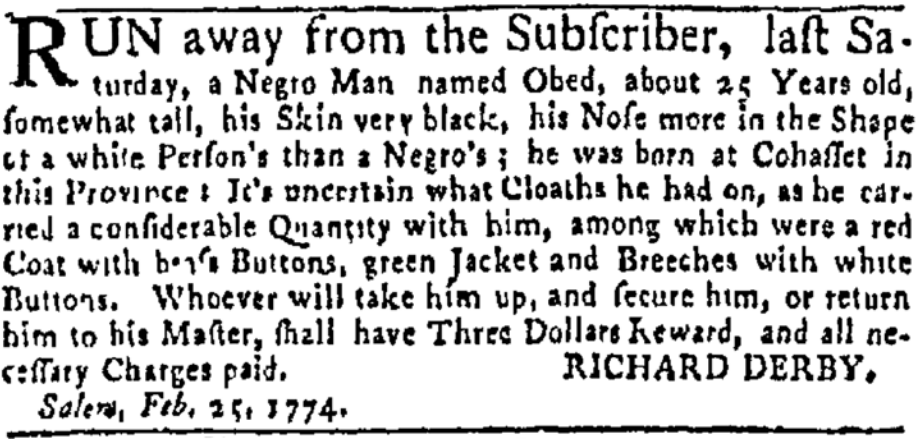
Schools and Churches

In the 18th century, the Salem schools were integrated. Beginning in 1807, however, a separate school for African Americans was organized, and in 1834 an elementary and high school was started by the city for black students, taught by one of the most experienced and respected teachers in town. Salem classrooms were fully integrated in 1843.

African-Americans attended some of the earliest churches in Salem, but they were usually expected to sit in segregated sections. In 1828, Salem's black community built a church near the Mill Pond, in a major African American neighborhood. Today, Canal Street runs through the area.

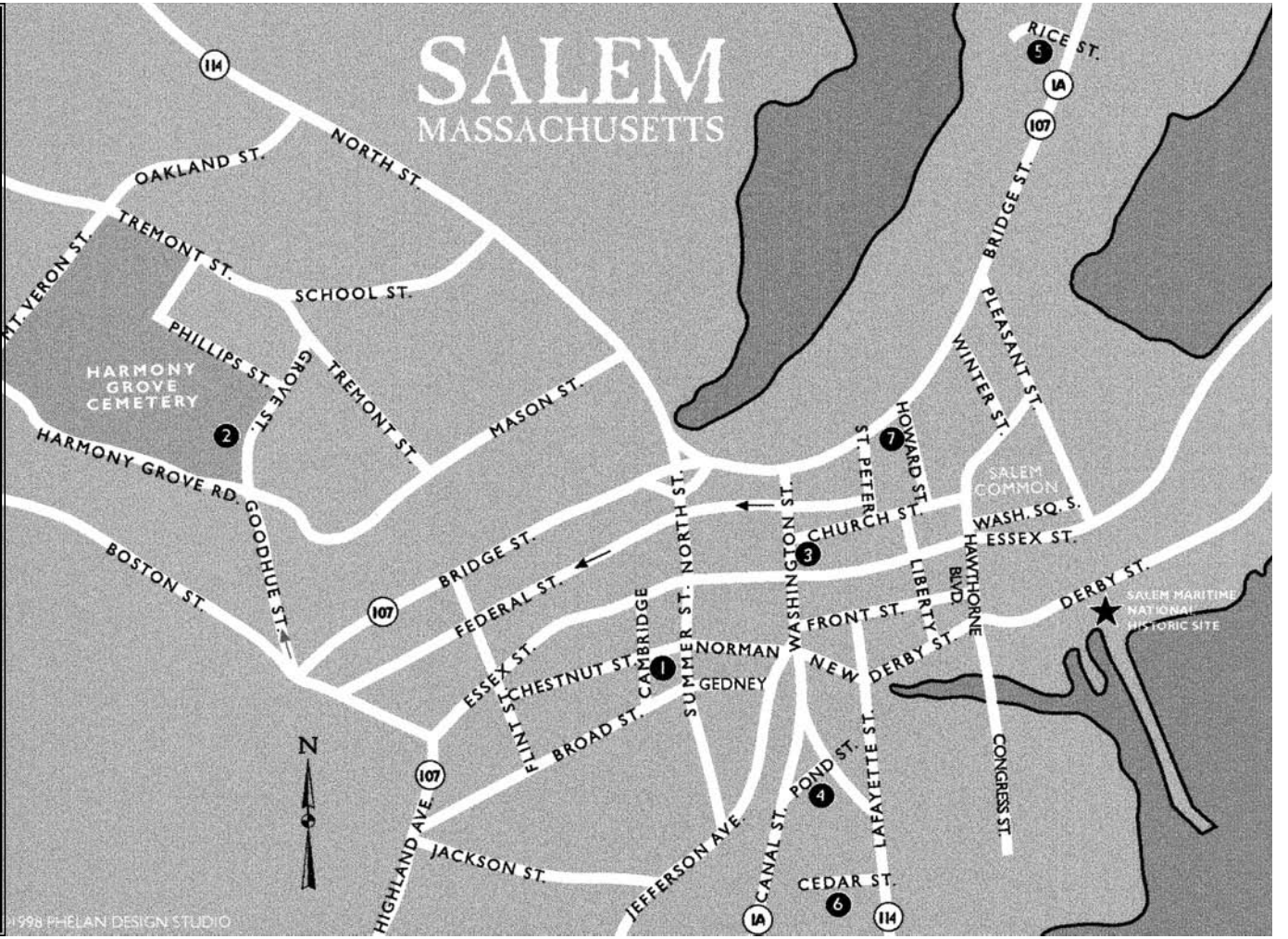
By the mid- nineteenth century, Salem was home to an educated, active, and successful African American community. This guide is an introduction to a few of the people and places vital to Salem's African American heritage.

Below: a runaway ad for a slave belonging to the famous Derby family of Salem. Whether Obed was recaptured is not known, but he is not mentioned in Richard Derby's will nine years later, although Derby mentions other slaves. From the *Essex Gazette*, March 8, 1774.
Peabody Essex Museum


RUN away from the Subſcriber, laſt Saturday, a Negro Man named Obed, about 25 Years old, ſomewhat tall, his Skin very black, his Noſe more in the Shape of a white Perſon's than a Negro's; he was born at Cohaſſet in this Province: It's uncertain what Cloaths he had on, as he carried a conſiderable Quantity with him, among which were a red Coat with brass Buttons, green Jacket and Breeches with white Buttons. Whoever will take him up, and ſecure him, or return him to his Maſter, ſhall have Three Dollars Reward, and all neceſſary Charges paid. RICHARD DERBY.
Salem, Feb. 25, 1774.

Salem African American Heritage Sites

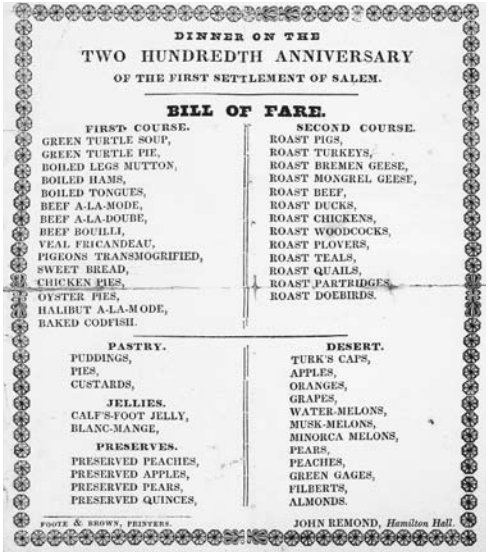
1. Hamilton Hall
2. Harmony Grove Cemetery
3. Salem Lyceum
4. Pond Street
5. Rice Street
6. Cedar Street
7. Howard Street Cemetery



Above: Hamilton Hall, corner of Chestnut and Cambridge Streets, c. 1890. Hamilton Hall was designed by the famous Salem architect Samuel McIntire and built in 1805. For almost two centuries, the hall has been the site of assemblies, dinners, dances, lectures, and weddings.

1 Hamilton Hall 9 Chestnut Street

In the early nineteenth century, Hamilton Hall was the center of the catering business of John Remond (1786-1874). An immigrant from the Caribbean island of Curacao, Remond became a prosperous businessman in Salem. He began his career as a hairdresser, but with his wife's help, he became a caterer. He handled some of the most important functions in town, including the dinner celebrating Salem's two hundredth anniversary in 1826 and a dinner for President Andrew Jackson in 1833. Remond also retailed wines and specialty foods, as well as catering, and his business records show the degree of his success from the 1820s through the 1840s. Many of Remond's children also became business owners, following their parents into hairdressing and catering. Two of his children, Charles Lenox Remond and Sarah Parker Remond, were active abolitionists in the mid-19th century.



DINNER ON THE
TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FIRST SETTLEMENT OF SALEM.

BILL OF FARE.

FIRST COURSE.
GREEN TURTLE SOUP,
GREEN TURTLE PIE,
BOILED LEGS MUTTON,
BOILED HAMS,
BOILED TONGUES,
BEEF A-LA-MODE,
BEEF A-LA-DOUBE,
BEEF BOUILLI,
VEAL FRICANDEAU,
PIGEONS TRANSMOGRIFIED,
SWEET BREAD,
CHICKEN PIES,
OYSTER PIES,
HALIBUT A-LA-MODE,
BAKED CODFISH.

SECOND COURSE.
ROAST PIGS,
ROAST TURKEYS,
ROAST BREMEN GEESE,
ROAST MONGREL GEESE,
ROAST BEEF,
ROAST DUCKS,
ROAST CHICKENS,
ROAST WOODCOCKS,
ROAST PLOVERS,
ROAST TEALS,
ROAST QUAILS,
ROAST PARTRIDGES,
ROAST DOEBIRDS.

PASTRY.
PUDDINGS,
PIES,
CUSTARDS,

JELLIES.
CALF'S-FOOT JELLY,
BLANC-MANGE,

PRESERVES.
PRESERVED PEACHES,
PRESERVED APPLES,
PRESERVED PEARS,
PRESERVED QUINCES,

DESERT.
TURK'S CAPS,
APPLES,
ORANGES,
GRAPES,
WATER-MELONS,
MUSK-MELONS,
MINORCA MELONS,
PEARS,
PEACHES,
GREEN GAGES,
FILBERTS,
ALMONDS.

FOOTE & BROWN, PRINTERS.
JOHN REMOND, *Hamilton Hall.*

Left: John Remond's menu for the "Dinner on the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the First Settlement of Salem." Peabody Essex Museum

Sarah Parker Remond: Activist and Abolitionist

An Abolitionist in Action

In 1853, Sarah Parker Remond bought tickets for herself, her sister Caroline, and fellow abolitionist William Cooper Nell to an opera performance at the Howard Athenæum in Boston. The opera was Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, starring the great soprano Henrietta Sontag, so tickets were in great demand throughout Boston. Sarah had purchased tickets for the then-segregated dress circle, so the management attempted to seat them elsewhere. The three declined to sit in a less-desirable location and resisted overtures for a refund. Exasperated staff and police forcibly removed the party from the theater, culminating in Sarah falling down a flight a stairs. She sued the Athenæum and eventually received a small punitive sum and tickets in the dress circle for a future performance.

International Advocate for Freedom

In standing up for her rights as a paying customer of the Howard Athenæum, Sarah Remond was following the family tradition of advocacy for African Americans. Like her brother, Charles Lenox Remond, Sarah traveled within the U.S. and throughout England, Ireland, and Scotland, speaking in support of abolitionism. When the Civil War broke out, she decided to stay in England in order to lobby the British Parliament to refuse assistance to the Confederacy. After the end of the war, Sarah Remond became a physician in Florence, Italy.

Portrait of Sarah Parker Remond, c. 1860.
Peabody Essex Museum

2 Harmony Grove Cemetery 30 Grove Street

Harmony Grove Cemetery was consecrated in 1840 and is a fine example of the "rural garden" cemetery, with landscaped trees and winding paths.

The Remond Family Grave
National Park Service

The Remond Family Graves
The cemetery holds the burial plots of many members of the Remond family, including John Remond, his wife Nancy, and several of their children. Although the plots of John, who died in 1874, and Nancy are not marked, their son Charles Lenox Remond shares a marker with many of his family.

Charles Lenox Remond: Speaker and Abolitionist

Portrait of Charles Lenox Remond, c. 1860.
Peabody Essex Museum

Charles Lenox Remond (1810-1873) was one of the first African Americans to be paid to lecture on the abolitionist circuit. He spoke frequently to audiences at home in Salem, but he also had an international reputation. The American Antislavery Society chose him as its representative to a world convention in London, and after the convention he continued to travel and lecture in England and Ireland.

Remond was a close friend of the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and remained so throughout his career as an activist. In addition to his own work, Remond helped encourage the abolitionist efforts of women, such as his sister, Sarah Parker Remond, and Charlotte Forten, who resided with his family for several years. Unlike many abolitionists, Remond favored the participation of women in the abolitionist movement.

Initially, Charles Lenox Remond opposed the use of violence to end slavery. Once the Civil War began, however, he became a recruiting officer for the Massachusetts 54th Regiment of African American volunteers. Near the end of his life, he served as a clerk in the Boston Custom House.

Oh, how inexpressibly bitter and agonizing it is to feel oneself an outcast from the rest of mankind, as we are in this country! To me it is dreadful, dreadful. Oh, that I could do much towards bettering our condition. I will do all, all the very little that lies in my power, while life and strength last!"

Diary of Charlotte Forten, Sunday, January 18, 1856

Charlotte Forten: Teacher and Abolitionist

Charlotte Forten was the daughter of James Forten, a wealthy sailmaker and ardent abolitionist from Philadelphia. In 1854, James Forten sent his daughter to stay with Charles Lenox Remond's family in Salem in order to attend the town's integrated schools. While she was living in Salem, Charlotte began to keep a journal of her thoughts and activities. These writings are a valuable record of the experiences of an African American woman in the nineteenth century. Like her father, she was also an active abolitionist and became a member of the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society.

A Student at the Salem Normal School

Upon her graduation from the Salem public school system, Charlotte entered the Salem Normal School (see cover) in 1856. This institution, now part of Salem State College, educated teachers, and Charlotte was the first African American student in the school. After her graduation, she taught for several years in the Salem School District, while continuing to take advanced classes at the Normal School.

A Teacher in the Civil War

During the Civil War, Charlotte traveled to Port Royal, South Carolina, to help educate the recently freed slaves. From her vantage point at Port Royal, she witnessed the bloody assault on Fort Wagner by the Massachusetts 54th Regiment. In her diary, she noted with great sadness the death of its commander, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw.

Charlotte returned to teaching after the war and also enjoyed a successful career as an author of poems and essays. She married Presbyterian minister Francis J. Grimke in 1878, and continued her advocacy for African Americans and women until her death in Washington D.C. in 1914.

Right: Photograph of Charlotte Forten, c.1870. Moorlan Springarn Research Center, Howard University.

3 Salem Lyceum 43 Church Street

The Salem Lyceum opened in 1831, and its rows of banked seats quickly filled with residents of Salem eager to watch demonstrations, lectures, and concerts. Nationally known artists, politicians, philosophers, and scientists, including Daniel Webster, Alexander Graham Bell, and Ralph Waldo Emerson came to speak in the building. Many activists in the abolitionist movement came to the Lyceum as well, such as William Lloyd Garrison. In December 1865, Frederick Douglass lectured in the hall on the assassination of President Lincoln.

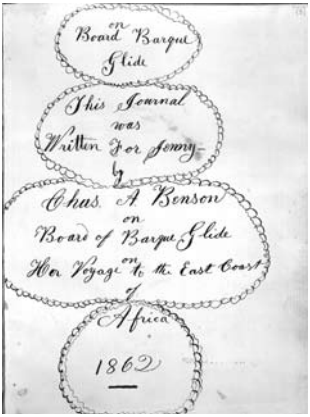
The Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society

The hall was also used for meetings and lectures by the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society, whose members included the noted African American abolitionists Charlotte Forten and Sarah Parker Remond. Charles Lenox Remond gave the Society's anniversary address in 1844 and was frequently asked to speak as part of the Society's ongoing lecture series.

Below: Photograph of Church Street, c. 1890. The Salem Lyceum is the two story building on the right side of the street.
Peabody Essex Museum

Charles A. Benson: Sailor

One particularly noteworthy member of Salem's African American maritime community was Charles Benson, who lived on both Pond and Rice Streets. He sailed for over twenty years, and because of his skill he earned more than the able bodied seamen in his crew. During those twenty years, he kept a series of journals to document his life and experiences at sea. On Christmas Day, 1878, Benson recorded that he was the first crew member to see a waterspout heading for the ship; his watchful eye saved the vessel and her men. Benson's diaries show not only his own conflicting feelings about life at sea, but also the dangers and hardships that were faced by all sailors, regardless of race.



Above: title page of Charles Benson's journal
Peabody Essex Museum

4 Pond Street

5 Rice Street

African American Sailors

In the 1830s and 40s, Pond and Rice Streets were home to an ethnically diverse population and included many of Salem's sailors. Many African Americans were drawn to seafaring occupations because of the opportunity to earn equal pay with white crew members. Between 1842 and 1846, about 46% of African American males with an occupation listed in the Salem City Directories were sailors. Surviving crew lists from Salem's international trading fleet reveal a socially and ethnically diverse sailing community.

6 Cedar Street

Salem Residents in the Civil War

Like Pond and Rice Streets, Cedar Street was home to some African American families. During the Civil War, several residents of the street served in the Union Army. When the Massachusetts 54th Regiment of African American volunteers was formed in 1863, so many men volunteered that the 55th regiment was immediately created. Many men from Salem served in both regiments, including one resident of Cedar Street, Thomas C. Wilson, a member of the 55th who died of disease during the war.

Captain Luis Emilio of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment

Luis Emilio was the son of a Spanish immigrant. He was commissioned as a 1st lieutenant of Company E of the Massachusetts 54th, and rose to become captain of that company. Emilio was the highest-ranking officer of the 54th to survive the assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina without injury, and as a result, he served briefly as its acting commander. After the war, he resided on Essex Street. Though he spent much of his later life in California and New York City, upon his death he was brought home for burial in Salem. Emilio and two other veterans from the 54th, Francis Fletcher and Charles Chipman, are buried in the Harmony Grove Cemetery.

Above: Photograph of Howard Street, c. 1880, with the Howard Street Cemetery on the left.
Peabody Essex Museum

7 Howard Street Cemetery Howard Street

When the Howard Street Cemetery was established in 1801, a portion was dedicated to Salem's African American population. Many prominent members of the African American community are buried in the cemetery.

Prince Farmer, Oyster Dealer

One member of the Salem African American community buried in the Howard Street Cemetery was Prince Farmer (1787-1852). A cook on the Salem vessel *George*, Farmer opened his own business as an oyster dealer after he left the sea. By 1850, Farmer owned a sizable business on Derby Street and was an active member of the African American community in Salem.

The Howard Street Church

The Howard Street Church was originally located behind the cemetery. Several abolitionist events happened in the church, including an anniversary meeting of the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society and a lecture by the famous abolitionists, the Grimke sisters. The church property was sold in 1867 and torn down to make way for a school.