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LUCY TERRY PRINCE: “SINGER OF HISTORY”*

MUCH IN THE achievements of Jupiter Hammon of Long Island and Lucy Terry Prince of Massachusetts and Vermont offers food for comparison. The pioneer black poet and poetess share race and literary priority as well as social status as chattel property in 18th century America. Hammon has already received a measure of recognition as the first published Afro-American poet, with his broadside *An Evening Thought; Salvation by Christ With Penitential Cries*, in 1761. Hammon's fame, nevertheless, rests on but seven poems and four prose pieces discovered eighty-seven years ago.¹

Lucy Terry Prince, on the other hand, is credited with but a single poem, composed fourteen years before Hammon and published 141 years ago, although not until recently recognized as the first poetry by any black American. Both Hammon and Prince, however, have been overshadowed by Phillis Wheatley whose precocity attracted attention in her own time and won for her contemporary literary recognition here and abroad.²

There are, it seems, some differences of opinion even among scholars about where the study of black written poetry begins. Some, like Hughes and Bontemps in *The Poetry of the Negro*, begin with Lucy Terry,³ but *The Negro Caravan*, by Brown, Davis and Lee omits her altogether and opens with Phillis Wheatley.⁴ William H. Robinson acknowledges Terry, in *Early Black American Poets*,⁵ but James Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* opens with Paul Laurence Dunbar.⁶ Kerlin's *Negro Poets and Their Poems* makes no mention of Terry,⁷ but Randall's *The Black Poets* includes her.⁸

That Lucy Terry Prince is a significant if not distinguished poetess there is no doubt. Her thirty-line doggerel, "The Bars Fight," recounting dramatic events surrounding the last Indian raid August 25, 1746, on Deerfield, Massachusetts, where she was a household slave, shows a flair for story telling. And if it lacks literary merit, it performs one of the earliest essential services of the poet—that of a singer of history. It is oral history, meant to be recited aloud, and there is evidence that Lucy herself was fond of repeating it into old age. It has also been described as the most accurate historical account of the engagement known.⁹

* This essay began as an independent study project undertaken at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst under the supervision of Prof. John H. Brace, Jr., and culminates several years' research and study of an almost completely neglected aspect of Afro-American and colonial New England history.

Like Jupiter Hammon, Lucy Terry Prince was not a creative author but, in the tradition of the troubador and of Homer, a chronicler of events and happenings. Hammon has been described as “pietistic, conservative, and obedient to his white master;”¹⁰ Lucy Terry, on the other hand, stands apart from both Hammon and Wheatley and most contemporary poets, and may even be said to follow in some degree the African tradition of the *griot* who Alex Haley found preserving the traditions of a people orally over generations.¹¹ In this context, if correct, Lucy Terry Prince takes on new meaning and added importance in Afro-American history and American literary history as well. Eileen Southern in *The Music of Black Americans* says,

An equally significant, though less dramatic, survival of ‘Africanism’ is represented by the storytelling and singing of black women in New England who, in their own way, kept alive the African tradition. For example, Lucy Terry of Deerfield and Senegambia of Narragansett, Rhode Island, who won wide recognition for their gifts in this regard. Lucy, who called herself Luce Bijah, married a free black man, Abijah Prince. After gaining her own freedom, she made her home a gathering place for slaves and freedmen of the community; a place where they could listen to tales and songs of old Africa.¹²

I. SLAVE GIRL

On Tuesday, August 21, 1821 the following obituary notice appeared in *The Franklin Herald* of Greenfield, Massachusetts:

At Sunderland, Vt., July 11th, Mrs. Lucy Prince, a woman of colour.—From the church and town records where she formerly resided, we learn that she was brought from Bristol, Rhode Island, to Deerfield, Mass. when she was four years old, by Mr. Ebenezer Wells: that she was 97 years of age—that she was early devoted to God in Baptism: that she united with the church in Deerfield in 1744—Was married to Abijah Prince, May 17th, 1756, by Elijah Williams, Esq. and that she had been the mother of seven children. In this remarkable woman there was an assemblage of qualities rarely to be found among her sex. Her volubility was exceeded by none, and in general the fluency of her speech was not destitute of instruction and education. She was much respected among her acquaintance, who treated her with a degree of deference. Vt. Gaz.¹³

This item, reprinted from *The Vermont Gazette* of Bennington, Vermont, is remarkable on a number of counts. In the first place, it seems to be the sole time Lucy Terry Prince’s name or notice of her appeared in the public press. It was an era when obituary notices were characterized by their brevity, particularly in the case of women, but this one is of unusual length, and, moreover, correct in historical detail. Something of its contemporary importance may be inferred by the stress laid on Lucy’s baptism and profession of religion; but the characterization of her ready gift of speech and fluency, “not destitute of instruction and education,” in a period when women were not supposed to exhibit such traits is extraordinary. Any of this written about a woman would be

noteworthy enough, but this was a black woman and a former slave. Lucy Prince's obituary is the climax of an unprecedented life, and her final impenetrability.

Can one discern through the mists of time and the ambiguities of tradition something more factual about this "remarkable woman" who commanded respect and deference from those about her? Several attempts have been made over the 170 years since her death, with varying degrees of success, depending upon one's bias and credulity. Seeking the "grain of truth" of Lucy Terry Prince involves an exploration into the shadow of women's history and the obscurity of Afro-American history; on the one hand largely recorded by unsympathetic male-dominant, and on the other by an almost total disinclination to recognize black contributions to American life.

Lucy Terry, as she was known before her marriage, was one of several slaves owned in the village of Deerfield, Massachusetts, in the 18th century. She was not the first black in the Puritan outpost settlement; that distinction seems to belong to Robert Tigo, "Negro servant" of the Rev. John Williams, who died May 11, 1695.¹⁴ From that time to the Revolution, forty or more blacks inhabited the village; Lucy and her husband, Abijah Prince, however, were the only known freed slaves in 18th century Deerfield.¹⁵

Lucy, or Luce, was said to have been stolen out of Africa when a child. That she was brought first to Rhode Island there is general agreement, and is altogether plausible as that colony dominated the colonial American slave trade.¹⁶ It is not possible to identify in what ship the child came, but the event must have taken place about 1730. A study of the slave trade in Rhode Island reveals that in the period when Lucy arrived the rum-slave-molasses traffic from Newport or Bristol to Africa and the West Indies was in its early development. From participation at first of only one or two ships annually, "Rhode Islanders entered the slave trade in force in the 1730's."¹⁷ Between 1709 and 1807, when the slave trade was banned, Rhode Island merchants sponsored at least 934 slaving voyages and carried an estimated 106,544 Africans to the New World.¹⁸

Added to the difficulty of trying to identify Rhode Island slave arrivals in the 1730's is the subsequent reluctance of later generations to discuss the matter. Wilfred H. Munro wrote, "Its immense profits made those who were engaged in it unwilling to make public many facts connected with the business;—the higher moral tone which now prevails throughout the world has induced their descendants to suppress all the evidence which proved the participation of their ancestors in it."¹⁹ Of course, those engaged in the "Triangular Trade" did not regard it as sinful; a Bristol slaver could record in his journal, "We have now been twenty days upon the coast [of Africa] and by the blessing of God, shall soon have a good cargo,"²⁰ while another, of a leading Bristol family and vestryman of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, cheerfully gave thanks, "that an over-ruling Providence has been pleased to bring to this land of freedom another cargo of benighted heathen, to enjoy the blessing of a Gospel dispensation."²¹

Records of those few slave cargos which have survived sometimes mention a few children, but no babies. Lorenzo Greene provides information that in 1720 the Massachusetts House remitted the import duty on a "suckling child" owned by Samuel Patishall, and that a 2-year-old slave child sold for 1 pound, 6 shillings, and 8 pence in Framingham, Massachusetts, about 1756.²²

Lucy was probably born in Africa; had she been born at sea the fact would surely not have escaped notice by myth makers and later traditions surrounding her. Rodney B. Field, whose account of Lucy and Abijah is among the first, says she was "said to have been of pure African blood."²³ Since the capture, care, and importation of very small children would not have been economically feasible, it seems almost certain Lucy was brought to America in the arms of her mother, or as a very small child in the care of some adult slave and too young to be manifested.

Field provides us with another important clue to the identity of the slave girl Lucy after her arrival in America and before she came to Deerfield. He says she was brought "from Rhode Island to Enfield, Ct. when 5 years old (date unknown)."²⁴ This statement is the probable explanation of why she was known as Lucy Terry before her marriage to Abijah Prince in 1756. Among the early settlers and founders of Enfield, Connecticut, was Samuel Terry (1632-1730), progenitor of a local dynasty; records of the town, its institutions, and its history fairly bristle with Terry references.²⁵

Samuel Terry, originally of Springfield, Massachusetts, is said to have been brought over in 1650 by John Pynchon, perhaps as an indentured servant.²⁶ Here he prospered, and while a linen weaver by trade, he was also a farmer who accumulated extensive land holdings and enjoyed the esteem of his neighbors.²⁷ It is perhaps significant to the story of Lucy that Samuel Terry died in 1730, but although he made a will probated at Northampton, Massachusetts, which jurisdiction then included Enfield, the document contains no mention of slave property.²⁸

Obadiah Cooley, John Burt, and Thomas Stebbins, appraisers of Terry's estate, had some difficulty in drawing up the accounts, so much so that Terry's sons, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Jonathan petitioned for additional time, "finding the Estate much Intangled & many Accnts & Some of them at a considerable distance."²⁹ Samuel Terry left his wife, Martha, one-half of his household goods, a black mare, two cows, and six sheep. He left the residue of his estate to his sons who were identifying parcels of their father's land holdings in Enfield and Somers as late as 1749.³⁰

As most blacks were not named aboard the slavers or even after landing, until they were purchased and transported to their owners,³¹ and since the surname Terry is not found among family names of colonial Rhode Island or Deerfield, it is most probable that Lucy came to be called Terry through an association with that prominent family of Enfield, Connecticut, where she spent some time before coming to Deerfield.³²

We cannot know how Lucy became the property of Deerfield resident Ebenezer Wells, but it is quite possible that she was part of the "much Intangled" estate of Samuel Terry. Her case may well be analogous to that of Phillis, one of three Negro "maids" in the estate of the Rev. Nehemiah Bull of Westfield, Massachusetts.³³

On February 4, 1741, Oliver Partridge and Elizabeth Bull, executors of Bull's estate, sold to Timothy Childs of Deerfield, "for the sum of one Hundred pounds current Bills of credit . . . a certain Negro Girl Named Phillis of about nine years of age."³⁴ The trio in Bull's inventory the previous year were valued at 195 pounds; the increase of 35 pounds value in Phillis' case is due to an inflationary spiral being experienced throughout colonial New England. On July 12, 1744 Timothy Childs (1720-1781) married

Mary, daughter of Ens. Jonathan Wells, of the largest slave-holding family in Deerfield.³⁵

Ephraim Williams, Jr. (1715-1755), through whose beneficence Williams College was founded, paid an even higher price, 225 pounds "old tenor," for a Negro boy named Prince, "age about 9 years, a servant for life" on September 25, 1750.³⁶ Earlier, Israel Williams (1709-1788), of Hatfield paid only about 90 pounds for "a certain Negro Girl named Kate aged About Eight or Nine years" on May 22, 1734.³⁷ The purchase of young girls, however, was somewhat less common.³⁸ Sale and exchange of New England slave property even in the most humane circumstances if not via public vendue was still a reality, especially in the settlement of estates.

II. DEERFIELD HOME

Ebenezer Wells (1691-1758) purchased a house and barn on Deerfield's principal street in 1717, and in 1720 married Abigail, daughter of Joseph and Sarah (Strong) Barnard. He was prominent in town affairs, held various offices, and between 1747 and 1752 was licensed as "Innholder, taverner and common victualler of strong liquor by retail." By 1730 he was evidently well off, and owner of two slaves: Cesar, about whom little is known, and Lucy.³⁹

The first documentary evidence we have of Lucy is a Deerfield church notice of her baptism June 15, 1735: "Lucy Servant to Ebenezer Wells was Baptised upon his account."⁴⁰ At the same time "Pomey Servant to Justice Jonathan Wells, Adam & Peter Servants to Justice Thomas Wells & Cesar Servant to Ebenezer Wells assented to the articles of ye Xtian [Christian] faith Entered into Covenant and were baptized."⁴¹ Lucy, a child, was not yet ready to accept the covenant. "Lusey Servant to Ebenezer Wells was admitted to the fellowship of the Chh." August 19, 1744,⁴² when she was about 20 years of age.

Slaves had a rather ambiguous place in Puritan religious life. The master-servant [i.e. slave] relationship borrowed from the Old Testament transformed the New England colonial slave into something between the Jewish "servant" and the Gentile "slave."⁴³ Thus slaves are most frequently styled "servants" and appear to have enjoyed certain legal and religious prerogatives, among them at least a degree of free will in the matter of conversion;⁴⁴ no fewer than five slaves were baptised that memorable June 15, 1735 during the revival known as the "Great Awakening" which appears to have affected free and chattel citizenry alike. In Deerfield seventy-eight persons were added to the church that year; three of them slaves admitted to full communion.⁴⁵

The slave girl Lucy seems to have made her mark in Deerfield, especially among the young. "Lucy was a noted character and her house a great place of resort for the young people, attracted thither by her wit and wisdom, often shown in her rhymes and stories."⁴⁶ Deerfield historian George Sheldon calls her "a great story teller" whose house became "a place of resort for the young people of the 'Street.'"⁴⁷ Perhaps as Ebenezer and Abigail Wells were childless, the black girl who helped with the housework and did chores became more a member of the family than was normal in traditional mixed household units.

Ebenezer Wells' accounts with Deerfield merchant Elijah Williams (1712-1771) as

recorded in Book 1 for the period 1743-1750, include a variety of goods clearly destined for the female members of his menage: cloth, thread, buttons, silk, needles, ribbons, and knitting needles.⁴⁸ Williams even carried a small account in Lucy's own name, between October 17, 1754 and June 7, 1755, which recorded her purchase of 1/8 of a yard of "cambrick" (in the 18th century a fine linen cloth used for underwear, ruffles, handkerchiefs, etc.), a yard of "ribband," a thimble, "sundries," and "1 cake of Chocolat."⁴⁹

During the summer of 1746, when Lucy was about 22 years old, the last Indian attack on Deerfield took place a mile or two south of the village. This followed closely the capture of Fort Massachusetts (North Adams) on August 9, by a party of French and Indians under Pierre Francois Rigaud de Vaudreuil. "After the surrender, sixty Abenakis hurried 'over the Hoosac by the Indian Path,' which is approximately the present 'Mohawk Trail,' and down the Deerfield valley, seeking more captives. Seeing on Sunday that some unmade hay was lying in the meadow near Stillwater of Deerfield River they waited and watched until the next morning."⁵⁰

Monday, August 25, the hay-makers, refreshed by the Sabbath, went to finish their work. They were members of the Allen and Amsden families: Samuel Allen, 44; his children, Eunice, 13; Caleb, 9, and Samuel, 8; Oliver Amsden, 18; and Simon, 9, orphan sons of John Amsden. These two families normally lived nearby at a place called "The Bars" because of a barway in the common field fence at this point. Fear of Indian attack, however, had forced them temporarily within the fort at the village. Two soldiers seem to have been assigned as guards for the haying party: John Saddler of Deerfield, and Adonijah Gillett of Colchester, Connecticut. Out on a hunting excursion, Eleazer Hawks, Allen's brother-in-law, was with the party as it approached the waiting Indians lying in ambush in a thicket at the foot of a nearby hill.

Of course, news of the fall of Fort Massachusetts had not reached Deerfield and so only minimum precautions were taken. Had not prisoners instead of scalps been their object, the Indians might have killed the whole party in a single volley. Seeking game, Hawks, however, stumbled upon the ambush; he was shot and the war-whoop given as the Indians rushed toward their victims.

Although there are a few official records to document what followed, the only contemporaneous one is the thirty-line poem Lucy Terry composed recounting in vivid detail the bloody ordeal suffered by her friends and neighbors.

The men urged the children to make for the fort, while they tried to hold off the attackers as best they could. Allen shot the foremost Indian, but he and Gillett were soon overpowered and killed. Saddler, amid a shower of bullets, dashed through the river to a thicket on a small island and thus escaped. Oliver Amsden was scalped and his head severed from his body. His brother Simon was likewise overtaken and killed after a brave defense. Caleb Allen escaped by dodging about and hiding in a field of corn. Samuel Allen was caught and after a sharp resistance with teeth, nails, and feet, made prisoner of the Indians who carried him to St. Francis in Canada. Eunice was the last to be overtaken as she fled, and finally an Indian split her skull with his hatchet and left her for dead, bleeding on the ground, not stopping to secure her scalp. She survived the attack

and lived for seventy-two years more, but she never fully recovered from her ordeal.⁵¹

The high drama of the event made a deep impression on many minds even in the frontier village where Indian depredations had become a fact of life. There is some uncertainty whether Lucy Terry actually wrote her poem, or if it was an oral composition. Evidence of Lucy's literacy is scant, consisting of a cryptic reference in a letter written to Elihu Ashley (1750-1817), by his sister Clarissa. The eighteen-year-old somewhat unsophisticated teen-ager begins her letter with a pointless ramble, and nearly a quarter down the page scrawls, "I suppose you will scarcely read this however it will serve to put you in mind of old Luce for I begin at one corner of the paper and I have got all most down to the other."⁵²

In the spring of 1757, following his marriage to Lucy, Abijah Prince purchased from Joseph Barnard a "Book Sect' gyude" for 10 shillings.⁵³ This is thought to have been *The Secretary's Guide, or, Young Man's Companion*, compiled by William Bradford and published in numerous editions, a manual of grammar, spelling, and writing forms.⁵⁴ This acquisition by Abijah, who signed all his known deeds with an "X," may have been for his own self improvement, or, as seems more likely, that of his wife whose literary activity is better documented.

No manuscript of Lucy's poem has been preserved. George Sheldon seemed to believe that she produced another version of "The Bars Fight." Two lines, "preserved in the teeming brain of Miss Harriet Hitchcock,"⁵⁵ however, appear to be nothing more than misplaced from the original, as demonstrated by Bernard Katz in "A Second Version of Lucy Terry's Early Ballad."⁵⁶

What became of "The Bars Fight" from the time of its composition in 1746, to its publication in 1855 by Josiah G. Holland in his *History of Western Massachusetts* is a mystery. The suggestion has been made that Holland first learned of the poem from George Sheldon,⁵⁷ and in fact Sheldon became acquainted with Josiah Gilbert Holland during the 1850's when the Deerfield man was employed in Chicopee, Massachusetts. None of Sheldon's notes preserved by the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, which he founded in 1870, contains the poem or references to it.

III. ABIJAH'S LUCY

Sometime about 1750 a new black presence made itself known in Deerfield. Abijah Prince, formerly "servant" to the Reverend Benjamin Doolittle of Northfield, Massachusetts, must have captured the attention of Deerfield's slave population because of his "free" status. Born about 1706, Abijah was brought from Wallingford, Connecticut, with the household of the Reverend Mr. Doolittle in 1717.⁵⁸ The Northfield pastor perhaps gave Abijah his freedom and some real estate rights before he died, for in 1751 Abijah Prince was cited as a proprietor in the fourth division of Northfield lands and owner of at least twenty acres.⁵⁹ However, Northfield's town and proprietor records fail to fully confirm this. The fourth division of Northfield common land was voted April 9, 1753. The original record does not contain a last name, just "Abijah," and no acreage for the lot, number seventeen, beside the name. Further, when the lots of this division are mapped, there is no space for this lot; owners of lots sixteen and eighteen abut. Perhaps Abijah Prince never took up a claim, or this was part of the allowance to Abijah Hall of

Northfield in the same division.

Abijah Prince did receive a lot in the sixth division of common land, number forty-seven, one acre and forty rods. This division was voted October 9, 1781. The site today is on South Mountain Road, just east of Route 63, in Northfield, Massachusetts.⁶⁰ Sheldon says Abijah held his Northfield property until 1782, although he does not seem to have been resident there after 1752.⁶¹ On December 10, 1785 the "laborour" Abijah Prince of Guilford, Vermont, sold this lot to Samuel Merriman for twenty shillings.⁶² This seems to be the sum total of Abijah's recorded property holdings here.

Doolittle, a native of Wallingford, was of a prominent family which might be expected to have had slaves. However, Abijah as his property is not mentioned among Northfield slaves described in an "Historical Sketch" read by Deacon Phinehas Field at a meeting of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association February 25, 1879,⁶³ and only by name very briefly in the Northfield town history with which George Sheldon was directly involved. Benjamin Doolittle died suddenly on January 9, 1748/9, and evidently left no will. In the rather detailed inventory and settlement of his estate recorded at Northampton, there is no mention of slave property.⁶⁴ It has been suggested that Abijah was granted his freedom in recognition of military service. Although Massachusetts excluded blacks and Indians from the militia as early as 1656,⁶⁵ there is ample evidence that Deerfield slaves did see military service in colonial New England wars.⁶⁶ Sheldon even includes Abijah's name on a 1748/9 military roll, together with Sedawdy, an Indian.⁶⁷

It is no mere coincidence that the Reverend Jonathan Ashley of Deerfield preached an evening lecture sermon addressed to the blacks of his parish on January 23, 1749. Only twelve days before, the Deerfield clergyman had preached the funeral sermon for his colleague and fellow Yale alumnus the Reverend Benjamin Doolittle;⁶⁸ the unique situation enjoyed by Abijah cannot have escaped notice by blacks throughout the neighborhood, which in 1755 numbered 74 in Hampshire County, 56 males and 18 females.⁶⁹

Taking as his text First Corinthians 7:22, "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is the servant," the pastor opened with a classic statement of spiritual equality:

God has no respect of persons in the affair of our salvation; whosoever will is invited to come and take of the waters of life freely . . . There are none of the human race too low and despicable for God to bestow salvation upon. Yea, it is the mean and base things of this world which God is pleased to choose to eternal life, whilst the rich are sent empty away, and the great and honorable are left to perish in their sin.⁷⁰

He then proceeded in classic Puritan fashion to instruct his hearers in their appropriate understanding and interpretation of God's will:

1st, I will show that Christianity allows of the relation of master and servants.
2ndly, I will show that such as are by divine providence placed in the state of servant are not excluded from salvation but may become the Lord's freemen.

3rdly, I will show what a privilege and advantage it is to be a freeman in the Lord.

4thly, I will give some directions to such as want to become the Lord's freemen.

5thly, I will show what motives there are for such to be the Lord's freemen.

The pastor spoke of believing servants and unbelieving masters, about Paul, Philemon, Onesimus, etc; "What a temptation of the Devil it is therefore to lead servants into sin, and provoke God; to insinuate into them they ought not to abide in ye place of servant—and so either forsake their master, or are uneasy, unfaithful, slothful servants, to the damage of masters & the dishonor of religion, the reproach of Christianity."⁷¹

The captive audience was cautioned finally, "You must be contented with your state and condition in the world, and not murmur and complain of what God orders for you. You must be faithful in the place God puts you and not be eye servants—[it is] in vain to think to be Christ's freemen and be slothful servants."⁷²

The minister probably went to his warm bed that night well satisfied with his performance, while his hearers found their way to cold garret or loft still puzzled. Why, they must have wondered, could Abijah come and go as he pleased, decide for himself what work he would do, and be able to play court to one of their number, the loquacious Lucy? What was it that allowed Abijah to do what they could not, and how could they become like him?

Abijah persevered and prevailed: "Abijah Prince and Lucy Terry Servant to Ens. Eben' Wells were married May ye 17, 1756 by Elijah Williams, Justo Pace."⁷³ Lucy, it would thus appear was still a slave upon her marriage. This was a situation George Sheldon suggests might have been to Ebenezer Wells' liking who might have hoped for profit since the offspring of such a marriage followed the condition of the mother.⁷⁴ However, in this instance the children of Abijah and Lucy were free, nor is there further reference to Lucy as "servant" or slave.

That the union was performed by a justice rather than the pastor does not infer any censure on the part of the church. Marriage was viewed as a civil contract, the proper function of magistrate and not of the minister in colonial New England.⁷⁵ Although the Reverend Jonathan Ashley solemnized a good many, civil marriages appear increasingly during the 1750's; Deerfield church records show the pastor performed only one marriage in 1756.⁷⁶

Perhaps Ebenezer Wells granted Lucy manumission in recognition of a quarter century of faithful if involuntary servitude; or maybe Abijah was her champion and the means of her emancipation. The couple set up housekeeping a little to the east of the village, on land owned by Ebenezer Wells at the eastern end of his property, part of lot No. 26, purchased 39 years before.⁷⁷ If Abijah was not possessed of land of his own, he gave to it his name: the nearby brook was long known as "Bijah's brook;"⁷⁸ also nearby was "Abijah's hill" where Laurel Hill Cemetery was later laid out.⁷⁹

Abijah Prince was industrious and carried accounts with several individuals and merchants of Deerfield as revealed in the account book collections of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library; perhaps his wide-ranging activity involved

securing his wife's freedom. Dealings with Elijah Williams between March and June 1756 included his purchase of mugs of cider, a knife, cloth, and a "drum rim," for which he paid in salmon. Following his marriage, Abijah paid Williams for "sundries," a cake of soap, cloth, cheese, rice, rum, and brandy by working clearing land, carting hay, mowing, and ferrying.⁸⁰ Abijah was employed by Deerfield's minister, Jonathan Ashley, cutting brush and wood, mowing, and sugaring between February 1756 and November 1759,⁸¹ and for Salah Barnard he made lime mortar and cut tobacco in return for "an old under Bed & 2 blankets," foodstuffs, and a woolen shirt between January 1765 and June 1767.⁸²

Among the most interesting accounts are those with Dr. Thomas Williams between August 1757 and June 1775. For remedies of an herbal nature—camphor, cathartic, and lavender—blood-letting and emolument, Abijah settled by making five barrels of cider, ferrying, lime mortar, and "by yr wife's work" valued at 8 pence on November 26, 1765, and probably also her "spinning 5 Rum [Runs] Tow Yarn" for 2 shillings and 6 pence on July 9, 1775.⁸³ That Abijah was fully aware of political conditions of the world in which he lived is clearly indicated by the charge of Dr. Williams on October 31, 1765, "Recording 5 Births," 10 pence, entered on the books of the town the day before the Stamp Act went into effect when a tax on such official records was imposed.⁸⁴

Abijah was about fifty years of age when he married a woman some twenty years his junior. This disparity may be explained at least in part by the disproportion between the sexes of New England's slave population. Of 2,674 Negro slaves of sixteen years and upwards in Massachusetts in 1755, the year before the marriage, 1,500 were males and only 855 were females.⁸⁵ Negro males of marriageable age had almost no prospect of marrying within their age group.

The union proved fruitful, for six children were born to Abijah and Lucy between 1757 and 1769. If Abijah was somewhat slow in his civil responsibility recording the births of his children, he and Lucy attended to their spiritual obligation more punctually, and each of their children was baptised shortly after birth by Parson Jonathan Ashley: Caesar, born January 14, 1757 was baptised on February 13, 1757; Duroxa, born June 1, 1758 was baptised on July 30, 1758; Drusilla, born August 7, 1760 was baptised on September 7, 1760; Festus, born December 12, 1763 was baptised on January 29, 1764; Tatnai, a son, born September 2, 1765 was baptised on September 22, 1765; and Abijah, born June 12, 1769 was baptised on August 6, 1769.⁸⁶

The names chosen reflect interest and allegiance to religion and the Bible in which Lucy was said to be especially steadfast: "Her knowledge of the holy scriptures was uncommonly great," and, "having a tenacious memory," she was able to recite large portions learned by heart over a fifty-year period.⁸⁷ Caesar has classical Roman origins, but figures in biblical literature; Drusilla was the name of the wife of Felix, Antonius, a freed slave, who as procurator of Judaea was responsible for the persecution of the apostle Paul. Festus, Porcius was procurator of Judaea following Felix, and Tatnui was the name of a satrap or governor of the province west of the Euphrates in the time of Darius Hystaspis. Abijah was probably given to honor the child's father, but is also the name of the son and successor of Rehoboam and is to be found elsewhere in the Old Testament.⁸⁸ Duroxa has not yet been identified as to origin. Although obituaries state

that Lucy was mother of seven children, no other offspring are on record.

Prince was commonly known as "Bijah," and his wife went by the familiar sobriquet "Luce Bijah," indicative of their local notoriety. Theirs must have been a lively household and gathering place. A new generation of young people were attracted to Lucy's fireside where they were entertained with recitations, music and poetry on the order of an adult literary circle.⁸⁹ One or both of Lucy's daughters, Duroxa and Drusilla, may have inherited their mother's poetic talent. Drusilla, who was also "a great singer,"⁹⁰ became disabled and a town charge in 1838 at Sunderland. In 1850 the federal census listed her, age 88, blind and a pauper who could not read or write, living with a family in Arlington, Vermont.⁹¹ She died November 21, 1854. Duroxa's talent may have been clouded by insanity;⁹² she died "a few years previous to her mother."⁹³

Festus, the second son, "was inclined to festivity."⁹⁴ He was a natural musician and could play upon any instrument, reminiscent perhaps of another parental example, (his father purchased a "drum rim" of Elijah Williams in 1756). Abijah is said to have swapped a piece of land for an old horse, saddle and bridle, and a fiddle, "with which goods he endowed his son."⁹⁵

Both Caesar and Festus served in the American Revolution. Caesar marched with Connecticut Valley troops twice, under Captains Caleb and Moses Montague, in the summer of 1777 and again in the fall of 1779 on northern expeditions of the Second Hampshire Regiment to reinforce the Continental Army. His total service amounted to two months and twenty-five days.⁹⁶ Festus, age sixteen, stature five feet three inches, enlisted in the Continental Army from Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1779, and appears on other Stockbridge rolls in 1780 and 1781. He served at least five months at West Point, New York, and was reported with an artillery regiment and in the horse guard.⁹⁷

IV. VERMONT PIONEERS

Samuel Field (1678-1762) of Deerfield was a prominent citizen and church deacon as well as a substantial landowner there and in Northfield where he received a grant of 200 acres in 1736, probably in recognition of military service to the colony.⁹⁸ He was one of the original Massachusetts grantees of Guilford, Vermont, in 1736, and a proprietor under New Hampshire's Benning Wentworth grant of 1754. The deacon is supposed to have promised Abijah a 100-acre lot in his newly-opened territory.⁹⁹ Following Samuel Field's death, his son David Field who was also a participant in the development of Guilford, conveyed the land to Abijah, lot no. 187, in 1781, although Prince lived there perhaps as early as 1765.¹⁰⁰ Field, father and son, were undoubtedly acquainted with Ebenezer Wells; further, David's wife, Thankful, was the widow of Oliver Doolittle, eldest son of the Reverend Benjamin Doolittle, Abijah's old master.¹⁰¹

The record is unclear whether Abijah and Lucy established a permanent home near "Packer Corner" in Guilford, or if they soon returned to Deerfield after a few years of frontier life. In any event, the Prince family was resident on their Vermont land by 1785 when they became embroiled in a neighborhood squabble of such proportion that it came to the attention of none other than the Governor and Council of the State of Vermont.¹⁰²

There was much trouble between "Bijah" and the Noyes families whose lands adjoined. After having their fences torn down and hay ricks burned, as well as being subjected to a variety of annoyances, Lucy decided to act. This woman, "a prodigy in conversation" whose "volubility was exceeded by none," and whose fluency of speech "captivated all around her,"¹⁰³ addressed a petition to the highest authorities for redress of grievances.

At a meeting held at Norwich on Tuesday, June 7, 1785, attended by Governor Thomas Chittenden, Lieutenant Governor Paul Spooner, and Councilors Moses Robinson, Peter Olcott, Benjamin Emmonds, Thomas Murdock, John Throop, and Ira Allen, the following piece of business was considered:

On the Representation of Lucy Prince, wife of Abijah Prince, and others shewing that, the said Abijah, Lucy and Family, are greatly oppressed & injured by John and Ormas Noyce, in the possession and enjoyment of a certain farm or Piece of Land, on which the said Abijah and Lucy now Lives, the Council having Taken the same into consideration and made due enquiry, are of Opinion that the said Abijah and Lucy are much injured, and that unless the Town take some due Methods to protect said Abijah, Lucy & family in the enjoyment of their possession, they must soon unavoidably fall upon the Charity of the Town.

Therefore Resolved that His Excellency be Requested to write to the Selectmen of the Town of Guilford Recommending to them to Take some effectual Measures to protect the said Abijah, Lucy & famly, in the Possession of said Lands until the said dispute can be equally & equitably settled.¹⁰⁴

In crossing swords with John Noyes, Lucy took on an impressive adversary. "Squire" Noyes, as he was sometimes called, hailed from Groton, Connecticut,¹⁰⁵ and his Vermont property on lot 190," was one of the most pretentious of the ancient Guilford homesteads.¹⁰⁶ Holding important town positions of trust, Noyes was Guilford's representative to the Vermont legislature (1799-1804 and 1809-1811) and a member of the Vermont electoral college in the presidential election of 1800.¹⁰⁷ He and his sizable family (numbering 13 in 1790) clearly outnumbered and out-ranked "Bijah" and Lucy, whose household was not even enumerated in the first federal census of 1790.¹⁰⁸

Although it is difficult to view this disturbance in other than racial terms, it may well have had political overtones, property line controversies and local jealousies at its core. During the period Guilford was torn by factional disputes over loyalties to New York State and the recently established Republic of Vermont. "Though no formal pitched battle was ever fought, the town has probably been the scene of more internal strife and violence than any other in the State."¹⁰⁹ John Noyes was an active partisan of Vermont interests. It is unclear where "Bijah" stood in the controversy, but as two of his children—Festus and Abijah, Jr.—lived in New York State, it may be that the Princes were inclined toward the "Yorker" faction, or infuriated their neighbors by trying to maintain neutrality during the period in which their town existed in a virtual state of anarchy.

"Bijah" apparently shared an inordinate hunger for land with other frontiersmen,

and although there is reason to believe he was not always a good manager of it, he continually sought opportunities. Rodney B. Field writing to George Sheldon, February 15, 1879, reveals how his proprietorship may not have been without difficulties: "Abijah was cheated out of land by Samuel Beldon and Elijah Walsworth by trading off property that they had not title to."¹¹⁰ In the case of Northfield holdings, we know that the final sale in 1785 involved only one acre and forty rods for the sum of twenty shillings.¹¹¹ When "Bijah" conveyed 100 acres in Guilford to Augustus Belding on June 4, 1788, he received fifteen pounds for the same lot no. 187, his Guilford homestead grant from David Field seven years before.¹¹² "Bijah" and Lucy probably remained living on the Guilford property, for here Abijah died and was buried. It was said creditors dared not bring a writ of ejection against Lucy because her husband was buried on the property which became known as "Abijah's lot."¹¹³

Even before he left Deerfield, Ebenezer Wells' paternity and David Field's liberality, Abijah sought security for himself and his young family as a proprietor of Sunderland, Vermont. His name is among the original sixty-four grantees of the wilderness tract in Bennington County chartered July 29, 1761,¹¹⁴ and he was the only one of the grantees to actually settle there.¹¹⁵ Abijah drew an equal share with the others in all six divisions of Sunderland common lands where his holdings amounted to upwards of 300 acres.

Abijah and Lucy's eldest son, Ceasar, took up one tract. Ceasar was among the signers of the covenant at the settlement of the Reverend Henry Williams at Guilford, January 1, 1779,¹¹⁶ and as a military veteran he was for a few years before his death in 1836 a pensioner receiving \$32 per year from the government.¹¹⁷

Festus, the second son, built a log house upon one of his father's lots, but removed to New York about 1815, and to Danby, Vermont, in 1817 where he died in February 1819.¹¹⁸ He married a white woman; "the day after his burial his family were brought to Sunderland on an order of removal."¹¹⁹ The widow, Lucy, subsequently married a black man named William McGowan on September 26, 1822.¹²⁰ McGowan died about 1827; Festus' eldest daughter married a Salem, New York, grocery merchant of some means, and the family numbering seven or eight emigrated there.¹²¹

Festus' deed of sale September 26, 1817 to Remembrance Sheldon of Williamstown, Massachusetts, scion of a Deerfield family, of his share of the first division of Sunderland land, lot no. 20 originally drawn by Abijah Prince, is the only recorded transaction of Abijah's holdings,¹²² but there is indication in town records of other transfers—lots set off to E. Graves about 1811, and Abijah's rights to other land "struck off" to John Searl.¹²³ It was said at the time of Lucy's death, "Her husband was proprietor of some rights of land in this state; but through inattention they were lost, which subjected her to penury."¹²⁴

V. CHAMPION OF RIGHT

During the period Lucy and Abijah were resident in Vermont tradition links her to one of western New England's oldest collegiate institutions. The earliest published account (1888) is by Rodney B. Field:

Desiring a liberal education for one of her sons, probably Festus, she [Lucy] applied at Williams College. He was rejected on account of his race; the indignant mother argued the case in a "3-hour speech" before the trustees, quoting abundantly text after text from the scriptures in support of her claims for his reception.¹²⁵

Investigation of original College trustee records at Williamstown, however, fails to confirm the event.¹²⁶ Candidates for admission to Williams College in 1793 were required to be able to read accurately Virgil's *Aeneid* and Tully's *Orationes* in Latin and the Evangelists in Greek, or be familiar with French and demonstrate acquaintance with the rules of arithmetic.¹²⁷ These are requirements no district school education in Guilford could match. Perhaps Lucy sought admission of her son to the Free School in Williamstown, opened in the fall of 1791, which became "unexpectedly popular especially in its higher departments" and was housed in "a commodious building and furnished with a competent head," Ebenezer Fitch.¹²⁸ Two branches of instruction were established: an English free school recruited from the higher classes in the town schools; and a grammar school or academy.¹²⁹ When the school was incorporated as a college by act of the Legislature in 1793, the free English department was dropped, but the grammar school, for which tuition was charged, continued for a few years as a kind of preparatory institution.¹³⁰

The archives of Williams College and papers of Ebenezer Fitch, preceptor of the Free School and first president of the College, fail to substantiate the popular myth concerning Lucy's "earnest and eloquent" harangue, but Field's undocumented assertion has been repeated in all accounts of Lucy as evidence of the remarkable fluency of her speech. It does not figure in older Williams College histories, but it is included in Leverett W. Spring's later *A History of Williams College* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917), pp. 138-139, based on George Sheldon's writings. There is probably truth behind Field's anecdote, but undated and unsubstantiated, it must now be viewed as more parable than gospel.

Had a collegiate education been her aim for Festus, Lucy may have applied to the wrong school. Williams awarded its first diploma to an Afro-American in 1889.¹³¹ Middlebury College in her adopted state of Vermont, claims the honor of America's first black college graduate sixty-six years earlier, Alexander Lucius Twilight in 1823,¹³² moreover, Middlebury's honorary A. M. degree conferred on the Reverend Lemuel Haynes in 1804 is the first American collegiate recognition of any Afro-American.¹³³ Both Amherst and Bowdoin graduated Afro-Americans in 1826; Oberlin in 1844; and Harvard in 1870, although three other blacks had taken degrees in 1869 from Harvard's graduate schools of law, medicine, and dentistry.¹³⁴

In Sunderland Abijah and Lucy established themselves south of the Batten Kill River, not far from the home of Colonel Ethan Allen who had located on the opposite side of the creek.¹³⁵ Allen, however, seems to have been too occupied with political manipulations and other stratagem to disturb the domestic tranquility of his black neighbors.¹³⁶ Such was not the case with their nearer abutter, Colonel Eli Bronson,

whose lands adjoined Abijah's. Bronson set up a claim to part of "Bijah's" property, and "by repeated law suits obtained about one half of the home lot, and had not the town interposed they would have lost the whole."¹³⁷

This predicament gives rise to the second perplexity concerning Lucy: the tradition that she argued her own case against Bronson's claim before the United States Supreme Court.¹³⁸ The situation becomes more mystifying when one considers that Samuel Chase of Maryland (1741-1811) actually was an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, appointed by George Washington in 1796.¹³⁹ Given the fact that the Supreme Court never held a session in Vermont, and the report that Chase complimented Lucy after her appearance, saying she "made a better argument than he had ever heard from a lawyer in Vermont,"¹⁴⁰ it follows that if Lucy argued her case in a court presided over by Chase, it would have to have been the U. S. Circuit Court during May 1796, at Bennington, as that was the only Vermont session in which Chase participated.¹⁴¹

The Vermont Gazette, of Bennington, announced in its issue of May 11, 1796: "Sunday last arrived in town the hon. Judge Chace and his lady, his honor will open the session of the Circuit Chourt of the United States in this town tommorrow." Some unknown bard greeted the jurist:

Sometimes the mind of man conceives aright,
Of things predestined for his future view,
And sometimes for a beauty rears a fright,
Mere fancy's object, quite unlike the true.
A case in point—his honor justice Ch-c,
His coach unharnest, and his gout polite,
His Lady forward, walk'd to view the place
From Dewey's inn to court-house' gentle height.
So an important stately ship of war,
Exploring foreign shores, with wise design
Sends on the beauteous tender, to prepare
A passage for her consort of the line.
But to return, arrived at greatest height,
He sought the seat of justice, stately, grand,
But no such object offering to his sight,
Pray sir, says he, where does the court house stand?
Where! says the man he ask'd—why here before us—
What said his honor in a house?—It is!
Yes Sir! Why did you think 'twas out of doors?
Aye! says the judge, and laugh'd beneath the trees.¹⁴²

Subsequent issues of the paper shed no light on the court's business. As with the tradition connecting Lucy Terry Prince to Williams College, there is probably some truth behind this anecdote although it defies documentation despite its plausibility. George Sheldon, it would seem, overstepped the bounds of the historian in describing the event and its outcome in Lucy's favor; even Rodney B. Field was not so incautious.¹⁴³

VI. THE FINAL YEARS

Abijah and Lucy may have been discouraged by their Sunderland ordeal where “for many years they were more or less aided by the town,”¹⁴⁴ and returned to Guilford where Abijah spent his final years. His death January 19, 1794, age eighty-eight, was recorded by the church there.¹⁴⁵ Abijah’s grave located a few rods westerly from the highway was marked by a lettered slate headstone. Upon division of the property the site “fell into the hands of Capt. Isaac Noyes” who “fixed up the grave”¹⁴⁶ which was respected by successive owners until about 1890. A later owner, Charles Jacob, probably ignorant of its significance, plowed over the burial spot, although the location continued to be known as the “Bijah lot,” was generally recognized by townsfolk and was pointed out to the younger generations as the final resting place of the black Guilford pioneer.¹⁴⁷

Abijah’s final “appearance” in Guilford was reported not long after his death at a spot on the road leading northerly from the Noyes homestead toward the center of town. A young woman of the Noyes family passing along “Cold Spring Pitch,” a steep grade leading out of a little hollow and natural spring, just at nightfall was terrified by a “fearsome apparition.” The young woman clung to the saddle as her horse bolted in a mad run up the pitch, down the road past “Bijah’s” grave, and on to the Noyes homestead. The phantom was declared to be “Bijah’s” ghost, but whether or not it was so, or some great owl or startled deer, distorted by a troubled conscience, is not known.¹⁴⁸

Of Lucy’s final years we have a few fleeting glimpses. Rodney B. Field writes, “After Abijah’s death [she] lived a few years in a log house of my grandfather.” [Elihu Field (1753-1814) son of “Bijah’s” Guilford patron David Field, who married Hepzibah Dickinson]. Lucy was evidently a talented mimic, for Field continues, “Mother [Pamelia Burt Field (1784-1872)] once when I was a boy acted out Lucy which grandmother said was perfect and it caused a great laugh as there were visitors that knew Lucy well, and I can see in my mind her various positions.”¹⁴⁹

Perhaps her son Tatnai was her solace in old age. Phinehas Field indicates that Tatnai was “held” by captain Samuel Hunt of Northfield, which Sheldon guardedly accepts.¹⁵⁰ However, Tatnai of Northfield and Lucy’s son were perhaps two distinct individuals. Rodney B. Field recalled, “I now think Tatnai used to come to our place when I was a boy. If so he was a tall good looking man and quite a talker.”¹⁵¹

Lucy remained in Guilford until about 1808, when she returned to Sunderland,¹⁵² probably making her final home with her eldest son, Caesar, a farmer reported in the federal census schedules for Sunderland in 1820 and 1830. “Abijah’s widow had a strong memory few indeed could repeat more scripture. At an advanced age she would ride horseback to Bennington, a distance of 18 miles,” Giles B. Bacon recalled.¹⁵³ As long as she lived she made an annual pilgrimage over the Green Mountains “to see the old folks”¹⁵⁴ at Guilford and visit her husband’s grave.¹⁵⁵

Although Lucy is known to have shown her mettle in the matter of her rights, she appears to have always recognized the inherent inequality of her time. “When Lucy Prince, a respected African-born woman visited a white family in rural Deerfield, Massachusetts, in her old age, she is said to have refused a place at the table, saying, ‘No, Missy, no, I know my place.’”¹⁵⁶

Lucy was blind for several years previous to her death. Giles B. Bacon makes the telling if inconclusive comment, "She gave her age at the time of the Deerfield Masacre which she often related [,which] if correct in her statement [she] would have been 112 years [old]."¹⁵⁷ It now seems more probable that the old woman was retelling her story of the "Bars Fight" which her hearers confused with the 1704 Deerfield Massacre, an error still encountered from those seeking information about Lucy's poem and the event it describes.

Lucy Terry Prince died at Sunderland, Vermont, on July 11, 1821, at ninety-seven years of age.¹⁵⁸ *The Vermont Gazette* of Bennington published a long obituary, reprinted in part by *The Franklin Herald* of Greenfield, Massachusetts, and perhaps other newspapers. "Suitable respect was shown at her interment, and evidence exhibited that her memory was precious," the newspapers reported. However, there is no notice of Lucy's death or burial in the Public Records/Vital Records files of the State of Vermont at Montpelier, the Vermont D. A. R. Book of Records of Sunderland cemeteries at the Vermont Historical Society, or Susan Fisher's *Vital Statistics of Sunderland, Vermont; Also Record of Gravestones, Taken From All Available Sources*, compiled by Susan Fisher and J. M. McCabe, a typescript at the Vermont Historical Society. In this last there is indication that town records 1820-1870 may be missing.

Perhaps in Lucy's final triumph over a life of hard work, bitter controversy, and disappointment she bequeathed a double legacy: her courageous strength of character clearly emerging from the almost invisible heritage of black American history, and the opportunity at her funeral for an important statement on slavery by the Reverend Lemuel Haynes, styled "the most significant Black man in America prior to the emergence of Frederick Douglas."¹⁵⁹ The Bennington newspaper reported, "A discourse adapted to the occasion was delivered by the Rev. Mr. Haynes, of Manchester," and appended to Lucy's obituary a verse of twenty-four lines, which if not attributable to Haynes, certainly must have had his approbation:

And shall proud tyrants boast with brazen face,
 Of birth—of genius, over Africa's race:
 Go to the tomb where lies their matron's dust,
 And read the marble, faithful to its trust.
 Let not within Columbia's happy bower,
 Infested lungs pollute the sacred tower:
 While Seargent, with his flagellating cord
 Drives them away, as did our blessed Lord:^{*}
 And Mallary, with his eloquence severe
 Dispels the fog and purifies the air.
 Shall drear Missouri's melancholy cell,
 Caress the demon, emigrant of hell?
 Shall there fell Slav'ry find a dark retreat?
 And vagrant despots stalk about the street?
 Then let our union be a fulsome name:
 Our tongues shall hiss them from our courts of fame.
 How long must Ethaopia's murder'd race
 Be doom'd by men to bondage & disgrace?

And hear such taunting insolence from those
 "We have a fairer skin and sharper nose?"
 Their sable mother took her rapt'rous flight,
 High orb'd amidst the realms of endless light:
 The haughty boaster sinks beneath her feet,
 Where vaunting tyrants & oppressors meet.

*John 2. 15.¹⁶⁰

Mentioned by name in the poem are Rollin Mallary and John Seargent [sic.] Rollin Carolas Mallary (1784-1831), of Poultney, Vermont's representative to Congress, "won some distinction as an opponent to the admission of Missouri with slavery."¹⁶¹ Mallary's speech in Congress on the Missouri question, including whether "any negro or mulatto has political rights in any state," was published in the *Vermont Gazette* of Bennington, January 23, 1821. John Sergeant (1779-1852), represented Pennsylvania in Washington.¹⁶² He too opposed the Missouri Compromise, and it was said, "his greatest strength was as a forensic legalist."¹⁶³ His February 1820 speech in Congress on the Compromise was published.

The Reverend Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833) became minister at Manchester, Vermont, in the summer of 1818 following a thirty-year pastorate at Rutland, and before his settlement at Granville, New York, in February 1822.¹⁶⁴ A possible connection with Lucy Terry Prince has previously been sought without success from the Rutland, Vermont, Historical Society;¹⁶⁵ her *Vermont Gazette* obituary has not been noted before.

One would certainly wish to know what were the "evidences that her memory was precious," and how "suitable respect" to her was demonstrated at the funeral. Most especially, what did Reverend Lemuel Haynes have to say that was "adapted" to so unique an occasion? The verses printed with Lucy's obituary, perhaps, offer a clue. It is particularly tantalizing in view of Ruth Bogin's assertion that "one of the striking facts about his prodigious output, the fruit of half a century of preaching, is its almost total silence about slavery."¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, funeral discourses seem to have been Hayne's specialty: "Few of Christ's ministers have been called more frequently on funeral occasions to administer instruction and consolation."¹⁶⁷

Lucy Terry Prince, America's first black poetess, champion for justice, and loyal wife and mother has partially emerged from obscurity. Although we now know more about her and Abijah, her husband, than most contemporary Afro-Americans, Lucy still remains somewhat in the shadows and will doubtless always be the subject of myth and folklore at the mercy of the romancer and the uninformed. Perhaps there is nothing more to be discovered except a few legal papers, a deed or two, or a newspaper item which has escaped notice. Lucy's story which has come down to the historian in documents and facts is like the life she led, an unadorned and unembellished saga in which there was no time for personal egotism or conceit. She was, nevertheless, a remarkable individual, "an assemblage of qualities rarely to be found among her sex," and this is the final and ultimate riddle and the Lucy Terry Prince we perhaps can never fully know.

EPILOGUE & BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

The Rodney B. Field correspondence with George Sheldon and the significant Giles B. Bacon 1877 letter to Field, forwarded to Sheldon, are the principal new sources of this study. George Sheldon drew upon them but missed some of their implications in his interpretation of Lucy Terry Prince. They are part of the manuscript collections of the Potumtuck Valley Memorial Association in Deerfield and do not appear to have been consulted by anyone since Sheldon until now.

Bacon, who Field described as “a full blooded Jackson Democrat,” represented Sunderland in the Vermont legislature twelve terms, and about 1858 contributed data on his town, including a bit about the Abijah Prince family, published in Abby Maria Hemeway’s *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer . . .* (Burlington, Vt., 1867-1891), vol. I pp. 238-240. This material has been repeated in later works, notably Hamilton Child’s *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Bennington County for 1880-81 . . .* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1880).

Rodney B. Field collaborated with John Wolcott Phelps in the earliest history of Guilford, Vermont, published in 1888, incorporated in Hemeway, vol. V pt. 3, published in 1891. Somewhat more authoritative than Bacon, Field’s account has also found its way into other works, notably George Sheldon’s.

Field is an almost contemporary, but not a first-hand source. “I have no recollection of ever having seen Lucy,” he wrote Sheldon, but he repeated information from his family and others: “I was at Bellows Falls in June and saw Col. Russell Hyde he told me he remembered Lucy Prince very well.” In most respects Field seems dependable, but there are enough inconsistencies to throw doubt on his credibility in the matter of Williams College and the United States Supreme Court of which he seems to be originator.

Field, the tenacious genealogist of the Field family (his important manuscript, “a volume no library in the land can match,” and correspondence were given to Sheldon’s Deerfield library in 1883), wrote Sheldon soon after the 1875 publication of *A History of the Town of Northfield . . .* which Sheldon co-authored. Field’s letters are largely genealogical in nature, inquiries and notices of individuals, but he does seem to have introduced Sheldon to Abijah Prince. Field also wrote to Bacon (letter, February 20, 1877 in the Russell Vermontiana Collection of the Martha Canfield Memorial Free Library, Arlington, Vermont), and Bacon’s important reply of February 27, 1877, was sent to Sheldon, “I also enclose a letter from Giles B. Bacon, Esq., of Sunderland, Vt., in relation to Abijah Prince family so you can make his family record in full . . . You can keep the letter among your archives if you like and should I ever want any of the information will know where to find it.”

George Sheldon is the principal perpetrator of Lucy Terry Prince’s story and legend. His 1893 article, “Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield” appeared in *New England Magazine*, new series vol. VIII no. 1 (March 1893), pp. [49]-60, and was widely circulated via the periodical and off-prints. It is an ambitious article, substantially accurate, and a pioneer contribution to Afro-American historical studies. Sheldon, however, made no attempt to verify what Rodney B. Field wrote him, and even is guilty of embellishment.

Sheldon kept a record of some 100 copies of the off-print sent to historical societies, libraries, and individuals including Francis Parkman. Copies were also sent to the *Atlanta Constitution*, *Augusta Chronicle*, *Charleston News & Courier*, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, *New Orleans Democrat*, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, *Richmond Dispatch*, *Jackson Clarion*, and *Louisville Journal*. Reviews from these sources might make interesting reading.

The more scholarly discovery revealed in this study is Lucy's *Vermont Gazette* obituary and her hitherto unknown connection with the Reverend Lemuel Haynes. A literary analysis of the verses included, as with "The Bars Fight" itself, might reveal something of significance in the thinking of the individuals as author.

What remains largely undone is a comprehensive search of newspapers for possible references to Lucy, and more especially the publication of her poem. It now seems reasonable to suppose that in Vermont where "her memory was precious," the ditty she recited in old age was perhaps communicated to a newspaper as "suitable respect" to her memory. However, issues of Bennington's *Vermont Gazette*, for the period 1819-1825, have been scanned without result.

NOTES

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⁹ George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts, The Times When and The People By Whom It Was Settled, Unsettled and Resettled, With A Special Study of the Indian Wars in the Connecticut Valley, With Genealogies* (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 1896), Vol. II:899.

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- ¹¹ Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday & Co., 1976), 674.
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- ¹³ *The Franklin Herald* [Greenfield, MA], XXX:550 (Aug. 21, 1821), 3.
- ¹⁴ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *New England Magazine* [new series], VIII:1 (March 1893), 50.
- ¹⁵ Jennifer Moon, "Master and Servant: Slavery in 18th Century Deerfield," Historic Deerfield Summer Fellowship Program (Deerfield, MA: 1987), 1.
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- ¹⁷ Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 33.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ¹⁹ Wilfred H. Munro, *The History of Bristol, R.I., The Story of The Mount Hope Lands . . .* (Providence, Rhode Island: J. A. & R. A. Reid, 1880 [republished by Bristol Historical Society and the Preservation Society, 1977]), 348.
- ²⁰ Wilfred H. Munro, *op. cit.*, 350.
- ²¹ Mark Anthony DeWolf Howe *Bristol, Rhode Island, A Town Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 67.
- ²² Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942 [Atheneum, 1971]), 4-45, 55.
- ²³ John Wolcott Phelps and Rodney B. Field, *The Local History of Guilford, Vt., 1754-1888*, Abby Maria Hemenway, ed. (Chicago: Abby Maria Hemenway, 1888), 79.
- ²⁴ John Wolcott Phelps and Rodney B. Field. *loc. cit.*
- ²⁵ Francis Olcott Allen, ed., *The History of Enfield, Connecticut . . .* (Lancaster, Penn: Wichersham Printing Co., 1900), 3 volumes.
- ²⁶ Colonial Society of Massachusetts *The Pyncheon Papers, Edited and with an Introduction by Carl Bridenbaugh and Juliette Tomlinson, Vol. II, Selections From the Account Books of John Pyncheon, 1651-1697* (Boston: 1985), 205, 279.
- ²⁷ Stephen Terry, *Notes of Terry Families in the United States of America Mainly Descended From Samuel of Springfield, Mass. . . .* (Hartford, CT: the Compiler, 1887).
- ²⁸ Hampshire County, Mass. Probate Court Registry, Book V (1729-1738) 83, 91-93, 111, 138. Northampton, MA, Hampshire County Probate Court, film at Historic Deerfield Library, Deerfield, MA.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* and Francis Olcott Allen, *op. cit.*, 2231-2.
- ³¹ Newbe Niles Puckell, *Black Names in America, Origins and Usage, Collected by Newbe Niles Puckell, Edited by Murray Heller* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1975), 6.
- ³² Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *op. cit.*, 201.
- ³³ Hampshire County, Mass. Probate Court. Registry, Book VI (1739-1745) 121, Northampton, MA, Hampshire County Probate Court, film at Historic Deerfield Library, Deerfield, MA.
- ³⁴ Thomas Williams, Papers, letters, correspondence . . . manuscript collections, New York Historical Society, New York; microfilm at Historic Deerfield Library; Susan Robeson McGowan, *Agreeable to His Geniis, John Partridge Bull (1731-1813), Deerfield, Massachusetts, Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, 1988, Appendix I.*
- ³⁵ George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts, op. cit.*, Vol. II, 112; Jenifer Moon, *op. cit.*, 7-8.
- ³⁶ Jenifer Moon, *op. cit.*, 13; original document, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library Manuscripts, Slavery papers and documents.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Rachel D. Carley, "The Wells-Thorn House," Deerfield, MA, Historic Deerfield Summer Fellowship Program, 1976, 1.

⁴⁰ Deerfield, Mass. First Church, "Records of the Church in Deerfield, 1731-1810 . . .," microfilm at Historic Deerfield Library; Original volume on deposit by First Church of Deerfield with the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *op. cit.*, 168.

⁴⁴ Jenifer Moon, *op. cit.*, 26.

⁴⁵ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 52.

⁴⁶ John Wolcott Phelps and Rodney B. Field. *op. cit.*, 79.

⁴⁷ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 56.

⁴⁸ Elijah Williams, Account book, Vol. 1 (1743-1750), manuscript at the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁴⁹ Elijah Williams, Account book, Vol. 2 (1746-1756), manuscript at the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁵⁰ Emma Lewis Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada Between 1677 and 1760 During the French and Indian Wars*, (Portland, ME: The Southworth Press, 1925), Vol. II:211.

⁵¹ George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I:545-549.

⁵² Clarissa Ashley to Elihu Ashley, July 12, 1775, manuscript in Ashley Family Papers, Elihu Ashley correspondence, 1769-1811. Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁵³ Joseph Barnard, Account book, July 1738-1769, manuscript, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA; the purchase also appears in Barnard's Day book, May 1737-August 1785, in the Deerfield library collections.

⁵⁴ Joanne D. Chaison, Head of Readers Services, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA, to David R. Proper, September 17, 1988, manuscript letter.

⁵⁵ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 58.

⁵⁶ Bernard Katz, "A Second Version of Lucy Terry's Early Ballad," *The Negro History Bulletin*, XXIX:8 (Fall 1966), 183-184.

⁵⁷ Communicated to author by Mrs. Mary Ball of Deerfield, ca. 1974.

⁵⁸ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 56.

⁵⁹ Josiah Howard Temple and George Sheldon, *A History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts, For 150 Years, With an Account of the Prior Occupation of the Territory by the Squakheags, and With Family Genealogies* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1875), 282.

⁶⁰ Mrs. Robert P. Johnston, Northfield Historical Society, Letter to David R. Proper, Nov. 10, 1988.

⁶¹ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 56.

⁶² Franklin County, Mass. Registry of Deeds, Greenfield, MA, Vol. 16:117.

⁶³ Phineas Field, "Slavery in Massachusetts" *History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 1870-1879* (Deerfield, MA: Published by the Association, 1890), Vol. I:480-486.

⁶⁴ Hampshire County, Mass. Probate Court. Registry Book VII (1745-1752), 230-232; 249-250, Northampton, MA, Hampshire County Court Probate Court, film at Historic Deerfield Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁶⁵ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *op. cit.*, 127.

⁶⁶ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield" *op. cit.*, 53.

⁶⁷ George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I: 567.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Ashley, *Ministers and People Excited to Diligence in Their Respective Duties, by the*

Consideration of Their Shortly Putting Off Their Earthly Tabernacles; A Sermon Preached at Northfield, Jan. 11, 1748, the Day Before the Interment of the Remains of the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Doolittle, Pastor of the Church There, Who Died January 9, 1748, in the 54th year of His Age, and 30th of His Ministry . . . (Boston, Printed by Rogers and Fowle, 1749).

⁶⁹ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *op. cit.*, 127.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Ashley, Sermon No. 1800, January 23, 1749, manuscript at Union Theological Seminary Library, New York; transcript with notes to *Grapes and Thorns, A Study Centered Upon Parson Jonathan Ashley of Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1712-80*, by Bruce McClellan, typescript, held by Historic Deerfield Library, Deerfield, MA; published in part by George Sheldon in "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield" and his *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts . . .*

⁷¹ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield" *op. cit.*, 58.

⁷² Bruce McClellan, *op. cit.*, I:133.

⁷³ Deerfield, Mass. Town Records; Births, Intentions, Marriages, and Deaths, film at Historic Deerfield Library.

⁷⁴ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," 56; Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *op. cit.*, 126.

⁷⁵ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *op. cit.*, 192.

⁷⁶ Deerfield, Mass. First Church, "Records of the Church in Deerfield, 1731-1810 . . ." microfilm at Historic Deerfield Library; Original volume on deposit by First Church of Deerfield with the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library.

⁷⁷ Amelia F. Miller Research File, Deerfield house lot documentation, records, prepared by Historic Deerfield with the University of Massachusetts Anthropology Department under a federal grant, at Historic Deerfield Library; George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts, op. cit.*, Vol. I:616-617.

⁷⁸ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 56.

⁷⁹ Stephen W. Williams, "Recollections of Mrs. Bradley, Collected by Dr. Stephen W. Williams," 1836, manuscript in Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library; photocopy in Amelia F. Miller Research File.

⁸⁰ Elijah Williams, Account Books, manuscripts, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁸¹ Jonathan Ashley, Day book, Deerfield, MA, February 1752-1778, manuscript, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁸² Salah Barnard, Account book, 1749-1774, manuscript, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁸³ Josiah Howard Temple and George Sheldon, *op. cit.*, 161: "Spinning was commonly done by the run. A run of yarn consisted of twenty knots, a knot was composed of forty threads, and a thread was seventy-four inches in length, or once round the reel . . . Tow, which was the refuse combing of flax, was spun on the great wheel."

⁸⁴ Thomas Williams, Account book, 1753-[1775], "Ledger No. 6," manuscript at New York Historical Society, microfilm at Historic Deerfield Library.

⁸⁵ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *op. cit.*, 93.

⁸⁶ Deerfield, Mass. Town Records; Births, Intentions, Marriages, and Deaths, "Births in Abijah Princes Negro Family," 157, manuscript, film at Historic Deerfield Library; also in Deerfield, Mass. Vital Records of Deerfield, Massachusetts To The Year 1850, Comp. by Thomas W. Baldwin, Boston, 1920, p. 104; and Deerfield, Mass. First Church, "Records of the Church in Deerfield, 1731-1810 . . . Names of Children Baptized . . ." microfilm at Historic Deerfield Library; Original volume on deposit by First Church of Deerfield with the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library.

⁸⁷ *Vermont Gazette* [Bennington, VT], XII:41, Whole No. 613 (Tuesday, August 1, 1821), 3.

⁸⁸ James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963);

William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1975).

⁸⁹ Martha R. Wright, "Bijah's Lucy of Guilford, Vermont," *The Negro History Bulletin*, XXVIII:7 (April 1965), 153.

⁹⁰ Rodney B. Field to Giles B. Bacon, Guilford, VT, February 20, 1877, manuscript letter in the Russell Vermontiana Collection, Martha Canfield Memorial Free Library, Arlington, VT. The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library holds Bacon's reply of February 27, 1877.

⁹¹ U. S. Bureau of the Census. *Heads of Families at the Seventh Census of the United States . . . 1850, Vermont*, microfilm at National Archives & Records Service, Waltham, MA.

⁹² Phelps, John Wolcott and Rodney B. Field. *op. cit.*, 79; Broad Brook Grange No. 151, ed., *Official History of Guilford, Vermont, 1678-1961, With Genealogies and Biographical Sketches*, (Guilford, VT: Published by the Town of Guilford and Broad Brook Grange N. 151, 1961), 146; Martha R. Wright, *op. cit.*, 153.

⁹³ Giles B. Bacon to Rodney B. Field, Sunderland, VT, February 27, 1877, manuscript letter in Prince Family folder, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

⁹⁴ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 56

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Massachusetts, Secretary of the Commonwealth. *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A Compilation From the Archives . . .* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1904), Vol. XII:789.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 790.

⁹⁸ Frederick Clifton Pierce, *Field Genealogy, Being of All the Field Family in America Whose Ancestors Were in This Country Prior to 1700 . . .* (Chicago: Hammond Press, 1901), 1:40.

⁹⁹ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 56.

¹⁰⁰ Broad Brook Grange No. 151, ed., *op. cit.*, 335.

¹⁰¹ George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts*, *op. cit.*, II:159.

¹⁰² Broad Brook Grange No. 151, ed. *op. cit.*, 145.

¹⁰³ *Vermont Gazette*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁴ Vermont. *Records of the Governor and Council of the State of Vermont*, ed. and pub. by Authority of the State of Vermont, Vol. III [1782-1791] (Montpelier, VT, 1875), 66. There seems to be no further information available concerning this incident. Guilford town records on microfilm at the State of Vermont Public Records Office, Montpelier, contain no references; application by mail and in person to D. Gregory Sanford, State Archivist, Office of the Vermont Secretary of State has been fruitless; and research at the Vermont Historical Society and in Julie P. Cox's *A Guide to the Papers of Vermont's Governors* and Thomas Chittenden sources in particular has likewise been unsuccessful. Mr. Sanford suggests that Vermont state archives have been moved more than once and suffered at least one fire, so the original of Lucy's petition and even the manuscript of the Council meeting itself have disappeared.

¹⁰⁵ Henry E. Noyes, *Genealogical Record of Some of the Noyes Descendants of James, Nicholas and Peter Noyes . . .* Boston, 1904, Vol. II:101.

¹⁰⁶ Broad Brook Grange No. 151, ed., *op. cit.*, 333.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 157, 242.

¹⁰⁸ U. S. Bureau of the Census. *Heads of families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790 . . .* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Gov' t. Print Off., 1907).

¹⁰⁹ Works Progress Administration. Federal Writers' Project. *Vermont, A Guide to the Green Mountain State . . .* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937), 159.

¹¹⁰ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, February 15, 1879, manuscript letter. Field Family Papers, Rodney B. Field genealogical collection, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

- ¹¹¹ Franklin County, Mass. Register of Deeds, Greenfield, MA, Vol. 16:117.
- ¹¹² Guilford, VT Town Books. Deeds, Vital Records, Vol. 2:131, microfilm, State of Vermont Public Records Office, Montpelier, VT.
- ¹¹³ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, February 15, 1879, manuscript letter, *op. cit.*
- ¹¹⁴ Lewis Cass Aldrich, ed., *History of Bennington County, Vt. . .* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1889), 468-475.
- ¹¹⁵ Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Bennington County, Vt. for 1880-81 . . .* (Syracuse, NY: Printed at the Journal Office, 1880), [206]-209.
- ¹¹⁶ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, February 15, 1879, manuscript letter, *op. cit.*
- ¹¹⁷ Giles B. Bacon to Rodney B. Field, Sunderland, VT, February 27, 1877, manuscript letter, Prince Family File. Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁰ Sunderland, Vt. Proprietors Records, Vol. 1, 1763-1826, microfilm, State of Vermont Public Records Office, Montpelier, VT.
- ¹²¹ Giles B. Bacon to Rodney B. Field, Sunderland, VT, February 27, 1877, manuscript letter, *op. cit.* (Sheldon's *History* Vol. II:265 has marriage under Tatnai).
- ¹²² Sunderland, Vt. Town Books. Deeds, Vital Records, Vol. 5:240, microfilm, State of Vermont Public Records Office, Montpelier, VT.
- ¹²³ Sunderland, Vt. Proprietors Records, Vol. I, 1763-1826, microfilm, State of Vermont Public Records Office, Montpelier, VT.
- ¹²⁴ *Vermont Gazette, op. cit.*
- ¹²⁵ John Wolcott Phelps and Rodney B. Field, *op. cit.*, 79.
- ¹²⁶ Lucy Terry Prince, 1730-1821, A Scrapbook of References, comp. by the Williams College Library, 1979, Williamsiana Collection, Williams College, Williamstown, MA. Rayford W. Logan, editor of *The Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1983), and a Williams alumnus, made application to the College for documentation in 1975, in answer to which Sarah C. McFarland at the direction of College President Chandler and archivist Professor Lawrence W. Beals, searched trustee minutes from their beginning in 1785 to 1821 without success. Ms. McFarland suggests that if Lucy sought admission of her son to the College, the matter would have been handled by the president and tutors; the trustees were not involved in admissions according to the institution's organizational rules.
- ¹²⁷ Williams College, Williamstown, MA, Trustee Minutes, Meeting of the Corporation, August 6, 1793, manuscript at Williams College archives.
- ¹²⁸ Arthur Latham Perry, *Williamstown and Williams College*, (Williamstown, MA: Published by the author, 1899), 210.
- ¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 200.
- ¹³⁰ Robert. R. R. Brooks, ed., *Williamstown, The First Two Hundred Years, 1753-1953 . . .* (Williamstown, MA: The McClelland Press, 1953), 187.
- ¹³¹ Dennis C. Dickerson, "Success Story With a Difference" [Gaius Charles Bolin, first black graduate of Williams College, 1889], *Williams Alumni Review*, LXXI:1 (Fall 1979) 2-6.
- ¹³² "The Iron-Willed Black Schoolmaster and His Granite Academy," *Middlebury College News Letter*, Middlebury, VT (Spring 1974).
- ¹³³ Richard Newman, *Lemuel Haynes, A Bio-biography* (New York: Lambeth Press, 1984), 3.
- ¹³⁴ "The Iron-Willed Black Schoolmaster and His Granite Academy," *op. cit.*
- ¹³⁵ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 57.
- ¹³⁶ Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Damndest Yankees, Ethan Allen and His Clan* (Brattleboro, VT: Stephen

Greene Press, 1976), 77, 203-204, 225, 227.

¹³⁷ Giles B. Bacon to Rodney B. Field, Sunderland, VT, February 27, 1877, manuscript letter, *op. cit.*

¹³⁸ The same Rodney B. Field of Guilford was the first to suggest Lucy appeared in a "United States Court" with Honorable Samuel Chase of Maryland presiding judge; George Sheldon labeled it the Supreme Court of the United States. Catherine R. Romano of the Library staff of the U. S. Supreme Court, Washington, D. C., has replied to inquiries that there is no evidence, record, or documentation that Lucy Terry Prince ever appeared before the United States Supreme Court. Ms. Romano suggests that perhaps Lucy was a principal or witness in a U. S. Circuit Court, a federal District Court, or the state superior or supreme court.

¹³⁹ James Haw, Francis F. Beirme, Rosamond R. Beirme [and] R. Samuel Jett, *Stormy Patriot, the Life of Samuel Chase* (Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society, 1980), 182. In this early period of American jurisprudence the Supreme Court met twice a year in Philadelphia, while the federal Circuit Courts held two sessions a year in each district in the circuit. The U. S. Circuit Court was composed of one Supreme Court justice and the federal District Court judge of the district. Therefore Supreme Court justices had to travel regularly over the three federal circuits—Eastern, Middle, and Southern. Each Supreme Court justice normally was assigned to one term of one Circuit Court per year. In his early years on the federal bench Chase "was getting used to the arduous business of riding circuit. His first assignments to the Eastern and Southern circuits required a great deal of planning for they took [him] into unfamiliar territory." *Ibid.*, 182. For a further account of this era in Supreme Court History, see Eleanor N. Schwartz "Hard-Travelling Justices; Circuit Riding Was an Essential—and Unloved—Part of the Job Description for the Early Members of the Supreme Court," *Constitution*, 2:1 (Winter, 1990), 20-25.

¹⁴⁰ John Wolcott Phelps and Rodney B. Field, *op. cit.*, 79.

¹⁴¹ Records of the U.S. Circuit Court-Vermont, "Case Files, 1792-1797," the U.S. District Court-Vermont, "Case Files, 1791-1797," and Record of Executions of the federal court in Vermont, September 1792 to October 1825, however, do not include this case or any case in which Lucy Terry Prince or those supposed to be associated with the Bronson litigation can be identified. Investigation at National Archives and Records Service Boston Branch, 380 Trapelo Rd., Waltham, MA, of the originals, Aug. 18, 1988; and letter, James K. Owens, Director, to David R. Proper, Waltham, MA.

Eli Bronson, or Brownson (1748-1830), was a leading and influential citizen of Manchester and Sunderland with far-reaching interests. He is supposed to have employed two of Vermont's leading lawyers in his cause: Stephen R. Bradley and Royall Tyler, the wit and poet. John Wolcott Phelps and Rodney B. Field, *op. cit.*, 79.

Tyler (1757-1826), is the best known of the supposed participants in Lucy's case. He arrived in Vermont in 1790, settled at Guilford the next year and at Brattleboro in 1801. He became State's Attorney for Windham County in 1794 and was appointed Assistant Justice of Vermont's Supreme Court in 1801. Six years later he became Chief Justice and held the post until 1813. His own papers "are few in number;" existing collections and research seems to focus on his literary talent. G. Thomas Tanselle, *Royall Tyler* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 211-212; Tyler's attitude toward the slavery question is documented in Jon T. Anderson, "Royall Tyler's Reaction to Slavery and the South," *Vermont History*, 42:4 (Fall 1974) 296-310; *Ibid.*, xii, 215-216; Marius B. Peladeau, *The Prose of Royall Tyler, Collected and Edited* (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Historical Society, 1972).

Stephen Row Bradley (1754-1830) of Westminster, on the other hand, was "a prominent

political leader, and exercised a large influence in laying the foundation of the state of Vermont." He was "admitted to practice in the Circuit court of the United States on the 12th of May, 1793," and became one of Vermont's first U.S. Senators in 1791. Benjamin H. Hall, *History of Eastern Vermont From Its Earliest Settlement to the Close of the Eighteenth Century, With a Biographical Chapter and Appendixes* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1858), 595-598; U. S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 . . .* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Gov't. Print. Off., 1971), 625.

Tyler, who in 1802 handed down a landmark Vermont Supreme Court judicial opinion reaffirming that state's rejection of slave ownership, and Bradley, who as a U. S. Senator introduced legislation to outlaw the slave trade in 1806, seem improbable participants in the kind of lawsuit Bronson sought to prosecute.

¹⁴² *Vermont Gazette* [Bennington, VT], XIII:51 (Wednesday, May 11, 1796), 2.

¹⁴³ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 57. Assisted by the Honorable Samuel Hitchcock, Esq., Associate Justice Chase, District Judge of the Vermont District, considered twenty-three cases. Isaac Tichenor (1754-1838) is supposed to have managed for Abijah and Lucy, and drew up the plea which Lucy argued before the bench. Tichenor was actively involved in the organization of the new state, served on the governor's council from 1786-1791, and the Supreme Court from 1791 to 1796. Following a brief term as U. S. Senator, he was elected Governor of Vermont in 1797. *Dictionary of American Biography*, edited by Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1964), Vol. IX:523.

Between 1792 and 1797, there were eight sessions of the U. S. Circuit Court held in Vermont, at Rutland, Windsor, and Bennington. The Associate Justices who presided over these courts were James Wilson in May 1793 at Windsor; William Paterson in May 1794 at Bennington; James Iredell in May 1795 at Windsor; William Cushing in November 1796 at Rutland; Oliver Ellsworth in May 1796 at Windsor; and Samuel Chase in May 1796 at Bennington; besides Chief Justice John Jay who presided at the June 1792 session at Bennington. The Maryland Historical Society's Chase papers do not contain references to the trial or its principals. Susan D. Weinandy, Manuscript Librarian, Maryland Historical Society, to David R. Proper, Baltimore, MD, February 27, 1988, manuscript letter, *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁴ Giles B. Bacon to Rodney B. Field, Sunderland, VT, February 27, 1877, manuscript letter, *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁵ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, undated [c1877] sheet of genealogical information in Field genealogical collection, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

¹⁴⁶ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, February 15, 1879, manuscript letter, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

¹⁴⁷ Broad Brook Grange No. 151, *op. cit.*, 146.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

¹⁴⁹ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, February 15, 1879, manuscript letter, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

¹⁵⁰ Phinehas Field, "Slavery in Massachusetts," *op. cit.*, 482; George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 57.

¹⁵¹ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, September 4, 1879, manuscript letter, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Giles B. Bacon to Rodney B. Field, Sunderland, VT, February 27, 1877, manuscript letter, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

¹⁵⁴ Rodney B. Field to George Sheldon, Guilford, VT, September 4, 1879, manuscript letter,

Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

¹⁵⁵ George Sheldon, "Negro Slavery in Old Deerfield," *op. cit.*, 57.

¹⁵⁶ William D. Pierson, *Black Yankees, The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 31.

¹⁵⁷ Giles B. Bacon to Rodney B. Field, Sunderland, VT, February 27, 1877, manuscript letter, *op. cit.* The same age, 112 years, is given by Bacon in his contribution to Vol. I of Abby Maria Hemenway's *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer, A Magazine Embracing A History of Each Town* [Burlington, VT], 1867, copyright 1859; if Bacon prepared his sketch of Sunderland (in which he calls Abijah "Price") in 1858, then it would have been just 112 years since the "Bars Fight" of 1746.

¹⁵⁸ *Vermont Gazette* [Bennington, VT], XII:41, whole no. 613 (Tuesday, August 1, 1821), 3.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Newman, *op. cit.*, 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Vermont Gazette* [Bennington, VT], XII:41, whole no. 613 (Tuesday, August 1, 1821), 3.

¹⁶¹ *Dictionary of American Biography, op. cit.*, Vol. VII:222.

¹⁶² U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, *op. cit.*, 1677.

¹⁶³ *Dictionary of American Biography, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII:589.

¹⁶⁴ Timothy Mather Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes, A. M., For Many Years Pastor of a Church in Rutland, Vt., and Late in Granville, New-York, With Some Introductory Remarks by William B. Sprague, D. D.* (New York: Published by John S. Taylor, 1839), 175, 213.

¹⁶⁵ David R. Proper to Rutland, VT, Historical Society, Deerfield, MA, June 3, 1988 and reply of Eleanor J. Elwert, June 6, 1988; also David R. Proper to Mrs. Eleanor J. Elwert, Deerfield, MA, July 22, 1988 and reply of Eleanor J. Elwert, July 24, 1988.

¹⁶⁶ Ruth Bogin, "'Liberty Further Extended' A 1776 Antislavery Manuscript by Lemuel Haynes," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XL:1 (January 1983), 88. Ms. Bogin has another contribution to "Notes and Documents," "'The Battle of Lexington': A Patriotic Ballad by Lemuel Haynes," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XLII:4 (October 1985), [499]-506.

¹⁶⁷ Timothy Mather Cooley, *op. cit.*, 134.