

An Act authorizing the Manumission of Negroes, Mulattoes, & others, and for the gradual Abolition of Slavery

Whereas all Men are entitled to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, yet the holding Mankind in a State of Slavery, as private Property, which has gradually obtained by unrestrained Custom and the Permission of the Laws, is repugnant to this Principle, and subversive of the Happiness of Mankind, the great End of all civil Governments:

Be it therefore enacted by this General Assembly, and by the Authority thereof it is enacted that no Person or Persons, whether Negroes, Mulattoes or others, who shall be born within the Limits of this State, on or after the first day of March AD 1784, shall be deemed or considered as Servants for Life or Slaves, And that all Servitude for Life to be born as aforesaid, or Slavery of Children in Consequence of the Condition of their Mothers, be and the same is hereby taken away, extinguished & forever abolished. And whereas Humanity requires that Children declared free as aforesaid remain with their Mothers a convenient Time from and after their Birth, To enable therefore those who claim the Services of such Mothers to maintain and support such Children in a becoming Manner, it is further enacted that such Support and Maintenance be at the Expense of the respective Town where those Reside and are settled, Provided however that the respective Town Councils may bind out such Children as Apprentices, or otherwise provide for their Support and Maintenance, at any Time after they arrive to the age of one Year and before they arrive to their respect ages of Twenty one and Eighteen: And whereas it is the earnest Desire of this Assembly that such Children be educated in the Principles of Morality and Religion, and instructed in reading, writing and Arithmetic, Be it therefore enacted by the Authority aforesaid, that due and adequate Satisfaction be made as aforesaid for such Education and Instruction: And for ascertaining the Allowance for such support and Maintenance, Education and Instruction aforesaid, the respective Town Councils are hereby required to adjust and settle the amounts in this behalf from Time to Time as the same shall be exhibited to them, which Settlement so made shall be final and the respective Towns, by Virtue thereof shall become liable to pay the Sums therein Specified and allowed And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid that all Persons held in Servitude or Slavery, who shall be hereafter emancipated by those who claim them, shall be Supported as other and not at the separate Expense of the Claimants Paupers if they become chargeable, provided they shall be between the Ages of Twenty one Years, if Males, and Eighteen Years, if Females, and forty Years, and are of sound Body and Mind, which Shall be judged of, and determined by the Town Councils aforesaid.

In the Lower House, 26 February 1784

It is voted and Resolved that the foregoing Drought of an Act passed as an Act of the General Assembly. Voted & etc., Benj. Bourne Clerk. In the Upper House. Read the same Day and concurred, By Order Henry Ward Secretary

THE LAST SLAVES IN RHODE ISLAND

Bruce C. MacGunnigle and Cherry Fletcher Bamberg FASG

Sometimes stories have clear beginnings and clear ends, sometimes not. The story of slavery in Rhode Island has a very long end indeed. Rhode Island adopted a limited act “prohibiting the importation of Negroes into this Colony” in June 1774. It was designed “for the future,” not affecting the status of thousands of then enslaved Rhode Islanders. People who came to the colony from places where slavery was legal were allowed to bring in and keep their slaves. Slaves could be brought from Africa on Rhode Island ships to the West Indies; if they “could not be disposed of” in the Caribbean, they could come to Rhode Island as slaves for one year.¹ Rhode Island did not begin to abolish the ownership of slaves until the Act of 1784.² Even that Act was hedged about with conditions that left large numbers of people—all those born before 1 March 1784—in slavery unless freed by their owners. It was “gradual emancipation,” not a freeing of slaves as was to happen with the Emancipation Proclamation in the next century. Children of slaves born after that date would be free only at the age of majority, 21 for men, or 18 for women.³ Slavery is considered to have ended in Rhode Island with the adoption of a new constitution in 1842. The numbers shown in the table (right) have been accepted for years as documenting the long end of slavery. This article will address the “final five” shown in the aggregate totals of the 1840 census. Was this number correct? More importantly for genealogists, who were these people?

Year	Slaves
1790	952
1800	381
1810	108
1820	48
1830	17
1840	5

Numbers of slaves in federal censuses of Rhode Island.

The number was certainly wrong, an error embedded in the original returns. The aggregate totals for 1840, certified by Barrington Anthony, Marshal of the United States for Rhode Island, 30 November 1840, show one slave in Providence,

1. The act excluded slaves sailing on Rhode Island ships. Slaves fleeing to Rhode Island for freedom were to be turned away, and those harboring them to be punished (John R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, 9 vols. [Providence, R.I.: State of Rhode Island, 1856–1865], 7:251–253).
2. Bartlett, *Recs of RI* [note 1], 10:7–8
3. For an overview of the long story, see Joann Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery, Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998).

two in Warwick, and two on Block Island.⁴ In copying out the totals Anthony or his clerk missed at least other slave, a man who had been counted in the sixth ward of Providence. The number 5, used by government bureaucrats, demographers, and historians ever since, should be 6. It seems folly to assume there were no other last slaves missed in copying.

As an aside, there are different ways to define the “last” slaves. One could take last surviving Rhode Islander who had once been a slave at some point in his or her life. That person is believed to have been James Howland of Jamestown. On 10 January 1859 the *Providence Daily Tribune*, reported his death on the 3rd of that month, at the age of 100, calling him the “Last of the Rhode Island Slaves.” James Howland may well have been the last surviving Rhode Island slave, but he was a free man when he died, and had been so for some time. The 1840 census lists four free blacks living with the Jamestown family of John Howland where James later died, so we know that James—the unnamed 94-year-old free black in the household—had been freed before then. At least six others had not been so lucky, and this article will set forth what is known or can be surmised about them, working from the households in which they lived.

The census of 1840 collected a lot of information: 13 columns of age categories each for white men and women, six columns each for “free colored” men and women, six columns each for male and female slaves. The censustakers entered numbers in these fifty columns, plus others about disabilities and education. Like the Rhode Island censuses of 1774 and 1782 and federal censuses from 1790 on, however, the 1840 census named only heads of household. The scanty data—only the name of head of household, only a range of age, no place of birth, no relationships—gives the researcher little to go on in the quest to identify the enslaved person. They were a woman 35–55, three women 55–99, a man 24–35, and a man 55–99. The ages are iffy at best, often conflicting in different records, but two of these people were clearly too young to have been born into slavery in Rhode Island. We know the name of only one of the final six slaves counted in the 1840 census, and that because her owner was a prominent man, the subject of much scholarship. What we can do for all of them is to look at the households in which they lived, remembering the standard caveats of research into enslaved people. Because a slave lived in a household, it does not prove (a) that the slave shared the surname of the head of household, as James Howland did, (b) that the slave necessarily belonged to the head of household, or (c) that the slave had a blood relation to anyone else in the household.

The families varied dramatically. Two of the families lived in Providence, two in Warwick, and two on New Shoreham (Block Island). The heads of four of the families were white; the two others, black. All but one were born in Rhode Island.

4. The totals, first as numbers in columns and then next to printed definitions are found at the beginning of the Newport returns (1840 U.S. Census, Newport, Newport Co., R.I., roll 504, pp. 148–150). The authors thank Jeff Howe for the exact location.

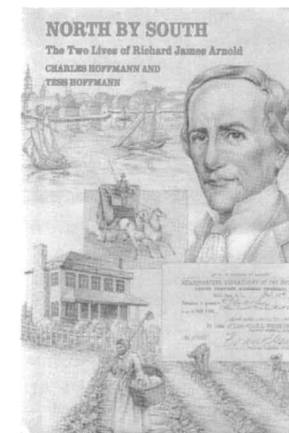
Of the four white heads of household, one was a major slaveowner in Georgia, one was an abolitionist minister born in England, and two were probably boarding poor people in their town. The two black heads of families in Warwick may have been caring for relatives or neighbors who belonged to someone outside the household. Even in the colonial period slaves might live in the homes of the owner’s relatives or business connections, bound out for work. Especially trusted slaves sometimes lived with their own family. In his 1883 memoir, for example, William J. Brown mentions that when his grandfather Noah Brown, a slave of Moses Brown, married Phillis in 1768, they “went to keeping house” in a house on Olney St., Providence that was owned by Moses Brown.⁵

Let’s take a closer look at these six very different households, hoping that future genealogists can use this background to solve the mystery of their identities and that other slaves will be discovered.

Head of household: Richard J. Arnold of Providence, Ward 2.

In 1840 this household contained twelve people, nine free whites (two boys under 5, a boy 5–9; a man 40–49, a girl 10–14; another girl 15–19, a woman 20–29, and two women 30–39, two free blacks (a man 24–35 and a woman 36–35); and finally one black slave woman 36–54. Of these one person was employed in agriculture and one white person over 20 could not read or write.⁶

Richard J. Arnold (1796–1873) was the son of Providence merchant and shipowner Welcome Arnold and his wife Patience Greene. Welcome Arnold, who died young in 1798, had been a supporter of the 1784 gradual emancipation act. An 1814 graduate of Brown University, Richard had education, wealth, and family connections from his youth. Richard’s brother Samuel Greene Arnold served as Rhode Island’s Lieutenant Governor 1852–53, 1861–62, and U.S. Senator 1862–63. When he married Louisa Caroline Gindrat in 1823, Richard acquired White Hall plantation in Bryan County, Georgia.⁷ Until the



For the story of this man and his divided loyalties, see this classic study.

5. William J. Brown, *The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, R.I. with Personal Recollections of Incidents in Rhode Island* [1883] (repr. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 6.
6. 1840 U.S. Census, Providence, Ward 2, Providence Co., R.I., roll 505, p. 352.
7. <http://www.richmondhillhistoricalsociety.com/coastal-bryan-heritage-trail.html>. For an old photo of White Hall in somewhat overgrown condition and an elegant photo of its patrician owner, see Buddy Sullivan, *Richmond Hill* (Charleston, S.C.: Buddy Sullivan and the



THE SABIN TAVERN, SOUTH MAIN STREET.

Richard J. Arnold's Providence home from Welcome Arnold Greene's The Providence Plantations for Two Hundred and Fifty Years (1886), p. 358.

Civil War he was a slave owner beyond the imagination of most Rhode Islanders, not in that state, of course, but on his plantation in Georgia. He listed 139 slaves in his account book in 1834 and valued his human property in 1835 at \$40,000.⁸ Richard spent summers in Providence in the house in which he had been born, the former Sabin Tavern at 100 South Main St.⁹ He also spent long periods in Newport mingling with other wealthy Southerners. Involved in high social, cultural, and political circles in Providence, Richard J. Arnold belonged to the Anti-Abolition Society to the distress of many of his Arnold relatives. He served as Rhode Island's Assistant Commissary General during the Dorr War.¹⁰ By 1860 he is said to have owned 15,000 acres in Bryan County and 195 slaves.¹¹ After the Civil War White Hall plantation remained in the family who attempted to convert it rice growing with free labor. It became a country retreat used for hunting, and, badly decayed, it burned down in 1914.¹² Still a wealthy man, Richard J. Arnold died in Providence in 1873 and is buried with his parents, wife, and four children in Swan Point Cemetery, Providence Historic Cemetery 3.¹³

The woman slave, 36–54, in 1840 was Mum Phebe or Phoebe, the “mammy” who had made the annual trek to Providence from Georgia since at least 1830

Richmond Hill Historical Society, 2006), 13, 52. White Hall survived the Civil War but burned down in 1914. Arnold owned many other tracts in the county (*ibid.*, 7).

8. Charles Hoffman and Tess Hoffman, *North by South: The Two Lives of Richard James Arnold* [hereafter Hoffmans, *North by South*] (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 91.
9. The *Providence Directory* of 1839 and that of 1841, both published in Providence by H.H. Brown, showed “Richard J. Arnold, merchant” at that address (15, 21). The building had been bought by his father after the burning of the *Gaspee* (“The Burning of the *Gaspee*,” *Newport Mercury*, 5 Oct. 1839, p. 2, from the *Providence Journal*).
10. “Rhode Island—Most Diabolical Outrage,” *Boston Recorder*, 1 July 1842, p. 104. His papers at R.I. Historical Society include a sheaf of receipts for food, lodging, and other supplies for militia, apparently totaling more than \$20,000 (Richard J. Arnold Papers, Mss 32, box 1, receipts, bills, etc. 1840–1849).
11. Historical marker for Richard James Arnold, shown on the Richmond Historical Society & Museum website <http://www.richmondhillhistoricalsociety.com>.
12. Hoffmans, *North by South* [note 8], 270.
13. Find A Grave Memorial# 29909959.

when she was counted there in the Arnold household.¹⁴ She was the mother of Tom Morel, b. ca. 1812, and Amos Morel, b. 1819, Arnold's most valued slave.¹⁵ While her age is unknown, she was at least a teenager in 1812, from the birth of her son Tom. In household accounts in 1840 Arnold mentions Phebe being given money to buy shoes for herself and Elizabeth.¹⁶ Arnold's twin sister Eliza Harriet (Arnold) Allen wrote to her brother when Mum Phebe died in 1841, “Mum Phebe I think was a very good woman & I doubt not the exchange was a happy one.”¹⁷

Her son Amos Morel, a mulatto, was one of the few Arnold slaves loyal to his former master. When the Civil War ended, he traveled, with enormous difficulty to Rhode Island where Arnold paid him back wages and gave him temporary work as “waiter” in the household. Morel returned to Bryan County, with two other former slaves, given by Arnold an acre near White Hall on which to build a church. He eventually bought four hundred acres of land.¹⁸

Head of household: John Dowling of Providence, Ward 6.

In 1840 this household also contained seven people: six free whites (one boy under 5, one man 30–39; one girl under 5, one girl 5–9, a woman 20–29, a woman 30–39) and one black male slave 24–35.¹⁹

John Dowling's household contained one person employed, in the curious terms of the census, as a “learned professional engineer.” John Dowling, who was born in Pevensy, Co. Essex, England 12 May 1807 and died in New York City 4 July 1878, was indeed one of the most learned men in Providence. He had taught languages (Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and French) at classical institutes in London, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire, England before being ordained a Baptist minister in 1832. His interests extended far



Frontispiece of John Dowling's History of Romanism (1845) He is shown kneeling in the foreground.

14. There were two women slaves in the household then, one 10–23, the other 36–54 (1830 U.S. Census, Providence, East Side of River, Providence Co., R.I., roll 168, p. 35). The Hoffmans identify the younger woman as Mary, who ran away, and the older as Mum Phebe (*North by South* [note 8], 91).
15. Hoffmans, *North by South* [note 8], 44.
16. Richard J. Arnold Papers, Mss 32, R.I.H.S., box 2, bound volume 10, chronological order, July entry. Elizabeth was the cook.
17. Eliza Harriet Allen to Richard J. Arnold, quoted in Hoffmans, *North by South* [note 8], 45.
18. Hoffmans, *North by South* [note 8], 166–178, 255, 268–269.
19. 1840 U.S. Census, Providence, Ward 6, Providence Co., R.I., roll 505, p. 236.

beyond classical languages to ancient church history and contemporary issues of social justice. He received an honorary degree from Brown in 1834.²⁰ A prolific author, he wrote books for school children as well as dense, scholarly works that are still in print today. Dowling flitted from church to church after arriving in America in 1832, serving the Second Baptist Church in Newport until July 1836 and then several churches in New York City before coming to the Pine St. (later Central Baptist) Church in Providence. He lived at 5 Plane Street, near the church.²¹ Dowling was to leave Providence by 1844 for a succession of other pulpits in New York City, Philadelphia, and Newark, N.J. He served longest, in two terms totaling twenty years, at the Berean Church in New York City.²² He died at New-York State Homeopathic Asylum for the Insane at Middletown, New York 4 July 1878 a few months after suffering a head injury in a fall on his return from a lecture in Jersey City.²³

The age of the slave (24–35) in Dowling's Providence household in 1840 allows an estimated date of birth in the nineteenth century. If he was born decades after the 1784 cut-off, he must have been born outside Rhode Island. Rev. John Dowling was a passionate abolitionist who addressed the evils of slavery from the pulpit and lectern. In 1833 Arnold Buffum wrote for *The Liberator* of a meeting in Catskill, N.Y. at which "Dowling, a Baptist minister from England, addressed the audience in a strain of eloquence, expressive of the feelings with which Englishmen abhor slavery."²⁴ It seems likely that he was sheltering a slave from another state in his home. Whatever the complicated truth may have been, Dowling surely was acting to protect the slave.



John Dowling as an older man. The etching from a photograph, appeared in his obituary in Frank Leslie's Sunday Magazine.

20. "Exercises on Commencement Week," *Newport Mercury*, 6 Sept. 1834, p. 2.
21. *Providence Directory 1841* (Providence, R.I.: H.H. Brown, 1841), 61
22. *Historical Catalogue of Brown University, 1764–1904* [hereafter *Historical Catalogue of Brown University*] (Providence, R.I.: The University, 1905), 363–364. "The Late Rev. John Dowling," *Frank Leslie's Sunday Magazine*, 4 (July to December 1878): 373.
23. "Illness of Rev. John Dowling, D.D.," *New York Times*, 25 June 1878; "Obituary," *New York Herald*, 5 July 1878, p. 8.
24. "Catskill, 9th mo. 24, 1833," *The Liberator* (Boston), 5 Oct. 1833, p. 2. He supported the Rhode Island Suffrage Association in 1841 (Letter to Jesse Calder (the secretary), published in the *New Age and Constitutional Advocate* [Providence], 3 Sept. 1841, p. 2).

Head of household: Henry Bates of Warwick.

In 1840 this household contained seven people: six free blacks (a boy under 10, a man 24–35, three females 10–23, and one woman 24–35) and one black woman slave 55–99, with one person employed in agriculture.²⁵

Henry Bates was born in Warwick, Kent Co., Rhode Island ca. 1816, the son of Martha ("Patty") Lippitt, and died there of consumption 21 August 1879, age 63.²⁶ He married twice, first, by 1835 (birth of child) to a woman who died before 1850, and, secondly, in Providence 8 April 1855 Mary A.M.C. Jackson, who was born in Connecticut ca. 1816.²⁷ For as long as he can be traced, he lived in a cluster of free black families in Old Warwick on what is now Sandy Lane. Henry Bates ("man of color") bought one piece of land from Benedict and Sarah (____) Arnold in 1836 and another from Samuel Low in 1839.²⁸ Next door in 1840 was Cato Holden and beyond him Robinson Lippitt. In 1850 Henry Bates, 40, and his children Eliza F. Bates, 15, Joseph A. Bates, 11, and Sarah M. Bates, 2, were living in the household of Mar____ Holden, a 75-year-old black woman, next door to Robinson Lippitt, 57, and Patty Lippitt, 50.²⁹

Henry's mother Patty Lippitt died 3 October 1861, aged about 75, on the road near her home in Old Warwick, according to the *Providence Evening Press*.³⁰ By that time Henry had become mentally incompetent and had been intermittently under the care of a guardian, Thomas Arnold. Arnold handled the probate of Patty's estate (\$196.72), giving cash and household furniture to Bates.³¹ The

25. 1840 U.S. Census, Warwick, Kent Co., R.I., roll: 504, p. 111.
26. Henry's death record names only his mother Martha Lippitt (R.I. Vital Records, Deaths, 79:986). While that had certainly been her name since at least 1850, she may well have been married previously to a man named Bates.
27. The 1850 census shows him living with only his children. Edwin M. Snow, *Alphabetical Index of the Births, Marriages, and Deaths Recorded in Providence* (Providence, R.I.: City of Providence, 1880), Vol. 2 (Marriages 1851–1870), 29, citing original 6:156. Mary's place of birth and age from 1865 R.I. Census, Warwick, E.D. 3, Kent Co., R.I., 1:180.
28. Warwick Land Evidence, 21:508; 23:476.
29. 1850 U.S. Census, Warwick, Kent Co., R.I., roll 841, p. 187A. Patty was said to be 75 when she died eleven years later.
30. R.I. Vital Records, 61:830–831. Patty was on her way home at 9 PM from Apponaug with groceries when she fell. The coroner's jury, clearly baffled, attributed her death to a fit or "some other disease to the jurors unknown" (*Providence Evening Press*, 12 Oct. 1861, p. 2, repr. from the *East Greenwich Pendulum*). The daughter of Pero and Violet Cheese, Patty was buried in Warwick Historical Cemetery 105, the Lippitt/Spywood Lot (John E. Sterling, *Warwick, Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries* [Baltimore, Md.: Gateway Press, Inc., 1997], n. pag.). The inscription on her now missing gravestone was recorded by James N. Arnold in 1891 as "Patty (Lippitt) Cheese, daughter of Pero and Violet," perhaps reflecting the preference of the Cheese women to use their maiden names.
31. Robinson Lippitt, Patty's husband, the son of Cyrus and "Sylvea" (____) Lippitt, had died of "neppritis" (nephritis) 31 Dec. 1857, age 60 (R.I. Vital Records, 57:826; Warwick Probate Letters of Administration, 1:22). Henry's condition is mentioned in his mother's probate records (Warwick Wills and Probate, 14:16–17; Probate Letters of Administration, 1:59).

Henry Bates,
from the D.G.
Beers Rhode
Island
State Atlas,
1870



inventory of 9 December 1861 shows Patty's remarkably prosperous domestic setting: lots of furniture, feather beds, cherry tables, carpets for each room, clocks, a looking glass, silver and china, ornaments and books, as well as \$107.27 deposited in People's Savings Bank.³² Despite his inheritance Henry's estate had declined so much by the early 1870s that his guardian, still Thomas Arnold, had to sell some of his property for his support.³³ Wilson D. Wilcox, a neighbor, was appointed administrator of Henry's estate in 1879. Predictably Henry's probate record does not reflect his mother's affluence. At his death Henry Bates had lived in a house with ten acres on the south side of "Sand Lane," i.e., the modern Sandy Lane, near Little Pond, but the land had to be sold to pay the debts of the estate.³⁴

The identity of the woman slave in 1840 has not been established.

Head of household: Collet or Colleet Lippitt of Warwick.

In 1840 this two-person black household contained one free woman 55–99 and one male slave 55–99.³⁵

Unlike Arnold and Dowling whose residence in Providence was intermittent or temporary, Collet appears to have been deeply rooted in her community. She had been a Warwick resident at least since 1800 when the census showed Collet Lippitt, "B.M." (the initials usually stood for "Black Man") as head of a household of four slaves. It was an unusual census entry in that slaves rarely were counted as heads of their own household. She was not named in the 1810 census—not necessarily because she was not in Warwick—but because the censustaker there made all black head heads of household anonymous by using "B" instead of their names and lumping all data into a single total. He rarely noted slaves, even by a digit. Collet Lippitt reappears in 1820, a free black woman over 45, with a free

32. Warwick Wills and Probate, 13:233–234.

33. Arnold sold one lot to Samuel Bliss in 1870 and another to neighbor J.O. Lincoln in 1872 (Warwick Land Evidence 36A-35; 37B-359).

34. Warwick, Kent Co., R.I. Probate Bonds, 1:525. The land was sold in two parcels to neighbors Abraham Lockwood and John O. Lincoln (Warwick Land Evidence, 42F:34, 36).

35. 1840 U.S. Census, Warwick, Kent Co., Rhode Island, roll 504, p. 110.

black young man 14–25 and one enslaved black man over 45. This configuration suggests but does not prove a family with a free mother, an enslaved husband, and a free son. "Colert Lippitt" appears in the 1830 census as head of a household of two free black women, one 36–54 and the other 55–99.³⁶ She does not appear in the 1850 census. No vital records, deeds, probate records, newspaper notices, or gravestones provide any clues as to her identity.

Head of household: George G. Sheffield of New Shoreham.

The 1840 census is ambiguous about the makeup of Sheffield's household but, in addition to the whites and two free blacks, it clearly shows one black slave woman, 55–100, in his household.³⁷

George Gardiner Sheffield was born on Block Island 24 February 1792, the son of Edmund and Marcy (Littlefield) Sheffield, and died in South Lyme, New London Co., Connecticut 8 May 1874. He married Eliza Paine, daughter of William S. Paine, 4 January 1816 on Block Island.³⁸ "Squire" George G. Sheffield was an important man on Block Island, serving for decades as warden of the town council and representing his town in the General Assembly. A substantial property owner, he is said to have lived in a house, formerly belonging to Ray Thomas Sands, on the west side of Corn Neck Road on the northern tip of the island.³⁹ In early 1874 he sold land on the southeast end of the island as the site of Southeast Lighthouse, and its important fog signal was sounded before his death that year.⁴⁰ His gravestone in the Old Stone Church Burial Ground in East Lyme, Connecticut bears the epitaph "He was respected most by those who knew him best."⁴¹

The identity of the slave at his house in 1840 remains unknown. The absence of slaves in his household before this census suggests that she did not belong to him. She may have been one of the island poor who was being cared for in his private home. Block Island had no poor house at the time. Town meeting records

36. 1800 U.S. Census, Warwick, Kent Co., R.I., roll 45, p. 36; 1820 U.S. Census, Warwick, Kent Co., R.I., roll 116, p. 60; 1830 U.S. Census, Warwick, Kent Co., R.I., roll 167, p. 258.

37. The original gives the total number of persons in the household as ten, and yet the marks in the columns add up to only nine (1840 U.S. Census, New Shoreham, Newport Co., R.I., roll 504, p. 272). That total depends on the interpretation, adopted by Ancestry.com, of the first digit (for boys 10–16) as a 3. The original is unclear, the digit perhaps written over as a 1. The authors thank Jeff Howe for pointing out this conundrum.

38. Arnold, RIVR, 4:4:36; 4:4:19. *Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island*, x vols. (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1908), 1:72. Also G. Andrews Moriarty, "One Branch of the RI Sheffields," *NEHG Register*, Vol. 104 (Jan. 1950), 12–13. For an overview of the Sheffield family on Block Island, see G. Andrews Moriarty, "Some Notes on Eighteenth Century Block Island," *NEHG Register*, Vol. 105 (Oct. 1951), 249–272, at 267–268.

39. Robert M. Downie, "May 19, 1824: A vacant field with something to say," 18 May 2011, *The Block Island Times*. The house had largely disappeared by the 1940s.

40. "Southeast Lighthouse Funded and Built," Block Island Historical Society website, <http://blockislandhistorical.org>.

41. Find A Grave Memorial# 22151372.

1837 to 1841 show arrangements for the care of two unnamed black women paupers but do not mention slaves.⁴² George G. Sheffield wrote a report on care of the poor on the island ten years later.

We have at present two male paupers, the one aged 83, the other 59 years—also four female paupers whose several ages are 92, 46, 42 and 41 years. They are let at auction to be well clothed and provided for, under direction of a Committee, who visit them once a month to ascertain their treatment. The compensation we pay this year for keeping our poor is \$198, and we pay our physician \$25 per year to attend them... A part of them have been chargeable to the town for about twenty years. One of them for two years only. They are all white persons. They are all sane, with the exception of the aged female, who is now childish. They have always been single.⁴³

Head of household: Simon Ball of New Shoreham.

In 1840 this household contained 14 fourteen people: four whites (a boy 10–14, a teenage boy 15–19; a man 60–69; one woman 40–49), nine free blacks (four boys under 10, a man 24–35; three females 10–23; one woman 36–54), and one black woman slave 55–99.⁴⁴

Simon Ball was a generation older than Sheffield, born ca. 1772, son of Peter and Elizabeth (Sims) Ball. He married, first, Mary (“Polly”) Littlefield who became the mother of his children, and then the much younger Nancy _____, the woman 40–49 shown in the 1840 census. He died on Block Island 8 May 1855.⁴⁵

Ball’s household in 1830 included no slaves.⁴⁶ None of the blacks, including the woman slave, has been identified.

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42. Jeff Howe, email to Cherry Fletcher Bamberg, 9 Jan. 2016.

43. George G. Sheffield to T.R. Hazard, 23 Sept. 1850, in *Report on the Poor and Insane in Rhode-Island, Made to the General Assembly at Its January Session 1851* (Providence, R.I.: State of Rhode Island, 1851), 16–17. For the Sheffield family on Block Island see G. Andrews Moriarty, “Some Notes on Eighteenth Century Block Island,” *NEHG Register*, Vol. 105 (Oct. 1951), 249–272, at 267–268.

44. 1840 U.S. Census, New Shoreham, Newport Co., R.I., roll 504, p. 270.

45. Ball Families of North America as collected by Dr. Joseph L. Druse (1915–2004), 3x5 inch index card file, last updated December 2001, Personal Library of David G. Ball, North Vancouver, BC, Canada (<http://www.newenglandballproject.com>). Simon is not mentioned among Peter’s children in Nicholas Ball’s brief genealogy *Edward Ball and Some of His Descendants* (Newport, R.I.: The Author, 1891), 9.

46. 1830 U.S. Census, New Shoreham, Newport Co., R.I., roll 167, p. 111.



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