

**A COMPILATION OF AFRICAN
AMERICANS AND HISTORIC SITES
IN THE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON
Volume II**

PRESENTED BY

**THE AFRICAN AMERICAN
HISTORIC DESIGNATION COUNCIL (AAHDC)**



**TOWN OF HUNTINGTON
NEW YORK**

FEBRUARY 2009

**AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC
DESIGNATION COUNCIL
(AAHDC)**



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Gennifer Ellis
Phyllis Pottinger
Richard H. Robertson, III
Charla Bolton

Robert C. Hughes, Town Historian
Rex Metcalf, Advisor

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INFORMATIONAL SHEET

A separate informational sheet has been inserted in this booklet specifically for you to share pictures or any information you have about Huntington’s African American heritage. Your information will allow the Council to compile and preserve pertinent information about the history and contributions of African Americans in the Town and it may appear in future publications such as this one.

**Please return the sheet to:
MRS. IRENE MOORE, AAHDC CHAIR
c/o COUNCILWOMAN GLENDA JACKSON
TOWN OF HUNTINGTON, 100 MAIN STREET
HUNTINGTON, NEW YORK 11743**

GREETINGS FROM SUPERVISOR FRANK PETRONE AND COUNCILWOMAN GLENDA JACKSON



Dear Residents,

It has been a tremendous year for African-Americans in our nation. Since the last publication of this booklet, our country has elected the first African-American President in the history of the United States. This special moment was bolstered by the local excavation of previously undiscovered slave quarters at the Joseph Lloyd Manor and the designation of the presumed first African-American owned home in the Town, the Peter Crippen House.

At its inception, the African-American Historic Designation Council (AAHDC) was charged with the ever-important task of preserving our history in the Town of Huntington, specifically as it pertained to the recognition of prominent African-American leaders. The AAHDC has continued to work closely with the Historic Preservation Commission and the Town Historian to create a more thorough narrative of the legacy of African-Americans in Huntington.

It is our hope that with the second addition of this booklet, we will help to educate the public about the history of African-Americans in the Town and encourage Huntington residents to come forward to share their personal family histories.

With your continued assistance, we can bring this goal to life. The AAHDC has provided an insert in this booklet for your convenience that will allow you to share your family history. Please complete the insert and forward it to the address listed on page four. The Council will contact you if additional information is needed.

On behalf of the Town Board, we would like to thank the African-American Historic Designation Council for its diligence in compiling this booklet and sharing it with residents of Huntington and also for their constant commitment to keeping our history alive for future generations.

Sincerely,

FRANK P. PETRONE
Supervisor

GLENDA A. JACKSON
Councilwoman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank P. Petrone".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenda A. Jackson".

FOREWORD

In recognition of Black History Month, The African American Historic Designation Council (AAHDC) is pleased to present this booklet which includes a compilation of historic sites, and African Americans who have not only contributed to the rich history of Huntington, but have made a difference in the larger society. As indicated in the Town of Huntington's mandate, the Council, in collaboration with the Huntington Historic Preservation Commission and the Town Historian, assists the Town in identifying and researching historic sites having ties to African American heritage in the Town and explore the many potential undiscovered locations which deserve to be celebrated and protected.

To ensure proper recognition of African Americans' contributions to the Town of Huntington, the Council is requesting your assistance. Please send copies of your information to the address listed in this booklet on page 4. The success of this endeavor will depend largely on your support and the support of others like you.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to thank the Town Board specifically Councilwoman Glenda Jackson for assisting the Council with facilitating its mandate as well as the publication of this booklet. With your help, the contributions and accomplishments of African Americans will be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,



Irene Moore, AAHDC Chair

Members:

Gennifer Ellis

Phyllis Pottinger

Richard Robertson, III

Charla Bolton

Robert C. Hughes, Town Historian

Rex Metcalf, Advisor

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC DESIGNATION COUNCIL (AAHDC) MANDATE

The African American Historic Designation Council will assist the Town in identifying and researching historic sites having ties to African American heritage in the Town of Huntington and explore the many potential undiscovered noteworthy locations in the Town which deserve to be celebrated and protected. Some of the Town Board's historic designated landmarks include the John Coltrane House in Dix Hills, where he wrote "A Love Supreme," and the Booker T. Washington House in Fort Salonga where his family spent a few summers before his death in 1915. The AAHDC will help to further the endeavor of the Town to preserve and celebrate black history.

The African American Historic Designation Council will engage in the significant task of ensuring proper recognition of all sites that hold historical value to African American history in the Town. The Council will locate and research important areas, which have been key to the legacy of African Americans in Huntington, and make recommendations, where appropriate, for landmark designation under the Town Code.

The African American Historic Designation Council is comprised of (5) members. Each Town Board Member, along with the Supervisor, appoints one person to the Council. Such appointees are chosen due to their exemplification of leadership within the Town of Huntington as well as their interest and concern for the African American history that our Town possesses.

The African American Historic Designation Council will serve as a subcommittee of the Huntington Historic Preservation Commission and the Town Historian shall serve as an ex officio non-voting member and as Secretary of the Council.

The members of the Council serve without compensation.

Meeting Procedures:

The Council shall meet as such times as the Chair of the Council or a majority thereof may determine. The Council shall keep minutes of its meetings and proceedings. A Quorum of the Council shall be duly constituted with four of the members present or by proxy.

Powers/Duties. The Council shall:

- Recommend to the Huntington Historic Preservation Commission particular places, sites, structures and buildings, or districts of African American historical significance, for consideration as historic landmarks or historic districts in accordance with the procedures set forth in Article VI of the Town's Zoning Code.
- Review and issue written reports on all municipal proposals relative to uses or structures affecting African American landmarks or historic districts.
- Make studies and inquiries into federal and state grants and tax incentive programs relative to the preservation or rehabilitation of designated African American historic landmarks and districts.
- Increase public awareness of the value of historic, architectural, and cultural preservation by developing and participating in public information programs.

HISTORY OF COUNCIL

The first official meeting of the African American Historic Designation Council (AAHDC) was hosted by Councilwoman Glenda A. Jackson on Thursday, March 23, 2006 at 6:00 p.m., in room 304 of Town Hall, 100 Main Street, Huntington, New York. Joined by Town Historian Robert Hughes, Councilwoman Jackson discussed the vision and objectives of the AAHDC. Expressing deep appreciation for the history of the Town, Councilwoman Jackson remarked, "This is a vital point in our Town's legacy, the preservation of our history is essential and needed for all. This Council will reveal untold history and is a safeguard for our children."

Appointed members were; Irene Moore, John Johnson, Jerry Brown, Sr., Thelma Jackson-Abidally and Gennifer Ellis. Present at the first meeting were Mrs. Gennifer Ellis, Mrs. Thelma Jackson-Abidally, Mr. John Johnson, Ms. Susannah Mrazek, Mrs. Irene Moore, and J. Stewart Moore, Esq. The current members are: Irene Moore, Chair, Gennifer Ellis, Phyllis Pottinger, Richard H. Robertson, III, Charla Bolton, Robert Hughes, Town Historian, and Rex Metcalf, Advisor

The African American Historic Designation Council (AAHDC) began as a vision of Attorney J. Stewart Moore. Mr. Moore attended a meeting of the Huntington Historic Preservation Commission in 2005 where he was invited to speak. He spoke about the importance of placing a resolution on the agenda for creating an African American Historic Designation Council in the Town of Huntington, and later presented the idea to Councilman Mark Cuthbertson. Councilman Cuthbertson was instrumental in presenting this resolution to the Town Board, and on September 13, 2005, resolution Number 2005-596 to create the African American Historic Designation Council was voted on and passed by the Board.

Goals and Objectives:

- To locate, research, and preserve African American history and culture through collecting and documenting information, and sponsoring programs that will enhance research and promote public interaction.
- To become an outstanding resource for African American historical information.
- To educate and promote an understanding and appreciation of history through collections, exhibitions, and programming.
- To conduct and develop programs using various interdisciplinary initiatives to educate and inform the community.
- To preserve and tell the story of Huntington through informative and engaging exhibits.

ONE HUNDRED WONDERFUL YEARS! A 2008 HUNTINGTON CENTENARIAN

by Phyllis Pottinger

Lynnette Vassall-Crawford, a resident of Huntington for more than half-a-century, celebrated her 100th birthday on Saturday, June 7, 2008. Family, friends and parishioners celebrated with Lynnette at a special Mass at her church, St. Francis of Assisi in Greenlawn. Lynnette was presented with a Proclamation from the Town of Huntington, presented to her by Councilwoman Susan Berland. Following the Mass a birthday party was held in Lynnette's honor.



Lynnette is a graduate of New York University College of Nursing, BS Class of 1945. She hails from Jamaica, West Indies, one of four girls born to William and Septina Vassall. Lynnette came to the United States of America at age 7, residing in Brooklyn for years, until she purchased property in Huntington where she has lived for half-a-century.

Her father, Dr. William Vassall, was a headmaster, civil engineer and author of two books: Under the Skin, published in 1932 and The Origin of Christianity, published in 1952. Under the Skin was reviewed by several newspapers including the *Amsterdam News*.

Lynnette, the third of the Vassall's four daughters, is the last surviving one. One of Lynnette's sisters was a teacher, one was a physician and the oldest sister Lurline was a nurse.

Lurline and their father were instrumental in the development of the Harlem Nursing School after Lurline was denied admission to other nursing schools because she was African American. Once the nursing school was opened it remained an institution in the community. Lynnette followed the career path of her sister Lurline and became a nurse. She graduated from the Harlem Hospital School of Nursing, receiving her nursing diploma in 1932.

Lynnette, an outstanding citizen, philanthropist, fundraiser and professional nurse worked tirelessly to improve the lives of individuals, families and communities until her retirement at age 55 in 1963. She held her first job as a Child Health Station Nurse with the New York City Department of Health. She also worked as a Visiting Nurse, a School Nurse, and a Chest Clinic Nursing Supervisor, in addition to her service as a nurse, Lynnette served as a founding member of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Greenlawn. Lynnette demonstrated leadership, motivation, determination, dedication, and devotion to fundraising with other parishioners for the building of the church in its early years.

Lynnette has traveled the world and recalls memories of people and favorite places, including Medugorje, a town located in Bosnia and Herzegovina, best known due to reported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary and which is now visited by pilgrims from around the world as a shrine. (www.wikipedia.org)

At the interview, I asked her what she believes contributes to her longevity. Without hesitation she said, "I like to help people and try to be nice to all people." What message will she pass onto the future generations? "Be nice to one another, love one another and *help* one another," says Lynnette. She firmly believes that when we do this and live this way it will be a beautiful world.

One of Lynnette's most treasured possessions is a poem written by her father dedicated to her. He uses each letter of her name to describe her in glowing terms. Lynnette's favorite song is "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." How fitting! Lynnette is a sweetheart to so many. She will always be remembered as thoughtful, caring, loving, giving and considerate.

Lynnette - Enjoy your magnificent and memorable milestone!

ALEXANDER RICHARDSON

by Gennifer Ellis

Alexander Richardson was born on December 29, 1930, to Thomas and Madeline Richardson. Thomas Richardson had migrated from St. Martin, French West Indies in 1918 and his wife Madeline joined him two years later.

Their union produced three sons, the late Conrad, Thomas and Alexander. Alexander graduated from St. Patrick's Elementary School in Huntington, and St. Dominic's High School in Oyster Bay.

Alexander enlisted in the United States Air Force in March 1949. After basic training, he was assigned to the U.S. Air Force Band School in Washington, D.C. Upon completion of this program, he was assigned to the 64th Air Force Band in Waco, Texas. Alexander received an Honorable Discharge in November 1952.

Mr. Richardson was married to the late Agnes Richardson, who passed away on April 24, 1964. He is the proud father of two children: Debra Ann Richardson-Pippinger and Alexander, Jr., and the grandfather of two grandchildren: Donovan A. Richardson, age 12, and Savannah A. Richardson, age 11.

Alexander joined the Huntington Police Department in November 1954. He was the fourth African American assigned to the Police Department. The Department merged into the Suffolk County Police Department in January 1960.

His duties included various traffic posts in Huntington, Cold Spring Harbor and East Northport. He also served at the Babylon sub-station (1st Pct.) until August 1963. Mr. Richardson retired on May 10, 1966 after he was injured while on duty.



Mr. Richardson is proud of his accomplishments throughout his life, one in particular is marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the March on Washington, D.C., in August 1963.

He was a member of the Huntington Township Concert Band where he played the Trombone for 12 years.

In 1968, Mr. Richardson became the first black District Sales Manager for Knickerbockers Liquor Company in the New York Metropolitan area. He served ten years in this position. While on vacation in Jamaica, West Indies in 1978, Alexander was featured in Jet and Ebony Magazines.

Mr. Richardson currently splits his time between Huntington and Chesapeake, Virginia. He enjoys reading, traveling, gardening and listening to different types of music. His daily activities include walking, and cycling.

RICHARD H. ROBERTSON, III

by Irene Moore

Richard H. Robertson, III, the first African American policeman in the Town of Huntington, was born in Huntington, New York on October 18, 1923. Mr. Robertson excelled in school and was known throughout the metropolitan area for his athletic skills in sports especially baseball, softball, and football. After graduating from Huntington High School, Mr. Robertson enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and received an honorable discharge after serving three and one half years during World War II. He traveled across the world serving in Africa, Italy, India and China.



Upon returning home he was signed up for the Brooklyn Dodgers by Branch Rickey, the owner, where he played professional baseball with Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play baseball in the major leagues. Not only was Jackie Robinson one of the most historically-significant baseball players during his era, he gained national recognition for breaking baseball's color barrier in 1945.

Unfortunately, Richard's dream of playing professional baseball was cut short because of an injury. Richard and his wife maintained friendship with Jackie and his wife and were in attendance at his funeral in October 1972.

Mr. Robertson worked as a laborer, in construction, and was also owner of Jack Rob Trucking Corporation. He and his partner transported topsoil, sand, gravel, and asphalt throughout the metropolitan area. He later passed the policeman test and was called to serve in 1949. He retired from the police department as sergeant in 1969 after twenty years of dedicated service. Richard received many accolades for his contributions to the Town of Huntington including a bronze plaque from Town Supervisor Walter Fasbender as well as commendations and certificates from organizations throughout the Town. In April 2005, he received the "Lifetime Achievement Award" from NBLSA at Touro Law Center for hard work and dedication in promoting diversity in the community. He is currently employed as a building assistant at Touro Law Center. He enjoys opera, jazz, and



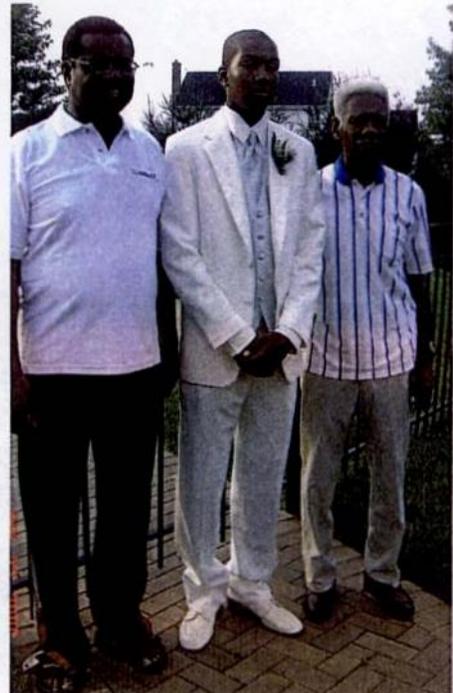
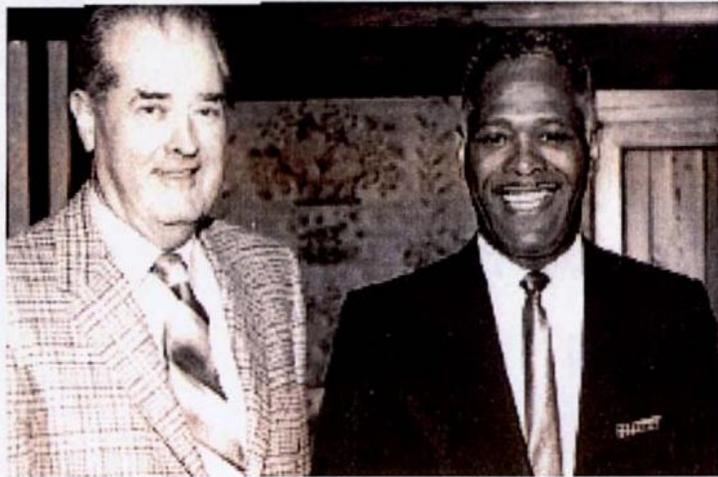
classical music and travels often to Lincoln Center to take in performances.

Mr. Robertson is the son of Richard Robertson II, and Blanche Pollard Robertson Lee. He is the grandson of Richard and Jennie Robertson Lee and the great grandson of Benjamin Ballton. Benjamin is the son of Samuel and Rebecca Ballton. Richard was raised by Jennie Robertson Lee and her second husband John Lee.

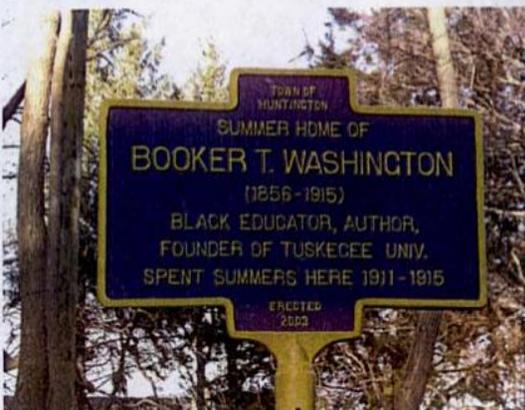
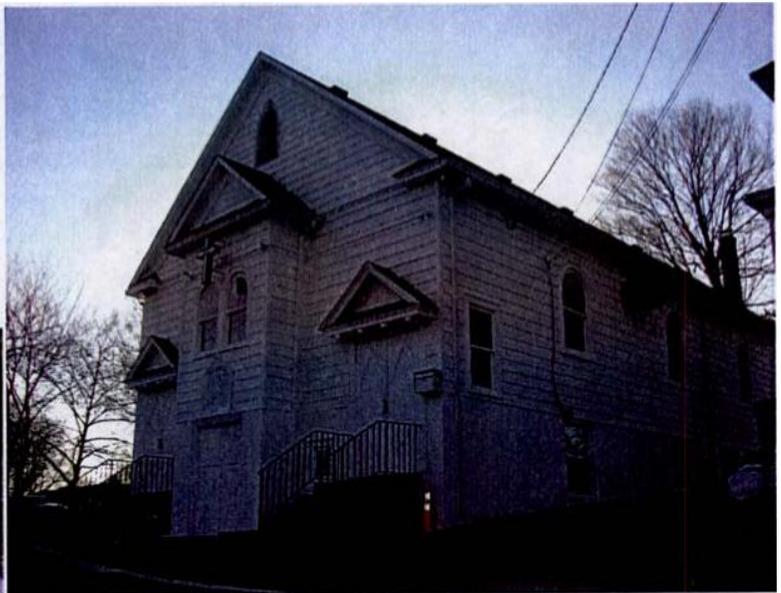
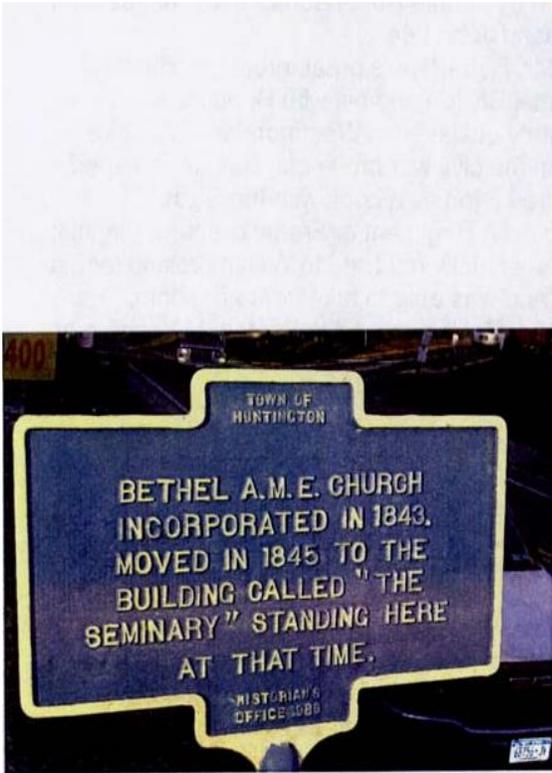


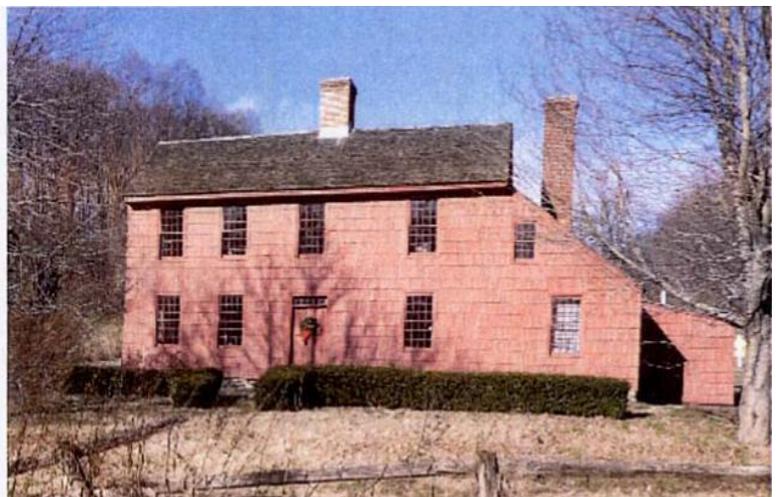
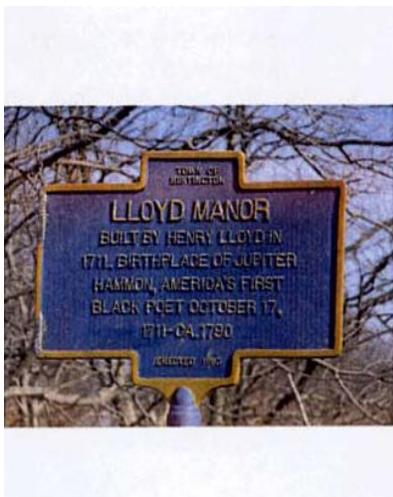
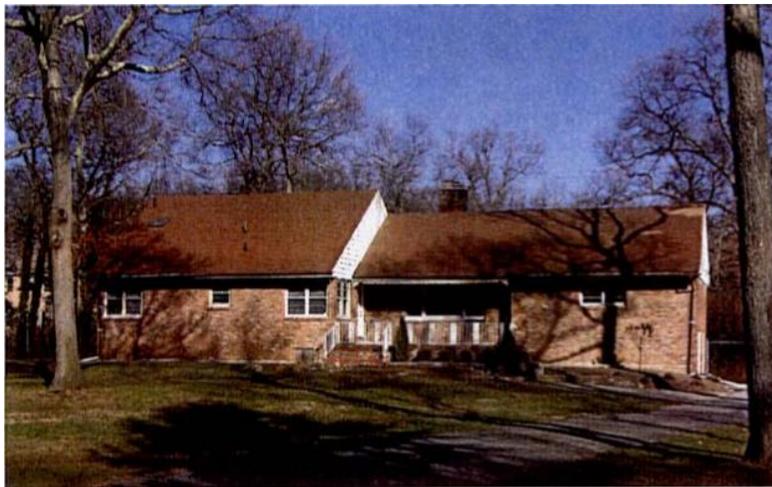
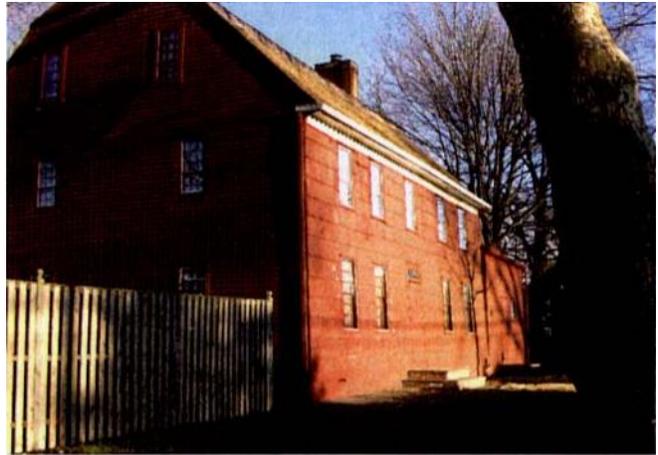
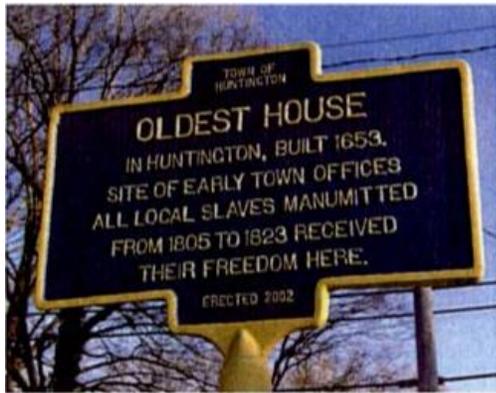
Mr. Robertson's great, great grandfather Samuel Ballton and his wife Rebecca were formerly enslaved in Westmoreland, Virginia. When the civil war broke out, Samuel escaped, secured a job as a cook with the Sixth Wisconsin Regiment at Fredericksburg, Virginia; and eventually returned to Westmoreland for his wife and was able to take her to freedom. Early in 1864, Ballton moved to Boston, MA, where he enlisted in the Fifth Massachusetts Cavalry. He was honorably discharged on November 30, 1865. He moved to Greenlawn in 1873 where he became a prominent entrepreneur and farmer and was known as the "Pickle King of Greenlawn" because of the enormous amount of pickle he grew in one harvest. ("The Pickle King is Dead." *The Long-Islander*, Friday, May 4, 1917)

Richard resides in Huntington with his wife Corinne Jackson Robertson. Their son Richard IV, his wife Linda and their two children, Richard V and Crystal also reside in Huntington.



AFRICAN AMERICAN SITES IN THE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON

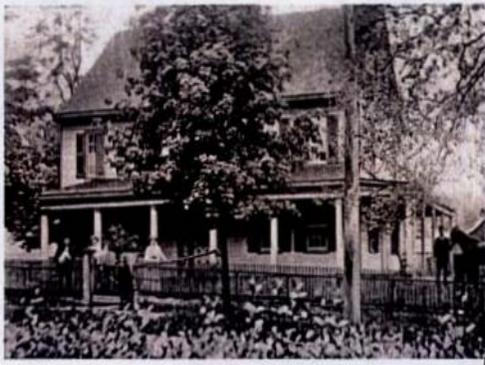




EARLY RESIDENTS OF "THE HOOK"

by Rex Metcalf

Some of Huntington's earliest and best documented African American residents lived at the ancient homestead that we know today as the former "Cow Harbor Inn." This property marks the eastern gateway to the Incorporated Village of Northport, at the northwest corner of Route 25A and Waterside Road. This neighborhood was known as "the Hook" for about 200 years.



Our first recorded African American resident came from the island of Barbados to Huntington in 1657, as the servant of Thomas Matthews, a wine merchant. He lived at Huntington Harbor, just north of the Town Dock, from 1657 to 1673 and then lived at this Northport property into the late 1680's.

The homestead was later owned by the Scudder family and several generations of their African American servants lived here with them. A husband and wife, living here before 1710, are mentioned in surviving family papers as being African born "Coromantee", a faction of the Akan people of present day Ghana. They were brought from Barbados to Long Island and then sold to the Scudder family. They had three children

here, Sampson, Rachel and Sterling, and eventually died here before 1750.

Sampson (1710-1760) was baptized at the Old First Church in Huntington, in 1732. He married Sarah (an American Indian servant, also living here) in 1737. They had five children, also baptized at the Old First Church. They were Sampson Jr. (1738), twins Ruth and Daniel (1742), Elijah (1750) and Sarah Jr. (1757).

Rachel (1713-1789) lived here for 18 years. She then became a servant of Abigail Scudder (who married Capt. Joseph Lewis Esq.) and moved to Huntington Village. Rachel later became a successful innkeeper.



Scudder House South Facade, 2003
Photograph by Henry Tobin

Sterling (1715-1790) was admitted to full membership at the Old First Church in 1750. He was later married here, to his brother's widow Sarah (the Indian), on December 30, 1760, by Rev. Ebenezer Prime.

Elijah (1750-1810) lived here for 20 years. He then became a servant of the widow Mary Platt, at her tavern on Park Avenue in Huntington Village. He later became a local Revolutionary War celebrity, as well as a popular musician.

Betsy (1792-?), a servant of Henry Smith, was sold to John B. Scudder about 1801. She lived here until given her freedom in 1810, at age 18. She then married Paul Ruggles and had three children. Her husband died suddenly and Betsy

Ruggles, left lame and destitute, became a dependent of the Town in 1822. The Scudder Homestead (c1790) may soon be demolished and replaced by a TD Bank building.

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THE AARON FRAZIER FAMILY

by Charla Bolton and Rex Metcalf

The Frazier Family is believed to have come from Rappahannock, Virginia and settled in Huntington shortly after 1830. John and Tamar Frazier had five known children: Aaron, Charles T, Jeremiah, Jacob and Adeline. They lived about a mile south of the Cold Spring Harbor village center. Tamar Frazier was a prominent figure in the founding of the Bethel AME Church in Huntington, in 1843.

Aaron Frazier (1808-1869?) and his wife Charity (b1810) were married about 1835 and first lived a short distance to the north of his parents' home. They had children: Charles (1836), John (1839), Tamer (1841), Elizabeth (1843), Henry (1845), Sylvester (1848), Richard (1855) and Aaron Jr. (1858).

By the late 1840's, Aaron Frazier was employed as a farm laborer by William Hewlett, who owned a large farm on West Neck, about a mile north of the Cold Spring Harbor business district. The large Hewlett farmhouse still stands on the east side of Goose Hill Road and now serves as the Kehillath Shalom Synagogue. The farm acreage originally occupied both sides of the road.

About 1849, William Hewlett built a new tenant house for his workers, on the opposite (west) side of Goose Hill Road, a short distance south of the main house. Its chimney was built to serve an iron heating stove in the parlor and an iron range in the lean-to kitchen. This was the latest thing in home technology in 1849. The stairs behind the front entrance led up to the loft. The U.S. Federal Census records enumerate the early occupants of the tenant house, which is known today as the Hewlett-Taylor House.

The 1850 Census shows that Aaron and Charity Frazier were living here with Aaron's brother, Jacob and his new bride, Nancy, as well as an unrelated young couple, named Henry and Marget Carll. It also enumerates six of Aaron and Charity's children, including their three eldest children, who were apprenticed to William and John Gardiner of Eaton's Neck. Typically, apprentices were provided by their masters with lodging, clothing, meals, education and job skills, in exchange for their service from age 6 to 21. When they completed their indentured service, they were usually given two suits of new clothes and a Bible.



The William Hewlett Farmhouse
Photograph by Charla Bolton



The Hewlett-Taylor Tenant House
Photograph by Charla Bolton

In 1860, Aaron Frazier and his wife were living here with four children, namely Elizabeth, Henry, Richard and Aaron Jr. Aaron Frazier is believed to have died in 1869 and by 1870, his remaining family had apparently moved elsewhere, after occupying this house for twenty years. The Hewlett House and the Hewlett-Taylor House are both designated historic landmarks.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The African American Historic Designation Council (AAHDC) would like to extend sincere appreciation to those individuals who contributed their time and effort in helping to ensure the successful completion of this booklet. Special thanks to Councilwoman Glenda Jackson; AAHDC members; Robert Hughes, Town Historian; Charla Bolton and Rex Metcalf, Huntington Historic Preservation Commission members; the Huntington Historic Society; Susannah Mrazek; Thelma Jackson-Abidally; and the Town of Huntington Printing Office.

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