

Between 1635 and 1848 slavery was legal in Connecticut. Though many people are under the impression that slavery was a phenomenon unique to the American South, this was not the case. In fact, throughout its long and storied past, Connecticut maintained the largest population of enslaved people in New England. Generations of Black and Indigenous people were bought, sold, abused, and forced to work without pay here in the Constitution State. Yet, few have had the opportunity to learn their names and hear their stories.

Fairfield's First Church Congregational wants to change that by evaluating their own past involvement with slavery. Current research confirms that between 1692 and 1806 four ministers of Fairfield's First Church Congregational enslaved no less than ten people, most of whom were children.

In this way, the ministers of First Church resembled many other Connecticut residents and members of the clergy. Slavery was a critical part of the economy in New England, and a significant portion of middle and upper middle class residents owned between one and three enslaved people. Often, these slaveholders were subsistence farmers, who had other roles in the community. In these circumstances, male slave labor shadowed whatever business the slaveholder was in. This was true for enslaved women as well, who were most frequently employed in difficult household tasks like mending clothes, cooking, cleaning, caring for children, and laundry. Enslaved children, meanwhile, were forced to perform light agricultural labor, assist in housework, or carry out errand work, like fetching well water.

The ten individuals highlighted here are symbolic of the First Church's historical complicity in a labor system which brutalized millions of people on both sides of the Atlantic.

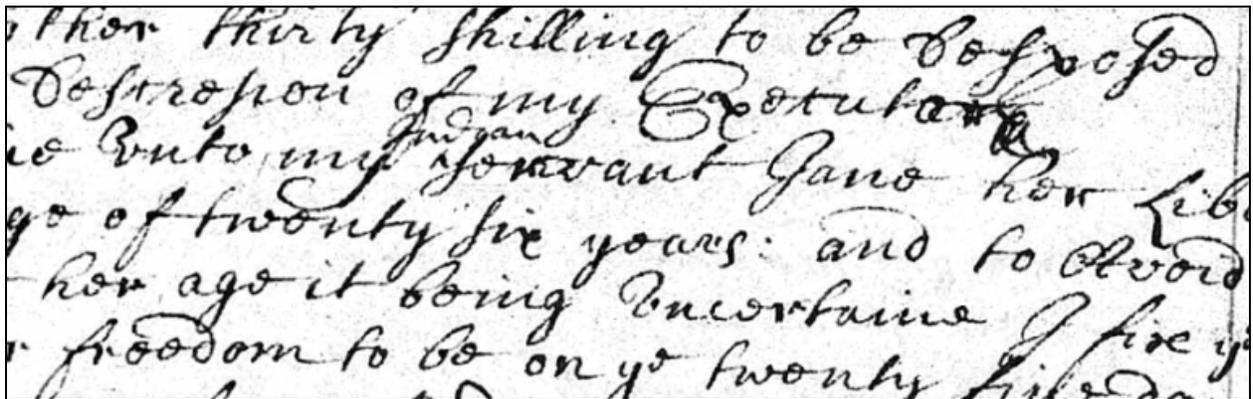
Jane and the Unidentified Boy

In the 1692 will of Reverend Samuel Wakeman, Jane was described as an "Indian servant." Reverend Wakeman stipulated that after he died, Jane would serve his widow, Hannah. If Hannah died, Jane would serve their son, John. But no matter what, Wakeman made clear that Jane would be freed in 1698, when he believed she would be 26 years old. Upon receiving her freedom, Jane was also to be given five pounds money.

If Wakeman was correct about Jane's age, then she was born in 1672, just a few years before what is known as "King Philip's War." Thousands of Native people died, but thousands more were taken hostage by the English. These captives, who were mostly women and children, were sold into slavery both throughout New England and abroad. Jane, having been born around 1672, may have been one of these captives.

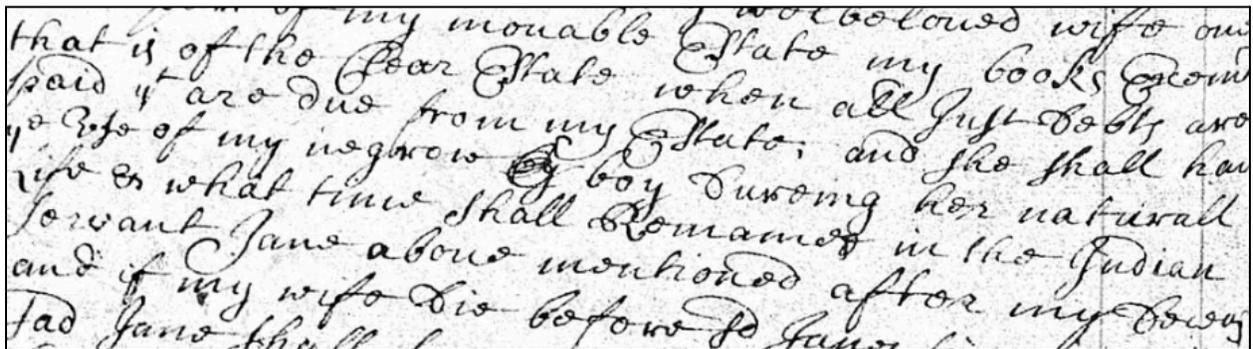
Other enslaved Native people were sent to the slaveholders in the Caribbean to labor on sugar and tobacco plantations. In return, New Englanders received enslaved Africans as payment. Through this loop between the North and the West Indies, Caribbean slaveholders could export less able slaves, while New England could develop a growing source of free labor.

Perhaps this is how Samuel Wakeman came by his second enslaved person, an individual who is only described by Wakeman as “my negrow boy.” This child was given to Samuel Wakeman’s widow unconditionally without any hope of freedom. Though little is known about Jane, even less is known about this child enslaved by Samuel Wakeman.



thor thirty shilling to be befreed
of the son of my ^{Indian} ~~negrow~~ boy
is unto my ^{Indian} ~~negrow~~ boy
go of twenty five years: and to avoid
how ago it being uncertaine I five y
r freedom to be on y^e twenty five y

“Will of Reverend Samuel Wakeman” (Ancestry.com, Connecticut, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1609-1999, Fairfield District, Probate Records, Vol 1-5, 1648-1750), Images 384-385.



that is of the ^{my} ~~negrow~~ ^{negrow} boy
paid y^e are due from my ^{negrow} ~~negrow~~ boy
y^e ^{negrow} ~~negrow~~ boy
and she shall have
servant Jane about mentioned in the Indian
and if my wife die before I do
I do Jane shall

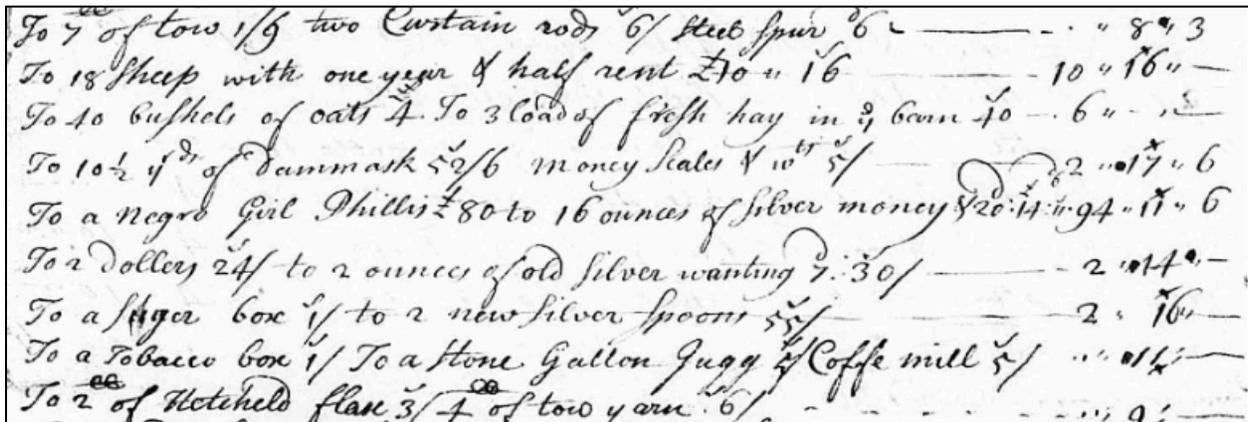
“Will of Reverend Samuel Wakeman” (Ancestry.com, Connecticut, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1609-1999, Fairfield District, Probate Records, Vol 1-5, 1648-1750), Images 384-385.

Phillis

Phillis was described as a “negro girl,” in the 1743 inventory of Reverend Joseph Webb’s estate. The appraisers of the minister’s property determined that she was worth 80 pounds and 10 shillings. This large sum of money speaks to the value of Phillis’ labor in Joseph Webb’s

household. She likely would have been expected to do most, if not all, of the cooking and cleaning, among other domestic tasks.

Phillis's name in this inventory is surrounded by other high value property, like coffee, sugar, tobacco, and silver. These luxuries were only available to the wealthiest members of society in 1743. But they are also telling of Webb's connection to global systems of trade. All of these items were products of enslaved labor in the Caribbean and South America. While Webb is only known to have owned one enslaved person, his lifestyle in Fairfield was reliant on the labor of thousands of enslaved workers farther south.



“Inventory of Reverend Joseph Webb” (Ancestry.com, Connecticut, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1609-1999, Fairfield District, Probate Packets, Wakeman, S-Weed, Jonas, 1648-1880), Images 1282-1287.

Dan, Dauphin, and Toney

One unusual aspect of slaveholding ministers was their ability and willingness to administer religious rites to their enslaved people. In 1763, Reverend Noah Hobart baptized two “negro children servants,” Dan and Dolphin. Unfortunately, this is the only documented evidence of Dan. After being baptized, Dan completely disappears from the written record.

Dan, however, was baptized jointly with another child, named Dauphin (sometimes written as “Dolphin”). This unusual name most likely refers to a French title of royalty. It remains possible that Dauphin had come from a French-speaking region of the world prior to being enslaved by Reverend Hobart. When Noah Hobart died in 1773, he gave Dauphin to his widow. But some years later, when she moved back to her hometown of Plymouth, Massachusetts, she gave Dauphin to Noah Hobart’s step-daughter, Priscilla, who still lived in Fairfield. Dauphin lived and worked in the home of Priscilla and her husband, Gershom Burr for several years. According to a letter written by Priscilla to her sister-in-law, Dauphin was one of several enslaved people who

were left to fend for themselves when their owners fled the British attack on Fairfield in 1779. What happened to Dauphin beyond this point, however, is not known.

In addition to Dauphin, another enslaved child, named Toney, wound up in Noah Hobart's will. And like Dauphin, Toney also became the property of the Reverend's step-daughter, Priscilla. Toney likely spent the rest of his life serving Priscilla and Gershom Burr. Toney appears once again in Gershom Burr's own 1789 estate inventory. By the time of Burr's inventory, Toney was at least 16 years old, on the cusp of adulthood. But like many others, Toney then disappears from the written record.

Ebenezer, son of David and Ann
Dimon, bapt. Nov. 6, 1763.
Dan & Dolphim, Negro Children Servants of Noah
Hobart, bapt. Nov. 6, 1763.
Samuel, son of Abel and Ellen
bapt. Nov. 27, 1763.

"Baptism of Dan and Dolphim," *First Congregational Church, Fairfield, records: 1747-1805.* Fairfield, Connecticut, 1763, Familysearch.org.

(David)
I give my loving Wife all she brought with her,
also the use of my house and Home Lot, so long as she has a
mind to stay here - with the Negro boy Dauphin, and
five Vols. of Dodrives Works -

"Will of Reverend Noah Hobart" (Ancestry.com, Connecticut, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1609-1999, Fairfield District, Probate Records, Vol 1-5, 1648-1750), Image 320.

I give Justin Hobart his Note he ballancing his Books,
account against me -
I give Priscilla Burr the Negro Child Toney
I give the rest of my Estate real and personal to my
Daughter Ellen Lothrop -

“Will of Reverend Noah Hobart” (Ancestry.com, Connecticut, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1609-1999, Fairfield District, Probate Records, Vol 1-5, 1648-1750), Image 320.

Nanny, Toney, Flora, and Anna

In 1775 Reverend Andrew Eliot officiated the marriage of his “negro servant” Nanny to an enslaved man named Toney, who was owned by Jeremiah Sherwood. In the North, marriage among enslaved people was encouraged by puritan ministers in the hopes that it would instill a sense of Christian morality among the community’s Black population. But marriage did not ensure enslaved people that they could spend any time with their spouse. Nanny’s husband, Toney, was living in Green’s Farms. Given the difficulty of travel in the 1700s, it is difficult to imagine that Nanny and Toney were able to see each other with any frequency.

However, Toney and Nanny did bring at least three children into the world. Their oldest, also named Toney, was born about 1776. Their youngest, named Flora, was born just a few weeks before the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Unfortunately, this is all that is known about either Toney or Flora. The rest of their lives are obscured by the fog of slavery.

But unlike her siblings, the middle child, Anna (who later changed her name to Nancy), lived a well documented life. For some unknown reason, Nancy found herself in the home of Hezekiah Bradley, a slaveholder who lived in Greenfield Hill. While it is not clear how he came to possess her, it is likely that Hezekiah Bradley purchased Nancy from Reverend Eliot. Like her father, Toney, Nancy was separated from her family by several miles.

In 1785, Hezekiah Bradley’s daughter Charlotte, was getting married to a man named Hezekiah Chaffee. In an unusually demeaning gesture, Nancy, an eleven year old girl, was given to Charlotte as a wedding present. Chaffee, however, was from Windsor, Connecticut, on the opposite end of the state. Once again, Nancy was uprooted and separated from everything she knew. It is likely that she never saw her family again.

Nancy lived with the Chaffee family for the next 36 years, doing all manner of domestic labor alongside several other enslaved women. When Hezekiah Chaffee died in 1821, he gave Nancy to his daughter, Abigail, who was married to Colonel James Loomis, a farmer and storekeeper. She would live here until her death in 1857.

But Nancy’s story is representative of slavery’s slow and disorganized end in Connecticut. While she was still enslaved in 1821, she was listed as a free woman in the 1830 census. Yet no record of Nancy’s emancipation has ever been found. These documents would ordinarily be kept by a town clerk’s office as official Windsor government records.

In 1848, when Connecticut fully abolished slavery, there were only a handful of enslaved people left in Connecticut. According to local stories, Nancy was one of these last few who were freed by the state. While some suggest that Nancy was, in fact, free, no evidence to that effect has ever been identified.

Nancy died in 1857. Unlike the many thousand others who were enslaved in Connecticut, Nancy bears the distinction of having a headstone to mark her place of burial in Windsor's Palisado Cemetery. Before her death, Nancy took the last name, "Toney," likely as a tribute to the father she was separated from at a young age.

The image shows a page of handwritten church records from the First Congregational Church in Fairfield, Connecticut. The records are written in cursive and include the following entries:
- At the top, a signature: "Mr. Andrew Hill".
- "Toney Negro Servant to J. Remond. Shewell
of Green Farms"
- "Nanny Negro Servant to Andrew Hill
were married July 25th 1770"
- "Mr. Andrew Hill"
- "Toney Negro Servant to the Honorable"

"Marriage of Toney and Nanny," First Congregational Church, Fairfield, records: 1747-1805. Fairfield, Connecticut, 1775, Familysearch.org.

The image shows a page of handwritten church records from the First Congregational Church in Fairfield, Connecticut. The records are written in cursive and include the following entries:
- "Abel son of David and Jane
Byden, bapt. Nov. 25, 1770"
- "Toney (a negro child) son of Toney & Nanny
bapt. Dec. 2, 1770."
- "Arthoda, Daughter of Joseph & Christian
Silliman, bapt. Decem. 23, 1770."
- "John-Robt son of David and Sarah"

"Baptism of Toney," First Congregational Church, Fairfield, records: 1747-1805. Fairfield, Connecticut, 1763, Familysearch.org.

• Fed a Negro Child offered by Job
Bartram baptized June 23 1776
Flora Daughter of Tony and Nanny
baptized in the Chh. of Andrew Elliot - baptized June 23 1776
Sarah Daughter of Ebenezer and Mary
Bartram baptized July 20th 1776

"Baptism of Flora," *First Congregational Church, Fairfield, records: 1747-1805*. Fairfield, Connecticut, 1776, Familysearch.org.

Samuel Son of Samuel and Abigail
Sturges baptized Nov: 18. 1771
Anna Daughter of Tony & Nanny - a Negro Child, offered
by Andrew Elliot - baptized Nov: 27th 1771
Jenny a Negro Child, offered by Deacon Bulkley - baptized

"Baptism of Anna," *First Congregational Church, Fairfield, records: 1747-1805*. Fairfield, Connecticut, 1763, Familysearch.org.