Historical Black Experiences at Cherry Hill Collection 7-12 Teaching Unit



Lesson 2: Slavery by a Different Name

An Exploration of the True Cherry Hill Mystery:

Why did Minnie Knapp have the same name as Cherry Hill's 3rd
generation matriarch?

Credit Statement:

Shawna Reilly researched and created this teaching unit, with interpretive and editorial support from Kori Graves, PhD, Frederick Schrock, and classroom teacher Robert Naeher, PhD. LaReina Torain and Lindsay Kesten assisted with the digitization and metadata creation of the primary sources. Grant funding for the project was awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy Demands Wisdom.

Overview: This lesson examines how the children of enslaved women were indentured under Gradual Emancipation laws in New York State and its impact on generations of Black families.

Students will think about the Cherry Hill mystery: Why did Minnie Knapp- a woman of color who worked as a servant- have the same name as Cherry Hill's 3rd generation matriarch?

Materials: Stories are told with photographs, bills of sale, Cherry Hill family notes, letters, and other primary documents.

Content Warning: Some of the primary source documents contain words that were used during the 18th & 19th centuries that are not acceptable today. Those words include "negro," "slave," and "coloured" in reference to people of African descent who were enslaved.

Objectives: Students will:

Experience first-hand how primary sources help us to understand the human experience in the Albany, N.Y. area, from the late 1700s through the 1850s. They will recognize gaps in the genealogical record of people whose ancestors were enslaved.

Understand that by indenturing another generation of people of African descent, New York's Gradual Emancipation Laws were designed to serve the needs of enslavers rather than the enslaved.

Think about how Gradual Emancipation in Albany affected generations of Black families like the Jackson-Knapps throughout the 19th century.

Essential Questions:



- What did gradual emancipation mean for the children of enslaved New Yorkers?
- How did gradual emancipation affect generations of people of people of African descent?

Vocabulary:

apprenticeship- a contractual agreement to prepare youth for labor in agriculture or the crafts. During the eighteenth century many occupations began with up to 7 years apprenticeship. Apprentices usually worked without being paid until their contract was complete.

cabinet card- a type of photograph that was popular during the mid to late 1800s. They used cardboard and were less expensive to make.

daguerreotype- an early type of photograph popular during the early 1800s. They used iodine-sensitized silvered plate and mercury vapor, and subjects needed to sit very still.

genealogy- the study of family ancestral lines from one generation to the next.

indenture- a legal contract in which someone must work for an employer without pay for a certain period of time. Indenture contracts had different rules depending on when and for whom they were used.

matriarch- a female (woman) leader or head of house.

patroons- a patroon was a person who brought settlers to New Netherland. As a reward, a patroon received a large area of land he could rent to farmers. He also received hunting, fishing, and fur trading privileges. A man passed down his patroonship to one of his male heirs.

people of color or (POC)- In the context of Albany during the 1800s, most people of color were of African and Indigenous descent.

surname- a person's last name, or family name.



Check the definitions for any vocabulary words that you don't know.

Record and define any additional vocabulary words you find in the empty space.

Mystery #2: Why did Minnie Knapp have the same name as Cherry Hill's 3rd generation matriarch?



Harriet Maria Elmendorf Knapp (1852-1903) was called "Minnie" by all who knew her.

Minnie Knapp lived with members of the Cherry Hill family from 1854-- when she was two years old-- until her death in 1903.

This daguerreotype was taken not long after Minnie and her sister Jane arrived at Cherry Hill. A year later, Jane was sent to the home of another Van Rensselaer family member in Syracuse. Their brothers-James and Richard-- were raised in Van Rensselaer family households in Albany and Philadelphia.



Look at the daguerreotype of Minnie Knapp (left) with her sister Jane (middle) and another member of the Cherry Hill household.

Read the description.

List some words that describe the image.

Brainstorm reasons why Minnie Knapp had the same name as Cherry Hill's 3rd generation matriarch.

Primary Source:

<u>5128_Daguerreotype_HMEK_</u> JAKB

Lesson 2: Slavery by a Different Name Introduction

"Be it enacted...that any Child born of a slave within this State after the fourth day of July next, shall be...be born free: Provided nevertheless that such Child shall be the servant of the legal proprietor of his or her mother until such servant if a male shall arrive at the age of twenty eight years, and if a female at the age of twenty-five years." -March 29, 1799

Above: Excerpt from "An Act for the gradual abolition of Slavery," NYS Archives digital collection (*right*).

Background: By the turn of the 19th century, institutions that made it necessary and easy to enslave people of color were coming to an end. The transatlantic slave trade was outlawed in 1808. An agricultural economy based on Hudson River farms and sloop trade was slowly replaced by canals, railroads and factories. New York State was industrializing.

Nevertheless, slavery was an economic institution. It existed because free labor made colonists rich-- especially larger landholders like the Van Rensselaers. While political leaders took steps to end slavery, laws were passed - called *Gradual Emancipation*- to ensure that enslavers did not lose their investments overnight.

In Act for the gradual abolition of Slavery Bett enacted by the people, the stating see Sork upon seated on funde and spooting had any laid of born of without with the fresh day of sale need, shall be deemed and adjudged to be been for Revited nevertheles that such Child shall be the swant of the legal proprieter of hisor her mether, until such seventila mate shall arrive as the age of twenty ught year, and if a famale at the age of And be if further market, basinels respective his being that the constitute the security mark back and the constitute the security mark back and the agreement of the agreement was been able to the law beach to the beach to see the back to the beach to service by the braness of the them. And leit further enacted, that every person being an Inhale land of this State who shall be intellect to the service of athier han after the greek day of hely an afrance dall wither were months after the birth free brith course to be det and to be both of the latter been when you however has be an inhabitant a calificate in uniting containing the name and addition of such master or mistress, and she namenge and set ferry child se born which certificate shall be, by the said the haccordio in a Book to be by he for that purpose provided, which record shall be good a sufficient without of the age of such bhill, Ind the black such bity or foun shall weever from said ressen heele Conts for way thelet so registered and if any such pour reglats to make areturn of every such thele as afore said to said black within nine months after the Bis Thosel, such person shall fafiet and pay Fire Dolla for way such offines to be suced for and recovered by the Clash of the tily or Fun in which such povon resides

Read the excerpt and background about the Gradual Emancipation Law passed in 1799.

Brainstorm: How do you think enslaved parents felt about this law?

Dig Deeper:

<u>Abolition of the</u> <u>transatlantic slave trade</u>

Primary Source:

An Act for the gradual abolition of slavery
[NYSA 13036-78 L1799 Ch062]
March 29 1799, New York State Archives, New York (State).
Dept. of State. Bureau of Miscellaneous Records.
Enrolled acts of the State Legislature. Series 13036-78, Laws of 1799, Chapter 62.

Part A: The Reality of Gradual Emancipation

Background: The 1799 Gradual Emancipation law freed children born after July 4, 1799, but only after they worked 25 to 28 years of indentured servitude to their mother's enslaver.

This 1799 law was based on more than 150 years of legal rules for governing the poor. The first of the "poor laws" was Dutch; dating back to the 1630s, it denied those in poverty from the same advantages as patroons.

A 1788 law allowed "Overseers of the Poor" to assign homeless children to apprenticeships and indentured servitude. An 1804 law eliminated the minimum age required for enslavers to support any children who were "abandoned" in their household. These laws allowed enslavers to indenture the children if it suited them after 1799, but freed them of any responsibility for those whose parents could not take care of them.

Essential Question:

 What did Gradual Emancipation mean for the children of enslaved New Yorkers?



Primary documents: Gradual Emancipation Law of 1799:

1803 Bill of Sale (Peg & Bill Grant);

1803 Bill of sale (Dean);

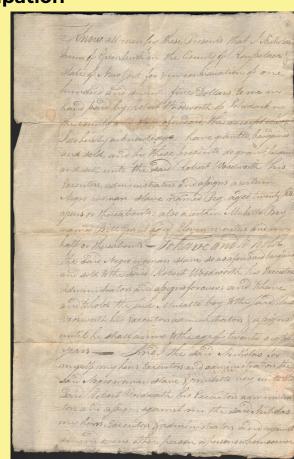
1825 Agreement (Dian & infant child)

Worksheets: Venn Diagram "Enslaved- Indentured- Child of Indentured"

Part A: The Reality of Gradual Emancipation

Activity 1

"... I Nicholas Drum of Greenbush in the County of Rensselaer...in consideration of one hundred and seventy five Dollars to me in hand paid by Robert Woodworth of Schodack... do grant, bargain and sell...a certain Negro woman slave named Peg, aged twenty six years or thereabouts; also a certain Mulatto Boy named Bill Grant aged Eleven months and an half or thereabouts - To have and to hold the said Negro woman slave...forever; and to have and to hold the...boy...until he shall arrive to the age of twenty eight **Years...**" July 19, 1803



Read the excerpt from the Bill of Sale of Peg and her infant child, Bill Grant.

List facts about Peg and her son Bill Grant on the enslaved & indentured sections of the Venn Diagram.

What do they have in common? What is different about their situations?

Think...Why do you think Bill has a surname, but Peg does not?

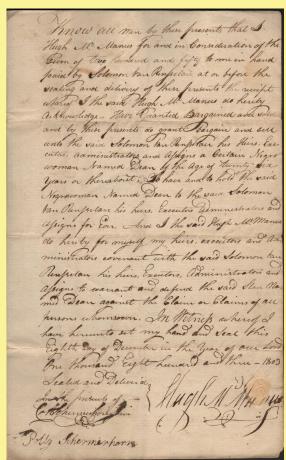
Primary Source:

5 10 2 July 19 1803 Bill of Sa le ND to RW

Part A: The Reality of Gradual Emancipation

Activity 2

"...I Hugh McManus for and in consideration of the sum of two hundred and fifty to me in hand paid by Solomon Van Rensselaer...do grant bargain and sell unto the said Solomon Van Rensselaer...a Certain Negro woman Named Dean of the Age of twenty-six years or thereabout; To have and to hold...for Ever..."





Read the excerpt from the Bill of Sale of Dean.

List some facts about Dean on the Venn Diagram under *enslaved*.

Primary Source:

3_14_December_8_1803_Dean_Bill_of_Sale_HMM_to_SVR

Part A: The Reality of Gradual Emancipation Activity 3

Articles of agreement made and concluded on This I' December hover for in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand bight hundred and liverly five, Between Solomon Pan Kenfelau bequie of the City of Albany of the first part, and Robert Stan Renfelace of the Town of Bethlehem in the county of allany of the focund part, Whereas. The said Solomon is by Saw, entitled to the personal forvices and Labor of a certain colored girl, named Sian, which Said girl was born of a black woman, who was Then a flave of the said Solomon, and whereas the Jaid Robert is desirous and willing to take from The said Solomon, an Ofrignment of the unexquest Term of Service of the said bean and her infant child , which by law is vested in the said Solomor now there presents wetnes, that the gaid Solomon, for good cause and consideration him thereunto moving, and also in consideration of the sum of Twenty five cents of the current money of the State of new York, to him in hand paid by the said Robert, The receipt whereof is hereby as know ledged, hath and by these presents doth hereby afign transfer and get over to the said Robert and to his Executors, Administrators and Opigin, all his the said Solomons his right little and intenst of in and to the unexpired time of the said Dean and her infant child, which by law is

"...Agreement made...Between Solomon Van Rensselaer Esquire of the City of Albany... and Robert S Van Rensselaer of the Town of Bethlehem...the personal services and Labor of a certain colored girl, named Dian...born of a black woman, who was then a slave of the said Solomon...Robert is desirous and willing to take ... an Assignment of the unexpired Term of Service of the said Dian and her infant child, which by law is vested in the said Solomon...in consideration of the sum of Twenty five cents ...Robert...will act towards the said Dian and her infant child in every respect as is enjoined by law...and hereby assume upon himself all the liability to which the said Solomon is subject by law..." December 6, 1825



Read the excerpt from the Agreement transferring the indenture of Dian and her infant child.

Think...how is this agreement different from the bills of sale?

List facts about Dian and her infant child on the indentured and child of the indentured sections of the Venn Diagram.

Primary Source:

3_14_December_6_1825_Dian_ Agreement_SVR_to_RSVR

Conclusion Part A: The Reality of Gradual Emancipation

Essential Question:

What did Gradual Emancipation mean for the children of enslaved New Yorkers?

entries in the Venn Diagram. Think about the primary sources

The Bill of Sale for Peg & her infant **Bill Grant**; Bill of Sale of

you've seen in

Part A--

Look at your

Dean: Agreement concerning the services of Dian & her infant child

Part B: Impact of Gradual Emancipation

Background: We can learn how gradual emancipation affected people throughout the 1800s by following generations of the same family at Cherry Hill.

It is often challenging to trace the genealogy of people whose ancestors were enslaved. However, notes written by the Cherry Hill family reveal a connection between Dean, Dian (and her infant child), and the Knapp family.

Gradual emancipation was based on the centuries' old practice of indentured servitude. Throughout the 1800s, it became more common for children to be indentured as their families suffered from crop failure, accidents, disease, and other financial troubles.

In Albany, institutions like the Shaker settlement in Watervliet indentured children whose guardians were unable to support them. The Cherry Hill household also fostered children with the expectation that they would work to earn their stay, but their intentions may have differed. Records from this time allow us to compare the experiences of children like Minnie Knapp to other children in Albany

descent?

affected by poverty during the 1800s. **Essential Question:** How did gradual emancipation affect generations of people of African

Knapp children: Letter about Minnie & Janie Knapp:

Genealogy notes about the

Primary Sources:

1865 census record:

Flora Shepperman's

indenture;

cabinet card for Minnie

Knapp **Worksheets:** Facts about Knapp Family

Part B: Impact of Gradual Emancipation Activity 1

Note: "Hat" was Harriet

"Jane Amelia Knap born at Hudson Nov 25th 1845--

Harriet Maria Elmendorf Knap born Oct 20th 1852, -- Jane their Mother died Dec 13th 1854

Hat. R.V.R. M.E. went down to Hudson & brought

them up Dec 27 1854 [Dean was mother to Dian-**Dianna** was Mother to Jane...

Jane married Knapp (an Indian)

Their children: -James Knapp Born Dec 16, 1843

Jane Amelia Knapp born Nov.

25. 1845 Richard Knapp

Minnie Knapp born Oct 20. 1852.

Died Dec. 18. 1903..."

and the 3rd generation matriarch of Cherry Hill. Jane Amelia Franch born at Audson Nov 255 Harrist Main Elmen IN Though born Oct 200, 1852, T. V. M. M.E. went down to Hadson & brought The up Dec! 27 th. 1854 Dean was mother to Stan Diama was Mother to fave, her daughter Jane matried Knapp (an Indian) Their children: -James Knapp Born Dee 16. 1843.

Minnie Knapp born Oct 20. 1852. Lid. Dec. 18. 1903.

Jane Amelia Knapp both Nov. 25. 1845.

The son James Knapp paid all expense for his

Richard Knapp

father's funeral

Maria Van Rensselaer

Elmendorf. She was a

Arriet Van Rensselaer,

daughter of Solomon and

Read the notes tracing the genealogy of the Knapp family.

Think...Are there any problems with using these notes for genealogical information?

about the Knapp children... What were their names

List facts you now know

and dates of birth? What do you know about their parents?

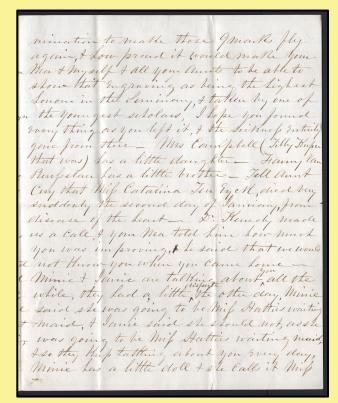
What events do these notes describe?

Secondary Source: Photocopy of CH genealogy notes written by Catherine VR Bonney, Harriet Maria VR Elmendorf, & Harriet

Elmendorf Gould.

Part B: Impact of Gradual Emancipation

Activity 2



"Minie & Janie are talking about you all the while, they had a little dispute the other day, Minie said she was going to be Miss Hatties waiting maid, & Janie said she should not, as she was going to be Miss Hatties waiting maid, & so they keep talking about you every day..." January 7, 1855

Read the excerpt from a letter mentioning Minnie (age 2) and Jane Knapp (age 9).

The letter was written by
Peter E. Elmendorf of
Cherry Hill to his daughter,
Harriet Maria Van
Rensselaer "Hattie"
Elmendorf, while she is
away at boarding school.

Think...What were Minnie and Janie's roles in the Cherry Hill household?

What were they raised to do?

Primary Source:

4_1_January_7_1855_PEE_to_HEG

Part B: Impact of Gradual Emancipation Activity 3

| - Saller | Sex. | of white, black that the statement of th | Relation to the head of the family. | In what county of this state, or in what other state, or foreign country born. | Of how many chi | Number of times married. | Now married. | Now widowed. | Single. | Profession, trade or occupation. |
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| Name | Age. | Sex. | Color | Relation to the Head of the Family | Place of Birth | Profession, trade or occupation. |
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| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 16 |
| Minnie Elmendorph | 14 | F | В | Servant | Columbia Co. | |



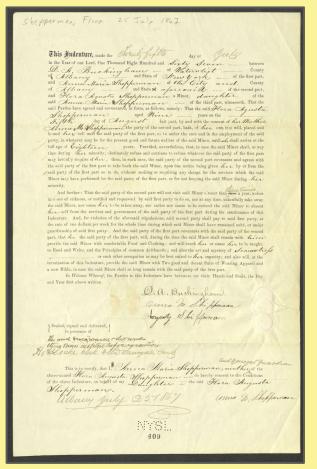
Look at the Cherry Hill household's entry in the 1865 New York Census record.

Read the entry for Harriet Maria Elmendorf "Minnie" Knapp. She is on the last line.

Think...Was your hypothesis about Minnie and Jane's roles at Cherry Hill correct?

What else do you notice about Minnie's entry in the census record?

Primary Source: 1865 NYS census, New York State Archives



"This Indenture...between D. A.
Buckingham of Watervliet County of
Albany...and Anna Maria Shepperman
of the City and County of Albany...and
Flora Agusta Shepperman a Minor,
daughter...aged nine...of her own free
will, placed and bound her self...until
she shall arrive at the full age of
eighteen years...

...the said party of the first part, will...provide the said Minor with comfortable Food and Clothing; and will teach her or cause her to be taught to Read and Write, and the Principles of common Arithmetic; and also the art and mystery of Seamstress..." July 25, 1867



Read the excerpt from the indenture of Flora Shepperman, by the Shaker community in Watervliet.

List some facts about Flora's indenture.

Did she have any protections?

Did she gain anything from this indenture?

Primary Source:

Sc22330_shaker-collection_ flora-sheppermann_jul-25-1 867_box-41a-f5, Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library, Cultural Education Center

Part B: Impact of Gradual Emancipation

Activity 5

(right).

Description:
Photographs of
Harriet Maria
Elmendorf "Minnie"
Knapp: Studio
portrait, 1900 (left),
cabinet card, 1890



Background: The Elmendorfs lost their wealth in the 1880s, leaving Cherry Hill in 1884. At times when they could not support Minnie, she worked in other households, including with cousins at Cherry Hill. Renting out servants to other households was common; the practice dates back to slavery. The cabinet card may have advertised Minnie's services, in exchange for her room and board.

Compare the two photographs of Minnie Knapp.



List the differences between the two pictures.

Read the description and background.

Think: What questions do you have about Minnie's life?

Write your questions in the space provided.

Primary Sources:

6568 Photo of HMEK 1890 5222 HMEK 1900

Part B: Impact of Gradual Emancipation Activity 6

Description: This is a photograph of Minnie Knapp's gravesite. She was buried in the Elmendorf section of the Van Rensselaer family plot, in the space behind Harriet Maria "Hat" and Peter Elmendorf. She has no headstone.



Background: Minnie worked as a servant for the Elmendorfs until her death in 1903. She had no formal indenture as a child at Cherry Hill. She never had an income, never married or had children. According to Cherry Hill family letters, she never learned to read or write well enough to correspond with her siblings.

Minnie was in some ways treated like a family member. She had birthday celebrations and exchanged holiday gifts with the Cherry Hill family. She called Harriet Maria, her namesake, "Ma." When the Elmendorf family lost their wealth, Harriet Maria wrote that she felt a responsibility to take care of Minnie, because she had been loyal to the family for thirty years.

A few years before Minnie's death, Emma Bonney, a cousin of the Cherry Hill family wrote: "Minnie is both a bane and a blessing."

Look at the photograph of Minnie Knapp's gravesite.

Read the description.

Think...How was Minnie Knapp's experience at Cherry Hill different from other child servants, like Flora Shepperman's at the Shaker community?

any protections?

How were their

Did Minnie Knapp have

opportunities in life different?

.

Cemetery

Source:
Photograph of Harriet Maria
Elmendorf Knapp's gravesite,
Van Rensselaer family plot, Lot
66, Section 56, Albany Rural

Part B: Impact of Gradual Emancipation Conclusion

Essential Question:

How did gradual emancipation affect generations of Albany's Black families like the Knapps?

Think about the primary & secondary sources you've seen in Part B--

Genealogy notes about the Knapp children: **Letter about Minnie** & Janie Knapp; 1865 census record; Flora Shepperman's indenture; Photograph of Minnie Knapp's gravesite/Cabinet Card

Lesson 2: Slavery by a Different Name Conclusion

Mystery #2

Why do you think Harriet Maria Elmendorf "Minnie" Knapp had the same name as Cherry Hill's 3rd generation matriarch, Harriet Maria Van Rensselaer Elmendorf?

How was she connected to the Cherry Hill family?

Take a virtual walk through Minnie Knapp's room in the garret and explore other spaces related to her life at Cherry Hill:

www.tours.vividmediany.com/3d-model/historic-cherry-hill/fullscreen/

Start on Floor 4

Citations & Sites for Research:



<u>A SHORT HISTORY OF SLAVERY</u> <u>IN NYC — NYC URBANISM</u>

<u>Albany Rural Cemetery</u>

Brief History of Government Charity in New York (1603 – 1900) Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries Social Welfare History Project

Dulberger, Judith A. <u>"Mother Donit for the Best"</u>

<u>Correspondence of a Nineteenth-Century Orphan Asylum</u>, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Shaker Heritage Society

Williams, Oscar, "Slavery in Albany, New York, 1624-1827," Afro-Americans in New York Life & History