

Contributions

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

The resilience, creativity, and perseverance of Valley African Americans have helped define what it means to be American. Their stories are as diverse as the landscape of the Shenandoah Valley itself. In those stories of impossible odds, even greater victories, and promises yet to be fulfilled, are the threads of pride, community, and strength that tie this region together.

As individuals, families, and communities, African Americans have contributed to the shaping of the Shenandoah Valley since the early 1700s. Their influence can be found throughout the MSV Collection in the form of art, objects, and documents.

Contributions is the first exhibition at the MSV to directly address regional African American history and culture. It is also a living exhibition. New research, new discoveries, and community collaboration will guide future efforts and build on the contributions of those who came before.

Slavery was a dehumanizing status imposed on individuals. In this exhibition we use the term “enslaved” rather than “slave” whenever possible to emphasize the person rather than the condition of bondage. Likewise, we use the terms “enslaver” and “slaveholder” to describe individuals who consciously chose to hold others in chattel slavery.

This exhibition features historical documents that include outmoded language and presents material and topics that guests may find unsettling.



Bedouin Encampment with Huts, 1930

Charles Franklin Moss
(American, 1859-1937)

Signed lower right “Charles Franklin Moss / 30”

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Oil on canvas

Collection of Maura Nestor Haverly



Using bright colors, painter Charles Moss here depicts life among the Bedouin people, nomads of North Africa and the Middle East. There is no record of Moss ever traveling abroad. However, he may have seen photographs of the Bedouins, or similar works by African American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner. Tanner, whose mother was from Winchester and who was born in Pittsburgh, may have known Moss. On his travels, Tanner painted many images of North Africa and the Middle East and may have influenced Moss’s painting.

A Story of Freedom

The journey of the Mosses of Winchester demonstrates how one Valley family pursued the promise of freedom. Each generation and each individual approached the challenges to their advancement in different ways. Collectively their stories provide examples of the many paths that make up the Black experience in America.

Mary Johnson Ligans Moss (1840–1926) was enslaved by the white Miller family of Winchester and trained as a cook. Emancipated in the 1860s, she married Thomas Winifred Moss, sought wages for her skills, and pursued education for her children. Mary’s daughter, *Henrietta V. Johnson Davis* (1861–1938), followed in her mother’s footsteps. Henrietta and her husband, Alexander W. Davis, built a business and invested in property.

For Mary's son, artist *Charles Franklin Moss* (1878–1961), freedom meant leaving the Shenandoah Valley in search of better opportunities. Charles Moss joined the Great Migration of African Americans moving north, east, and west. He left Virginia for Rhode Island and eventually Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Moss became a prominent painter and successful photographer.



Mary Johnson Ligans Moss (1840–1926)
Courtesy Stewart Bell Jr. Archives, Handley
Regional Library, Alfred Henkel Family
Collection



Henrietta V. Johnson Davis
(1861–1938)
Collection of the Museum of the Shenandoah
Valley, 2015.4.2
Given by Alexander and Bonnie Finley in
honor of Jennie James Davis



Charles Franklin Moss (1878–1961)
Courtesy Stewart Bell Jr. Archives, Handley
Regional Library, Henry Moss Brooks
Collection

***Portrait of Alexander W. Davis*
(1837–1920), 1902**

Charles Franklin Moss (American, 1878–1961)

Signed lower left "Chas F. Moss / 1902"

Winchester, Virginia

Oil on Artist's board

*2015.4.1, Given by Alexander and Bonnie
Finley in honor of Jennie James Davis*



Son of William and Betsy Davis, Alexander Davis was probably born enslaved in Front Royal. Following the Civil War, Davis established a successful business by "becoming one of the first persons around Winchester to raise vegetables strictly for commercial purposes," according to his obituary. In 1892, he married Etta Johnson, half-sister to artist Charles Moss.

This portrait is one of Charles Moss's earliest signed works. Like many young artists, Moss began his career by painting friends and family. He later honed his skills in Pittsburgh and through study at the Cooper Union School of Fine Arts in New York, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.



***Portrait of Rebecca Schultz Miller*
(1798–1855), about 1855**

Artist unknown

Winchester or Frederick County, Virginia

Oil on canvas

2005.11.2, Gift of Christine M. Leahy

Painted here from a photograph, Rebecca Miller was a recent widow when she purchased Mary Johnson around 1844 and had her trained as a cook. At the time, Johnson—probably the daughter of a man named Jesse Johnson—was four or five years old. Rebecca Miller died in 1855. Her will stipulated that Mary Johnson should be freed when she turned 21. In the intervening years, Johnson remained enslaved to Miller's daughter.

***Photograph of Mary E. Johnson Ligans Moss*
(1839/1840–1926) and Thomas Winifred Moss
(1831–1904), 1933 (Reproduction)**

Charles Franklin Moss (American, 1878–1961) after an
unknown photographer

Probably Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Courtesy of Alexander and Bonnie Finley



Reproduced by their son Charles in 1933, this photograph originally dates to the 1877 marriage of Mary Johnson Ligans and Thomas W. Moss in Winchester. Both had been previously widowed. Records of Mary Johnson's first marriage remain elusive. Following the Civil War, she worked for her former enslavers on a wage basis. Like many African Americans during Reconstruction, Johnson balanced the costs of this situation with the need to support her family. Thomas Moss was a stonemason and mill worker. His first marriage, to Anna Matilda Robinson (1833–1875) resulted in 14 children. Mary and Thomas Moss had one child: artist and photographer Charles Franklin Moss.

***Photograph of the Moss*
*Family, about 1917***

(Reproduction)

Attributed to Charles Franklin

Moss (American, 1878–1961)

Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Courtesy of Alexander and Bonnie Finley



Charles Moss's growing family was one of his favorite subjects. This photograph chronicles three generations of Mosses. Charles poses at rear left and rests his hand

on his mother Mary's shoulder. Surrounded by their children, Charles's wife Sarah Townsle (1880–1970) anchors the opposite side of the image.

Moss trained as a photographer in Rhode Island. Around 1909, he opened a series of studios in Harrisburg, Carlisle, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Moss used his photography skills to empower Black families and organizations, promote self-image, and counter racist stereotypes. In recognition of his skills, Moss became the first African American admitted to the National Association of Professional Photographers in 1914.



Photograph of Henrietta “Etta” Virginia Johnson Davis (1861–1938), around 1890–1900

Photographer Unknown
Possibly Providence or Newport, Rhode Island
Tintype photograph
2015.4.2

Given by Alexander and Bonnie Finley in honor of Jennie James Davis

This photograph of Etta Johnson Davis—dressed sumptuously in furs—might date to her half-brother Charles Moss's time studying photography in Newport and Providence, Rhode Island. Similar surviving photographs of Etta have a Providence studio marking.

Etta was the oldest child of Mary Johnson. Evidence suggests Etta's father may have been a white man related to the Miller family, Henry Slagle (1819–1906). Etta married widower Alexander Davis in 1892. Together, they built a profitable commercial vegetable business. The Davises reinvested their profits into a fashionable home in Winchester. One newspaper described it as “a pretty brick house, surrounded by spacious, well kept and handsomely ornamented lawns.”

Writing Box , after 1863

Attributed to Shop of
Luigi Gargiulo
(Italian, 1806–1883)
Signed on lid “[illegible] Gargiulo / Sorrento”
Sorrento, Italy
Marquetry in mixed woods

Courtesy of Alexander and Bonnie Finley



Like today's laptops and mobile devices, writing boxes let you take your writing with you. Inside was everything needed for personal correspondence:

a writing surface, a space to store paper, and containers for writing instruments and ink. The maker of this example further decorated it with inlaid wood.

According to the donor's family history, this box was a present from a relative to freedwoman Etta Johnson Davis (1861–1938), daughter of Mary Johnson Moss. The survival of this deeply personal object demonstrates the importance of literacy in advancing equality, independence, and prosperity for Valley African Americans following the Civil War.

Lives Bound Up

The vast majority of objects made in America from 1619 through Emancipation have connections to enslavement. While most of the objects on this platform were made or used in the Shenandoah Valley, they are evidence of a global commercial system fueled by slavery.

Colonial-era trade began the flow of people and goods back and forth across the Atlantic. Enslaved people from Africa and of African descent—and their skills, knowledge, and forced labor—were a constant presence in this economic system. Their toil built the wealth that paid for fashionable commodities and the homes that displayed them. Enslaved workers harvested, mined, and processed valuable raw materials. Enslaved artisans labored in shops that produced luxurious goods. Enslaved individuals were responsible for the continued care of objects.

Written records rarely acknowledge those bound up in slavery and their involuntary role in the creation of goods. These objects show the contributions of enslaved people to the culture of the Shenandoah Valley and of America.

Bristol: A View from Clifton Hill,
about 1815
Francis Danby (Irish, 1793-1861)
Signed lower left “F. Danby”
Bristol, England
Watercolor and pencil on paper
Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection,
0043



Bristol was one of several English ports participating in the Atlantic slave trade. In 1750 alone, 8,000 of the 20,000 enslaved Africans sent that year to British American colonies left through the port. Bristol merchants also supplied British colonies with a steady supply of plantation goods that supported the slave system.

Artist Francis Danby painted Bristol several years after the British Empire abolished the slave trade within its borders. During Danby's time, the ships in port represented a fraction of those present just a few years earlier. But homes and businesses built with profits from the slave trade were still standing.

International commerce was at the heart of the traffic in human beings. Starting in the 1500s, European powers began a Triangular Trade route of manufactured goods from Europe, raw materials and foodstuffs from the Americas, and enslaved people from Africa. As a British colony, Virginia participated in this system. Beginning in the 1600s tobacco—grown, picked, and exported with enslaved labor—placed Virginia on the international stage. The consumption of tobacco built wealth that was reinvested in global trade networks. This increased the reliance on slavery for hundreds of years.

Tobacco Cutter, 1800s

Maker unknown

Attributed to the Shenandoah Valley

Iron, wood

2001.13.578

A person processing tobacco used the sharp blade of this tool to cut shredded leaves or pressed blocks of the plant into smaller pieces for smoking or chewing. The Shenandoah Valley was not known for its cultivation of Virginia's first cash crop. But people in this region—white, Black, free, and enslaved—were ardent users of enslaved-grown tobacco in all its forms. For most of the 1700s, tobacco could even be used to pay debts in Virginia. Heavy tobacco consumption throughout the Commonwealth reinforced systems of slavery there.



Illustration of a tobacco plant ("Tobacco plant," from *A treatise on the culture of the tobacco plant; with the manner in which it is usually cured*. By Jonathan Carver, London, England, 1779. Image from the Biodiversity Heritage Library. Contributed by the University of California Libraries. www.biodiversitylibrary.org)

Tobacco Jar with Tamper, 1800–1810

Maker unknown

Attributed to Staffordshire, England

Earthenware (prattware)

Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0653a-c



Mrs. George Oswald (1747–1791), 1770–1774

Thomas Gainsborough

(English, 1727–1788)

Likely Bath, England

Oil on canvas

Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0075

Wealth built from the slave trade paid for luxuries on both sides of the Atlantic. Painted by fashionable artist Thomas Gainsborough, this portrait of Margaret Smyth Oswald is one example. The Oswald family's business interests touched nearly every aspect of the Triangular Trade, including Virginia's tobacco-based colonial economy. Margaret's husband, George Oswald, led the Scottish tobacco-trading firm of Oswald, Dennistoun & Company. George's uncle left him money from investments in multiple slave ships and in Bance Island, a slave-trading fort in Sierra Leone. Other close family members in Glasgow traded in goods produced by enslaved people or invested in industries that supported the slave economy.



British Men of War in a Calm Sea and British Men of War in a Rough Sea, probably 1730s

Peter Monamy (British, 1689–1749)

Signed lower left "Monamy"

England

Oil on canvas

Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0114.1–2

European navies—including Britain's Royal Navy—patrolled trade routes to ensure the uninterrupted flow of enslaved people to, and raw materials from, the Americas. Paintings like these reinforced Great's Britain's role as a global trading power. Peter Monamy depicts warships in two settings, emphasizing the imperial navy's mastery of the seas under any conditions. When Parliament abolished the British slave trade in 1807, the Royal Navy began patrolling the coast of West Africa to suppress the trade in human beings. The United States ended the importation of enslaved people from Africa the following year. But its internal slave trade continued to grow

Sugar Nippers or Sugar Cutter, about 1750

Maker unknown
American, possibly Shenandoah Valley
Iron
2001.13.350



Unlike refined sugar today, slave-cultivated sugar of the 1700s came in cones, loafs, or lumps. The person handling the sugar used nippers like these to cut off a portion that could be served or ground more finely. Records suggest that because sugar was so expensive, enslavers controlled its distribution tightly. Yet enslaved people often cooked with sugar or served it with social drinks like coffee, tea, or rum punch. Cooking and serving sometimes gave them the chance to resist enslavement by claiming a little sugar for themselves.

Sugar Bowl with Lid, 1810–1820

Maker unknown
Inscribed "Mary + + Embich / when I am Dead and in my Grave / and all my bones are wrotten / When this you See Remember me / elce I Shall be Forgotten"
Hagerstown, Maryland
Earthenware with tin or lead glaze
2002.6.1



This earthenware sugar bowl would have been much cheaper than sugar bowls made of silver or imported porcelain. It tells us that sugar was becoming more affordable to American consumers by the early 1800s. Sugar production rose steadily throughout the 1700s, fed by growing demand and the steady importation of an enslaved workforce to the Caribbean. The rise in production led to a drop in sugar prices. This shift meant that sugar consumption was no longer limited to the very wealthy and extended slavery's reach to include many everyday Americans.



Enslaved people processing sugar in the Caribbean ("A representation of the sugar-cane and the art of making sugar," from *The universal magazine of knowledge and pleasure*. Published by John Hinton, London, England, 1749. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.)

Bottle Case and/or Sugar Chest, 1770–1790

Maker unknown
Winchester, Virginia
Maple, yellow pine and/or white pine, brass
2019.9.6



Often called a "bottle case" or "brandy case" in period records, lockable raised boxes like this one stored costly alcohol in Southern households. This example lacks the bottle dividers usually found inside. This indicates it also may have held Caribbean sugar used to sweeten alcoholic beverages. The pull-out board—called a "slider" in the 1700s and 1800s—provided a surface on which to mix drinks and organize the case's contents. From those who labored for the box's contents to those who might have manipulated it over time, slavery was entwined with this object.

Looking Glass, 1784–1790

Shop of John Elliott
(American, working 1784–1804)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany, yellow pine, glass
Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0860



What do you see when you look into this mirror? In the early 1800s, it reflected the appearances of the numerous people—free and enslaved—who lived at Glen Burnie. What did they see? Period sources from across Virginia reveal that enslaved people expressed their cultural history through dress and appearance. Many enslaved people purchased and wore items that were part of West African traditions, like head wraps, beads, cowrie shells, and coins worn as necklaces. One English visitor to Prince William County, Virginia, noted in 1803 that "the girls never failed to put on their garments of gladness, their bracelets, and chains, rings and ear-rings."

Pair of Knife Cases, 1770

Maker unknown
Silver mounts marked "IW"
London, England
Mahogany, silver
Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection
0570.1–2



Despite the name, knife boxes stored an assortment of (usually silver) utensils and cutlery. Open during mealtimes to display their costly contents, knife boxes

were locked when not in use. Ironically, though, the frequent task of cleaning and polishing the carefully guarded contents often fell to enslaved people. In 1856 freedom seeker Dan Josiah Lockhart—who successfully fled from Frederick County to Canada—recalled this type of work in his former enslaver’s home: “My business was to clean knives, forks, candlesticks, etc., until my mistress died, when I was twelve or thirteen.”

Coffee Pot, about 1795

Shop of John McMullin
(American, 1765–1843)
Marked four times on bottom “McMullin”
Engraved “EMT”
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Silver, wood
Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0788a–b



Waste Bowl, 1810–1815

Shop of William L. Campbell
(American, 1787–1815)
Marked twice on foot “Campbell”
Winchester, Virginia
Silver, 2012.5.1



This waste bowl—used to hold the dregs of tea—bears the impressed mark of Winchester silversmith William Campbell. Tax records show that in 1811, 1812, and 1814, one enslaved person over age 16 lived in Campbell’s household. A second person over 16 also lived there in 1812. Unfortunately, tax records of this era do not identify enslaved people by gender, name, or occupation. The entries, though, might represent enslaved craftspeople that Campbell purchased or rented for their labor. Alternatively, these individuals might have worked at domestic tasks that ensured Campbell could spend more time behind the silversmith’s bench.

Sugar Bowl with Lid, 1810–1816

Shop of Daniel Hartman and William Phillips
(active 1802–1816)
Marked twice inside handles “H&P”
Winchester, Virginia
Silver
2021.11a–b



In 1811, Winchester tax collectors assessed the silversmithing business of Daniel Hartman and William Phillips. The assessors noted one Black man over 16 years old in their household. Because Hartman

and Phillips were taxed as a joint business—rather than as individuals—the evidence suggests that the unnamed Black man also worked in the silversmithing trade. Unfortunately, though, the tax records do not clarify whether he was enslaved or worked for the firm as a free man. Perhaps he made or helped make objects like this sugar bowl, originally part of a larger tea service. Future research might reveal his name.

Sideboard, 1790–1800

Maker unknown
Attributed to the northern Shenandoah Valley
Mahogany, yellow pine, tulip poplar, brass
Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0854



Introduced in the late 1700s, sideboards stored and displayed commodities closely related to enslavement. Their broad tops provided space to display “all the silver one owns” as one French visitor to America described it. Like many examples, this mahogany sideboard has a drawer with dividers designed to store alcohol, another product of the Triangular Trade.

Enslaved people may have interacted with this sideboard or objects like it. Household guides recommended frequent polishing of mahogany furniture to keep surfaces shining, a task often assigned to enslaved people. At the end of meals, enslaved people stored dining equipment away in drawers that were then locked by their enslavers.

Tall Case Clock, 1810–1820

Movement by Shop of Jacob Craft
(American, 1765–1825), case by Shop of James Shepherd
Signed “Jacob Craft / Shepherds Town”
Labeled by James Shepherd
Shepherdstown, Virginia (now West Virginia)
Mahogany veneer, mahogany, walnut, brass, polychrome paint
2011.1.1, Gift of August Van Dessel

Tall Case Clock, about 1795

Works by Goldsmith Chandlee
(American, 1751–1821)
Signed “G. CHANDLEE WINCHESTER”
Winchester, Virginia

Cherry, yellow pine, brass, steel, lead, iron, enamel, glass
Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0841



This clock is one of the original furnishings of Glen Burnie. In the late 1700s, living by a clock was still a

fairly new concept. But both enslaved people and their enslavers grew to pay close attention to time management. Enslavers believed that adherence to the clock reinforced order and maximized productivity. Enslaved workers who failed to follow a schedule could be punished. In response, they used predictability to subvert their masters. Aware of the schedule of interaction with their enslavers, enslaved people applied the time in between to their own benefit. For example, they could learn to read only when they knew whites were not likely to check in on them.



Enslaved labor produced and paid for many of the luxuries enjoyed by Americans, including people in the Shenandoah Valley. Even those who did not own enslaved people benefited from slavery's reach. Enslaved labor produced consumable products—like sugar, tea, and tobacco—that became part of daily life. With increased consumption of these products came objects used to display and serve them. These included mahogany furniture, silver services, and porcelains from Europe and China. Exports from the Shenandoah Valley helped pay for these new consumer goods. Wheat, for example, travelled to the Caribbean and to Central and South America, where enslaved workers felled mahogany, mined silver, and processed sugar at great risk to their own lives.



Increased consumption of sugary beverages and cakes inspired tableware to serve them. The service here is set for tea. Similar settings would have accompanied related beverages like coffee and chocolate.

Teacups, Saucers, Teapot with Stand, Sugar Bowl with Lid, Cream Pitcher, and Waste Bowl, about 1815

Attributed to New Hall Company (active 1781–1835)
 Shelton, Staffordshire, England
 Soft-paste porcelain
 Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0678.4,6,10,12 – 14, 21 – 25

Salver, about 1781

Shop of John Crouch I and Thomas Hanman
 London, England
 Silver
 Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0816

Teaspoons, 1820–1866

Shop of Charles G. Stewart (American, 1797–1866)
 Marked "STEWART"
 Engraved "JSM"
 Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia)
 Silver
 2007.6.7 – 8, 10

Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1817–1820

Shop of William Phillips and John Foster
 Marked "P&F"
 Engraved "CEC"
 Winchester, Virginia
 Silver
 2001.20.1

Tea Caddy

Maker Unknown
 Attributed to China
 Black lacquer over unidentified wood, gilt, pewter, brass
 Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0333a-g

Pair of Beakers, 1773

Shop of Joseph Richardson Sr.
 (American, 1711–1784)
 Marked "IR"
 Engraved "RW"
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Silver
 Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection
 0786.1–2



Small, portable vessels like this pair of beakers held a variety of beverages. These included (often alcoholic) drinks made or sweetened with sugar. According to family history, these beakers were a wedding gift to Robert Wood and Comfort Welsh. They married in April 1774 and lived at Glen Burnie. The daily handling of the beakers, though, likely fell to one or more of the 11 people enslaved by the Woods at Glen Burnie. By 1807 these included Lewis, Frank, Joe, Alfred, Emily, John, Davy, Phoeby, Margaret, Jenny, and a woman whose name remains unknown.

Excerpt from the estate inventory of Robert Wood listing the people enslaved at Glen Burnie by 1807 (Frederick County Will Book 8, Frederick County Virginia Circuit Court. Microfilm image courtesy Stewart Bell Jr. Archives, Handley Regional Library, Winchester, Virginia.)



Toddy Ladle, 1802–1816

Shop of Daniel Hartman & William Phillips
(active 1802–1816)

Marked "H&P"

Engraved "RHD", "MLLW", and "JJW"

Winchester, Virginia

Silver

2011.3.3



Punch drinkers of the early 1700s sipped directly out of a bowl passed from hand to hand. But by mid-century, this practice had begun to wane in favor of punch ladles from which you could serve yourself. The twisted handle and half-round bowl of this ladle indicate it was used to serve toddy. Popular in the 1700s and 1800s, toddy was a mixture of pot-stilled liquor, boiling water, spices, and sugar. This object is connected to the practice of slavery in two ways. Enslaved workers both produced the sugar and mined the silver of the ladle.

Punch Bowl, 1840–1860

Moore & Co.

Staffordshire, England

Lusterware

Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0302



Popular in the 1700s, punch was a drink closely entwined with slavery. Many of its ingredients—rum or brandy, sugar, citrus fruit juices, spices, and water—travelled along global trade routes or were cultivated by enslaved people.

Punch was a social drink. Objects like this punch bowl facilitated communal drinking. Early punch drinkers passed the bowl from hand to hand, drinking directly from it. Manufactured in England, this punch bowl is decorated with symbols of British imperial ambition: ships, famous landmarks, and an imagined scene of Black and white men panning for gold while one man looks on.

Card Table, 1790–1805

Maker unknown

Winchester, Virginia

Mahogany, black walnut, yellow pine,

lightwood inlay

Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 1021.2



This table is one of a pair commissioned by Robert and Comfort Wood for Glen Burnie. When not in use, it sat folded and "at rest" against a wall. Setting up and taking down the table, though, was probably a

recurring task for one of the five men enslaved at Glen Burnie by 1807: Lewis, Frank, Joe, John, and Davy.

The table's most distinctive feature is a series of inlays on the legs depicting either cornhusks or wheat shafts. The Wood family chose to decorate the table legs with symbols of agricultural wealth, achieved at Glen Burnie through the labor of enslaved people.

Hot Water Urn on Stand, 1802

Robert Hennell I (English, 1741–1811)

London, England

Silver

Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0796a–d



Urn Stand, 1785–1790

Maker Unknown

Attributed to Massachusetts

Mahogany

Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 1029

Jamb Stove Front Plate, about 1773

Attributed to Marlboro Furnace

Frederick County, Virginia

Cast iron

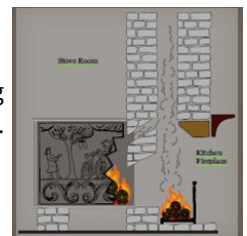
2008.7.4



Enslaved labor was vital to the large colonial iron industry. Both free white and enslaved people worked at Isaac Zane's Marlboro Furnace, where this stove plate and the nearby andirons were cast. By his death in 1795, Zane enslaved 21 men and women, at the time one of the Valley's larger enslaved work forces.

This plate was part of a five-piece jamb stove popular in the homes of Valley Germans. The verse you see is from the Biblical book of Micah. It translates as "they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid." Ironically, this statement did not extend to the enslaved people who labored for the stove's construction.

Side elevation of a jamb stove showing an iron stove plate.





***Portrait of Thomas Boyle Campbell
(1796–1858), about 1842***

Artist unknown
Winchester, Virginia
Oil on canvas
2013.84.4

By 1850, six enslaved people lived in the household of silversmith Thomas Boyle Campbell. This portrait of the craftsman—painted a few years earlier—hung somewhere in Campbell’s house. Placed in rooms where people often passed, portraits reinforced the idea that masters and mistresses were ever watchful.

Olaudah Equiano—enslaved in Virginia during the 1700s and later an abolitionist in Britain—described “a picture hanging in the room, which appeared constantly to look at me, I was still more affrighted...I thought it was something relative to magic.”

Mantel, 1820–1830

Maker unknown
Attributed to Brownsburg, Virginia
Poplar, paint
2016.10.1



***Directional Mile Marker,
1820s–1830s***

Liberty Furnace
Inscribed “LIBERTY. FURNACE. 4 MILE”
Liberty Furnace, Shenandoah County, Virginia
Cast iron
2001.13.529



This sign once pointed the way towards Liberty Furnace west of Woodstock, though the pointing finger is now missing. Walter Newman opened the furnace in 1822. Members of his family continued to operate it through the Civil War. Through the wealth created by Liberty Furnace and other enterprises, Newman was able to invest in more profit-building enslaved labor. In 1820, Shenandoah County tax assessors recorded one enslaved boy in Newman’s household. By 1830—as iron production at Liberty grew—that number ballooned to nine enslaved people and two free Black boarders.

Iron Pig, 1822–1860

Liberty Furnace
Signed “LIBERTY / FURNACE”
Liberty Furnace, Shenandoah County, Virginia
Cast iron
2021.14



Ingot-shaped pig iron was one of the most common products of Valley furnaces. Because the pig iron was filled with impurities, foundries typically exported it to other locations to be further refined. In its refined form, pig iron became bar iron. Free and enslaved blacksmiths throughout Virginia reworked bar iron into items like household implements, tools, and nails.

Black craftspeople might have played a role in casting this piece of pig iron. By 1830, two free Black and four enslaved men and/or boys lived at Liberty Furnace with furnace founder Walter Newman.

Fireplace Tongs, late 1700s or early 1800s

Maker unknown
Attributed to the Shenandoah Valley
Wrought iron
2001.13.370



Pair of Andirons, 1770–1790

Attributed to Marlboro Furnace
Frederick County, Virginia
Cast iron
2021.15.1–2

Like the nearby stove plate, this pair of andirons was likely produced at Isaac Zane’s Marlboro Furnace west of Winchester. When these andirons were made, Zane was expanding his enslaved workforce. Surviving records related to Marlboro and other Valley furnaces suggest that enslaved people were involved in nearly every stage of iron production and distribution. Many of the tasks ironmongers assigned to enslaved people were backbreaking and hellish. These included mining iron ore, gathering and breaking limestone, and continuously feeding the furnace. However, enslaved people with specialized skills could sometimes leverage their talents for a greater degree of independence.

Control was essential to keeping the economic engine of slavery moving. Public laws controlled how enslaved Africans and African Americans could or could not live, learn, and gather. In household settings, everyday objects could also be used to exert control. Locked pieces of furniture determined who had access to food and medicine. Clocks regulated the tasks of the day. But these same objects also provided opportunities for enslaved individuals to resist the people and system that exploited them. Purposefully breaking a tool to end a workday early. Chipping a plate so that it was no longer presentable. Sneaking an extra morsel from a food safe when a back was turned.

Key Basket, 1830–1860

Maker unknown

Southern Rockingham or northern

Augusta County, Virginia

Leather, cotton

2001.0013.496



Women of the mid-1800s used baskets like this one to carry and store household keys. In slaveholding households, key baskets served as objects of control. They were symbols of women's domestic authority over their households, including the enslaved men, women, and children who worked in them. The person who managed household keys controlled access to necessities like food, medicine, and clothing. Consequently, enslavers kept key baskets and their contents close at hand. Objects like this one illuminate the role of women in perpetuating and enforcing slavery.



Closet Safe, about 1830

Attributed to Shop of Matthew S. Kahle (American, 1800–1869) and Shop of John Henson (Anglo-American, active 1819–after 1830)

Lexington, Virginia

Tulip poplar, pine, tinned sheet metal

2014.02.01

Food safes provided ample—and secure—space for storing food and valuables. The massive size of this safe and its political imagery suggest that it might have stood in a more public setting, like an inn, rather than in a home. Another, nearly identical safe made in the same shop was once among the furnishings of the Washington Tavern in Lexington, Virginia. In public places like inns and taverns, enslaved people working there as well as those traveling with their enslavers would have encountered, accessed—or been barred from accessing—the safe and its contents.

Free People of Color

Not all Africans and African Americans in the Valley were enslaved. Prior to 1865, free people of color included those who were born free and those who gained their freedom through manumission (release from enslavement). Despite laws restricting them, free Blacks carved out meaningful lives for themselves and their families. Purchasing relatives who remained enslaved required significant financial resources, as did avoiding fines, imprisonment, and re-enslavement. Through the daily act of living, free Blacks challenged the racial status quo.

Abraham Spencer (about 1806–1873) is a rare documented example of a free Black Valley artisan. Born in Winchester, Spencer was the son of an emancipated father and free mother. The Spencer family later moved to New Market, where Abraham trained with potters working in a German tradition. Over his lifetime, Spencer worked for multiple white-owned potteries in the Shenandoah Valley and may even have owned his own business. In years leading up to the Civil War, Spencer's efforts kept his family free and financially independent. Spencer also built a network of employers who could vouch for his freed status and his skills as a potter.

Explore the lives of other free people of color in the *Reading Between the Lines* section around the corner.

Photographers recorded few images of free Blacks in the

Shenandoah Valley. Even fewer survive today. This image of Abraham Spencer's daughter Serena (Anker, born 1851), from about 1900, gives us some idea of what her father may have looked like. Serena described Abraham as "a man that weighed nearly three hundred pounds, but he toddled around lively."



Image courtesy of Kenyette Spencer Mills

Vase, about 1815–1822

Attributed to Shop of Christian Adam (active 1814–1822) and/or Jacob Adam (active 1808–1827)

New Market, Virginia

Earthenware with lead and manganese slip decoration

2001.0013.067



Bowl, 1830–1880

Attributed to Shop of John Coffman (1803–1885)

New Market, Virginia

Earthenware with white lead slip and lead glaze

2019.16



Ceramics like these two illustrate the Germanic pottery tradition in which Abraham Spencer trained. They might also be clues as to what other Spencer pieces might look like. In 1811, potter Jacob Adam purchased property in New Market near that of Abraham Spencer's father Jesse. Adam and/or his brother Christian—both of whom learned pottery making in Hagerstown, Maryland—may have trained Abraham in pottery making. John Coffman, who made the slip-decorated bowl, probably also trained with the Adam

brothers. Coffman continued to emulate their distinctive style years later. Spencer likely learned similar decorative techniques.



Crock, about 1860–1873

Attributed to Abraham Spencer (American, about 1806–1873) in the Shop of Samuel Bell (American, 1811–1891)
Inscribed upside down on body “A”
Strasburg, Virginia
Earthenware with manganese-glazed interior
 2018.01.1

The large inverted “A” on this crock is a clue to its maker. The “A” identifies it as one of the few pieces attributable to free Black potter Abraham Spencer. Spencer worked for multiple white potteries during his lifetime, including Samuel Bell of Strasburg. According to a tradition passed down in Bell’s family, Spencer marked his wares with an “A” so he could be paid properly for his work. It looks like he marked this crock after stacking it upside down in the kiln before firing. The rim profile and the shape of the body show the influence of New Market potters on Spencer’s work.

The excerpts on the wall are reproduced from the 1817 daybook of New Market doctor and merchant Solomon Henkel (1777–1847) Abraham Spencer’s father Jesse appears multiple time in the daybook, documenting the Spencer family’s presence in the community. Freed from the estate of planter Robert Carter III in Frederick County in 1803, Jesse moved to New Market sometime soon after. .

To help support himself and his family, Jesse worked periodically for Henkel at a variety of tasks. . Some entries suggest that Jesse worked to find housing for other free Blacks and/or enslaved individuals in the surrounding area.

Transcribed below are the daybook entries reproduced on the wall:



Jesse Spencer Cr By 3 Days Hay making some time ago at 3/pr Day



By finding Bording [Boarding] for Watsons Negro man a Day



Jesse Spencer Cr By a part of a days mowing



Jesse Spencer Cr By a Days washing day bfo [before]

Side Chair, 1858

John W. Pennybaker (American, died 1862) in the Shop of David Russell Jr. (American, 1799–1859)
Winchester, Virginia
Tulip poplar, oak, paint
 2016.7.1



This chair is similar to the one that appears in the nearby photograph of an unidentified woman. Objects like this help date and contextualize the photograph. Called “fancy chairs” for their decorative paint schemes, this style was introduced to Winchester in the late 1810s or 1820s by chairmakers. Artisans produced variations of the fancy chair form until the Civil War. Like this example, the crest of the chair in the photograph appears to be painted in a solid color (probably black) edged with gold banding and striping. This color scheme was particularly popular in the Winchester-Frederick County area.



Portrait of Thomas Glass (1792–1862), about 1860–1862

Edward Caledon Bruce (American, 1825–1900)
Signed “EB”
Winchester, Virginia
Oil on canvas
Julian Wood Glass Jr. Collection 0026

Around the time he had this portrait painted, farmer Thomas Glass enslaved 15 people at Rose Hill in western Frederick County. Shortly after sitting for this portrait, Glass died, prompting an inventory of his estate. The names of five enslaved women appear in the inventory: Mary, Delpha, Sally, Allice [sic], and Ann. Two additional names, Press and Page, could represent either men or women. The unidentified African American woman in the photograph nearby might be one of the women named in the inventory.

Reading Between the Lines

Prior to the end of slavery, laws and social practices prevented most Black Virginians from learning to read or write. As a result, they left few records written in their own hands and from their own perspectives. Records that do survive—legal papers, account books,

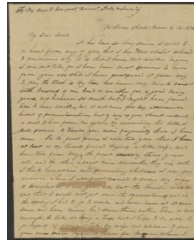
personal correspondence, and photographs—tell part of the story. They offer clues about how people of African descent built families and communities, expressed themselves through action and dress, and encountered and resisted slavery. However, these records should be approached with a critical eye. They usually were written from white—and often slaveholding—perspectives.

Letter from Dr. Lawrence Augustine Washington Jr. (1814–1882) to Wood Family Relatives at Glen Burnie, November 29, 1843

Red Shoal, Putnam County, Virginia (now West Virginia)

Iron gall ink on paper

Wood-Glass Family Archive WGFP.0760



In this letter to his Wood relatives at Glen Burnie, Lawrence Augustine Washington Jr. (George Washington's great-nephew) noted, "Negro property is becoming very uncertain[,] in this country they are running away every day." At the time he wrote this, Washington lived in what is now Red House Shoals, West Virginia, about twenty miles from the Ohio River. Their proximity to the free state of Ohio must have made escape seem more attractive to those Washington enslaved. Washington's disdain suggests some were successful.

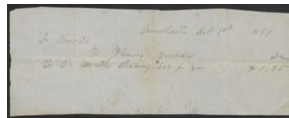
Receipt from Fleming Jordan (born 1818) to Dr. Robert Wood (1776–1855), October 1, 1851

Winchester, Virginia

Iron gall ink on paper

Wood-Glass Family Archive

WGFP.0625



This receipt for "2½ Months shaving" documents the trade of free Black barber Fleming Jordan. Barbers were among the most affluent of Virginia's free African American population. Their specialized skills were needed on a recurring basis. Jordan seems to have followed this trend of success. In October 1849, he married freewoman Margaret Brown. A year later, the couple lived in their own household in Winchester alongside two young boarders. By 1860, the Jordans had moved to Washington, DC, and acquired property valued at \$500. Nevertheless, barbers like Jordan navigated difficult circumstances. Their occupation placed them under the near constant scrutiny of white clients.

Photograph of a Woman and Child, 1860s or 1870s

Photographer unknown

Frederick County, Virginia

Tintype

Wood-Glass Family Archive WGFP.1317



This photograph of an African American woman was discovered in the nearby Wood-Glass family photo album. While the subject is unidentified, details in the image help tell us about the era in which she lived. Her dress appears to be made of a floral-printed cotton fabric like those popular from the 1860s through the early 1870s. Visible behind her is the back of a painted side chair like the one nearby. This and the photograph reproduced nearby might be the only known images of one of the 15 people enslaved by the Glass family at Rose Hill before the Civil War.

What is Her Name?

Enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals, people of color, and Native Americans from the past are often challenging to research. Their lives were not usually recorded the way those of white members of the community were.

The woman in this photograph from the Wood-Glass Family Papers is unidentified. Her clothing, the photographic technique, and possible identification of the baby as one of the children born to the Glass family, date the image to the 1860s or 1870s.

Additional research may reveal her identity. The 1862 estate inventory of Thomas Glass provides first names of the women enslaved by the Glass family at Rose Hill Farm: Mary, Delpha, Salley, Allice, and Anne. The slave schedules of 1850 and 1860 and the federal census of 1870 provide more information about African Americans living on and around Rose Hill. The 1870 census includes their names, ages, sexes, places of birth, and occupations. Further analysis and comparison of these and other documents may lead us to one day know her name.

While the woman in this photograph is unidentified, details in the image help tell us about the era in which she lived. Her dress appears to be made of a floral-printed cotton fabric like those popular from the 1860s through the early 1870s. Visible behind her is the back of a painted side chair, or "fancy



chair," like the one nearby. Winchester chairmakers produced these chairs well into the 1850s.

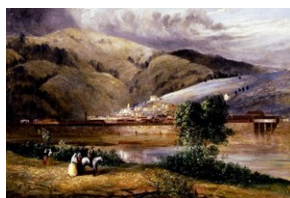
Collection of the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, Wood-Glass Family Papers, WBFP .1317.

In 1850 and 1860, the United States census included slave schedules that tallied the number of enslaved people in each state. The schedules rarely list the names of enslaved individuals. They are instead usually listed under a slave owner's name and described by age, sex, and color (black or "mulatto," a derogatory term meaning of mixed Black and white ancestry).

Slave schedules nevertheless can provide useful information in researching enslaved people. Pictured here is the 1860 slave schedule entry for Thomas Glass of Rose Hill. The entry lists three girls between the ages of 10 and 16. One of these girls could have grown up to be the unidentified woman pictured in the photograph album.

Slave Schedule, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Series Number M653, Record Group 29, The National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

Name	Age	Sex	Color
Thomas Glass	10	Female	Black
	12	Female	Black
	14	Female	Black



Harper's Ferry Virginia, about 1859

Attributed to Ferdinand Joachim Richardt (Danish, 1819–1895)
Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia)

Oil on canvas
1999.7.1

Painted just before the Civil War, this landscape of Harpers Ferry depicts the future home of Storer College. The town's features—some of which are seen here made it an attractive site for a freedman's school. The region's location made it a natural gathering place. From Harper's Ferry, freedmen could leave the South by rail, water, and overland. Buildings associated with the U.S. Armory—like Lockwood House on the hill at upper right—provided classroom spaces and housing for students. The town was also significant for abolitionists as the place where John Brown attempted to end American slavery.

The Legacy of Storer College

At the end of the Civil War, about 30,000 newly freed African Americans lived in the Shenandoah Valley. For this community, pursuing an education was one of many avenues to pursuing equality, prosperity, and independence. Civic, religious, and governmental

organizations founded schools throughout the Valley to meet the needs of its African American citizens. Founded in 1867, Storer College in Harpers Ferry was one of the Valley's largest and most enduring schools for freed men and women.

Storer had humble origins. It grew out of a one-room school founded by Freewill Baptists and the Freedmen's Bureau just after the Civil War. For its first 25 years, Storer College was the only school in West Virginia to offer more than a primary education to students of color. The school's earliest instructors were white missionaries. However, an integrated faculty soon became one of Storer's defining features. By 1938 the school offered full four-year degrees. Storer produced generations of Black leaders, educators, doctors, lawyers, farmers, and other professionals. By the time it closed in 1955, the school had graduated over 7,000 students.

Photograph of students posing at Myrtle (later Mosher) Hall, about 1878–1890

Photographer unknown
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
Albumen print photograph
2009.10.368

Gift of Mrs. Anne Dungan, Mr. John C. Newcomer,
Mr. Thomas W. Newcomer, and Mrs. Elizabeth Snyder



In the 1870s, the Storer College campus expanded to accommodate a growing student body. Myrtle Hall served as the women's dormitory. It was built in 1878 with funds from the Free Will Baptist Woman's Missionary Society. When first constructed, Myrtle Hall accommodated up to 60 students and two faculty members. This photograph depicts some of the building's residents around the time of Myrtle's construction. On both levels of the building, multiple women hold or display books, drawing attention to the tools that advanced their education.

Photograph of students and teachers of Storer College on Jefferson Rock, 1890

Photographer unknown
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
Albumen print photograph
2009.10.372, Gift of Mrs. Anne
Dungan, Mr. John C. Newcomer, Mr.
Thomas W. Newcomer, and Mrs. Elizabeth Snyder



Taken at Jefferson Rock above Harpers Ferry, this photograph depicts several of Storer's students and

teachers on an outing. One of Storer's teachers wrote that "within the campus all was calm...it was a little heaven." The same could not be said of the rest of Harpers Ferry. Early students and teachers faced verbal and physical abuse from locals who opposed the education of African Americans. The Storer college community—Black and white men and women working together to advance education—also challenged Southern racial taboos that extended to before the Civil War.

Photograph of Anthony Memorial Hall, about 1890

Photographer unknown
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
Albumen print photograph
2009.10.369

Gift of Mrs. Anne Dungan, Mr. John C. Newcomer, Mr. Thomas W. Newcomer, and Mrs. Elizabeth Snyder

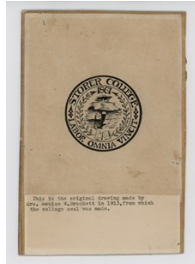


Anthony Memorial Hall was the center of scholarly and social life at Storer College. Constructed in the 1840s as the U.S. Armory superintendent's home, the building became part of the school campus in 1869. An expansion in 1882 created space for Storer's main library, museum, music room, chapel, lecture room, science laboratories, and administrative offices.

Anthony Memorial Hall gained national significance in August 1906 as the site of the second meeting of the Niagara Movement. Founded by African American intellectual leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary Burnett Talbert, and William Monroe Trotter, the organization was the predecessor to the NAACP.

Drawing of Storer College Seal, 1913

Attributed to Louise Wood Brackett
(American, 1842–1936)
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
Ink on paper
2009.10.615
Gift of Mrs. Anne Dungan, Mr. John C. Newcomer, Mr. Thomas W. Newcomer, and Mrs. Elizabeth Snyder



Louise Wood Brackett—a teacher at Storer College and wife of founder Nathan Brackett—drew this seal ahead of the school's 50th anniversary. It became Storer's official seal until the school closed in 1955. In the upper center of the seal is Jefferson Rock, a Harpers Ferry landmark. The school's Latin motto *Labor Omnia Vincit*—translated as "Work Conquers All"—

appears in the bottom half. A modified version of this seal is still used by the Storer College National Alumni Association.

Seal Press of Storer College, probably 1910s

Lamb Seal and Stencil Co.
Washington, D.C.
Steel, brass
2009.10.2, Gift of Mrs. Anne Dungan, Mr. John C. Newcomer, Mr. Thomas W. Newcomer, and Mrs. Elizabeth Snyder



This press produces the seal of Storer College. Storer administrators embossed the seal on official college documents, such as diplomas. Storer instructor Louise Wood Brackett designed the seal, enlarged and reproduced on the wall above you. The seal prominently features Jefferson Rock, a Harpers Ferry landmark that roots the school in a sense of place. It also includes the Storer motto *Labor Omnia Vincit*, or "Work Conquers All." This phrase embodies the resolve of Storer's graduates, who seized the opportunity for education against the backdrop of the Jim Crow South. Storer officials began using the seal sometime after 1913.

Ice Water Pitcher, 1873

Possibly Meriden Britannia Company
Engraved "N. C. Brackett / Presented by the Students / of Storer College / Nov 27th 1873"
New England, possibly Meriden, Connecticut
Silver plate (Britannia metal)
2009.10.1, Gift of Mrs. Anne Dungan, Mr. John C. Newcomer, Mr. Thomas W. Newcomer, and Mrs. Elizabeth Snyder



The students of Storer College presented this water pitcher to school founder Rev. Nathan Cook Brackett in 1873. Expensive gifts like this demonstrate the affection and mutual respect that existed between Storer's students and faculty. Together they worked to advance the education of people who—just a few years earlier—were legally barred from formal learning.

Portrait of Rev. Nathan Cook Brackett (1836–1910), about 1890

Attributed to Louise Wood Brackett
(American, 1842–1936)
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
Oil on canvas
2009.10.5, Gift of Mrs. Anne Dungan, Mr. John C. Newcomer, Mr. Thomas W. Newcomer, and Mrs. Elizabeth Snyder



A Freewill Baptist minister from Maine, Nathan Cook Brackett was the founder of Storer College. Brackett first came to the Shenandoah Valley in 1864 as an agent for the U.S. Christian Commission attached to the Union Army. Following the war, he returned to the Valley to advocate for African American education.

In 1865, Brackett opened a one-room school in Lockwood House above Harpers Ferry. Two years later—with funding from philanthropist John Storer—the school became Storer College. Brackett served as Storer's first president until 1897. During his lifetime, he also served as the superintendent of all freed schools in the Valley. He oversaw 16 teachers/schools representing approximately 2,500 students.

Stories of Success and Perseverance

The related video tells additional stories of African Americans in the Northern Shenandoah Valley. It features brief biographies of more than three dozen people whose activities and experiences span the decades from the Civil War to today. These individuals fought for equality, advanced science and medicine, served their communities, taught in schools and universities, and achieved artistic and athletic excellence. Several of those included in this presentation were born enslaved, and many represent “firsts” for African Americans. Their actions impacted history and shaped the culture of our region and of the nation.

The biographies featured in the video are presented in chronological order and take about 15 minutes to view in full. For more information about the individuals seen here, see the *Stories of Success and Perseverance* handout in this exhibition.

Cathedral, early 1950s

Robert L. Cross
(American, born 1926)
Winchester, Virginia
Mixed media
Museum of the Shenandoah Valley,
gift of Robert L. Cross



This cathedral incorporates scrap wood that Cross recovered from the Henkel Harris Furniture Company. Cross also included a family heirloom in this piece. The pocket watch set into the clock tower descended to Cross from his grandfather William Cross (1845–1938).

William was born enslaved in Clarke County. After the Civil War he received land in Webbtown, east of Berryville. This land became the core of the farm on which Robert grew up two generations later. William was an early influence in his grandson's life, telling young Robert stories of when buffalo still roamed the Shenandoah Valley. William lived to the age of 97 and died when Robert was about 15 years old.

The MSV would like to thank Candace Davenport, Sharon Dixon, Judy Humbert, and Carl Rush for advising on content. *Stories of Success and Perseverance* is narrated by Cynthia Martin Banks.

Contributions is made possible by the extraordinary support of the MSV Compass Society.



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