

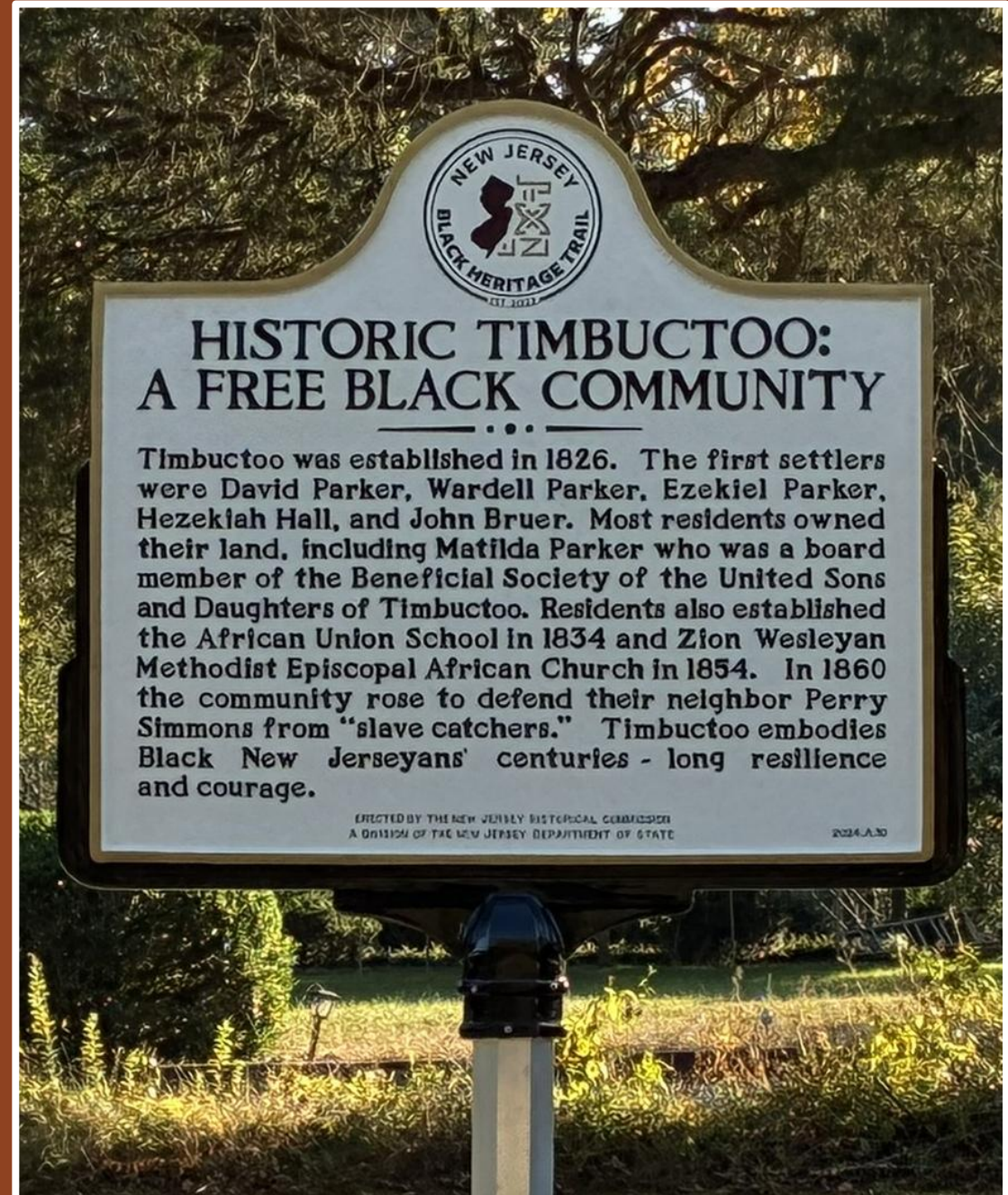
Preserving, Promoting and Protecting Timbuctoo

Prepared for:
37th Annual

Pinelands Short Course
New Jersey Pinelands Commission
and Stockton University

March 7, 2026

Guy Weston, MA
Timbuctoo Historical Society



Points of Discussion

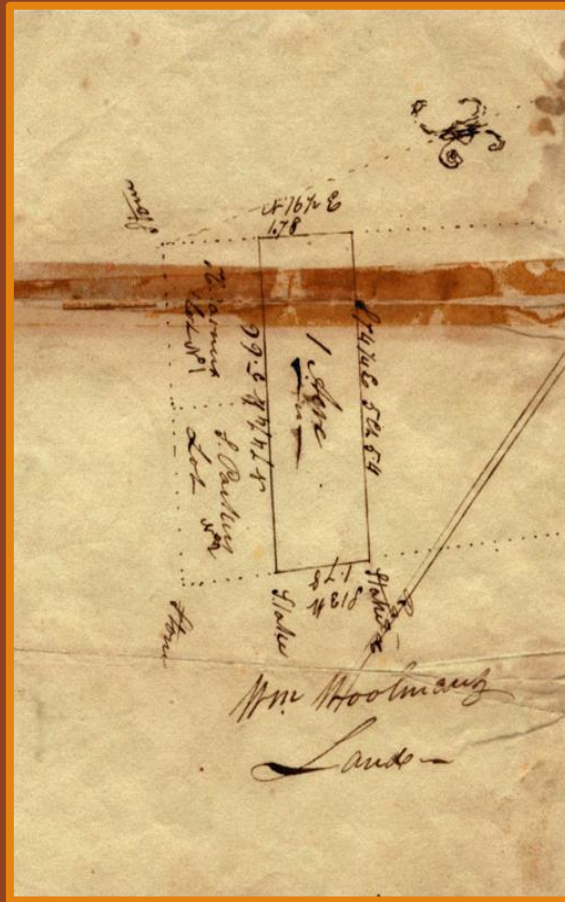
- What Is Timbuctoo – and Where Is It Located?
- Discovering Timbuctoo in My Own Family History
- Why Timbuctoo Matters: Understanding Its Historical Significance
- Ensuring Timbuctoo's Place in the American Historical Landscape



How did I get here?

- Our cousin Lillian gave us a parcel of land purchased by my 4th great grandfather in 1829
- Included with the gift were original handwritten deeds and other legal documents as early as 1829
- The notion of land ownership by Black people in 1829 was contrary to my understanding of antebellum US history as taught in my high school
- Researching my own family history shed light on a missing chapter in the history books that I wanted to provide

This Indenture Made this fifteenth day of the twelfth month in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty nine
Between Samuel Atkinson of the township of Northampton in the County of Burlington and State of New Jersey and Hannah his wife of the one part, and John Bruere of the township and County aforesaid of the other part Witnesseth That the said Samuel Atkinson and Hannah his wife for the consideration of thirty dollars paid or secured to be paid to the said Samuel Atkinson by the said John Bruere do grant bargain sell and convey unto the said John Bruere and to his heirs and assigns all that lot or parcel of lands being part of a larger lot or tract of land which the said Samuel Atkinson became seized of by virtue of a deed of conveyance duly executed from John Lucas Volger his wife and estate the first day of April in the year of our Lord 1818 and is recorded in book 123 of deeds page 304 &c in the Clerk's office at Mount Holly to w^{ch} said deed being read with more fully and at large appears which said lot or parcel of land hereby conveyed is bounded as follows To wit Beginning at a stake in a line of lands belonging to Joseph Hitey and situate in the township of Northampton aforesaid and corner to a lot of land No: 1 sold by the aforesaid Samuel Atkinson to Henry Garner and runs partly by said Garner's lot and partly by another lot sold by the said Samuel Atkinson to Samuel Parker South seventy four degrees and 4/4



Deed
Samuel Atkinson
& Wife
John Bruere
For 1 Acre of Land
in Northampton

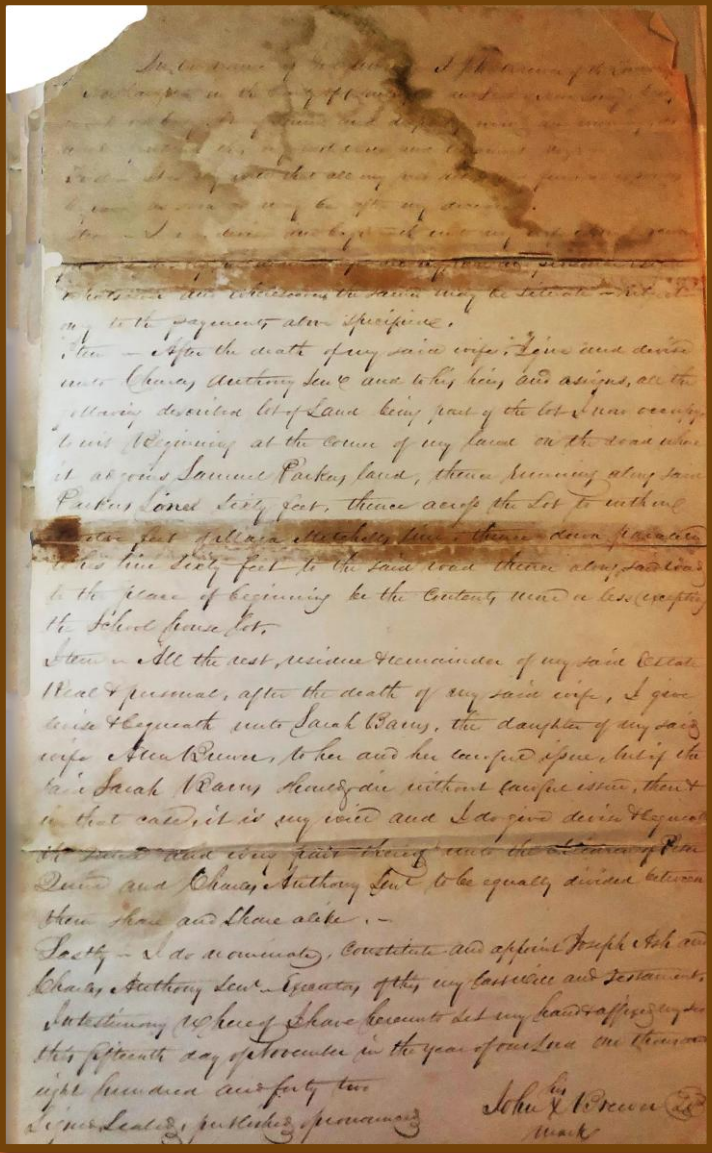
Recd July 9, 1830 & recorded in book 99 of deeds page 577 &c in the Clerk's office of the County of Burlington at

Sale to John Bruere: December 15, 1829¹

¹Burlington County, New Jersey, Deeds, Y-2:577, Samuel Atkinson and wife to John Bruere 15 December 1829; Burlington County Clerk's Office, Mount Holly.

Last Will and Testament of John Brewer

15 November 1842



In the name of God, Amen. I John Brewer of the Township of Northampton in the County of Burlington and State of New Jersey being weak in body but of sound and disposing mind and memory do make and publish this my last will and testament viz.:

First- It is my will that all my just debts and funeral expenses be paid as soon as may be after my decease.

Item- I give devise and bequeath unto my wife, Anne Brewer for and during her natural life all my real and personal estate whatsoever and wheresoever the said may be situate- subject only to the payment above specified.

Item- after the death of my said wife, I give and devise unto Charles Anthony, Sr., and to his heirs and assigns all the following described lot of land being part of the lot I now occupy, to wit. Beginning at the corner of my land on the road where it adjoins Samuel Parker's land, thence running along said Parker's line 60 ft, thence across the lot to within 12 ft of Major Mitchell's line, thence down parallel to his line 60 ft to the said road, thence along said road to the place of beginning be the contents more or less (excepting the schoolhouse lot)

Item- All the rest, residue, and remainder of my said estate, Real and personal, after the death of my said wife, I give devise and bequeath unto Sarah Barnes, the daughter of my said wife, Ann Bruer to her and her lawful issue, but if the said Sarah should die without lawful issue, then and in that case, it is my will, and I do give devise and bequeath the same and every part thereof unto the children of Peter Quire and Charles Anthony, Sr., to be equally divided between them and share alike. Lastly, I do nominate, constitute, and appoint Joseph Ash and Charles Anthony, Sr., Executors of this my last will and testament.

Witnesses: Amos Bullock, John R. Stack

Inventory of the Property of
John Bruer
11 May 1843

Inventory of the property of John Bruer thus taken by the
subscriber, this eleventh day of May 1843 the amount eight hundred
and forty three dollars

Wearing apparel of deceased	\$10.00		
1 Bureau 4.00	1 Dining table 4.00	5.00	
Lot of Crosey wood and secretary (in front room)	5.00		
1/2 doz back chairs 2.00	1 Rocking chair & cushion 1.00	3.00	
1 pair of blinds in front room	1.00	1 Looking glass .75	1.75
1 clock stand 1.00	1 Trunk & box 2.00	3.00	
Lot of carpeting in front room	3.00		
1 Bedstead & bedding (back room)	10.00		
" " " (middle room)	10.00		
1 drum (for stove)	1.00		
1/2 dozen ___ chairs	1.25		
Lot of carpeting upstairs	2.00		
1 small bedstead and box in middle room	1.00		
Lot of bottles, barrel boxes in end room	1.50		
1 Sacking bottom extra bedding in end room	5.00		
1 Walnut table and pine table	1.50		
1 Stove in kitchen and pipe	4.00		
Lot of ___ and crockery in kitchen	3.00		
3 Iron pots 1.00	1 Silver watch 4.00	5.00	
Lot of sundries in house	5.00		
1 bedstead and ___ (Still) house	3.50		
1 _____	0.50		
1 Cow and 2 pigs	19.00	<u>19.00</u>	

Appraised by us. Joseph Stokes
George Hulme

Inventory of the property of John Bruer thus taken by the subscriber,
this eleventh day of May 1843 viz.

Wearing apparel of deceased	10.00	
Bureau 4.00	Dining table 4.00	8.00
Lot of crockery ware and tumblers (in front room)	5.00	
1/2 Doz back chairs 2.00	Rocking chair and cushion 1.00	3.00
_____ 1.00	Looking glass .75	1.75
1 pair of blinds in front room	1.00	
1 clock Stand 1.00	Trunk and box 2.00	3.00
Lot of carpeting in front room	3.00	
1 bed bedstead, and bedding (back room)	10.00	
" " " (middle room)	10.00	
1 drum (for stove)	1.00	
1/2 dozen ___ chairs	1.25	
Lot of carpeting upstairs	2.00	
1 small bedstead and box in middle room	1.00	
Lot of bottles, barrel boxes in end room	1.50	
1 Sacking bottom extra bedding in end room	5.00	
1 Walnut table and pine table	1.50	
1 Stove in kitchen and pipe	4.00	
Lot of _____ and crockery in kitchen	3.00	
3 Iron pots 1.00	1 Silver watch 4.00	5.00
Lot of sundries in house	5.00	
1 bedstead and _____ (Still) house	3.50	
1 _____	0.50	
1 Cow and 2 pigs	19.00	<u>19.00</u>

108.00
Appraised by Joseph Stokes & George Hulme

Indenture of Mortgage

October 22, 1845

\$155

- § Paid back in annual payments, usually between \$1.50 to \$7.00.
- § Receipts are handwritten on back of the mortgage document
- § One entry reads "received of John Giles, 2000 bricks @ \$12.00 a thousand to pay the interest on the within bond for 1875 and 1876..."



Received 10th mo 12th 1846 one year's Interest on the within Bond — — — — — \$4.65. Jonathan Hilgard

Recd 10th mo 2nd 1847 of Abner Brewer Nine Dollars in part of the principle of the within Bond L. Giles agrees to pay the Interest

Received 10 mo 11th 1848 of Lambert Giles, Jonathan Hilgard
\$4.50 being one year's Interest on the within Bond due 10 mo 11th 1847
Jonathan Hilgard Executor

1849 10th mo 11th Received of Lambert Giles Five Dollars and twenty five cents which added to \$3.00 paid to Jonathan Hilgard Decd makes \$8.25 being two years interest of the within bond to this date Jonathan Hilgard Exec

1853 - 6 mo 15th Received from Lambert Giles (in hand of Jacob Colwell Treasr) \$1.50 on a/c of interest of within Bond

1858 - 2 mo 10th Received of Lambert Giles two dollars on a/c interest of the within bond for services rendered at the wedding

Received of John Hill balance of the loan of fifteen Dollars on account of the interest of within Bond to date of 4 mo 1859

Received of Lambert Giles five Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond the first day of Jan 1862

4.00 Received of Lambert Giles 8 mo 9th 1869 Four Dollars on a/c as above set forth

4.00 Received of John Giles 10 mo 11th 1872 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

4.00 Received of Lambert Giles 10 mo 11th 1873 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

4.00 Received of John Giles 10 mo 11th 1874 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

4.00 Received of John Giles 10 mo 11th 1875 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

4.00 Received of John Giles 10 mo 11th 1876 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

4.00 Received of John Giles 10 mo 11th 1877 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

4.00 Received of John Giles 10 mo 11th 1878 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

4.00 Received of John Giles 10 mo 11th 1879 Four Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

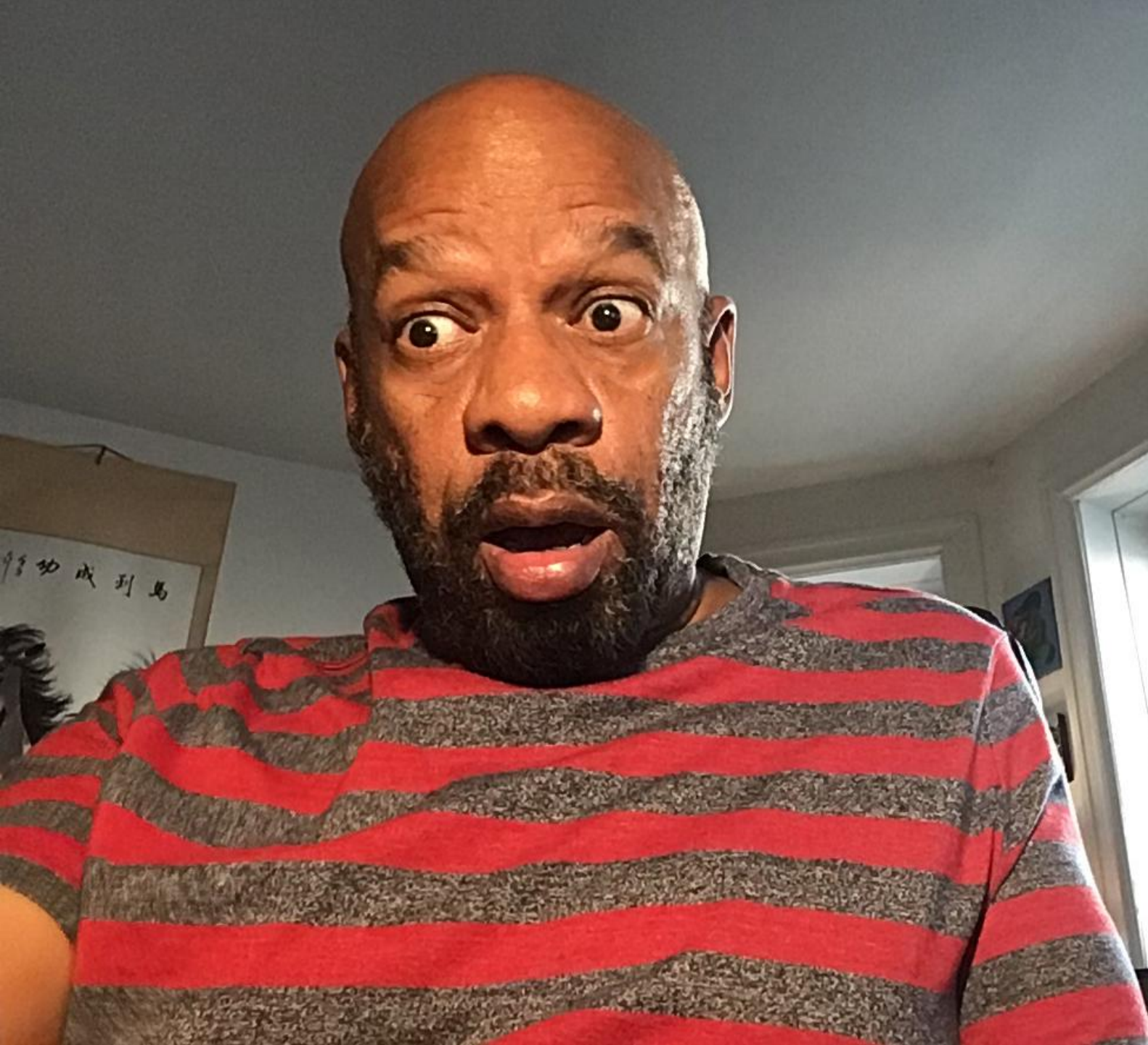
12.68 Received of John Giles 2000 Bricks @ \$12.00 a thousand to pay the interest on the within Bond for 1875 & 1876
The Ball of the Money \$11.32, deducted from Bricks \$85.16 leaves Balance \$73.84.
John B. Hilgard, Exr

3.00 Recd of John Giles 11/14/1877 Three Dollars on a/c of interest of within Bond

1.43 Recd of Joshua Giles 3/27/1878 One Dollar forty three cents ball for 1877. John Hilgard Exr

2.00 Recd of John Giles 12/3/1879 Two Dollars on a/c interest for 1878. due \$2.43

5.00 Recd of Joseph Giles 5/25/1881 Five Dollars on a/c of interest which pays balance for 1878 & leaves due for 1879 \$1.86



My ancestors
owned land
before the
Civil War?



Giles family members born between 1881 and 1902 in Timbuctoo

Quiet Title Action

- Contrary to assurances from my elders, we did not own the property,
- The ancestor with possession in 1930 (their father) had at least four siblings.
- Without proper transfer of ownership in 1880, it wasn't his alone, even though he raised his family there as the recognized owner for fifty years.



My early acquaintance with Timbuctoo

*This house stood at 102 Church Street
vacant from the mid-1970s to 1996*



What's significant about this house?

- One of multiple properties in similar condition; would not be tolerated in other sections of town; this one owned by Westampton Township.
- View from our driveway. After an extended exchange requesting action; they agreed to sell to us for \$1 in 1996, on the condition that we demolish.
- Fifteen years later we learned the wooden portion of the house was a 19th century structure that could date to 1830
- This 1830 transaction was the first to use the name **“Tombuctoo”**

What do we
mean by
Preserving,
Promoting and
Protecting?

- Preserve the historical narrative
 - Documentary history
 - Oral history
- Recovering the historical message and its meaning
- Reclaiming the rightful place in New Jersey and American history

Fast forward to Winter 2009

- Temple University archaeologist Dave Orr and National Park Service architectural historian Bill Bolger meet with Westampton Mayor Sidney Camp to advise him of Timbuctoo's historic significance and archaeological potential.
- Mayor Camp arranges with the township committee for funding to begin archaeological work; first project is ground penetrating radar “to identify subsurface features of archeological interest.”



Photo Credit: Dennis McDonald
Burlington County Times



Digging up Timbuctoo

- From 2009 -2011 David Orr and Christopher Barton led archaeological work in Timbuctoo
- Focused on a 20 x 100-foot parcel purchased by a William and Rachel Davis in 1879, who raised their five children in a 12x16 ft. home constructed on the site.

Digging up Timbuktoo

- Their work resulted in the excavation and analysis of 15,042 artifacts ; also, bricks used for construction.
- Archaeologists learn things about **social class, material consumption, access to consumer goods, home canning**, consumption of commercially processed foods.
- Principal Investigator Chris Barton places strong emphasis on community archeology, which emphasizes the importance of meaningful participation of descendant communities in archaeological research.

Timbuctoo

Timbuctoo was a large plantation in the state of Virginia, owned by the prominent Tidewater family of the same name. The plantation was established in the late 17th century and was one of the largest and most important plantations in the region. It was known for its large estate and its role in the development of the plantation system in the South.

CRISTINA BRUCE & DAVID CRISTINA

CRISTINA BRUCE & DAVID CRISTINA were prominent figures in the history of Timbuctoo. Cristina Bruce was the daughter of a wealthy Virginia family and married David Cristina, who was a prominent planter and politician. They were known for their large estate and their role in the development of the plantation system in the South.

HONORING TIMBUCTOO SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR

Timbuctoo was a large plantation in the state of Virginia, owned by the prominent Tidewater family of the same name. The plantation was established in the late 17th century and was one of the largest and most important plantations in the region. It was known for its large estate and its role in the development of the plantation system in the South.

The battle ground in the middle of the plantation was the site of a major battle during the Civil War. The battle was fought between the Union Army and the Confederate Army. The battle was a decisive victory for the Union Army and marked a turning point in the war.

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TIMBUCTOO CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL

WE HONOR THE BRILLIANT AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN FROM THE PRODIGIOUS BRUCE AND CRISTINA FAMILIES WHO SERVED IN THE UNION ARMY IN THE CIVIL WAR.

WE REMEMBER THAT TIMBUCTOO IN VIRGINIA WAS A PLACE WHERE AFRICAN-AMERICAN SOLDIERS HELD THEIR OWN COURAGE AND COURAGE TO FREEDOM.



Lesson plan



RV history teachers win award for developing lesson about local community of former slaves

Jarrad Daniel Saffren
Burlington County Times
Published 1:43 PM ET December 8, 2020 Updated 4:56 PM ET December 16, 2020

MOUNT HOLLY — JoAnn Donnelly, a social studies teacher at Westampton Middle School with over 25 years of experience, always used to get frustrated when she had to teach the history of 19th century America.

Donnelly felt that using the textbook she could only focus on slavery and the horrors of the American South, she said. Those lessons were of course necessary, but also simplistic and limited in scope, the teacher added. She wanted to find a way to paint a more detailed portrait.

Timbuctoo Curriculum Development



Burlington County Times

Group works to bring Westampton's Timbuctoo history to students

Rancocas Valley HS
Cheryl Alspach
Neshea Thomas

Westampton MS
JoAnn Donnelly
Jennifer Perry
Cristina Burroughs

Columbia University
Kevin Risley

**2019
Incorporated
Timbuctoo
Historical
Society**

Timbuctoo

Est. 1826

Know all people by these presents, that the **Timbuctoo Historical Society, a non-profit New Jersey Corporation**, was founded on August 15, 2019. The mission of the Timbuctoo Historical Society is to seek, document, preserve, interpret and perpetuate the history and heritage of Timbuctoo, an unincorporated community in Westampton Township, Burlington County, New Jersey, settled beginning in 1826 by formerly enslaved and free African Americans.

Guy Weston, Managing Director

2021 Acquisition of Timbuctoo Cemetery

Transcribed handwritten deed of record¹ was dated 1854; identified Zion Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal African Church of Timbuctoo. County Clerk's record said simply, "Colored Cemetery."

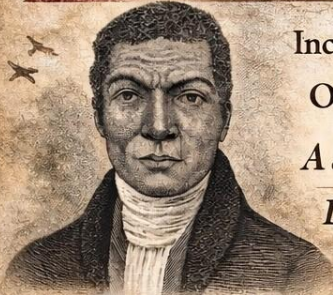
The deed says that the premises are to be used **"as a place of religious worship and a place to bury the dead."...."rules and discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in America."** (AME Zion Church)

Specifies that interment is limited to church members and others as decided by church Trustees

¹Burlington County, NJ, Deeds, E6:256, Peter Coppuck to David Parker, et al, 2 May 1854; Burlington County Clerk's Office, Mount Holly

— 200th Anniversary of Timbuctoo —

AME ZION CHURCH & CEMETERY



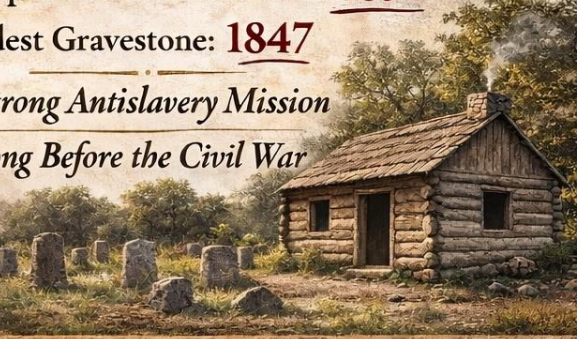
Incorporated in Timbuctoo in 1854

Oldest Gravestone: 1847

A Strong Antislavery Mission

Long Before the Civil War

Bishop Christopher Rush
National Church Leader

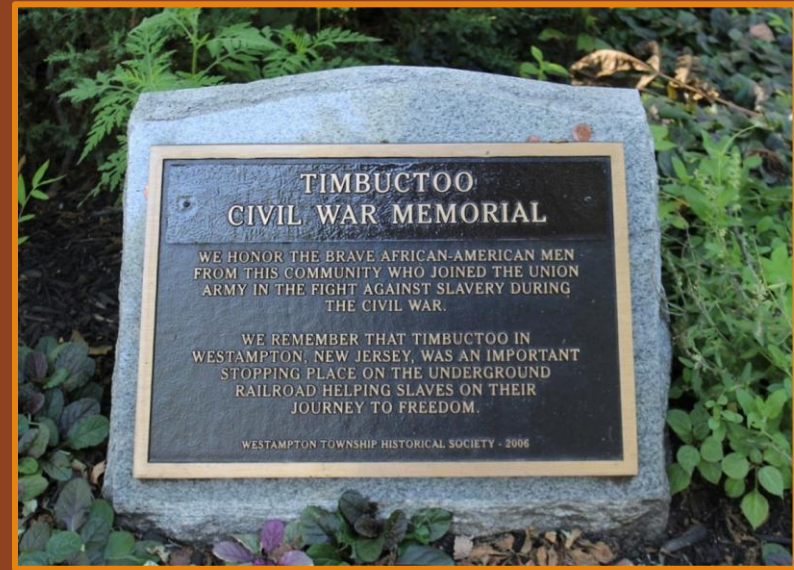
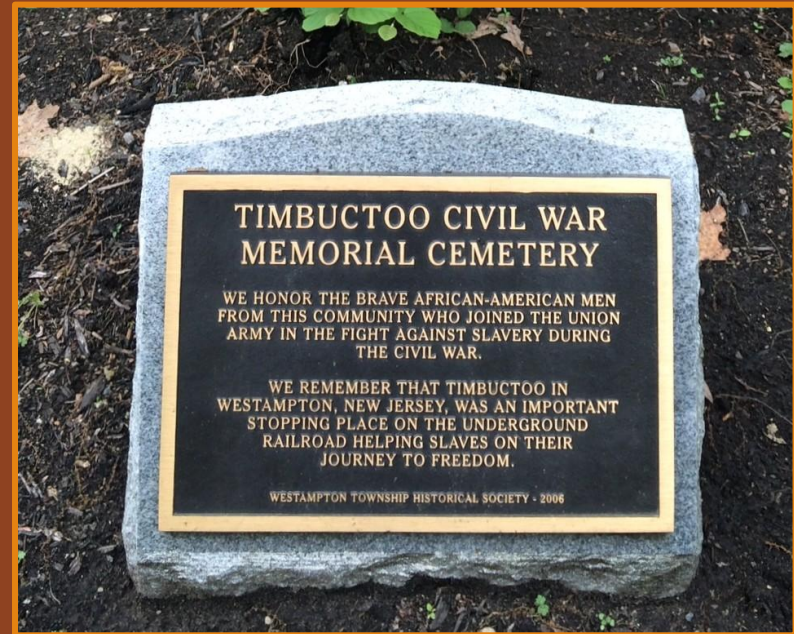


US COLORED TROOPS (USCT) & CIVILIANS

Buried Here as Members of the Church

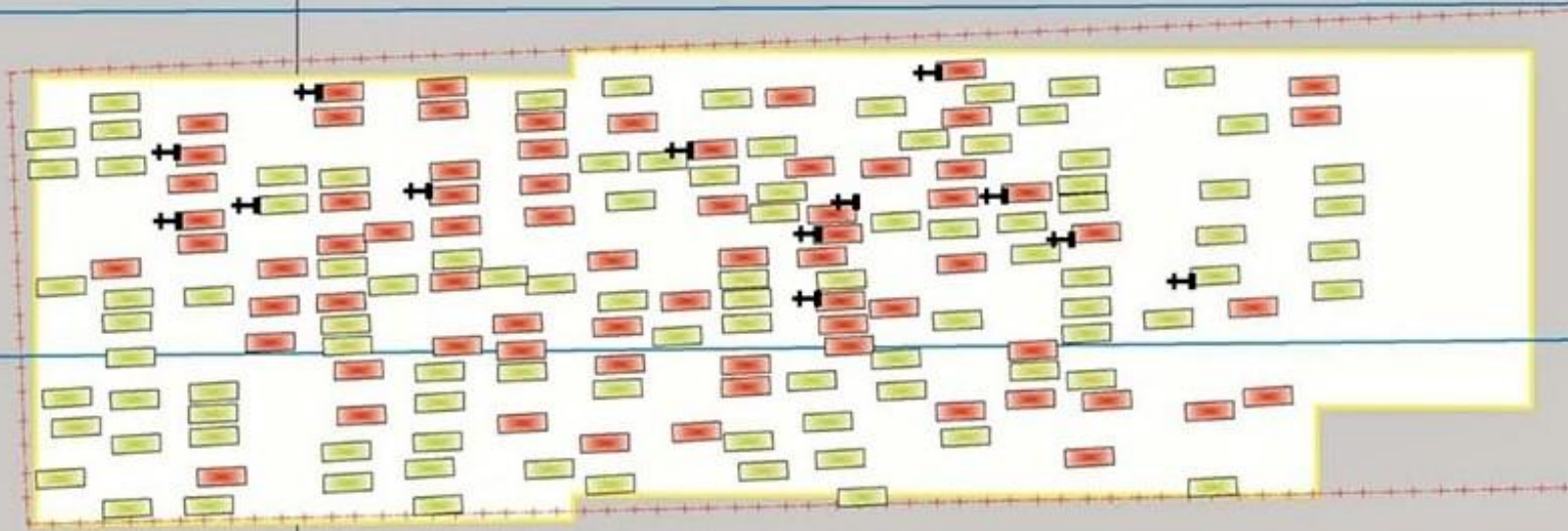


Honoring the Church, Its Mission, and
All Who Rest Here - USCT & Civilians Alike



Geophysical Survey of the Timbuctoo Cemetery

September 2009
John Milner and Associates



Results of ground-penetrating radar survey at the Timbuctoo Cemetery Area.

Map Features

- ☒ Grave Markers
- Metal Fences
- ▭ Tax Parcels (1955)
- ▭ Surveyed Area
- ▭ Non-Surveyed Area

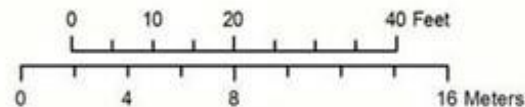
Cemetery Survey Results

- ▭ Likely Grave Shaft
- ▭ Probable Grave Shaft



True North
Grid North*

*Approx. 13.2 Deg East of True North



What do we mean by Preserving, Promoting and Protecting?

Preserve message and meaning

- *It's not a civil war cemetery; it's a church cemetery that includes 8 US Colored Troops (USCT) among as many as 161 interments*
- *USCT because of affiliation with the church; not because it's a civil war cemetery*
- *The civilian interments represent a church community important to the history of our community*
- *The AME Zion Church had a strong anti-slavery mission. Sojourner Truth, Frederic Douglas and Harriett Tubman all belonged to AME Zion churches*
- *Promote true history; protect the narrative from misinterpretation*

Also transcribed deed
for:

African Union School ¹

January 4, 1834

Peter Quire is the seller. **Edward Giles, Hezekiah Hall, and Major Mitchell** are identified as Trustees in the deed, which states:

“whereas, in the Settlement of Tombuctoo...and in the vicinity thereof, there are many people of Colour (so called) who seem sensible of the advantages of a suitable school education and are destitute for a house for that purpose.

And the said Peter Quire and Maria, his wife in consideration of the premises and the affection they bear to the people of Colour and the desire they have to promote their true and best interests are minded to settle, give, grant and convey...said premises to the uses and intents hereinafter pointed out and described.”

The deed further describes some rules of operation, such as the **requirement that any future Trustees be people of Colour who live within ten miles of the premises.**

¹Burlington County, NJ, Deeds, G3:389, Peter Quire to Edward Giles, et al, January 4, 1834; Burlington County Clerk’s Office, Mount Holly

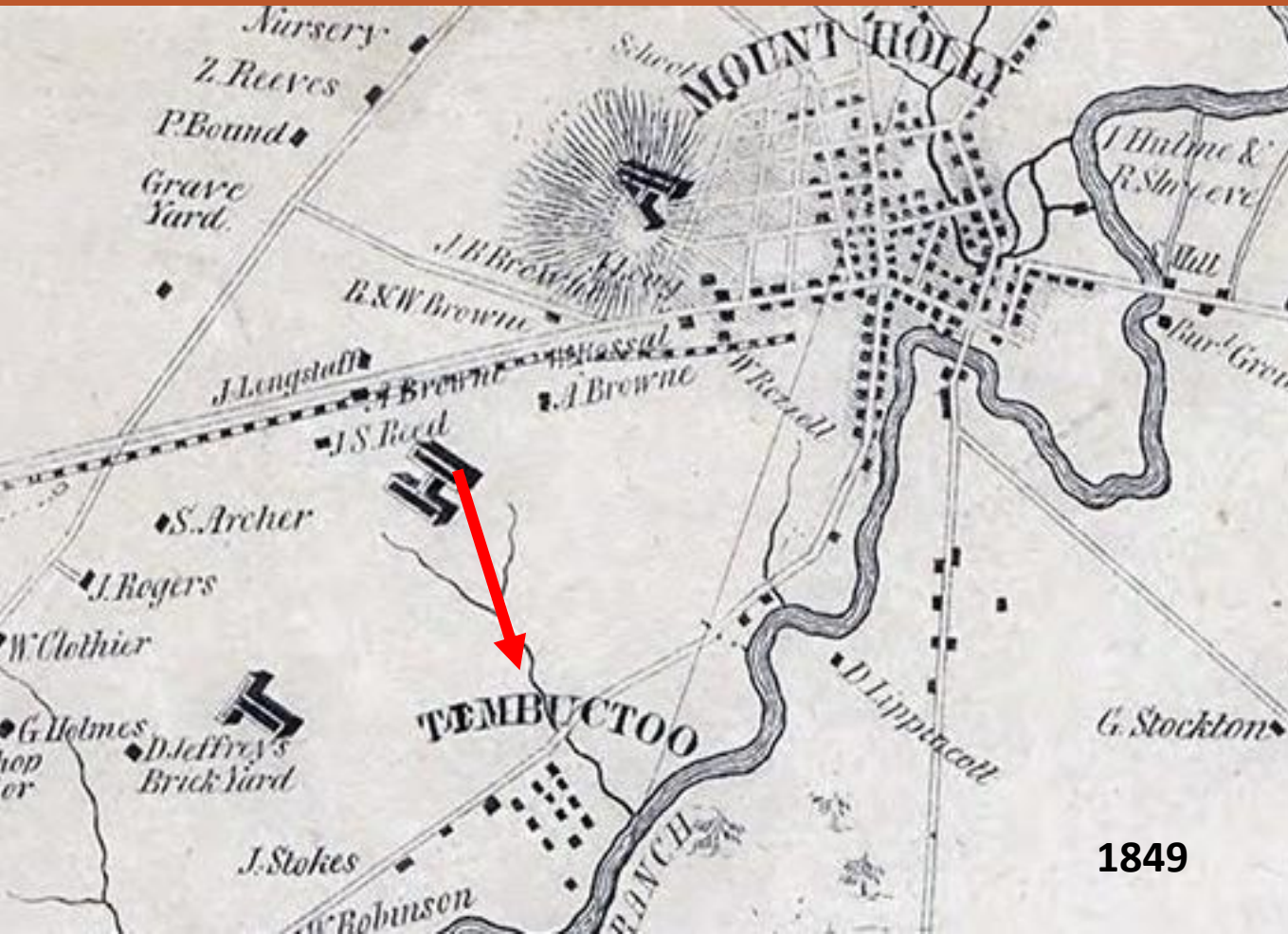
What are we
preserving and
promoting?

Preserve the message and promote
the meaning

- *Educating Black people was not universally illegal in 1834*
- *Timbuctoo was clearly a place that established its own institutions that were recognized by local authorities*
- *Timbuctoo was also recognized to the point of being listed on local maps*

Appears on maps as early as 1849

*Early area consisted of about 15 acres
What's known as Timbuctoo today is about
52 acres*

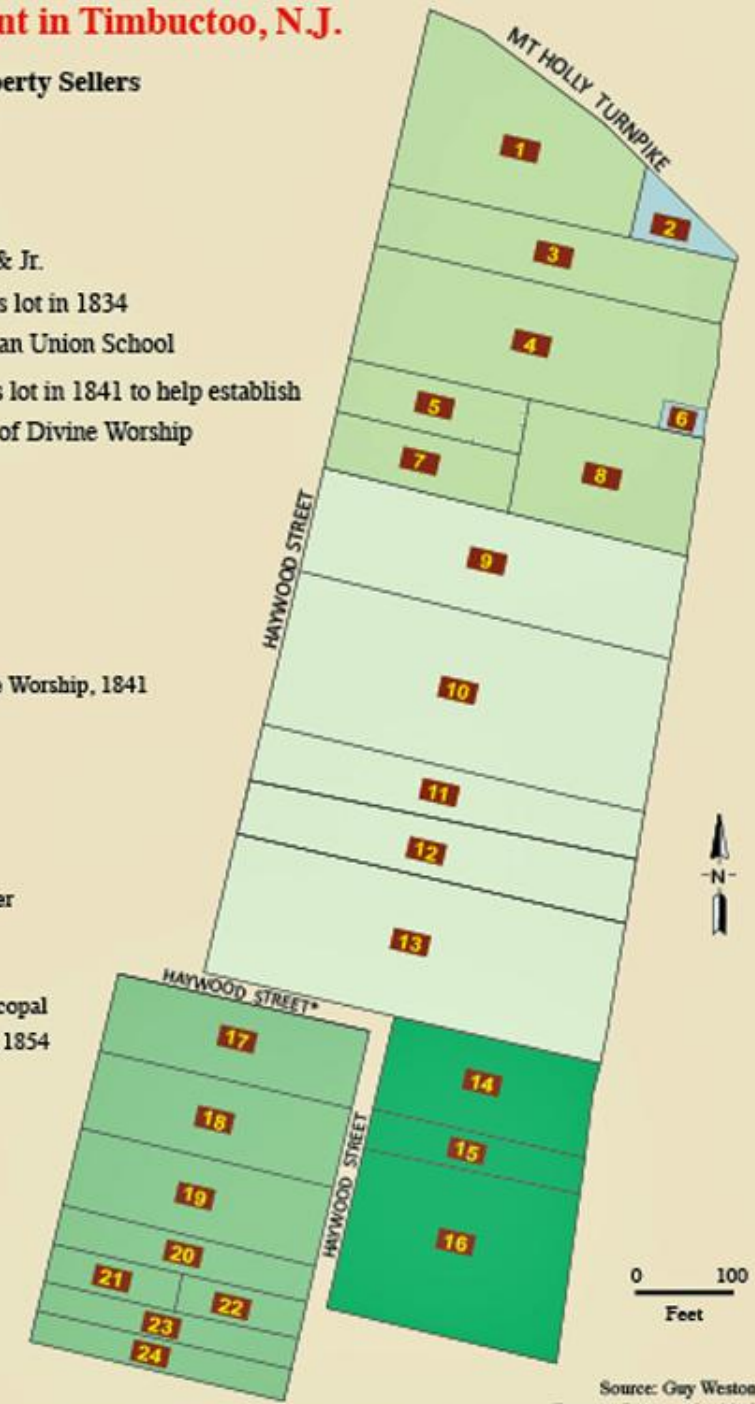


Early Settlement in Timbuctoo, N.J.

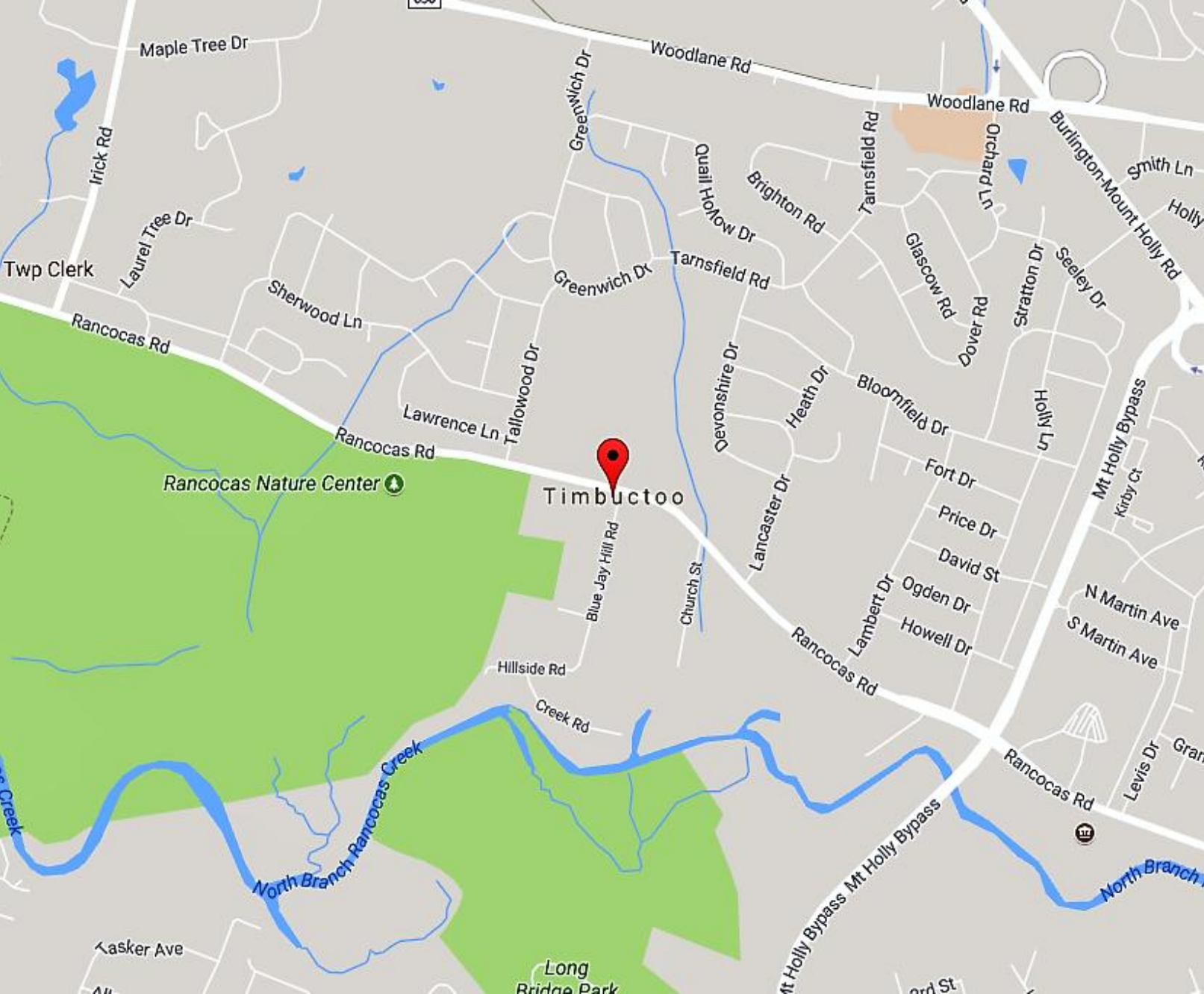
Original Property Sellers

- 1st-William Hilyard
- 2nd-Samuel Atkinson
- 3rd-Abigail Haywood
- 4th-Thomas Grissom Sr. & Jr.
- Peter Quire subdivided his lot in 1834 to help establish the African Union School
- John Bruer subdivided his lot in 1841 to help establish the Schoolhouse & Place of Divine Worship

- 1 Peter Quire, 1831
- 2 African Union School, 1834
- 3 Major Mitchel, 1830
- 4 John Bruer, 1829
- 5 John Bruer, 1831
- 6 Schoolhouse & Place of Divine Worship, 1841
- 7 David Parker, 1831
- 8 Samuel Parker, 1831
- 9 David Parker, 1826
- 10 Wardell Parker, 1826
- 11 Hezekiah Hall, 1826
- 12 George Wilmore, 1826 or earlier
- 13 Ezekiel Parker, 1826
- 14 Mary Hugg, 1838
- 15 Zion Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal African Church (& Cemetery), 1854
- 16 Joseph Hargrove, 1834
- 17 Henry Simmons, 1834
- 18 William Hill, 1839
- 19 Joseph Parker, 1833
- 20 David Parker, 1842
- 21 Levi Griffin, 1840
- 22 Gillis Parker, 1842
- 23 Joseph Hargrove, 1834
- 24 Alexander Armstrong, 1842



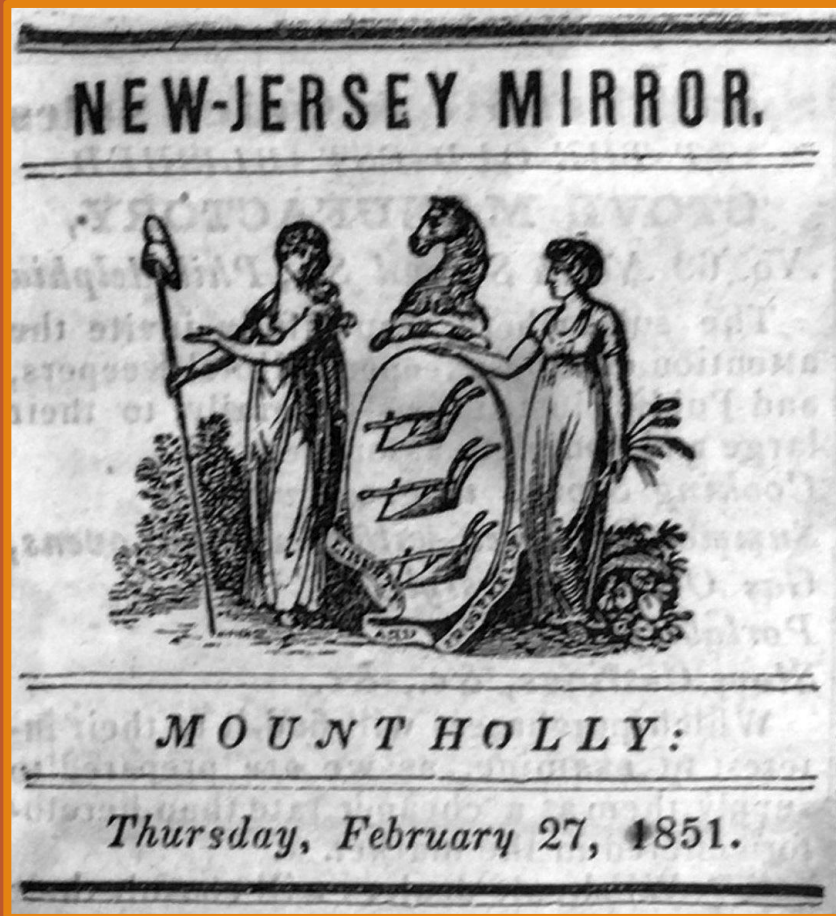
*note: prior to 1834, this section of Haywood St was a part of a parcel owned by Edward Giles.



What do we
mean by
preserving and
promoting?

Preserving the message:

*An abundance of Timbuctoo history can
be found in contemporaneous
newspapers*



Obituary of Hezekiah Hall

DIED.

In this town, on Friday the 14th inst., MARY BUDD, infant daughter of James B. and Rebecca S. Coppuck, aged 12 days.

In this town, on Friday last, JOB BISHOP, in the 82d year of his age.

In Camden, on Saturday last, Mr. RICHARD C. CAKE.

In Bordentown, on Sunday last, GEORGE W., Son of Daniel Deacon, aged about five years.

In Timbuctoo, near Mount Holly, on Friday last, HEZEKIAH HALL, (colored) aged about 60 years.

The deceased, in early life, was a slave, and belonged to Charles Carroll, of Carrollton. He escaped from bondage in the year 1814. He settled in our midst about the year 1824, since which time he has resided here. He was regarded by every one as a man of unblemished character, and his truly upright walk and Christian deportment commanded the highest respect. His remains were followed to the grave on Sunday last by a very large concourse of friends and neighbours.

NEW JERSEY MIRROR.



Mt. Holly, Thursday, April 22, 1875

LOCAL AFFAIRS.

FOUND DEAD.—Lambert Giles, a well known colored man, long a resident of this vicinity, was found lying dead by the side of the road from Mount Holly to Rancocas, near the barn of the late Caleb A. Woodward, on Monday evening about 7½ o'clock. He had been at work at his usual occupation, white-washing, in Mount Holly during the day and left here for his home at 'Bucto about 7 o'clock. Deceased was subject to attacks of an epileptic nature and doubtless died in a fit of this kind. Coroner Laumaster viewed the body in company with Dr. R. E. Brown, and no doubt being entertained of the cause of his death, an inquest was deemed unnecessary. Lambert was an industrious and worthy man and noted for his courtesy of manner. He was about 60 years of age.

Obituary of Lambert Giles



—The sudden demise of the old colored whitewasher, Lambert Giles, last week, put a number of housekeepers on the wing to find some body to fill his engagements. Lambert followed an bumble calling, but was regarded as about perfect in his art, and will be more missed than would many of our more pretentious citizens. He was often engaged weeks in advance.



Obituary of David Parker

☞ "THE KING" HATH DEPARTED.—David Parker, an aged colored man who for perhaps a half century has occupied a prominent position with his race in this vicinity, and who has commanded the respect and esteem of a large number of white friends, died at his residence in Timbuctoo on Sunday afternoon, aged about 75 years. "King David," as he had been known in other years, was possessed of more than ordinary intelligence and a determined will, which made him a natural leader among his people so long as his physical strength lasted, and he was generally at the head of any movement among them. For a few years past, however, his health has been poor, which, added to his advancing years, gave the younger and more vigorous sons of his race a chance to contest his rule, until the sceptre had well nigh passed from his hand. David was an ardent Republican, no effort availing to seduce him from the support of the party that gave him the ballot, and he allowed none of his followers to be caught by the enemy. The deceased will be missed by our citizens of both races, and much sincere regret felt that his light has gone out. The funeral takes place this (Wednesday) afternoon at 1 o'clock.



Beginning of the Battle of Pine Swamp — 1860

Local Facts and Fancies.

EXCITEMENT AT TIMBUCTOO.

THE BATTLE OF PINE-SWAMP—THE INVADERS FORCED TO RETREAT.

Great excitement has been created among the colored population of Timbuctoo and vicinity, in consequence of a recent "visit extraordinary," of some official and notorious individuals, in search of alleged runaway slaves. The contemplated visit was known to a few persons here, some weeks since.—Suspicions were first excited in consequence of the notorious George Alberti, being seen in the neighborhood. He was accompanied by a negro named Wright, a former resident of Timbuctoo. They were at the house of Elsie Jackson, a colored woman of that place, on a Sunday morning, leaving there about daylight.

On Thursday night last, the "grand descent" was made, which, unfortunately for the officers and their assistants, resulted in a "grand failure," and showed that it was no easy matter to capture a runaway slave, who has for ten or twelve years enjoyed his freedom.

The party started from Camden, in four hacks, about 8½ o'clock in the evening. It comprised Deputy U. S. Marshal Shivers, George Alberti, the well-known slave-catcher, who has been here before on the same business, Caleb Wright, a colored man who formerly lived in this vicinity, and some six or eight others, from Camden and Philadelphia.

They arrived at Moorestown, a few minutes before 10 o'clock, where we learn they

1100-word account of a confrontation between Timbuctoo neighbor Perry Simmons and "kidnappers" working on behalf of a Maryland enslaver.

The story is full of humorous anecdotes, such as the kidnappers, "concluded that 'discretion was the better part of valor' and hastily retreating to the carriages left the scene of their brilliant achievement as though Old Satan was after them."



The following week, the constable expresses regret for his involvement in the whole affair:



THE KIDNAPPING PARTY.

The kidnapping party, who were after Perry Simmons, secured the services of the Moorestown constable, by the meanest deception. Coming to his house at a late hour at night, they told him they had a warrant against a colored man for stealing, and wished him to serve it. He went with them, and it was not until after they reached Perry's house, that he was made acquainted with the real nature of the business, when he at once told them that he would have nothing to do with making the arrest, and started home on foot. He had a long and dreary walk, but he considered it infinitely more pleasant than to remain and assist such a man as George Alberti, in carrying off a negro and his family.

He walked home at least 7 miles... "a long and dreary walk, but he considered it infinitely more pleasant than to remain and assist such a man as George Alberti in carrying off a Negro and his family."

Then 14 months later, Perry dies:

THE MIRROR.



MOUNT HOLLY, N. J.

Thursday, February 13, 1862.

Local Facts and Fancies.

Perry Simmons, the colored man, whose attempted arrest as a fugitive slave, on two occasions, created considerable excitement in our neighborhood, died in Timbuctoo, a week or two ago. Perry had not been well since the last attempt to capture him, in consequence of taking a severe cold on that freezing night. It will be recollected that he was forced to fly suddenly from his bedroom to the garret, where he was obliged to remain till morning, suffering severely from the cold.

Perry is at last beyond the reach of his Southern master.

Perry is at last beyond the reach of his southern master

Summary

Held in high esteem by residents, Timbuctoo was a neglected “other side of the tracks” community prior to its historical resurgence

Spurred by archeological work, the renewed interest in Timbuctoo resulted in research that illuminated fascinating facts of American history

Timbuctoo residents owned land, established schools and churches, read about themselves in the local paper, and at least once, beat down “slavecatchers” who pursued one of their neighbors

Timbuctoo represents compelling documented history that should be routine in teaching 19th century Burlington County

One more thing: The Great Migration

Beginning in the 1920s, a second population influx occurred into Timbuctoo from the Great Migration. Many of those families are represented by modern day descendants

Each family has its own unique story of how their ancestors arrived, and through a combination of hard work, innovation, resilience, a strong sense of community, and faith in God, succeeded, sometimes facing seemingly unsurmountable obstacles.

Each left lasting legacies and remembrances that endure even today.





Early 20th Century Timbuctoo Pioneers



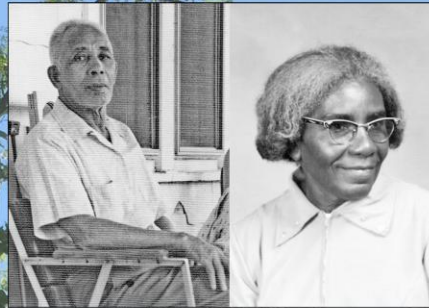
Bishop Judge R. Murray and his wife Hettie (née Pollard)

The Murrays originally came to Philadelphia from Cairo, Georgia. After working in an iron foundry for several years, Mr. Murray saved enough money to buy a parcel of land in Timbuctoo. In 1924 he built a house there to raise his family, earning his living as a farmer.

The Murrays raised vegetables that they sold at Columbus Market. In their heyday, they even had a contract with Campbell's soup, supplying tomatoes for Campbell's tomato soup!

Having been called to the ministry at an early age, he purchased a parcel of land to build a sanctuary for Mount Olive Rising Star Pentecostal Church, where he served as pastor and bishop for more than 40 years. The church remains in Timbuctoo today.

Judge and Hettie Murray had fifteen children: Frank, Fred Lee, Beatrice, Mattie Lee, Raeford, Hattie, Mary, Martha, John, Elizabeth, Judge, Thomas, Rose, Maggie, and Charlotte. His daughter Elizabeth described him as a loving father who was a strict disciplinarian who made sure his children knew the difference between right and wrong.



Antonio Rogers and his wife Pauline (née Harris)

The Rogers purchased their first parcel of land in Timbuctoo in 1937 and built their house there with the help of friends around 1942.

Mr. Rogers came to the US as a merchant marine, originally from Cape Verde, a Portuguese speaking island nation off the coast of West Africa. He was creative in finding things to make money to raise his family. He raised pigs on the land, even before building the house, collected scrap in Mount Holly with a pushcart to convert to cash, cut corn, worked in sand pits, and more, eventually walking to a job at a rope factory in Beverly before he had a vehicle. He also transported blueberry pickers from surrounding towns. Rogers was regarded by his children as a strict disciplinarian who stressed hard work and honesty. He was revered and well-respected by all who knew him, his son Louis said, describing his parents as a God-fearing couple who raised their 12 children (Joseph, Minerva, Catherine, Thomas, Eugene, Barbara, Marie, Norman, Luis, Joan, Brenda, and Ronald), to be likewise.



Frederick Smith and his wife, Constance (née Anderson)

In 1965, Mr. Smith told the Burlington County Times that he lived all his life in Bucto since he was 5 months old, "except for a few brief periods." That puts his family's arrival around 1910. Mr. Smith had three children: Dolores George, and Josephine. Their granddaughter Carolyn reports they were known as hardworking people and it was not uncommon for them to hire some of the locals to work doing whatever was available. They transported people from Mt. Holy and Philadelphia to nearby vegetable farms to pick fresh vegetables and out to Magnolia, Chatsworth, and Asbury Park to pick blueberries. Mrs. Smith was known for her tasty blueberry pie. Later, they would start their own refuse collection business for more than 30 years. Everyone worked on the trucks, including grandchildren. It was not uncommon to see the girls picking up trash cans when the trucks had mechanical issues. They would come home and change their business clothing into jeans and t-shirts to stay on schedule. Everyone pulled together to keep the business going. Mr. Smith's mother Mary Smith was also one of the church trustees named in the deed to purchase land for Mount Olive Rising Star Pentecostal Church in 1928.



Samuel Mosley Boyd and his wife, Mary Lee (née Cannon)

In 1922, Samuel Mosley Boyd and his wife, Mary Lee moved from Mecklenburg County, Virginia, to Mount Holly, New Jersey, after a brief stay in Maryland.

In the late 1930s, the Boyds purchased land with two houses—one on Church Street and another off Rancocas Road. Sam worked as a general farmer and served as a leader in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), helping to build and pave local roads. The family raised pigs, cows, chickens, and ducks, and grew crops like tomatoes, corn, watermelon, squash, grapes, and peanuts. Sam also made his own cider and wine.

As their family grew, they purchased additional property along Rancocas Road. One of their daughters still lives on the original homestead. Sam and Mary were devoted members of Mount Nebo Holy Church in Mount Holly and lived long, fulfilling lives—he to 92, she to 94. They raised 12 children: Pearl, Rebecca, Lurena, St. John, Samuel Jr., Anna Mae, Solomon, Eleanor, Sophronia, Grace, Edna, and Ida and left a legacy of faith, hard work, and family, now carried on by 45 grandchildren and more than 100 great-grandchildren.



Charles Couch and his wife Alma (née Booth)

The Couches came to Timbuctoo in the 1930s from Virginia, and purchased their land in 1939.

The Couches raised ten children: Lenwood, Charles, Leavi, Viola, Alma, Elvert, Ella, Joyce, Ruthann, and Sandra. The Couches took advantage of the rural landscape growing their own fruits and vegetables and raising farm animals. Mr. Couch always found ways to make money to support his family. For summers, he purchased and fixed up an old school bus to transport farmworkers. For winters, he cut down trees in the Pine Barrens under a contract with the State of New Jersey. He also hunted rabbits, squirrels and deer, and did deep sea fishing. These things he did for family food and as well as for income. Their daughter Joyce says they were raised by their parents to have a strong work ethic, self respect, and love of church and family and respect for the close-knit community they affectionately knew as "Bucto."



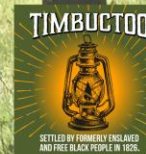
William ("Billy") Butler and his wife Jennie (née Jackson)

The Butlers built their home in Timbuctoo in 1921. However, Timbuctoo was not new to Mr. Butler. His grandfather Charles Butler was born in Philadelphia in 1831, and first appeared in the US census in Timbuctoo in 1860. The Butlers were faithful members of Mount Olive Rising Star Pentecostal Church. Mr. Butler was one of the trustees listed on the deed to purchase land for the church in 1928. Mrs. Butler played piano there. The Butlers hosted all holiday events at their house. It was always like a family reunion, and everyone looked forward to Jennie Butler's cooking. She, in turn, loved having her grandchildren around.

Mr. Butler was well known as a builder, skilled in both carpentry and masonry, as well as other aspects of construction. He built or helped to build multiple dwellings in Timbuctoo in the prime years of his career. His grandson, Donald Nixon is a current Timbuctoo resident, and followed his grandfather's career as a mason, with many other skills related to building and remodeling homes. The Butlers had six children: Elmira, Pearl, Melba, William, Malcolm, and Valerie.

The recently renewed interest in the history of Timbuctoo (or "Bucto," as affectionately called by people who live here), has focused mostly on the novelty of Black landowners decades before the Civil War. However, the importance of honoring the memory of early twentieth century pioneers can not be ignored. Many of those families are represented by modern day descendants who still live in the area. With this new historic sign, we pay tribute to the progenitors of the Boyd, Butler, Couch, Murray, Rogers, and Smith families. All but one family were part of the Great Migration, when over six million African Americans left the South seeking better opportunities. William Butler's grandfather Charles Butler was born free in Philadelphia and came to Timbuctoo in the 1850s. Each family has its own unique story of how their ancestors arrived, and through a combination of hard work, innovation, resilience, a strong sense of community, and faith in God, succeeded, sometimes facing seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. Each left lasting legacies and remembrances that endure even today.

We commemorate these families through signage to ensure their stories are included in the emerging narratives of Timbuctoo's history. We extend gratitude to the descendants of Charles and Alma Couch, whose generous donation paid for fabricating this important sign. Concept and design by Guy Weston - 4/15/2025



Why Timbuctoo?

- *The name Timbuctoo first appeared in a deed in 1830*
- *Early nineteenth century African American and antislavery publications described Timbuktu in Africa as a great African civilization, a place of commercial wealth and opportunity, and a place where African youth were sent from great distances to further their education.*
- *These descriptions contribute to our opinion that early Timbuctoo settlers may have chosen this name to reference their aspirations for the new community they were developing.*

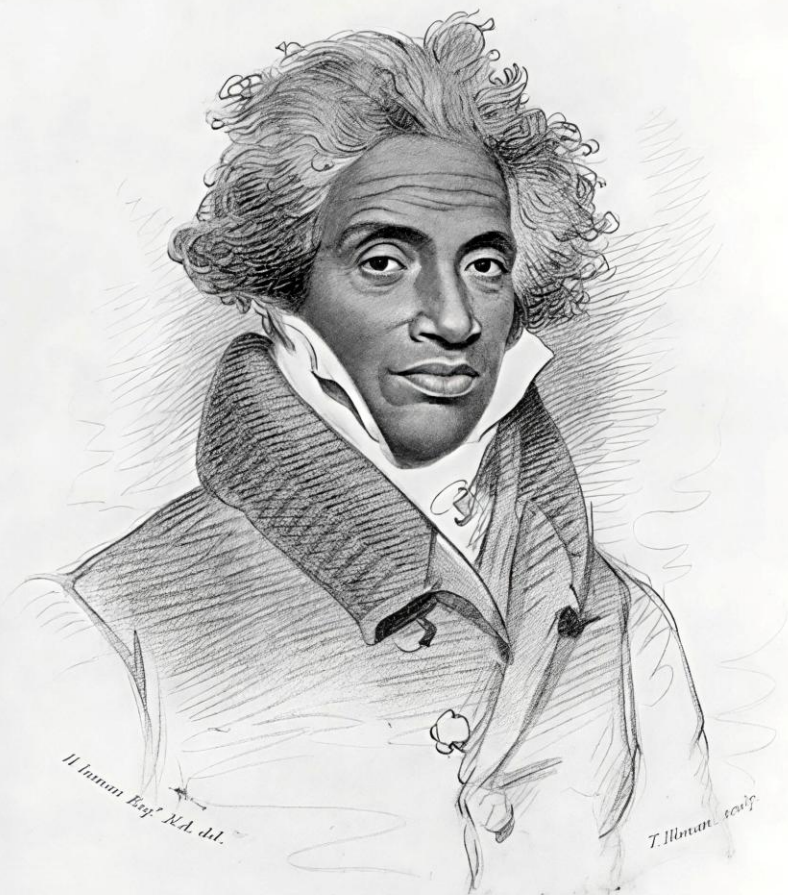
How might Black people in New Jersey know about Timbuctoo?

Abdul Rahman, son of an African King, was captured in present day Guinea and sold into enslavement in Mississippi. He was born in Tombouctou.

Two decades later, he was recognized by an Irish physician (Dr. Cox) who had been assisted by Rahman's family while stranded in Africa. Cox validated the Prince's identity, but his enslaver refused to free him

Eventually, he was freed, and he embarked on a speaking tour to raise money to buy freedom of his family.

One of the last stops on the tour was Philadelphia, where he participated in a New Year's Eve 1828 parade that ended at an AME Zion church



Fac simile of the Moorish Prince's writing.

Abdull Rahhahmani

Abdull Rahhahmani

2026 Goals

- 200th Anniversary of Timbuctoo's founding is September 1826
 - Commemorative Banquet
 - Book on the legacy of Timbuctoo
- Continuation of curriculum project
- Temple University archeological exhibit moves to Burlington County Historical Society
- Archeological excavation at ancestral home site
- Newspaper digitization and indexing project
- 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution activities

DISCUSSION AND VIDEO

<https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/timbuctoo-new-jersey-westampton-mt-holly/>

HAPPY 200TH ANNIVERSARY, ★★ TIMBUCTOO! ★★

Celebrating 1826 – 2026

A Historic Free Black Community
Westampton, New Jersey

DID YOU KNOW?

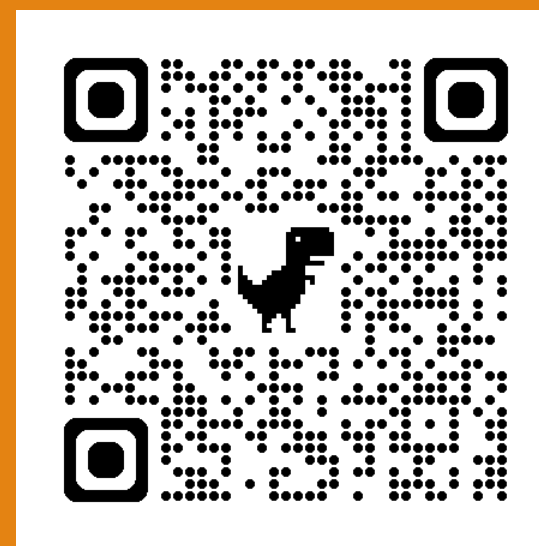
- ✓ Timbuctoo was founded in 1826 by four Black men who purchased land from Quakers.
- ✓ The founders established a **school, a church, and a cemetery.**
- ✓ In **1860**, residents courageously defended their neighbor **Perry Simmons** from slave catchers seeking to return him to enslavement in Maryland.
- ✓ Descendants of Timbuctoo's early settlers still live in Westampton and surrounding communities today.

Timbuctoo's story is one of
**resilience, self-determination, and
American history** at its finest!

Stay tuned for details on anniversary activities

www.TimbuctooNJ.com

For more information,
contact, or contribute:



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