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Emancipation, Elevation, and Education:
Black Education in New York City during the 1830s
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An 1831 editorial in *The Liberator* made the perceptive observation that “a line, almost impassable, [was] drawn between the two races.” One might say that the “problem of the color line” had actually been identified over seventy years before W. E. B. Du Bois diagnosed it in 1903. The same editorial continued, “by law, or by custom, in much . . . of the country, [blacks] are in a great measure deprived of the lessons of education. In most . . . states they cannot vote, or be chosen to office. If aliens, they cannot be naturalized. . . . [Blacks] cannot mingle in society with . . . whites.”^[1] Blacks were treated as second-class citizens. However, by the early 1830s northern blacks were deciding, whether it was in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or New York City, to actively challenge the racism within American society institutionally and lay claim to all the privileges of American citizenship. Various factors made the 1830s the decade when blacks would organize around education in an attempt to redraw the parameters of American citizenship. Among these were: emancipation in New York State in 1827, the founding of African American newspapers, abolition, and a strong commitment to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution.

The emergence of a more militant abolitionist movement early in the decade refocused the northern antislavery struggle on the desire for immediate abolition and enlarged the arena for blacks to participate in civil society. However, in addition to participating in white antislavery organizations, such as William Lloyd Garrison’s American Anti-Slavery Society, black leaders advanced their own case for abolition through independent educational efforts. They knew that the main argument against ending slavery and making blacks full citizens, besides the belief that the United States was—and should remain—“a white man’s country,” was that African Americans were “unprepared” to be citizens. By acquiring as much education possible, community leaders contended that blacks would demonstrate their true mental capacity and shed the degradation of enslavement. Educated blacks would be living testimonies

For the justicelessness of taxation, military, and full citizenship for all men as the nation was grappling with questions of democracy, who should vote, and who should not, free blacks in northern cities were organizing in order to strengthen their “citizenship resume,” in a manner of speaking. Sensing an opportunity to establish a stronger foothold in civil society, black Americans established primary and secondary schools, literary societies, debating clubs, and libraries.

Even though many of the societies were short lived and their educational activities even more brief, collectively they represented a movement among free blacks, unprecedented to that time, to better their lives and achieve a more complete freedom^[ii] through education. While there were African American groups in New York that had been established previously, the proliferation of organizations during the 1830s would give the decade particular significance in terms of educational attainment, institution building, and community development.

For blacks before the Civil War, attaining literacy was often fraught with incredible obstacles. There were too few schools and qualified teachers. White literary associations discriminated against African Americans. Because of organizations such as the American Colonization Society (ACS), most young blacks entering white-run schools were already perceived to be intellectually deficient; only capable of rote memorization and in need of moral uplift. And for blacks, at least in New York City, recently emancipated and in a tight job market, sending children to school was often a hard sell, for primary and secondary educations did not guarantee occupational mobility.^[iii]

However, even with all these impediments many black parents did attempt to take advantage—if not for themselves, then for their children—of whatever educational opportunities were available. The New York Manumission Society, a white organization founded in 1785, was the most important organization providing formal education to blacks in New York City prior to the 1830s. It supported the gradual abolition of slavery in New York State and believed that obtaining a formal education would be the best way for blacks to fight slavery in the South and white prejudice in the North. The argument was that if blacks could learn and demonstrate the habits of Christian virtue, a strong work ethic, and temperance that whites would accept them.^[iv] Ever since the Society established its African Free School (AFS) in 1787, there had always been at least one school in operation serving New York City’s African American population.^[v]

However, by 1830 African Americans were demanding increased representation in the administrative body of the AFS.^[vi] Blacks were insistent that they be more involved in controlling how resources were allocated for their children’s education. They also wanted more black teachers in the classrooms. And

finally, black opinion had hardened against African colonization by the early 1830s, but long-time principal, Charles Andrews had shown himself to be sympathetic to it. African Americans could no longer countenance supporting anyone who defended colonization. There were still over 1,000 youths enrolled in African Free Schools in the early 1830s but blacks felt the need to establish independent schools and educational societies.

The egalitarian language of the American Revolution gave black women and men the rhetorical ammunition with which to challenge the country to live up to its democratic ideals. Black leaders during the 1830s evinced a high level of faith in the democratic principles of the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. Whether it was the American Society for Free Persons of Colour, which operated with the “firm and settled conviction . . . that all men are born free and equal, and consequently endowed with unalienable rights,”^[vii] the Annual Conventions of Persons of Colour, which read both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to open their national meetings,^[viii] or the numerous individuals who cited those documents as evidence of their rights to full citizenship, the belief in these principles was strong.

Although black leaders saw the proliferation of schools as absolutely vital to racial elevation and attaining the full rights of citizenship, a major hindrance to African American educational initiatives both locally and nationally was the racist rhetoric of the American Colonization Society regarding black mental ability. Founded in 1816, the ACS included a number of prominent political leaders such as Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson. It wielded vast political influence and significant financial resources. The Colonization Society perpetuated malevolent stereotypes that blacks were intellectually deficient and incapable of remedying this defect. In the minds of ACS members, blacks would never achieve social or political equality in the United States.^[ix] The Society made clear in 1824 that “it [was] not a Missionary society, nor a society for the suppression of the slave-trade, nor a society for the improvement of the Blacks, nor a society for the abolition of slavery: it [was] simply a society for establishing a colony on the coast of Africa . . .”^[x] For the ACS, African colonization was the only way to “elevate [blacks’] character.”^[xi]

By the early 1830s there was little support for African colonization.^[xii] Person after person, and society after society condemned the Society’s efforts at repatriation. One man in a letter to the *Liberator* wrote, “I was seven months on board of the old Jersey Prison ship in the year 1780 . . . and am I now to be told that Africa is my country, by some of those, whose birth-place is unknown? Is it not a contradiction to say that a man is an alien to the country in which he was born? To separate the blacks from the whites is as impossible, as to bale out the Delaware with a bucket.”^[xiii] Besides making it crystal clear to anyone who would listen that America was where they intended to remain, African Americans also contested every other negative tenet of the ACS.

It is obvious that blacks in New York City organized around educational initiatives for various reasons. As they formed schools, literary societies, and libraries, black Americans were continuing a trend begun in the early part of the century of opening spaces in civil society to deal with issues facing their community. [\[xiv\]](#) The large majority of these groups were founded between 1830 and 1837, although some had begun before and a few were established after. [\[xv\]](#)

In 1830 several black men came together to form the Philomathean Society. Members devoted themselves to the “improvement of literature and useful knowledge.” [\[xvi\]](#) Each meeting they engaged in scholarly debates and soon after coming into existence, made plans to start a library. By April 1837, the Library of the Philomathean Society contained between five and six hundred volumes and the group took out an advertisement in the *Colored American*, a black-owned newspaper, soliciting donations of books and/or money in order to increase its holdings. [\[xvii\]](#) The Philomatheans also sponsored a lecture series during the early months of 1838 ranging in topics from chemistry to history to “decisions of character.” The entire series consisted of 30 lectures on eight branches of knowledge and were delivered by society members. [\[xviii\]](#) It was important in this period for African Americans to be able to seriously debate the most philosophical issues of the day. These were exercises in mental acuity, but more importantly practice at oratory and making logical arguments.

The lectures, however, were not free to attend. Interested parties could purchase a “season ticket” for \$2.50 or pay 12.5 cents per lecture. [\[xix\]](#) Charging to hear the speakers, though necessary to defray legitimate costs to put the series together, nevertheless, made it impossible for many blacks to attend. The membership of the Philomathean Society consisted of middle-class males; almost a who’s who of important black leaders in New York City. Among them were ministers; board members of the *Colored American*; Dr. James McCune Smith, the Scotland-educated physician; and a founder of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief. [\[xx\]](#)

That these were all professional men was no coincidence. Almost all literary society members were of the middle-classes. Most, if not all, the societies required members to pay regular dues and included moral criteria for joining. Mandating dues was necessary in order for these groups to provide the programs and services they did, but it also shrunk the pool of possible membership applicants. Though the total black population of New York City was 16,000, the black middle class was quite small in the 1830s. In 1839 an antislavery society published a list of black artisans, tradesmen, and manufacturers

that included only 64 names. Though surely an incomplete list, the point is still clear that the middle-classes made up a tiny percentage.^[xxi] Therefore, financial resources were at a premium and it was difficult to sustain a large number of societies. They were largely competing for the same people and member rolls often overlapped.^[xxii]

Though educational societies struggled to maintain their individuality, they often worked together in order for them all to survive. The Philomatheans, for example, soon after they were established, organized a benefit for the Female Dorcas Society and on another occasion sponsored an exhibition for the benefit of the Amistad captives in conjunction with the Phoenix Society.^[xxiii]

The Phoenix Society of New York, founded in 1833, was the largest of the African American educational societies. It also had several very prominent members, both black and white. Among the officers were reverends, leaders of abolitionist groups, and publishers. Arthur Tappan, the wealthy white abolitionist, served as the Society's first treasurer and the trustee board also included three other white men.

Having white officers gave the Phoenix Society the ability to make wider appeals for funding, but the organization still ran up against financial difficulties constantly. The Phoenix Society required a \$1 initiation fee and 25 cents per quarter year from its members, but this was not nearly enough income to pay for the projects the Society set out to accomplish.

The Phoenix Society tried to tackle serious issues plaguing New York City's black population. They wanted to be census takers, educators, moral reformers, philanthropists, as well as job placement agents.^[xxiv] This multi-pronged approach to attacking complex problems and the desire to make the cost minimal to lower-class blacks reflected a genuine sensitivity to the educational and economic plight of blacks during the 1830s. The Society's desire to establish ward libraries and have people pay only what they could afford demonstrates that the leaders made a commitment, at least in their rhetoric, to reach out to blacks of all classes.

What the Phoenix Society was actually able to accomplish, although significant, was severely limited by a lack of funds. In 1831 Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., started his own private high school. While the African Free Schools had made primary education for black children acceptable, the idea of secondary education for blacks, especially in the classical tradition, was alien and considered wholly useless to the majority of whites.^[xxv] Williams nevertheless placed a tremendous amount of faith in the elevating power of education. It is significant that in an era when few whites questioned the notion that blacks

were ill suited for higher mental pursuits, African American leaders were saying just the opposite. Black leaders all over the North, were pushing not only for high schools, but for colleges for African American youth.

The “conventional address” of the Second Annual Convention of People of Color eloquently articulated this point about the need for higher classical and manual education. They declared,

We must have Colleges and high schools on the Manual Labor system, where our youth may be instructed in all the arts of civilized life. If we ever expect to see the influences of prejudice decrease, and ourselves respected, it must be by the blessings of an enlightened education. It must be by being in possession of that classical knowledge which promotes genius . . . [\[xxvi\]](#)

Obtaining a formal education was arguably the most important component of racial elevation to many black leaders at the time. It certainly was to Peter Williams. While his school was short-lived, he did not cease in trying to help young blacks obtain secondary and university educations. In December of 1833 the Phoenix Society established a classical high school. It began with twelve students and also only functioned for a short time. [\[xxvii\]](#) Three years later the Phoenix Society advertised in the *New York Evangelist* that it had started the Phoenix High School for Colored Youth and that it needed funds. The president, Rev. Theodore Wright, and the financial committee, were trying to raise \$1,000 through donations to help defray the total cost of operation, which they estimated at \$1,500 to \$1,800 per year. [\[xxviii\]](#)

The High School for Colored Youth was a reprisal of both William’s school and the previous Phoenix Society high school. The school originally hired two white teachers and grew to include 60 students by early 1837. [\[xxix\]](#) Soon after soliciting money for the high school, the Society advertised that it would be opening an evening school two nights per week. Students were required to pay \$1 per quarter in tuition. [\[xxx\]](#) The Phoenixonians had already started a library in 1833 with Cornish as the librarian and it continued, presumably, for as long as the Society was in existence.

But the high school was in dire financial straits by July of 1837. They had been forced to give up their classroom because they could not pay the rent and were facing closure. [\[xxxi\]](#) The female department did however reopen in September at a cost of three dollars per quarter to students [\[xxxii\]](#) and the school survived until 1838. The Society only survived a few years beyond its schools. The last reference to it was in 1841. Its educational efforts were profound in their ambition and affirmation of black intellectual capacity for higher-level schooling.

The Philomathean and Phoenix societies, although the largest and most enduring, were not the only literary societies operating in the city during the period. The New York Garrison Literary Society (GLS), established in 1834, was a society for young people. “Anybody of ‘good moral character’ between the ages of ‘four and twenty by subscribing to the constitution and by paying 12 1/2 cents admission and 1 cent per week could become a member.’”^[xxxiii] They were devoted to singing, praying, and reading original works. Initially, the GLS had a large membership as over 150 children attended meetings. The original meeting space in the public school rooms on Laurens Streets quickly became too small and, in another example of organizational cooperation, the Philomatheans allowed the GLS to use their meeting hall for one year.^[xxxiv]

Men headed these three organizations, but black women also organized to contribute to the educational efforts of the community. The first in New York was the African Dorcas Society, which provided clothing to black children who attended Manumission Society schools, but later in 1834 black women came together to form the New York Female Literary Society. Henrietta Ray, wife of Charles B. Ray, was the Society’s first president. Members dedicated themselves to “acquir[ing] literary and scientific knowledge.”^[xxxv] But the Society also engaged in political matters by raising funds for the New York Vigilance Committee, a group that assisted runaway slaves, and pledging money to a petition drive for abolition in Washington, D.C. At the third anniversary celebration in 1837, besides soliciting for the Vigilance Committee the women were also raising funds to aid the *Colored American*.^[xxxvi] Both these organizations, like most black women’s associations, “blended benevolence, mutual aid, self-improvement, community service, and social reform in ways that defied easy categorization.”^[xxxvii]

What was happening in New York was not taking place in isolation by any means. Through the circulation of abolitionist newspapers, national conventions, and local developments, African Americans were able to remain abreast of what was going on in other cities. *Freedom’s Journal*, the *Emancipator*, the *Liberator*, the *Colored American*, and other abolitionist newspapers served as conduits for transmitting information about events concerning education all over the region.

Besides the newspapers, national conventions were the other way leaders communicated the concerns of their particular constituencies and tried to devise a strategy with which to combat racial oppression and slavery from a position of strength.^[xxxviii] In the early meetings discussion on education centered on a proposal to establish a Negro Manual Labor College in New Haven, Connecticut. The national conventions of 1831, 1832, and 1833 all made statements in affirmation of the plan to establish the school. But by 1835 the idea of a Negro college had been abandoned, as the white residents of New

Haven were entirely up in arms in opposition to the school.

These early conventions met in Philadelphia from 1830 through 1833 and again in 1835, with only the 1834 convention being held in New York. Being the second largest and by far the wealthiest urban black community, Philadelphia had the most African American benevolent associations—80 in 1838, not including five explicit literary societies.^[xxxix] Of the other eighty organizations, it is unclear how many of them, if any, engaged in any sort of educational activities. However, considering the broad conception of education and social reform black organizations employed, and the fact that one of those 80 was a Dorcas Society, it is probable that at least a few of them did.

The black populations of Boston and Pittsburgh were much smaller than either Philadelphia^[xl] or New York City, but they still organized around educational initiatives. Boston had at least five societies, while Pittsburgh had at least three. Women in Boston took the lead in starting educational organizations as several of them established the Afric-American Intelligence Society (AAIS) in 1832. These women, although concerned with education, also had broader interests in abolition and moral reform.

When Pittsburgh's black community organized the African Education Society in 1831 they worried not about prejudice from whites, knowing it would be "coolly received" by many. Instead, the Preamble to its constitution declared that "the intellectual capacity of the black man is equal to that of the white, and that he is equally susceptible to improvement." People had to pay two dollars to become members but the money was to be used to purchase books as well as land to build a school on.^[xli]

The examples of these three cities goes far in demonstrating that black New Yorkers were not alone in their pursuit of formal education during the 1830s. From Maine to Michigan, blacks in numerous cities, irrespective of the size of the community, formed associations and conducted schools for the purposes of dispensing knowledge, elevating the race, and erasing the claims that African Americans did not deserve to be citizens. The regional dynamic of autonomous organization makes these associations and the decade particularly significant as well, as a period when African Americans attempted to redefine the parameters of civil society, educational reform, the body politic, and the place of African Americans within it.

The years 1830 through 1837 were the heyday of black organizational ferment around educational initiatives in New York City. Even though education continued to be viewed as an important issue in the black press after 1837, educational initiatives were taking a backseat to political imperatives to get

property qualifications for black males removed so they could exercise the suffrage. Just as the 1830s in New York City would be characterized by the proliferation of literary societies and schools, the 1840s and 1850s would be an era of emerging political action groups and national benevolent associations. [\[xlii\]](#)

In conclusion, the 1830s were simultaneously a decade of increasing democracy and increasing segregation, social reform and dogged maintenance of the status quo. Emancipation had come for blacks in New York and the elimination of property restrictions for white males showed that the potential for change in the political culture was growing. However, at the same time, blacks were effectively disfranchised in New York State in 1826 as property requirements remained in place for them. As freedom seemed to promise broader horizons and inclusion into the body politic of the nation, the reality was that blacks would still be excluded from any meaningful participation in the doings of the city, state, and country.

The intent to exclude manifested itself in various large and small ways. Blacks were discriminated against in the job market until unemployment and underemployment levels reached epidemic proportions by mid-decade. All employment was tenuous as their positions were rarely ever secure. Blacks could be dismissed without protection for themselves or their families. Many whites that considered themselves, “friends of the colored people” could see only African colonization as the solution for racial animus and black elevation. And African Americans were largely denied the opportunity to pursue education beyond the primary level. Middle-class blacks that did attempt to integrate themselves into the larger society were rebuffed at almost every turn, as they were often not accepted into white benevolent organizations, schools, or literary societies.

The black community in New York City did not simply accept the current state of affairs with resignation. They believed that they, too, were included in the covenants that were the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. As white political elites sold the widened electorate rhetoric of egalitarianism, black leaders took the claims of the equality of all humanity to heart and attempted to put the moral conscience of the nation to the test.

[i] *The Liberator* vol. 1, no. 4, 22 January 1831.

[ii] Emancipation in 1827 had already given New York City’s blacks freedom from bondage. Among other things black educational efforts in the 1830s hoped to ensure that they and future generations would enjoy “positive freedom;” the “freedom to.” Real freedom cannot only mean the “freedom from,” it has to include the freedom to. At its most basic level, African Americans wanted the same rights and privileges as their white counterparts.

[iii] Carl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools in American Society, 1790-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 173. Kaestle comments on the fact that “education had little effect on job discrimination for blacks.

[iv]John L. Rury, "Philanthropy, Self Help, and Social Control: The New York Manumission Society and Free Blacks, 1785-1810," *Phylon* 43, no. 3 (1985), 231.

[v]Rhoda G. Freeman, *The Free Negro in New York City in the Era Before the Civil War* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1994), 237.

[vi]Carleton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State: From Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 22-3. According to Mabee, increased control over the administration of the AFS also included the resignation of long-time teacher and principal, Charles Andrews. Black leaders publicly voiced their doubt about a white director overseeing a black school after Andrews reputedly made a disparaging remark to a student. Black parents threatened to remove their children from the school if action was not taken against Andrews. He did eventually resign from his post in 1832 as the teaching corps at the AFS became increasingly black.

[vii] American Society of Free Persons of Colour, *Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Colour . . .* (Philadelphia: J. W. Allen, 1831), 9.

[viii] *Minutes and Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the People of Colour* (Philadelphia, 1831), 4.

[ix] American Colonization Society, "A Few Facts Respecting the American Colonization Society and the Colony at Liberia" (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1830), 12.

[x] Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, "An Inquiry into the Merits of the American Colonization Society: and a Reply to the Charges Brought Against It. . . ." (London: J. & A. Arch, Cornhill, 1833), 7.

[xi] American Colonization Society, "A Few Facts," 12.

[xii] In fact, I could only find one editorial in the Black Abolitionist Papers' microfilm collection defending the work of the ACS between 1830 and 1834.

[xiii] Anonymous, "Spirited Sentiments," *Liberator*, 22 January 1831. It is also possible to read into this statement that part of the impracticality of separating the blacks from the whites results from the knowledge of racial mixing particularly among slaveholders and their slaves.

[xiv] As early as 1796 they were forming separate institutions in New York State as disenchanted blacks broke away from the John Street Methodist Church to form Zion Church. It became the parent church of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination. In 1808 several dozen men came together and formed the New York African Society for Mutual Relief (NYASMR). Incorporated by the state legislature in 1810, the Society provided monetary benefits to members in cases of injury that prevented a member from working for an extended period and to the families of deceased members provided the widow and/or abandoned children continued to exhibit "good moral character." Although not an educational group, the NYASMR is significant not only because it was the first African American organization of its kind in New York City, but because it inspired the formation of other societies and the membership included many of the men that were leaders in the push for black education during the 1830s including Samuel Ennals, Philip A. Bell, Charles B. Ray, and Dr. James McCune Smith. John J. Zuille, *Historical Sketch of the New York African Society of Mutual Relief* (New York, 1892). On page 15 Zuille asserts that the influence of the society was evidenced by the fact that from it "sprang the Clarkson Society, the Wilberforce Benevolent Society, the Union Society, the Woolman Society of Brooklyn, and our documents were taken as models for many others." Beginning on page 27 Zuille presents a list of members from the time of the Society's founding through 1890. Ennals became a member in 1813, Bell in 1833, Ray in 1840, and Smith in 1841.

[xv] Dorothy Porter, "The Organized Educational Activities of Negro Literary Societies, 1828-1846," *Journal of Negro Education* 5 (October 1936): 557-8.

[xvi] Porter, 564-5.

[xvii] *Colored American*, 29 April 1837.

[xviii] *Colored American*, 13 January 1838.

[xix] *Ibid.*

[xx] Perlman, 194.

[xxi] Freeman, 208.

[xxii] Perlman, 194.

[xxiii] *Ibid.*, 194-5.

[xxiv] The mission statement of the Phoenix Society read as follows: "This Society will aim to accomplish the following objects. To visit every family in the ward and make a register of every colored person in it . . . to induce them, old and young of both sexes, to become members of the Society, and make quarterly payments according to their ability, to get the children out to infant, Sabbath and week schools, and induce the adults to attend school and church

on the Sabbath,—to encourage the females to form Dorcas Societies . . . and impress upon the parents the importance of having the children punctual and regular in their attendance at school,—to establish circulating libraries formed in each ward for the use of people of color on very moderate pay,—to establish mental feasts, and also lyceums for speaking and for lectures on the sciences, and to form moral societies,—to seek out young men of talents, and good moral character, that they may be assisted to obtain a liberal education,—to report to the Board all mechanics who are skilful and capable of conducting their trades,—to procure places at trades and with respectable farmers for lads of good moral character—giving preference to those who have learned to read, write, and cipher,—and in every other way to endeavor to promote the happiness of the people of color, by encouraging them to improve their minds and to abstain from every vicious and demoralizing practice.”American Anti-Slavery Society, “Object of the Phoenix Society of New York,” *Address to the People of Color of the City of New York* (New York: S. W. Benedict, & Co., 1834), 8.

[xxv]“Editor William L. Stone of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, a colonizationist, had asked: ‘what possible good can a classical education yield them? Will we feel any better because the man who waits on our table can read Virgil and Horace?’”In Mabee, 58. Stone makes a point, although cynically, about the fact that New York City’s job market did not reward African Americans that excelled at a literary education. However, Stone’s solution was to deny secondary education to blacks rather than to advocate changing the system.

[xxvi]*Minutes and Proceedings of the Annual Convention, for the Improvement of the Free People of Color in these United States* (Philadelphia, 1832), 34
[xxvii]Mabee, 58.

[xxviii]*New York Evangelist*, 24 September 1836.

[xxix]*Weekly Advocate*, New York, 14 January 1837.

[xxx]*Emancipator*, New York, 27 October 1836.

[xxxi]*Colored American*, 1 July 1837. Losing the schoolroom and possibly the school touched off a firestorm among members of the Society in the press. William Turpin Esq., an original trustee of the Society passed away earlier in the year. He left a sizeable estate of between six and seven thousand dollars of stock in the control of Israel Course, an old friend, and Arthur Tappan. Samuel Cornish firmly believed that Turpin intended this stock “to be given to such Society as they might think best calculated to promote the ‘education and benefit,’ of colored people.”As Course and Tappan did not agree what should be done with the money, it sat in a bank “doing no one any good.”Cornish was so upset by these developments that he blunted asserted that white men should not be in charge of funds for the aid blacks. “We will enter our protest . . . in always appointing white men, as trustees of every fund left to, or for the benefit of colored people. It is a bad practice . . . We are in no want of colored men, equally competent, whose responsibility would be sufficient . . .”It was not until December when the controversy was finally settled—to the dismay of the Phoenix Society—as the money was given to the Female Asylum for Colored Orphans, a white-controlled organization. *Colored American*, 30 December 1837.

[xxxii]*Colored American*, 16 September 1837.

[xxxiii]Porter, 568.

[xxxiv]*Ibid.*

[xxxv]Anne Boylan, “Benevolence and Antislavery Activity Among African American Women in New York and Boston, 1820-1840,” in Jean F. Yellin and John C. Van Horne, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women’s Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 127.

[xxxvi]Porter, 569

[xxxvii]Boylan, “Benevolence and Antislavery Activity,” 127.

[xxxviii]Disagreements between the New York and Philadelphia delegations weakened efforts, but prominent black New Yorkers attended each of the first six conventions. Howard H. Bell, *A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement, 1830-1861* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 18, 35.

[xxxix]The names of those five literary societies were: the Philadelphia Library Company, the Rush Library and Debating Society, the Minerva Literary Society, the Philadelphia Literary Female Association, and the Edgworth Society. Charles Gardner, et. al., *The Present State and Condition of the Free People of Color, of the City of Philadelphia and Adjoining Districts, as exhibited by the Report of a Committee of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Circular Letter to the People of Color in the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, Printers, 1838), 26-7.

[xl]There were many other societies in Philadelphia that I chose not to give information on for the purposes of space and the fact that several of the

societies duplicated one another in terms of purpose. Therefore, I did not want to provide even brief snapshots of them all.

[xli]*Liberator*, 25 February 1831.

[xlii]Perlman, "Organizations of the Free Negro in New York City, 1800-1860," *Journal of Negro History* 56 (July 1971), 197.