

Picturing Freedom's Shores: The Visual Culture of Liberian Colonization, 1821-1861

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines how different actors used visual culture to promote and respond to the African colonization movement in the United States from 1821, the year of Liberia's establishment by the American Colonization Society (hereafter, ACS), to 1861, the start of the American Civil War. Exploring a wide range of material including popular prints, book and newspaper illustration, paintings, settler architecture, daguerreotypes, and indigenous African material culture, I consider how Liberia functioned as an *idea* in the popular imaginations of various people on both sides of the Atlantic, including colonization promoters, Liberian settlers, abolitionists, the American public, and indigenous Africans. In doing so, I seek to fill noticeable gaps in two fields of literature: the study of race in antebellum American visual culture, which has yet to consider how colonization pictures were in conversation with popular antislavery imagery; and the history of the African colonization movement, which has overlooked the role of the visual in the Liberian settlement project.

Exploring the process of Liberian place creation that took place beyond the boundaries of written discourse, this dissertation demonstrates that the creation, reproduction, and transatlantic circulation of visual and material culture shaped the colonization movement and antebellum American culture in ways that scholars have yet to acknowledge. Examining how colonization iconography developed in conversation with popular anti-slavery visual culture, I argue that the colonization and abolition movements, though often antagonistic toward one another, were



nevertheless more fluid and entangled than historians have traditionally recognized. Through an analysis of early maps of Liberia, I also demonstrate that the ACS' desire to "civilize" the African continent was articulated in terms of spatial transformation using strategies that anticipated those of later European imperialists. While historians have been reticent to frame Liberian colonization within the context of early American imperialism, Liberian maps as well as the collection and public display of African artifacts in the United States – which contributed to the development of the myth of a "Dark Continent – reveal that the ACS' settlement project indeed embodied a goal of establishing a "United States of Africa." After Liberia's transition to independence in 1847, I further contend, popular representations celebrating the young republic as a "coloured America on the shores of Africa" also reveal the contradictions and ironies inherent in the settlement process, as elite settlers ultimately established plantation landscapes dependent on the exploitation of indigenous labor.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

ACS	American Colonization Society
YMCSP	Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania
PCS	Pennsylvania Colonization Society
SEAST	Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade
MSCS	Maryland State Colonization Society
SNMNH	Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History
CCS	Connecticut Colonization Society

## Chapter One

### Introduction

In the mid-1830s, a prominent Pennsylvania philanthropist named Elliott Cresson sat for a portrait with the Philadelphia artist John Sartain.<sup>1</sup> Cresson was a steadfast abolitionist and supporter of the American Colonization Society (hereafter, ACS), founded in 1816 to resettle African Americans in Africa. Sartain's three-quarter length portrait, which was soon reproduced as an engraving (fig. 1.1), presents Cresson as the great architect of the colonization movement in Philadelphia, his identity fusing seamlessly with the material references to Liberia that surround him.<sup>2</sup> In the upper left corner of the composition is a seascape depicting a three-masted ship, suggesting the transatlantic journey of African Americans to Liberia. In Cresson's left hand is a map of the Americo-Liberian settlement of Bassa Cove, indicating his mastery over the West African landscape and gesturing to the process of American territorial conquest inherent in the colonization project. Several pieces of indigenous African material culture are visible in the picture's left foreground, reflecting the popular American demand for exotic Liberian collectibles that developed in the first decades of colonization. And on the table at the right side of the canvas is an issue of the settler-owned and operated newspaper the *Liberia Herald*, pointing to the voices and participation of colonists in the

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<sup>1</sup> Sartain's original painting of Cresson is owned by the Fairmont Park Commission, Philadelphia and is currently housed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Thanks to Alina Josan of the Fairmont Park Historic Resource Archives for providing me with provenance information on the painting.

<sup>2</sup> The engraved version of the portrait was published as the frontispiece in F. Freeman, *A Plea for Africa, Being Familiar Conversations on the Subject of Slavery and Colonization, [Originally Published Under the Title "Yaradee"]*, Third Edition (Philadelphia: William Staveland, 1838).

successful establishment of Liberia.<sup>3</sup> As much a portrait of the colonization movement itself as it is a representation of one man, the picture demonstrates how objects, images, and ideas gained meaning through their transatlantic circulation between America and Africa.

This dissertation examines how different actors on both sides of the Atlantic used visual culture to promote and respond to the African colonization movement from 1821, the year of Liberia's establishment, to 1861, the start of the American Civil War. It builds on and contributes to recent scholarship on the ACS and the experiences of Liberian settlers. My focus, however, is neither confined to the actual, lived experiences of Liberian colonists and the Africans they encountered nor to the ways colonization animated nineteenth-century U.S. debates about slavery, although both of these topics are important in my analysis. Rather, I am centrally concerned with discovering how Liberia functioned as an *idea* in the popular imaginations of a wide range of nineteenth-century Americans and Liberians. Seeking to understand the process of Liberian place creation that took place beyond the boundaries of written discourse, I explore a wide range of material and visual evidence including popular prints, book and newspaper illustrations, paintings, settler architecture, maps, daguerreotypes, and indigenous African material culture. I argue that in their visual and material expressions, colonization promoters, Liberian settlers, and the American public attempted to define the meaning of Liberia against the context of growing anxieties about slavery and the possibility of racial integration in a post-emancipation United States. It was in the visual, I contend, that the

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<sup>3</sup> Dalila Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here': The American Colonization Society and the Imaging of African-American Settlers in Liberia" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2010), 68.



ideals, conflicts, and contradictions of Liberian colonization were negotiated and in many cases left unresolved.

The central role of visual and material culture in shaping antebellum American perceptions about Liberian colonization is reflected in Sartain's portrait of Cresson. The picture places Cresson and by extension other white supporters of colonization at the center of the Liberian story. Like many white American antislavery activists, Cresson feared that African Americans would never attain sufficient freedom or opportunity in the United States even if slavery were abolished. He and other colonizationists saw emigration to Liberia as the best solution to this plight, and they devoted their talents and resources to furthering its cause. In the early 1830s, Cresson helped found the Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter, YMCSP), a Pennsylvania auxiliary of the ACS. He was also instrumental in facilitating the resettlement of a group of black Philadelphia Quakers to Bassa Cove, a site on the Liberian coast located about 70 miles southeast of Monrovia. The Quaker emigrants named their new settlement Port Cresson after its most dedicated benefactor. The placement of material props within Sartain's composition presents a narrative about Liberian colonization and Cresson's role within it, asserting the sitter to be a crucial agent in the movement of bodies, ideas, and commodities between Africa and the United States.

Symbolically ascribing Liberia's successful establishment to the efforts of a white American benefactor, Sartain's picture contrasts sharply with another portrait made two decades later, a daguerreotype of Liberian statesman Beverly Page Yates taken by the settler-daguerreotypist Augustus Washington (fig. 1.2). Born free in Virginia around 1811, Yates had emigrated to Liberia at age eighteen and later became one of the

colony's most successful merchants.<sup>4</sup> By the time he sat for this daguerreotype with Washington, Liberia had become an independent republic and Yates was serving as its Vice President. As in Cresson's portrait, Yates is here captured in a moment of work. On the desk before him is an open book and inkwell, and in his right hand is a scroll of paper. The background drapery, though simpler than that behind Cresson, reminds viewers of the performative nature of portraiture, creating a visual product that is posed and manufactured by both artist and sitter. Like Cresson, Yates confidently asserts his prominence within the colonization enterprise.

If Sartain's canvas frames Cresson and his white Philadelphia peers as the central actors in the ACS' resettlement endeavors, Washington's portrait of Yates relocates the nexus of the colonization movement to Liberia itself, where the process of nation-making is actively taking place. Whereas the seascape, map, African collectibles, and newspaper in Cresson's portrait highlight the transatlantic exchange of visual and material culture engendered by colonization, Washington's daguerreotype itself bears witness to and exemplifies that exchange: both photographer and sitter have crossed the Atlantic to settle in Liberia, producing a daguerreotype – a medium symbolic of American technological progress – that will eventually be shipped back to the United States. The exchange of images, objects, and ideas between Liberia and the United States embodied in these and other images has yet to be adequately explored by scholars, a gap which this dissertation seeks to fill.

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<sup>4</sup> Ann Shumard, "Beverly Page Yates," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/yates.htm>.

## Historical Overview of Liberian Colonization

Modern Liberia is located on the West African coast and is bordered by Sierra Leone to the northwest, Guinea to the north, and Côte D'Ivoire to the east (fig. 1.3). Slightly smaller than the state of Virginia, its Atlantic coastal region is lined with mangroves and swamps, while rolling hills and tropical rainforests characterize its interior plateau.<sup>5</sup> Its capital city, Monrovia, lies on Cape Mesurado, a promontory of land extending into the Atlantic at the mouth of the Mesurado River, not far from the Saint Paul River; the region has deep historic ties to the slave trade. A sovereign republic since 1847, Liberia's official language is English, and its constitution and government structure are modeled on those of the United States. The story of Liberia's founding by a nineteenth-century American philanthropic society and African-American emigrants is singular in world history.

In the early nineteenth century, growing controversy over the "peculiar institution" of slavery began to plague the United States. By this period, all of the northern states had either abolished slavery or announced plans to gradually diminish the institution's peculiar presence within their borders. As a result, America's free black population grew to unprecedented levels, a situation that raised new concerns for the white body politic. Many abolitionist northerners, though morally opposed to slavery, were nevertheless uncomfortable with the prospect of the racially integrated American society that wholesale emancipation threatened to bring. On the other hand, many pro-slavery southerners perceived the free black population as a threat to their safety and

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Haggett, ed., *Encyclopedia of World Geography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol. 17 (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2002), 2319.

economic livelihood; it was free African Americans and their underground networks, these Southerners believed, who were responsible for inciting violent slave uprisings as well as more modest acts of slave resistance.

Responding to such concerns, a group of white politicians met at the Davis Hotel in Washington D.C. in December of 1816 to establish the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America, generally referred to as the American Colonization Society.<sup>6</sup> The gathering included prominent political figures such as Henry Clay, James Monroe, Bushrod Washington, Andrew Jackson, Francis Scott Key, and Daniel Webster.<sup>7</sup> The ACS' founders believed that the best solution to the growing conflict over slavery was to "return" free and newly emancipated black Americans to Africa. In 1817 the Society sent two agents, Samuel Mills and Ebenezer Burgess, to reconnoiter the West African coast for potential settlement sites. Mills and Burgess reached Africa in early 1818 and spent over two months scouting out the vicinity around Freetown, Sierra Leone, but were unable to secure territory for the colony.<sup>8</sup> With the help of the U.S. Navy, the Society was finally able to procure Cape Mesurado for its settlement in 1821. The colony was named "Liberia", suggesting that there black Americans could attain the uniquely American ideals of freedom that they were, ironically, denied in the United States. In 1847 Liberia became an independent republic, but the ACS continued to finance and

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<sup>6</sup> Carlos E. Cortés, ed., *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 191.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See Claude A. Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and The Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 37; Thomas H. Kiker, "The Relationship Between Samuel J. Mills Jr. and the Influence of the Second Great Awakening on Missions and Evangelism" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 161-62.

facilitate the emigration of black Americans to that country until the early twentieth century.

Clay, Monroe, and the other men who met at the Davis Hotel in December of 1816 to establish the American Colonization Society were not the first Americans to formulate a plan for colonizing black Americans in Africa. The ACS was led by an idealistic, even utopian vision that had its origins in late eighteenth-century American and British efforts to resettle people of African descent in Africa. Among the earliest proponents of African colonization was the Reverend Samuel Hopkins, an outspoken abolitionist from Newport, Rhode Island whose anti-slavery tracts and sermons were influential in promoting manumissions throughout the New England and mid-Atlantic American colonies.<sup>9</sup> Believing that African resettlement would both benefit American blacks and work to evangelize the African continent, in the 1770s Hopkins – along with future Yale president and Newport Congregationalist Reverend Ezra Stiles – raised funds for the theological educations of several free and enslaved Africans living in Newport who apparently retained African language abilities.<sup>10</sup> This education was intended to prepare these individuals to return to Africa and evangelize their homeland, but the American Revolution obstructed this goal.<sup>11</sup>

Across the Atlantic, however, British anti-slavery activists like Granville Sharpe were formulating similar plans to resettle in Africa some of London's growing

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<sup>9</sup> George E. Brooks, Jr., "The Providence African Society's Sierra Leone Emigration Scheme, 1794-1795: Prologue to the African Colonization Movement," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7, no. 2 (1974): 184-185.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 185-186.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 186.

impoverished black population. In 1786, Sharpe and his supporters persuaded the British government to fund the transportation of around 300 “Black Poor” to the West African coast and to cover the expenses of establishing an independently governed colony there.<sup>12</sup> Sharpe’s emigrants sailed in April of 1787, founding the “Province of Freedom” the following month in a region inhabited by the Temne people, not far from the mouth of the Sierra Leone River.<sup>13</sup> Disease and conflict with slave traders and the Temne people quickly weakened the experiment, and the Province of Freedom had failed by December of 1789.<sup>14</sup> Two years later, the settlement was refounded as Freetown under a royal charter from the Sierra Leone Company, a joint-stock trading corporation.<sup>15</sup> The initial success of the new colony was due in large part to the 1792 resettlement in Freetown of over 1,100 former American slaves who had previously been granted refuge in Nova Scotia in return for joining British forces during the American Revolution.<sup>16</sup> With a strong sense of community already intact, these “black Loyalists” formed the nucleus of the Sierra Leone Colony.<sup>17</sup> The colony gradually received more formerly enslaved blacks, including 500 deported Jamaican Maroons in 1800.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 187. For more history on the Province of Freedom, see Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2008), 200-243.

<sup>13</sup> Brooks, “The Providence African Society’s Sierra Leone Emigration Scheme,” 187-188.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 190.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Gott, *Britain’s Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London: Verso, 2011), 118.

Meanwhile, interest in resettling American blacks was growing in the newly formed United States. In his 1784 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson had proposed that enslaved African Americans be gradually emancipated and thereafter “colonized to such place as the circumstances of the time should render most proper.”<sup>19</sup> For Jefferson, colonization offered a solution to the troubling threat of racial mixing. “Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort,” he wrote. “The slave when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed he is to be removed beyond reach of mixture.”<sup>20</sup> Deeply concerned about the moral implications of racial amalgamation for the new Republic, Jefferson would throughout his life frequently revisit the topic of African-American emigration to Africa or other locations, though he took no political action in this regard.<sup>21</sup>

African colonization schemes also emerged in response to the fear among many Southern planters that free blacks were organizing slave uprisings.<sup>22</sup> In 1790, a Virginia slaveholder named Fernando Fairfax proposed that the new U.S. Congress establish a colony in Africa wherein emancipated slaves could be resettled, allowing slave owners to

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<sup>19</sup> “Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Queries 14 and 18, 137—43, 162—63” (1784), in Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, *The Founder’s Constitution*, vol. 1, ch. 15, doc. 28, accessed December 13, 2015, <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch15s28.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in James M. Volo and Dorothy Denneen Volo, eds., *Family Life in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 293.

<sup>21</sup> See Marie Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic: Black & White Virginians in the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 12; Kenneth J. Zanca, ed., *American Catholics and Slavery: 1789-1866 An Anthology of Primary Documents* (New York: University Press of America, 1994), 83. For more on the complexities of Jefferson’s views on racial mixing and colonization, see Peter S. Onuf, “Every Generation Is an ‘Independent Nation’: Colonization, Miscegenation, and the Fate of Jefferson’s Children,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (Jan., 2000): 153-170.

<sup>22</sup> Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, 9-14.

manumit their human property without fearing for their own safety. Fairfax's plan never materialized, but many prominent Americans continued to express interest in such projects.<sup>23</sup>

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, a wealthy Massachusetts Quaker businessman named Paul Cuffe began efforts to resettle American blacks in Britain's Sierra Leone colony. A sea captain and abolitionist, Cuffe was of mixed Aquinnah Wampanoag and West African Ashanti ancestry.<sup>24</sup> In 1811, he visited Freetown and Liverpool, meeting with leaders of the Sierra Leone colony and discussing its future needs. Halted by the War of 1812, Cuffe resumed interest in the project a few years later. In late 1815, he and 38 African-American colonists left Massachusetts for Freetown. Cuffe returned in 1816 and sought to procure funding for the transport of more American blacks to Sierra Leone, but was unable to do so before his death in 1817.<sup>25</sup>

Following Cuffe's efforts, the ACS emerged as the dominant body for colonizing African Americans in Africa, especially after Congress granted the Society \$100,000 in 1819.<sup>26</sup> The ACS' early leaders and members held various motivations for promoting African-American resettlement. Some were abolitionists who, despite their opposition to slavery, believed that the United States could not overcome its racial intolerances and that

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<sup>23</sup> See *ibid*, 17; Zanca, *American Catholics and Slavery*, 83.

<sup>24</sup> Rosalind Cobb Wiggins, ed., *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters, 1807-1817: a Black Quaker's "Voice from Within the Veil"* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1996): 45-56.

<sup>25</sup> For more on Cuffe see Wiggins, *Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters*, 45-70; Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 23-24; Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, 24-26.

<sup>26</sup> Carl C. Hodge and Cathal J. Nolan, eds., *U.S. Presidents and Foreign Policy From 1789 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2007), 49.



even free blacks born in America would therefore be better off “returning” to Africa.

Many supporters were Protestant clergymen who, like the Reverend Hopkins a generation earlier, believed that black Americans would be especially well positioned to evangelize Africa were they to form a permanent colony on that continent. Still other colonizationists were Southern slaveholders who wanted to maintain a slave society and felt that the best way to do so was to remove the perceived threat of free black Americans by “repatriating” them to Africa. Whatever their reasons, these different groups of people supported the ACS’ ambitious goal of “removing all the blacks to Africa.”<sup>27</sup>

In reality, the ACS was to meet with a seemingly unending set of challenges in seeking this ideal, beginning with securing territory for a colony in Africa. Just days before the Society’s first shipload of emigrants departed New York aboard the *Elizabeth* in early 1820, the organization announced at its third annual meeting that Africans were “impatient to receive” the American colonists, but this optimistic idea was far from the truth.<sup>28</sup> Although the ACS had been scouting the West African coast for land for a few years, it had yet to obtain territory for its settlement. Upon reaching West African shores, the 88 settlers were moved between Sierra Leone and nearby Sherbro Island, facing bad weather, inadequate shelter, and tropical diseases, while leaders continued struggling to secure land. Becoming desperate, the U.S. government sent an impetuous Navy lieutenant named Robert Stockton to pressure mainland African authorities to cede land

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<sup>27</sup> Quotation from Lydia Maria Child, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, original 1836), 117.

<sup>28</sup> *Third Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Washington: Davis and Force, 1820), 19, quoted and discussed in Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 37.

to the Society.<sup>29</sup> Accompanied by the ACS' first colonial agent, Dr. Eli Ayres, Stockton reportedly leveled a gun to the head of the local Dei leader "King Peter", threatening to pull the trigger if he did not cooperate.<sup>30</sup> King Peter complied, and for a territory which Ayres judged to be worth "one million of dollars," the ACS paid only about three hundred dollars worth of goods such as tobacco, beads, knives, and pots.<sup>31</sup>

The challenges at play in Liberia's founding foreshadowed many of the hardships and challenges of colonization over the next four decades. Perhaps the most serious of these was the West African disease environment, for which Liberia's American-born settlers were woefully unprepared. Europeans and Americans had long been aware of the disease threat in West Africa, but for many years they had assumed that it was a only danger to people of European descent. By the early nineteenth century, the West African coast had acquired the nickname "the white man's grave" due to the high mortality rates of Europeans who travelled to the region.<sup>32</sup> At the time, Westerners believed their susceptibility to disease in West Africa was due to racial difference, but as Philip D. Curtin has demonstrated, people of European descent usually did not have the childhood immunities to diseases like malaria and yellow fever that many Africans acquired growing up.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> History and quotation in *ibid*, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Philip D. Curtin, "The End of the 'White Man's Grave'? Nineteenth-Century Mortality in West Africa," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21, no. 1 (Summer, 1990): 63.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Most African-American emigrants to Liberia, however, had never lived in Africa and thus had no immunity to these tropical diseases either, making for alarming rates of death by the “fever” after arrival. John Day, a missionary-settler from Virginia who emigrated to Liberia in 1830, lost his wife and four children within a year after landing in Africa.<sup>34</sup> Sadly, the experience of the Day family was not uncommon. Historian Tom W. Shick’s quantitative analysis of Liberian colonization between 1820 and 1843 reveals that the sex and age distributions of emigrants, as well as the frequency of families emigrating together, “suggests a prospect of steady population growth,” at least in principle, but that is not what happened.<sup>35</sup> Instead, high mortality rates resulted in a dismal population growth rate. During this period, the African “fever” – referring mainly to malaria, yellow fever, and typhoid – accounted for 45.7% of recorded deaths.<sup>36</sup> The first year after arrival in Liberia was the most dangerous: during this year, 21% of emigrants died.<sup>37</sup> Scholar Antonio McDaniel has also performed quantitative analyses on emigrant death rates for the same period, concluding that the Liberian settler mortality rates for these years were the highest “in accurately recorded human history.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth H. Flowers, “‘A Man, a Christian... and a Gentleman?’ John Day, Southern Baptists, and the Nineteenth-Century Mission to Liberia,” *Baptist History & Heritage* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 76. John Day was the brother of the well-known African-American cabinet-maker Thomas Day. For more on John and his activities in Liberia, see Flowers, “‘A Man, A Christian... and a Gentleman?’” 70-85; Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, 68; Jonathan Prown, “The Furniture of Thomas Day: A Reevaluation,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 33, no. 4, *Race and Ethnicity in American Material Life* (Winter, 1998): 226-28.

<sup>35</sup> Tom W. Shick, “A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization with Special Reference to Mortality,” *The Journal of African History* 12, no. 1 (1971): 47.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Antonio McDaniel, “Extreme Mortality in Nineteenth-Century Africa: The Case of Liberian Immigrants,” *Demography* 29, no. 4 (Nov., 1992): 581.

The specter of death in Liberia hovers over emigrants' letters to the United States. Samson Ceasar, a former Virginia slave, wrote home in 1834 that, "I can not tell you much About the Country as their has been so many people died in this place I though [sic] I would not expose my Self in travling."<sup>39</sup> In March of 1857, emigrants Young Barrett, Maria Barrett, and Isabella Johnson described the lethal situation in a letter to James H. Minor, executor of their former Virginia master's will: "And I am very sorry to inform you that the mortality has; been very great by the fever, we have lost by Death the following persons, my father, sister Francis, Uncle Buck Thomson, Billy Douglass, James Scott, Lucy Twines baby, Frank Coleman; Marian Coleman; Lucy Twines Father; Patrick Mickey; Robert Scott is laying very low, indeed all the people down at Clay Ashland are quite sick."<sup>40</sup> Their letter included a request for black clothing suitable for mourning.<sup>41</sup> In another letter, emigrant William Douglass stated almost routinely, "I now tell you who is dead," giving a similarly long list of names of those recently deceased, noting that they had "all died with the fever and the rest have all had the fever but are

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<sup>39</sup> Samson Ceasar to Henry Westfall, 1 April 1834, p. 1, Letters of Samson Ceasar from Liberia, Accession #10595, 10595-a, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=uva-sc/viu02800.xml>.

<sup>40</sup> Young Barrett, Maria Barrett, and Isabella Johnson to James H. Minor, 3 March 1857, p. 2, Letters from former slaves of Terrell settled in Liberia, 1857-1866, Accession # 10460, -a, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, accessed December 13, 2015, <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=uva-sc/viu01228.xml>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

getting better.”<sup>42</sup> These are only a few examples of a nearly unending stream of fatalistic references in settler letters to the “fever” and the loss of life in Liberia.

In addition to the challenges of Africa’s disease environment for Liberian colonists, the ACS’ violent procurement of indigenous territory was to be only the first in a long series of conflicts between the Society-backed American settlers and the indigenous Africans already occupying the land. From the beginning, the Americans held demeaning assumptions about the indigenous Africans they encountered on the West African coast. Most pervasive among these was the basic belief that, while the various groups living in the region might have somewhat different characteristics, they all shared the basic trait of being “heathens” without knowledge of the Christian, “civilized” West and having no significant history themselves.

In reality, the Africans inhabiting the region that was to become Liberia were ethnically and culturally diverse, had complex and flexible social and political structures, and had significant previous experience interacting with Westerners. By the time the ACS’ first cohort of African-American colonists reached Cape Mesurado in the early 1820s, at least sixteen different ethnic groups inhabited the region that would become Liberia. This diversity was the result of multiples migrations into the area beginning around 6,000 B.C.E.<sup>43</sup> The first to arrive included the Gola, Kpelle, Loma, Gbandi, Mende, and Mano peoples. Much later, in the sixteenth century, the Kru, Bassa, Dei, and

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<sup>42</sup> William Douglass to Dr. James H. Minor and Frank Nelson, 8 March 1857, p. 1, Letters from former slaves of Terrell settled in Liberia, 1857-1866, Accession # 10460, -a, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, accessed December 13, 2015, <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=uva-sc/viu01228.xml>.

<sup>43</sup> The Advocates for Human Rights, “Chapter Four: Background on Liberia and the Conflict,” 51, accessed December 15, 2015, [http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/chapter\\_4-background\\_on\\_liberia\\_and\\_the\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/chapter_4-background_on_liberia_and_the_conflict.pdf).

Grebo peoples migrated to the region, followed a century later by the Vai and Mandingo from the north.<sup>44</sup> With these groups came certain notable skills that would still be observable in the nineteenth century, including cotton spinning, cloth weaving, iron smelting, and rice cultivation, as well as social and political traditions with their origins in the Mali and Songhay medieval empires along the Niger River, from which many of these people had once originated.<sup>45</sup> According to Olfert Dapper, a Dutchman who visited the region at the end of the seventeenth century, the populations of this area had advanced political and social structures, apparently not unlike those of the ancient Western Sudanic empires.<sup>46</sup>

The ethnically diverse groups living along what would become the Liberian coast also had extensive interaction with Westerners before American settlers arrived. Direct contact between this area of “Upper Guinea” and the western world dates to the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, when Europeans began exploring and trading in the area, establishing outposts in the regions that eventually became the Americo-Liberian settlements of Buchanan and Greenville.<sup>47</sup> Arriving in 1461, the Portuguese sailor Pedro de Cintra named the region the “Grain Coast” due to the large amount of melegueta pepper that grew there, the seeds of that wild bush being a highly desirable trade item at the time.<sup>48</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch were also buying

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Robin Dunn-Marcos et al., *Liberians: An Introduction to their History and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2005), 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

pepper in the region, as well as other valuable products such as gold and ivory.<sup>49</sup> Over the next few centuries, the region was variously referred to as the Melegueta Coast, the Pepper Coast, and the Rice Coast because, alongside slaves, melegueta pepper and rice constituted its peoples' major exports from the region into the Atlantic world.<sup>50</sup> Due to this early presence of Dutch and Portuguese in the region, much of the area's geography had been assigned European names that were somewhat Anglicized by the early nineteenth century, such as Cape Palmas, Cape Mesurado, and the Saint Paul River.<sup>51</sup>

While nineteenth-century written descriptions of Liberia suggested it to be a place only recently transformed from a wilderness inhabited by "primitive" heathens, the early modern Liberian coast actually included numerous trading factories that were firmly established by the time settlers arrived in the early 1820s.<sup>52</sup> Liberia's indigenous population was part of a larger web of coastal societies with highly complex commercial networks in which the trade in slaves and commodities played a vital role. In these early exchanges, Europeans were subject to abide within the social and economic systems long established by West Africans. Among the most important of these was the so-called "landlord-stranger relationship", a centuries-old system in which traders, itinerants, and other travelers agreed to provide labor or services and abide within the established social and economic structures of the communities they encountered in exchange for aid and

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> William E. Allen, "Liberia and the Atlantic World in the Nineteenth Century: Convergence and Effects," *History in Africa* 37 (2010): 17.

<sup>51</sup> Dunn-Marcos, et al., *Liberians*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Svend E. Holsoe, "A Study of Relations between Settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Western Liberia, 1821-1847," *African Historical Studies* 4, no. 2 (1971): 331.

protection. In the early period of European contact, Portuguese and other European visitors understood that their actions and exchanges in Africa were to be done on African terms if they were to stand any chance of success, or even survival.<sup>53</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, Cape Mesurado and the regions immediately adjacent to it were occupied by the Dei people.<sup>54</sup> Camwood, gold, ivory, rice and even water were among the items they sold, but their most important business was in slaves.<sup>55</sup> At the height of the slave trade in the mid-eighteenth century, explains Svend Holsoe, “the trade in slaves in this area was extensive, and during the early nineteenth century, Cape Mesurado was probably the most continually occupied trading center in the area.”<sup>56</sup> The known Africans trading in this region included at least two people of mixed race. A mulatto woman named Philipi, who was apparently the daughter of an American captain, controlled a trading factory on one of the islands in Mesurado Bay. Another mulatto named John Mill, the son of a British merchant, had a trading factory nearby. Mill helped early ACS officials scouting out the region for territory.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For more on this topic, see George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>54</sup> In 1819, a Church Missionary Society missionary living in Sierra Leone named J. B. Cates who travelled as far south as Grand Bassa, described in his journal how the Dei, who boiled salt, had built small huts along the coast. J. B. Cates, “Journal of a Journey by J. B. Cates,” C. A. 1/E7A, 68-69, Church Missionary Society archives, London; quoted in Holsoe, “A Study of Relations,” 334.

<sup>55</sup> Holsoe, “A Study of Relations,” 331.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. The presence of mixed-race traders on the Liberian coast relates to a broader trend in West African trading culture during the period. As the historian George Brooks has shown, for nearly as long as trade and exchange with Europeans had been occurring in coastal West Africa, communities of mixed European-African ancestry had played an important role in West African society. Luso-, French-, and Anglo-Africans monopolized the coastal trade in numerous commodities and were important middlemen, having language abilities and native immunities that allowed them to communicate within and across the ethnically diverse populations present along the coast. By the end of the eighteenth century, Eurafrican



Unlike other Westerners who had previously only visited but seldom permanently settled in this part of coastal West Africa, ACS agents and settlers arrived with a determination to make the land their own, a territorial aggression that caused frequent tensions between the Americans and Africans, especially during the first years of colonization. Moreover, the Americans reached Cape Mesurado at a time of heightened stress for the Dei and other local groups due to climate changes and economic challenges that no doubt exacerbated already existing interethnic rivalries, making the prospect of native-settler peace even more difficult.<sup>58</sup>

The hardships on the ground in Liberia were matched by controversy over the colonization movement at home, with many critics claiming the ACS' motives to be racist or impractical. Many abolitionists and members of the free black community came

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circumstances began to change as British and French officials in Saint-Louis and Gorée (now Senegal) imposed European legal codes on the population, and as Europeans began to found and control other settlements, such as Freetown. For more on this topic, see George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), xix-xxiii.

<sup>58</sup> As Brooks has noted, this period saw a growing European demand for slaves, leading to greater conflict and a dramatic increase in slave raiding in the region from 1630 to 1860, a time that also coincided with a dry period causing famine and draught, resulting in much overall stress on West African coastal societies. See In the region that became Liberia, much stress was brought about by strong interethnic rivalries. As Robin Dunn-Marcos explains, "competition for the control of markets and trade routes between the coastal region and the hinterland led to intense interethnic rivalries, especially between the Mandingo and the Gola peoples." Numerous commodities, such as salt, gun powder, rum, tobacco, cloth, and beads produced or acquired on the coast were exchanged for precious inland products including ivory, gold, kola nuts, rice, camwood, palm kernels and oil, and slaves. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, this competition for control over trade in the region resulted in two main federations. One of these, the Mandingo Condo Confederation, was headquartered at Bopolu and led by chief Sao Boso, known by Europeans and settlers as Boatswain. Comprised of a large, ethnically diverse population, the confederation headed by Sao Boso controlled coastal traffic through the Saint Paul River. The other group was the Gola Confederation, headquartered at Kongba and led by chief Zolu Duma, whom Europeans referred to as King Peter or Peter Careful. According to Holsoe, Zolu Duma's "power extended over most of the southwestern Gola people to the north of that river, possibly to some of the Gola to the south of it, and over the Vai in the Gawula and Tombe areas." When African-American settlers began arriving at Cape Mesurado in 1822, these two groups were at the height of their rivalry. See Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, 201-202; Dunn-Marcos, et al., *Liberians*, 7; Holsoe, "A Study of Relations," 331, 334-35.

to regard colonization as a loathsome scheme intended to preserve a Southern slave society. Whereas early on in the movement, many emigrants were freeborn African Americans from the Northern states with some education and financial means, growing antagonism toward the movement forced the ACS to increasingly depend on the manumission of enslaved southerners for its supply of emigrants. As Claude A. Clegg III has noted, the majority of emigrants before 1861 were former slaves “liberated for the express purpose of their removal to Africa.”<sup>59</sup> In some cases, emigration was offered to an enslaved person as a condition of emancipation. For example, the 1839 will of William Hamilton of Rockbridge County, Virginia stipulated that two enslaved sisters “shall each become free at the age of twenty one years provided they are then willing to go to the colony of Liberia on the coast of Africa or any other country out of the United States where they can be free.”<sup>60</sup> The frequent result of such situations was the arrival in Liberia of emigrants who, without financial means or adequate preparation, were ill-equipped for the challenges of starting anew in Africa.

The ACS and its African colony faced so many obstacles and so much criticism that historians have traditionally considered Liberia to be a great failure. As Marie Tyler McGraw describes, the ACS “has frequently been seen as a sideshow in nineteenth-century American history and one in which some of the nation’s more bizarre and racist

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<sup>59</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 198.

<sup>60</sup> Will of William Hamilton, 26 April 1839, Rockbridge County Will Books vol. 8, p. 162, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Virginia, in Ellen Eslinger, “Liberation in a Rural Context: the Valley of Virginia,” in *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*, eds. Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 371.

concepts were on display.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the ACS’ goal of resettling America’s entire black population in Liberia never even came close to materializing, with only about 11,000 actually emigrating by 1860 (out of an enslaved American population of nearly four million).<sup>62</sup> Yet despite the relatively small number of emigrants and the challenges they faced once they arrived in Africa, the ACS’ mission played an important symbolic role in America’s antebellum political and cultural landscape, fueling heated debates about the future of American race relations and transforming popular American perceptions of Africa. The role of visual and material culture in this process has yet to be adequately explored by scholars.

## Review of Literature

This dissertation responds and contributes to several fields of scholarship, among them the study of race in antebellum American visual culture. Since the publication in 1989 of British art historian Hugh Honour’s *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, an encyclopedic, multi-volume exploration of Western artistic representations of blacks since ancient times, a number of important studies have appeared which consider the implications of racial representations in the nineteenth-century United States.<sup>63</sup> The first

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<sup>61</sup> Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, 1.

<sup>62</sup> See Charles F. Irons, “Zion in Black and White: African-American Evangelicals and Missionary Work in the Old South,” in *The Old South’s Modern Worlds: Slavery, Religion, and Nation in the Age of Progress*, eds. L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 215; Laird W. Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96.

<sup>63</sup> Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). The 1989 edition was one of several published since the inception of “The Image of the Black in Western Art” image archive and research project in the 1960s at the W. E. B. DuBois Research Institute

of these was Albert Boime's *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (1990), which examined the social history of race in nineteenth-century American artworks and explored how racial hierarchies were often visually encoded into the works themselves.<sup>64</sup> Marcus Wood's *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (2000) analyzed British and American images of African slavery from a broad visual culture perspective, considering how fine art such as J. M. W. Turner's *Slave Ship* worked alongside more popular, ephemeral imagery like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* illustrations to convey particular ideas about the slave trade to a broad range of viewers.<sup>65</sup> More recently, Maurie D. McNinnis considers how a broad American and transatlantic audience came to understand slavery through the visual culture of abolitionism in *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (2011).<sup>66</sup>

This dissertation builds on the work of Honour, Boime, Wood, McNinnis, and others, but it also seeks to fill a noticeable void in the scholarship on race in antebellum American visual culture by bringing colonization pictures into critical conversation with abolitionist imagery. I contend that the visual culture of Liberian colonization developed

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at Harvard University. Image of the Black, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://imageoftheblack.com/about.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).

<sup>65</sup> Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000). For a more in-depth historiography, see David Bindman, "Introduction to the New Edition," in David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, New Edition, Vol. IV, Part 1 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 6-8.

<sup>66</sup> Maurie D. McNinnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

in direct response to anti-slavery imagery, suggesting the ACS' emigration plan to be the ideal "solution" to the slavery problem in all of its moral, political, and cultural dimensions, even while the organization maintained an ambivalent official stance on the issue. On a broader level, however, I also seek to uncover how Liberia was implicated in antebellum visual constructions of slavery and racial difference from the perspectives of both the American public and the African Americans who emigrated there.

This study also centrally engages with growing historical interest in the ACS and Liberian colonization. Historians of the African colonization movement have been largely focused on the ACS' motives regarding slavery. From the early nineteenth century up to the 1960s, most historians interpreted the organization to be conservative and antislavery in its goals.<sup>67</sup> Over the following three decades, however, scholars increasingly argued that the ACS' emigration scheme concealed darker and more racist motives.<sup>68</sup> By the 1990s, this revision dominated scholarship in the field, with many historians no longer considering the ACS to be antislavery at all.<sup>69</sup> In the new millenium,

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<sup>67</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the historiography on the ACS, see Eric Burin, "Rethinking Northern White Support for the African Colonization Movement: The Pennsylvania Colonization Society as an Agent of Emancipation," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127, no. 2 (Apr., 2003): 198. For examples at the beginning and end of this era of scholarship, see Early Lee Fox, *The American Colonization Society (1817-1840)* (Baltimore, 1919) and P. J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). Both of these titles are further discussed in Burin, "Rethinking Northern White Support for the African Colonization Movement," 198.

<sup>68</sup> Burin, "Rethinking Northern White Support for the African Colonization Movement," 198-199. Burin here notes these historiographical shifts.

<sup>69</sup> As Burin notes, some of examples of 1990s scholarship in this vein include Amos J. Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991); Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed., *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

scholarship on the ACS and Liberia has enjoyed a renaissance, with many historians again rethinking the ACS' goals in regard to slavery. In *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (2005), historian Eric Burin argues that the motives of colonizationists regarding slavery depended largely on their regional affiliations.<sup>70</sup> Focusing on the activities of one of the ACS' most powerful auxiliaries, the Pennsylvania Colonization Society (hereafter, PCS), Burin demonstrates that the colonization movement in Philadelphia was led by humanitarian abolitionists who saw Liberian emigration as an effective means of promoting slave manumissions.<sup>71</sup>

Burin is not alone in rethinking African colonization from a more regional rather than a strictly national perspective. In *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (2004), Claude E. Clegg III focuses on the colonization movement in North Carolina, considering how the ACS' broader goals played out in that state and revealing the experiences of North Carolinians who emigrated to Liberia in the nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> Mary Tyler-McGraw takes a similar route with *An African Republic: Black & White Virginians in the Making of Liberia* (2007), tracing both the history of colonization's leaders in Virginia and the participation of that state's emigrants played in Liberian settler society.<sup>73</sup> Tyler-McGraw's focus on Virginia is perhaps more warranted

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1999). For a discussion of these titles, see Burin, "Rethinking Northern White Support for the African Colonization Movement," 199.

<sup>70</sup> Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 2. See also Burin, "Rethinking Northern White Support for the African Colonization Movement," 2003.

<sup>72</sup> Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*.

<sup>73</sup> Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*.

than Clegg's on North Carolina, for not only did Virginia send more colonists to Liberia than any other state, but after Liberia became an independent republic in 1847, the majority of its elite political class had Virginia origins.<sup>74</sup>

The regional differentiation within colonization scholarship has been joined by emerging, though less well fleshed-out, historical interest in other dimensions of the movement. In a 2000 article for the *Journal of Social History*, Bruce Dorsey began to illuminate the ways in which colonization rhetoric was gendered, promoting emigration as the ultimate and only way for African-American males to attain nineteenth-century ideals of manhood, becoming leaders and conquerors on an African frontier.<sup>75</sup> The role of Liberian settlers in the exploration of West Africa has also been brought to light with the 2003 publication of four nineteenth-century diaries chronicling the journeys of Liberian settlers into the African interior.<sup>76</sup>

More recently, Bronwen Everill has reinterpreted the history of Liberia and the ACS through a transnational, comparative lens in her book, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (2013).<sup>77</sup> Everill examines the role of Sierra Leone and Liberia in British and American humanitarian efforts to combat slavery at its perceived source in West Africa. Like Burin, Everill finds the motivations of many colonizationists to be essentially anti-slavery, but she stresses the extent to which this anti-slavery humanitarian

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 3, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Bruce Dorsey, "A Gendered History of African Colonization in the Antebellum United States," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (Autumn, 2000): 77-103.

<sup>76</sup> James Fairhead et al., eds., *African-American Exploration in West Africa: Four Nineteenth-Century Diaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>77</sup> Everill, *Abolition and Empire*.

intervention was also imperialist in nature and linked to the goal of establishing a “United States of Africa”<sup>78</sup>. It was not that “Britain and America were using humanitarian aims cynically to develop empires - at least, not all the time,” Everill claims, “but that the desire for humanitarian intervention on the part of *settlers* as well as their metropolitan anti-slavery allies promoted an ‘imperialistic’ expansion of colonial and metropolitan resources in West Africa.”<sup>79</sup>

Like Everill, I seek to both complicate and expand the historical questions that have conventionally been asked about the ACS, particularly the traditionally black-and-white issue of the ACS’ motivations regarding slavery. Yet in doing so, I turn to a body of evidence that has been virtually ignored by scholars: the visual culture of Liberian colonization. The ACS’ propaganda war with those hostile to its mission was fought through images as well as words, yet this dimension of ACS rhetoric has yet to receive adequate analysis. Historians frequently use nineteenth-century colonization images as straightforward illustrations, rarely interrogating these pictures as critical evidence in themselves. Receiving only slightly more attention has been the topic of how, on the other side of the Atlantic, Liberian settlers used visual and material culture to respond to the colonization debate back home, to negotiate their encounters with their African hosts and enemies, and to assert new personal and community identities as citizens of an American republic in Africa.

A notable exception to this paucity of scholarship on the visual came in the late 1980s with the publication of *A Land and Life Remembered: Americo-Liberian Folk*

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<sup>78</sup> Benjamin Coates to Frederick Douglass, 16 January 1851, in *ibid*, 1.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 9.



*Architecture* (1988), a study of nineteenth-century Americo-Liberian vernacular architecture.<sup>80</sup> Though the central focus of the book was Max Belcher's photographic record of then-surviving early Americo-Liberian buildings, the book also included critical essays by historian Svend E. Holsoe and architectural historian Bernard L. Herman. Holsoe showed that Liberian immigrants were American and Christian in culture. They looked upon Liberia's indigenous population with disdain, forming a "settler standard" based on Western systems of social hierarchy, particularly those of the American South.<sup>81</sup> Herman's portion of the text built on Holsoe's, exploring how American social ideals were transferred to and transformed in the Liberian context. In particular, he compared the vernacular housing forms in the Liberian settlement of Arthington with the landscapes from which the majority of its population originated: the North Carolina tidewater, south Georgia, and the South Carolina Piedmont.<sup>82</sup> Houses, Herman argued, were a central way in which settlers "signified ambition, authority, and arrival."<sup>83</sup> Discussing the common house types that emerged on the Liberian landscape and the ways those types evoked similar languages of building in the American South, Herman demonstrated that Liberians' desire for a "good house" reflected ideals of property and permanence.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Max Belcher, Svend E. Holsoe, and Bernard L. Herman, *A Land and Life Remembered: Americo-Liberian Folk Architecture* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988).

<sup>81</sup> Svend E. Holsoe, "A Transplanted World: Black Americans in West Africa," in Belcher et al., *A Land and Life Remembered*, 18.

<sup>82</sup> Bernard L. Herman, "Settler Houses," in Belcher et al., *A Land and Life Remembered*, 97.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, 126.

Herman's conclusions were important but limited by their narrow scope of a single Liberian town founded half a century after colonization began.

Another key exception to the relative lack of scholarship on the visual culture of Liberian settlement is a recent art history Ph.D. dissertation, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’: The American Colonization Society and the Imaging of African American Settlers in Liberia,” by Dalila Scruggs (Harvard, 2010).<sup>85</sup> Scruggs considers the ways the ACS used visual imagery to present Liberia as an ideal solution to the slavery problem. Focusing on the medium of photography, her primary visual evidence consists of daguerreotypes by Augustus Washington, a Liberian settler whose images were circulated and recontextualized in colonization print culture in the United States. Analyzing Washington's daguerreotypes and their subsequent uses as ACS propaganda, Scruggs argues that colonization supporters imagined Liberia as an American “heterotopia” – a “separate but equal” space where blacks could enjoy the ideals of American society, at the same time freeing the United States to remain an all-white polity.<sup>86</sup> Scruggs' study is limited, however, in its focus on the medium of photography and the photograph's translation within ACS visual culture.

This dissertation engages with and builds on the work of both Scruggs and Herman, particularly in its focus on the transatlantic movement of images and design ideals between the United States and Liberia. Like these scholars, I see in Liberian visual culture a strong desire by both the ACS and Liberian settlers to recreate an American setting in Africa. Yet whereas these studies focus tightly on a specific type of visual or

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<sup>85</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’.”

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 33.

material evidence (daguerreotypes, settler architecture), this dissertation explores a much broader range of objects and images made by a more diverse group of actors, including colonization promoters, Liberian settlers, indigenous Africans, and American observers.

Focusing on the forty years between Liberia's establishment and the beginning of the American Civil War, which ended the American slavery debate, I seek to answer a related but expanded set of questions relevant to the broader field of ACS/Liberia scholarship: how did colonization promoters use images to position Liberian settlement in relation to the abolitionist movement and contemporary anxieties about racial integration in the United States? How was the goal of creating an American "heterotopia" in Liberia articulated in the visual and material worlds of settlement? In what ways did the transatlantic exchange of images and objects participate in a nascent American imperialism, claiming power over African territories while reshaping the popular image of that continent back in the United States? And how did the African Americans who settled in Liberia use visual and material culture to articulate the meaning of citizenship in an African republic on the eve of the American Civil War?

## **Chapter Outline**

Seeking to answer such questions, this dissertation is organized into four thematic chapters. In Chapter Two, "Freedom to Africa: Picturing Liberian Emigration as a 'Reverse' Middle Passage", I examine the intersections between colonization imagery and abolitionist visual culture in the antebellum United States. As a case study in this topic, I explore an illustration of Liberian settlement that decorated an 1853 deluxe edition of Harriett Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Situating that picture within a

larger body of popular woodcuts and lithographs produced by the ACS and its supporters, I demonstrate that by the early 1850s, a distinct colonization iconography had emerged that was in direct conversation with anti-slavery imagery. By appropriating and inverting recognizable abolitionist iconography, I argue, colonization pictures portrayed Liberian emigration as a “reverse” Middle Passage, rectifying the traumas of enslavement and bringing African Americans “home” to Africa. Such images presented Liberian colonization as a powerful alternative to the prospect of racial integration in a post-emancipation United States, influencing anti-slavery visual culture even while the mainstream abolitionist movement professed vehement opposition to the ACS’ emigration project.

Chapter Three, “Civilizing Savage Africa: Mapping Empire in Liberia”, considers how the ACS’ mission to “civilize” Africa was articulated in terms of space, geography, and landscape. Much of my analysis centers on a map of Liberia published in the United States in 1830 by the Philadelphia mapmaker Anthony Finley. The map circulated widely in the nineteenth century and continues to be a frequent illustration in historical scholarship on the colonization movement, but it is rarely analyzed as a critical text in itself. Produced less than a decade after the first African-American emigrants reached Liberia only to be confronted by hostility from local Africans and high rates of tropical disease, the map participated in a strategic effort by the ACS to convince Americans that Liberian colonization was successfully Christianizing and claiming order over an apparently wild and “long-benighted” African landscape. I situate Finley’s map within a broader set of nineteenth-century cartographic representations of the Liberian landscape, considering how these images concealed the violence of settlement and validated the

ACS's claims to sharply contested territories. Ultimately, I argue that colonization promoters used maps to envision the transformation of the African landscape according to the ideals of a nascent nineteenth-century American imperialism.

Whereas Chapters Two and Three consider visual culture made primarily by Americans, Chapter Four, "Travelling Objects: Exhibiting 'African Curiosities' in the Antebellum United States", turns to indigenous African productions and natural history specimens that were exhibited in America. The colonization of Liberia brought an unprecedented influx of West African material – both manmade and natural – into the United States during the first decades of settlement. Displayed on the crowded shelves of popular American museums and in the glass cabinets of scientific collections, these "curiosities" became physical, tangible props in a broader narrative about Liberian colonization, American slavery, and black-white relations in the United States, articulating notions of Africa's difference in ways that ultimately reflected American anxieties about race at midcentury. Exploring the collection, circulation, and public display of these objects, I demonstrate that nineteenth-century Americans were hungry for "African curiosities" and that their perceptions of Africa changed in response to them. Whereas American knowledge of Africa's geography, history, and diversity was limited in the early nineteenth century, the influx of African artifacts into the United States during the first decades of colonization validated emerging racial science and prepared the way for the development of a myth of a savage and exotic African ripe for colonial conquest.

In this dissertation's final chapter, "'A coloured America on the shores of Africa': Imaging Liberian Nationhood in the 1850s," I explore how Liberian settlers and the ACS

used visual culture to make meaning of Liberia's status as a civilized and autonomous independent republic in the 1850s. In particular, I examine a watercolor of the Liberian senate produced in late 1856 or early 1857 by the Liberian settler Robert K. Griffin. Griffin's watercolor was seemingly produced in conjunction with a set of eleven daguerreotype portraits of early Liberian statesmen by the settler-daguerreotypist Augustus Washington. I explore the possibility that Griffin and Washington were involved in a joint project to produce a never-realized popular engraving of the Liberian senate, considering how such a project would have appealed to an American audience hungry for visual images of the young republic in Africa. In the mid-1850s, I demonstrate, the American press witnessed a surge of interest in Liberia's identity as a republic founded and governed by former African Americans. I argue that this spike in national attention to the subject, which occurred between about 1854 and 1858, was linked to new developments in image-making technologies – namely daguerreotypes and woodcut illustrations – which allowed for the circulation of seemingly authentic, “eyewitness” pictures of the African republic through the American press on an unprecedented scale. Colonization promoters and Liberian settlers became joint participants in the creation of such images, which presented Liberia as a “little America” in Africa, a miniature version of the United States inhabited and governed by blacks instead of whites. Yet the contradictions and ironies of recreating an American setting in Africa also become apparent through a deeper consideration of these images alongside a broader analysis of Liberian settler architecture and culture.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation seeks to discover how antebellum Americans – particularly colonization promoters and Liberian settlers – wrestled with colonization’s hopes, disappointments, and paradoxes through their visual and material expressions. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of scholarship working to remedy the peripheral place of Liberian colonization in U.S. history, resituating the ACS and its African-American emigrants at the center of national conversations about race and slavery. By focusing on the images and objects that animated those debates, I seek to fill a noticeable void in the historical literature, at the same time providing new insights into the field of race in antebellum American visual culture. My goal is not to present a comprehensive survey of this material but rather to focus on particular questions and sets of evidence as I engage with it. In doing so, I see this dissertation as a launch pad from which further research on the visual culture of Liberian settlement might be carried out, especially on the perspectives of indigenous Africans, who have received the least amount of attention in this regard.

For those working in disciplines outside of those to whom this project is primarily directed, it is my hope that this dissertation will nevertheless reveal new insights about the interactions between history and visual culture. And in particular, I hope that this dissertation inspires new thinking within the secondary disciplines with which it engages, namely nineteenth-century African-American material culture, West African history just prior to the European Scramble for Africa, and early American anthropology, natural science, and cultures of collecting – fields in which Liberian colonization and the material exchange it engendered have yet to receive adequate study.



**Figure 1.1**

John Sartain, engraver (Philadelphia), after his own painting

*Elliott Cresson*

c. 1838

Mezzotint, etching, and stipple on cream wove paper

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

<https://www.pafa.org/collection/elliott-cresson> (accessed January 4, 2016)





**Figure 1.2**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*Beverly Page Yates*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664360/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

Born free in Virginia around 1811, Beverly Page Yates departed Norfolk for Liberia at the age of 18. Like many other prominent settlers, Yates became prosperous through merchant trading. His firm of Yates and Payne owned four warehouses and a ship by 1844. During the 1850s, he held several prominent public positions, including colonel of the First Regiment of Liberia Volunteers, associate justice of the Supreme Court, and Vice President to Stephen Allen Benson, the office he held when Washington made this daguerreotype. He was around 45 years old at the time. See Shumard, "Beverly Page Yates," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/yates.htm>.



**Figure 1.3**

U. S. Central Intelligence Agency

Detail of African map showing West Africa, including Liberia

2011

University of Texas Libraries, University of Texas at Austin

Full map available online at [<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/txu-pclmaps-oclc-792930639-africa-2011.jpg>], accessed December 23, 2015

## Chapter Two

### Freedom to Africa: Picturing Liberian Emigration as a “Reverse” Middle Passage

At the end of Harriett Beecher Stowe’s wildly popular abolitionist novel of 1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, the valiant mulatto protagonist George Harris decides to emigrate to Liberia. “On the shores of Africa I see a republic,” Harris explains in a long passage exalting the benefits of Liberian colonization, “a republic formed of picked men, who, by energy and self-educating force, have, in many cases, individually, raised themselves above a condition of slavery.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, an 1853 deluxe version of the novel illustrated by artist Hammatt Billings concluded with a scene of African-American exodus to Africa (fig. 2.1).<sup>2</sup> In the image, a multitude of freed American slaves face the ocean, their arms outstretched, while in a ray of light in the sky beyond are the words, “Freedom to Africa”. Coming at the end of Stowe’s 45-chapter tragic exposé of Southern plantation life, Billings’ illustration depicts Africa as the chosen site of redemption for slavery’s countless victims, who hail their native land in a spectacle of mass resurrection.

In thinking about the visual culture of Liberian colonization in the United States, it is useful to begin here, with a consideration of how that subject was visualized in the most powerful abolitionist text of the nineteenth century. Like the American anti-slavery movement that inspired and gained further momentum from Stowe’s seminal novel, the

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<sup>1</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, Illustrated Edition, Original Designs by Billings, Engraved by Baker and Smith (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1853), 541.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, 550.

African colonization movement emerged in the early nineteenth century in response to growing concerns about the “peculiar institution” of American slavery. During the antebellum period, the ACS maintained a complicated and dynamic relationship with the American abolitionist movement, which became increasingly antagonistic toward the Society’s emigration scheme. Despite the ACS’ inability to ever send large numbers of emigrants to Liberia, it retained a powerful voice in antebellum debates about slavery, shaping and responding to national anxieties about the prospect of racial integration in a post-emancipation United States.

The treatment of Liberian emigration in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* reflects this entanglement between the colonization and abolition movements, at the same time revealing how images often stood in tension with text in nineteenth-century representations of the subject. While Billings’ illustration seems to endorse the ACS’ emigration plan in a straightforward manner, Stowe’s text is noticeably ambivalent toward Liberian colonization. On one hand, Harris’ decision to emigrate is a celebrated act, insuring the future happiness of himself and his family. “George, with his wife, children, sister and mother, embarked for Africa... If we are not mistaken, the world will yet hear from him there,” writes Stowe.<sup>3</sup> Yet in the novel’s “Concluding Remarks”, the author speaks of colonization more cautiously, warning readers that, “to fill up Liberia with an ignorant, inexperienced, half-barbarized race, just escaped from the chains of slavery, would be only to prolong, for ages, the period of struggle and conflict which attends the inception of new enterprises.”<sup>4</sup> And yet Billings’ image, which illustrated

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 543.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 557.

these same “Concluding Remarks”, appears to depict just what Stowe admonishes against: the broken shackles lying in the foreground testify that these Liberian emigrants have indeed only “just escaped the chains of slavery.”

The confused treatment of Liberian colonization in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* made Stowe vulnerable to fierce criticism from many abolitionist readers. By 1852, most abolitionists were vehemently opposed to the ACS and its proposed “solution” to the slavery problem, and they in turn disapproved of Stowe’s decision to send George Harris and several of her other black protagonists to Liberia at the novel’s end. In 1853, the author responded to these concerns, assuring members of the American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society that she was “not a Colonizationist.”<sup>5</sup> Yet if Stowe was, like most abolitionists of her time, an opponent of the colonization movement, how are readers to understand her ambivalent treatment of the subject in what became the most powerful anti-slavery text of the nineteenth century? Furthermore, how does one explain the inclusion of Billings’ blatantly pro-colonization picture at the novel’s end?

Exploring these questions, this chapter takes Billings’ “Freedom to Africa” as a case study in the intersections between colonization imagery and abolitionist visual culture in the antebellum United States. Billings’ depiction was one of numerous antebellum images suggesting that Liberian colonization could both fix the traumas of the Middle Passage and offer a solution to the problem of racial integration in a post-emancipation United States. This chapter situates “Freedom to Africa” within a larger body of colonization pictures that circulated through the popular print press during the

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<sup>5</sup> American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, *The Thirteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1853), 193.

middle decades of the nineteenth century, particularly woodcuts and lithographs. I demonstrate that by the early 1850s, a distinct colonization iconography had emerged. Using this iconography, colonization promoters appropriated and inverted recognizable anti-slavery imagery in order to portray Liberian emigration as a “reverse” Middle Passage, redeeming African Americans from the traumas of slavery by sending them “home” to Africa. Ultimately, colonization visual culture presented Liberia as a powerful alternative to the troubling prospect of racial integration in a post-emancipation United States, influencing anti-slavery pictures like “Freedom to Africa” even while the mainstream abolitionist movement professed fervent opposition to the ACS’ emigration project.

### **Illustrating *Uncle Tom’s Cabin***

First published in serial form in the *National Era* in 1851-1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was the best-selling book of the nineteenth century, excepting only the Bible. In depicting the atrocities of Southern slavery through the humanized story of the enslaved protagonist Uncle Tom, the novel did more to advance the cause of abolition than did any other publication of its day. Stowe’s initial purpose in writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was to present her readers with a series of vignettes offering persuasive evidence of slavery’s injustices. In an 1851 letter to Gamaliel Bailey, the *National Era*’s editor, she explained that her vocation was “simply that of a *painter*, and my object.... To hold up in the most lifelike and graphic manner possible Slavery... There is no arguing with *pictures*, and

everyone is impressed with them, whether they mean to be or not.”<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of actual pictures in Stowe’s novel complemented her goal of presenting slavery’s horrors through a series of vivid and discrete scenes. Nevertheless, it was probably Boston publisher John P. Jewett more than Stowe herself that pushed for the inclusion of illustrations in the first edition.<sup>7</sup> Billings, the premier Boston illustrator of the time, was commissioned to make “six elegant designs” plus a vignette for the title page.<sup>8</sup> Published in March of 1852 in two volumes, the first edition was a huge success. Jewett soon began plans for a deluxe one-volume edition that would include over a hundred new illustrations, all designed by Billings and engraved by Baker, Smith, and Andrew of Boston.<sup>9</sup> It was to be dated 1853 but would be available by the Christmas season of 1852.<sup>10</sup> It was in this deluxe edition that Billings’ “Freedom to Africa” appeared.

Billings was a natural choice for the job of illustrating *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Born Charles Howland Hammatt Billings on June 15, 1858 in either Boston or Milton, Massachusetts to a middling family of old New England ancestry, the artist spent much of his youth in the Milton area before making Boston home for his entire adult life.<sup>11</sup> His career was impressive not as much for the quality of any one work as for the sheer

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in James F. O’Gorman, *Accomplished in All Departments of Art: Hammatt Billings of Boston, 1818-1874* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 47, 52.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 1-2,15.

breadth of modalities he worked in, from architecture to woodcut illustrations.<sup>12</sup> His drawing skills were refined early in his career while apprenticing for architects Asher Benjamin and Ammi Young.<sup>13</sup> With the explosion of book illustration in the 1840s and 1850s, Billings became Boston's premier book and periodical illustrator, providing pictures for over 250 titles.<sup>14</sup> Before creating images for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the artist had been chief illustrator for *Gleason's Pictorial* (later called *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*), a monthly illustrated periodical that, by the middle of the 1850s, had a circulation of a hundred thousand.<sup>15</sup>

Billings may have been an attractive choice to Jewett not only because of his popularity and experience but also due to his previous anti-slavery illustrating activities. In 1850, he had reworked the masthead design for William Lloyd Garrison's prominent abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, supposedly free of charge (fig. 2.2).<sup>16</sup> In doing so, he had kept certain elements of David Claypoole Johnston's earlier design (fig. 2.3) while changing others. As in Johnston's version, the left side of Billings' masthead depicts a slave auction, while the right side imagines the possibility of emancipation. Yet as Billings' biographer James O'Gorman notes, the new version "gave the design more legibility by creating scenes of greater cohesion and giving the entire composition more

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, ix.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 12, 21-24.

<sup>15</sup> Jo-Ann Morgan, *Uncle Tom's Cabin as Visual Culture* (Columbia, MS: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 24.

<sup>16</sup> O'Gorman, *Accomplished in All Departments of Art*, 47-48.

focus.”<sup>17</sup> The main addition to the reworked version was a central circle depicting a triumphant Jesus with a kneeling slave at left and an ashamed slaveholder at right.<sup>18</sup> Encircling him are the words, “I come to break the binds of the oppressor.” Shortly after his work on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, he was also to illustrate John Greenleaf Whittier’s *Sabbath Scene*, a fervent response to the Fugitive Slave Act.<sup>19</sup>

For the deluxe illustrated 1853 edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Billings and engravers Baker, Smith, and Andrew had to work quickly, producing their designs through the summer and fall of 1852 in order for the book to be ready by Christmas.<sup>20</sup> “Faced with the production of so many sketches, and pressed for space in a single volume,” explains O’Gorman, the illustrator “composed his vignettes as groups of figures with little suggestion of ambience, and the printer locked the engraved blocks into the text.”<sup>21</sup> Each chapter included a half-page headpiece, a small tailpiece, and sometimes one or multiple scenes in between.<sup>22</sup> “Freedom to Africa” was the headpiece for the deluxe edition’s final chapter, Stowe’s “Concluding Remarks”.

In the foreground of the scene (fig. 2.1), a group of five African Americans raise their arms toward the sky, leading the viewer’s eye toward the words “Freedom to Africa”. The palm trees just behind them signal that they have made it to Africa, while

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>18</sup> Morgan, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin as Visual Culture*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> O’Gorman, *Accomplished in All Departments of Art*, 47-48.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



the broken shackles in the center foreground indicate that they are now free from the chains of slavery. In the distance beyond countless emancipated slaves, many kneeling, raise their arms in the same gesture. Certain details of the scene are reminiscent of the artist's masthead design for the *Liberator* (fig. 2.4). Most notably, the crowd of figures raising their arms heavenward before a rising sun mimics the emancipated multitude in the *Liberator* image and suggests the Christian theme of resurrection.

As in Billings' *Liberator* masthead, "Freedom to Africa" appropriated stock icons of abolitionist visual culture. Most notably, the positions of the kneeling African Americans in the latter illustration echo the central supplicant slave of the *Liberator* masthead. In "Freedom to Africa", however, the figures have not only lost their shackles but are fully clothed, another sign that they are no longer in bondage. They are reminiscent of the subjects of another illustration from the book, "The fugitives are safe in a free land" (fig. 2.5), which depicts the safe arrival of George and his family in Canada, where they initially resettle before emigrating to Liberia.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the traditional icon of the supplicant kneeling slave implied a plea for help, in both "Freedom to Africa" and "The fugitives are safe in a free land" the figures kneel in a sign of gratitude after being granted their freedom.

"Freedom to Africa" exemplifies the way Billings' illustrations drew not only from anti-slavery imagery but also from Christian iconography.<sup>24</sup> As a physical object, the deluxe edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* even resembled a Bible, as Jo-Ann Morgan has pointed out. Costing ten times the price of the first edition, it was ornate, sporting a dark

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<sup>23</sup> Harriett Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, First Edition (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), 238.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan, *Uncle Tom's Cabin as Visual Culture*, 24-25, 74-75.

red cover with a gold-embossed print of Christ.<sup>25</sup> The scholar Colleen McDannell has demonstrated the importance of the Bible in mid nineteenth-century American homes. “Bound in leather and fastened with a gold clasp, family Bibles were displayed on parlor tables as signs of domestic piety and taste,” she explains.<sup>26</sup> By the 1850s, nearly half of these included illustrations.<sup>27</sup> With gilt-edge pages, small imprints of angels, doves, and other religious figures, and a decorated initial that began each chapter, the deluxe illustrated edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* embodied an image of Christian piety that Billings’ illustrations served to reinforce.<sup>28</sup>

As the headpiece illustration for Stowe’s “Concluding Remarks”, Billings’ “Freedom to Africa” is best understood less as a single cohesive scene and more as a symbolic or allegorical vignette combining Christian and antislavery iconography. In this context, the anonymous figures do not represent specific characters in Stowe’s story. Rather, they are generic freed slaves who, when seen as a mass alongside this tropical African landscape, represent “Africa” as an idea more than a specific place or actual group of people. The words “Freedom to Africa” suggest that Africa – embodying both a place and all the people spread through its diaspora who have become victims of the slave trade – has experienced a mass redemption that is both religious and civic through their removal to Liberia. The overriding sentiment in “Freedom to Africa” of a vague but all-encompassing African redemption was pervasive in mid-nineteenth century literature

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 74-75.

<sup>26</sup> Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 68, in Morgan, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin as Visual Culture*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin as Visual Culture*, 75.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

promoting Liberian colonization, as were graphic images that depicted that project as a solution or “fix” to the traumas of slavery. The remainder of this chapter will explore how “Freedom to Africa” and the treatment of colonization in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* reveal the tensions and intersections between abolitionist and colonization sentiment in the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Colonization and Abolition**

The relationship between the ACS and the American anti-slavery movement was complex and deeply entangled. The ACS was ostensibly founded as an antislavery organization, although in reality the motives of its members were mixed from the beginning. From its founding in 1816 through the 1820s, the organization enjoyed a fair amount of support from antislavery advocates, many of whom saw the Liberian colonization project as a radical abolitionist experiment. By the 1830s, however, most abolitionists had changed their opinions of the ACS and its proposed “solution”. This change was led by an increasingly critical voice against colonization among black Northerners. Prominent African Americans like Richard Allen, Frederick Douglass, and Martin R. Delany pointed out in public critique that many of the organization’s founders were slaveholders and that its publications were inflected with bigoted and patronizing attitudes.<sup>29</sup> African-American publisher Samuel Cornish wrote in September of 1829 in the *Rights of All* that, “we view the efforts of the colonization society... as unwished for on our part, uncalled for by circumstances, as injurious to our interests, and as

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<sup>29</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 4.

unrighteous and meddlesome on the part of the society.”<sup>30</sup> With few exceptions, the burgeoning abolitionist press sided with Cornish and denounced the efforts of colonizationists to expatriate black Americans to Liberia.<sup>31</sup>

David Walker’s 1829 antislavery pamphlet *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* included one of the most fervent attacks on the colonization movement to that date. “What our brethren could have been thinking about, who have left their native land and home and gone to Africa, I am unable to say,” wrote Walker.<sup>32</sup> “Those who are ignorant enough to go to Africa, the coloured people ought to be glad to have them go,” he wrote, “for if they are ignorant enough to let the whites *fool* them off to Africa, they would be no small injury to us if they reside in this country.”<sup>33</sup> Unlike colonization rhetoric, Walker’s sentiments firmly identified the “native land” and “home” of African Americans as the United States, not Africa. He declared that, “America is more our country than it is the whites—we have enriched it with our blood and tears... and will they drive us from our property and homes which we have earned with our blood?”<sup>34</sup>

Walker’s sentiments and the strength of his conviction were echoed two decades later by Frederick Douglass, who proclaimed in *The North Star* that,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>33</sup> David Walker, *David Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to those of the United States of America* (1829; reprint, New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 64, in Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Elizabeth Ammons, “Freeing the Slaves and Banishing the Blacks: Racism, Empire, and Africa in Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” in *Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin: A Casebook*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 233.

For two hundred and twenty-eight years has the colored man toiled over the soil of America, under a burning sun and a driver's lash—plowing, planting, reaping, that white men might roll in ease, their hands unhardened by labor, and their brows unmoistened by the waters of genial toil, and now that the moral sense of mankind is beginning to revolt at this system of foul treachery and cruel wrong, and is demanding its overthrow, the mean and cowardly oppressor is mediating plans to expel the colored man entirely from the country. Shame upon the guilty wretches that dare propose, and all that countenance such as a proposition. We live here—have lived here—have a right to live here, and mean to live here.<sup>35</sup>

The impassioned rhetoric of anti-colonization black Northerners like Walker and eventually Douglass had the effect of causing many white abolitionists, previously supportive of the ACS's goals, to rethink their position.<sup>36</sup>

The most notable example of this change in opinion came with *The Liberator* editor William Lloyd Garrison. Although Garrison had initially supported the colonization movement, he spoke out against it harshly in his newspaper and in a set of essays published in 1832 as *Thoughts on African Colonization*.<sup>37</sup> Garrison criticized the ACS' assertion that blacks would never be able to attain sufficient freedom and livelihood in the United States and the supposition that emigration to Liberia therefore represented their best hope. In historian Eric Burin's words, "Garrison demanded that white Americans conquer the mountains of racial intolerance that ACS advocates had judged unassailable."<sup>38</sup> Garrison's language was strong: "I am constrained to declare,

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<sup>35</sup> Frederick Douglass, *The North Star*, January 26, 1849; quoted in Ammons, "Freeing the Slaves and Banishing the Blacks," 227.

<sup>36</sup> Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> For an extract, see William Lloyd Garrison, "Exposure of the American Colonization Society," in *Selections from the Writings of W. L. Garrison* (Boston: 1852), accessed December 15, 2015, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abeswlgbt.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 21.

with the utmost sincerity, that I look upon the Colonization scheme as inadequate in its design, injurious in its operation, and contrary to sound principle; and the more scrupulously I examine its pretensions, the stronger is my conviction of its sinfulness.”<sup>39</sup> The 400-page diatribe against the ACS and its emigration scheme was to have a serious and permanent effect on the minds of many abolitionists who had previously supported the project.<sup>40</sup>

Abolitionist support for colonization plummeted following Garrison’s *Thoughts on African Colonization*, as did the number of emigrants sailing for Liberia. According to the historian Claude A. Clegg, “the ACS, its motives, and objectives were more frequently and roundly denounced in the black press than any other institution or program” except slavery itself.<sup>41</sup> In the 1830s, particularly, the American anti-slavery movement directed its greatest hostility not toward slave owners but toward colonizationists, as Bronwin Everill has noted.<sup>42</sup>

An 1839 satirical woodcut illustration published in the *Anti-Slavery Almanac* reflects many abolitionists’ negative opinions about the colonization movement during this period.<sup>43</sup> Entitled “‘Nuisances’ Going as ‘Missionaries,’ ‘With Their Own Consent’” (fig. 2.6), the scene depicts three white overseers, whips in hand, forcibly corralling African Americans into a line behind a ship. One victim attempts to escape as an overseer

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<sup>39</sup> Garrison, “Exposure of the American Colonization Society,” 14.

<sup>40</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 158.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1839* 1, no. 4 (New York: Published for the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839): 29. The same illustration appeared in Henry Bibb’s 1849 *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (see note 59), although the Liberian context was removed in that version.

reaches out to stop him. In the distance is the vessel that will transport them to Africa, and above the group is a sign with the words, “For Liberia”. In the caption below, one individual is quoted as saying, “They sent out two shiploads of vagabonds that were COERCED away as truly as if it had been done with the cartwhip.” Another man, this time a Liberian settler, reports being “acquainted with several, who informed me that they received SEVERAL HUNDRED LASHES to make them WILLING to go.” Reflecting the opinion of many abolitionists, the picture insinuated that emigration to Liberia constituted only another form of slavery.

Despite abolitionist hostilities toward colonization, however, the ACS experienced a resurgence of support in the late 1840s and 1850s. Multiple factors contributed to this rise in national colonization interest, including Liberia’s transition to independent nationhood in 1847, which granted the ACS greater financial stability and inspired public curiosity about Africa’s first independent republic.<sup>44</sup> Many black Americans who had previously been critical of the ACS also chose to emigrate during this period, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.<sup>45</sup> Legally requiring northern authorities to return fugitive slaves to their Southern owners, this law as well as the later Dred Scott decision (1857) denying African Americans U.S. citizenship left many who had once hoped for an immediate emancipation solution to feel that Liberia was their last hope, even while detesting what they considered to be the ACS’ real motives.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 173.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 173-74.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

In reality, the intentions of colonization promoters and leaders varied widely. While many of the ACS' founders indeed had ties to Southern slavery and interests in removing the "threat" of free blacks from the United States, the Society became increasingly dependent on the activities and fund-raising efforts of its state and local auxiliaries, whose goals and motivations were hardly consistent and often depended on regional affiliation. The PCS, for instance, was led mainly by abolitionist humanitarian Philadelphians who saw emigration to Liberia as a practical and effective means of promoting slave manumissions.<sup>47</sup> Despite the activities of the PCS and some other anti-slavery proponents of colonization, however, most northern white abolitionists continued to maintain a view that the ACS' efforts were in conflict with their own goals of ending slavery and promoting freedom for African Americans. Many suspected the Society's motives lied in a desire to rid the United States of free blacks while maintaining a Southern slave society. From the perspective of these abolitionists, the colonization movement would work only to ensure the continuation of slavery in the South while placing African Americans in a worse form of bondage.

### **The Visual Culture of Abolition**

The ACS' tense and dynamic relationship with the American anti-slavery movement was negotiated not only in writing but also through visual culture. In crafting

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<sup>47</sup> Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 83. As Burin here notes, the PCS sought to emancipate slaves in four main ways: first, using the financial support of its Pennsylvania members, the PCS sent funds to the treasury of its parent society, the ACS; second, at times the PCS took on the responsibility of carrying out ACS expeditions, transporting shiploads of freed southerners to Liberia; third, the PCS helped to fund the passage of manumitted slaves whose former owners had not provided money for their transport to Africa; and fourth, from time to time the PCS actually purchased slaves, whom they then sent to Liberia.



images of the journey to Liberia, colonization promoters borrowed and reinterpreted standard abolitionist artistic conventions and depended on viewers' familiarity with popular anti-slavery imagery to promote emigration as the ideal solution to the slavery problem. Despite the vague and often mixed motives behind the colonization movement, ACS promotional imagery presented emigration as essentially anti-slavery in purpose, evoking sympathy for the slave and celebrating Liberia as the ideal alternative to black bondage.

In promoting African-American emigration to Liberia through visual propaganda, the ACS and its supporters depended on the ability of their viewers to make quick associations between colonization iconography and popular abolitionist imagery, whose long history extended back to the late eighteenth century. One of the first large-scale efforts to end the international slave trade arose in London in 1787 under the organization of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (hereafter, SEAST).<sup>48</sup> Along with pamphlets, books, and various other materials, SEAST employed powerful and strategic imagery to advance its cause. Among its first artistic commissions was a medallion designed by ceramics entrepreneur Josiah Wedgwood (fig. 2.7).<sup>49</sup> Wedgwood's image shows a kneeling slave, bound in chains and wearing only a loincloth, grasping his hands together in a desperate plea for relief. Encircling him above are the words "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" As the art historian Maurie D. McInnis has argued, "the genius of the image was its visual economy. One figure and a few words

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<sup>48</sup> McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 28.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 29. For a more in-depth analysis of Wedgwood's medallion, see Saadia Nicoe Teresa Lawton, "Contested Meanings: Audience Responses to the Wedgwood Slave Medallion, 1787-1839" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009).

summed up thousands of abolitionist pamphlets, petitions, and broadsides.”<sup>50</sup> The image quickly became iconic, appearing not only in antislavery publications but also on countless objects, from dishes to collection boxes.<sup>51</sup> The kneeling slave icon was powerful not only because of its simplicity and recognizability. It also stirred up empathy for blacks while still maintaining a message of white superiority. The slave, whose blackness is highlighted against the white ceramic background, is shown as a helpless victim completely dependent upon the benevolence of whites.<sup>52</sup> This message of black inferiority would remain prominent in abolitionist imagery throughout the following decades.

Seeking primarily to bring an end to the slave trade rather than to slavery itself, SEAST produced materials and images that focused on the terrors of the slave journey.<sup>53</sup> In doing so, it commissioned what was to be, along with *Am I Not a Man and a Brother?*, the most widely reproduced abolitionist image: *Description of a Slave Ship* (fig. 2.8). First released in 1789 as an illustrated broadside, the *Description* presented a detailed cross-section, as well as frontal and side views, of the way human cargo could be legally packed into the *Brookes*, an actual slaving vessel docked in Liverpool.<sup>54</sup> According to Marcus Wood, the success of the picture, which was rapidly circulated in Britain and the United States, was largely attributable to its use of the conventions of naval

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<sup>50</sup> McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 29.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 27-28.

architecture.<sup>55</sup> The use of naval draftsmanship lent the image a sense of scientific authenticity while also questioning the relationship of British maritime power to the abhorrent trade in human flesh, creating for its viewers what Wood refers to as “a superb semiotic shock tactic.”<sup>56</sup> Like the kneeling slave icon, the *Description* also upheld ideas of white superiority by emphasizing the victimhood and complete helplessness of its African passengers.<sup>57</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, the anti-slavery visual agenda continued to employ images inspired by *Am I Not a Man and a Brother?* and *Description of a Slave Ship*, but it also expanded to include subjects more pertinent to its present needs. Britain had abolished the international slave trade in 1807 and slavery in its colonies in 1833, so by midcentury the anti-slavery campaign was firmly focused on ending the internal American slave trade and slavery as an institution in the United States. While British activists and observers continued to play an important role in the anti-slavery cause, the center of the movement shifted across the Atlantic. Against this background, one of the most popular subjects for abolitionist imagery in the antebellum United States was the slave auction. Abolitionist Northerners created auction scenes that emphasized the heartbreaking separation of African-American families at the hands of Southern slaveholders.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Wood, *Blind Memory*, 26.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 26, 27.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>58</sup> McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 48.

A good example illustrated Henry Bibb's 1849 *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (fig. 2.9).<sup>59</sup> On the floor at the center of the composition, an enslaved woman desperately pleads for her baby, who is being flung before a crowd by a heartless auctioneer. At left, another woman embraces her child, perhaps for the last time. Not far behind her, a white planter raises a whip high above his head, foretelling the violent life for which these victims are destined. In the right corner of the scene a shirtless enslaved man, bound in chains, pleads for mercy. He perfectly mimics the appearance of the slave in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother?* Behind him stands a despondent slave who is also chained. He is temporarily dressed up for sale, as many slaves were forced to do in preparation for auction.<sup>60</sup> Other slaves cry out in agony, but their pleas are ignored by the white planters who have come to make their purchases. Emphasizing the tragic separation that slavery wrought upon families, auction scenes like this one were among the most powerful tools in advancing the cause of abolitionism at mid-century.

The visual culture of abolitionism was successful in furthering its aims by conveying and sensationalizing the cruelties of the slave trade, but it failed to create a vision of post-emancipation American life, where the specter of racial integration loomed large. Although white American abolitionists advocated the emancipation of slaves in the United States, many were not comfortable with the idea of blacks and whites living side by side. For this reason, the visual program undertaken by the ACS and its supporters

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<sup>59</sup> Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: Published by the author, 1849), 201. For more discussion of Bibb's narrative and its illustrations, see McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 48-49.

<sup>60</sup> For more on this topic, see McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 115-144.

was powerful and persuasive. It borrowed from the emotionally charged iconography of abolitionists, but it inverted that iconography to suggest Liberia as a “solution” to the atrocities of slavery and to the question of racial integration in America.

### **“View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Montserado”**

Early on in the colonization movement, the ACS advanced a visual program that borrowed little from abolitionist imagery. The organization’s first published depiction of Liberia was an engraving plate that appeared in the June, 1825 issue of *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*.<sup>61</sup> Published and distributed to ACS members from 1825 to 1919, the *Repository* was the ACS’ official periodical and propaganda mouthpiece and occasionally included illustrations.<sup>62</sup> Although the engraving’s maker is unknown, *Repository* editor Ralph Randolph Gurley certainly approved if not shaped its design. Entitled “View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Montserado” (fig. 2.10), the scene depicts the young colony from the perspective of someone aboard a ship at the mouth of the Mesurado River. Recalling the conventions of cartography and naval drawing, the engraving suggested a scientific and unbiased rendering of the colonial landscape. This emphasis on presenting truthful, “eyewitness” representations of Liberia would remain an important theme in colonization visual culture during the following decades.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> “Plate,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 4 (Jun., 1825): 129.

<sup>62</sup> After Liberia became an independent republic, the title of the journal was shortened to *The African Repository*.

<sup>63</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 96-99.

On the hill at the left side of the picture is Monrovia, its buildings reminiscent of the common architecture of the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. Among these structures is the circular tower of Stockton Castle, a colonial fort marked by an American flag. Moving right, the cape's ridge rises and is covered with thick vegetation. At its highest point sits another group of Western-style structures marked by an American flag. Known as Thompson's Town, this was a settlement designated for enslaved Africans recaptured by American anti-slaving vessels patrolling the coast. The cape's downward slope leads the eye to yet another set of American flags, which fly from a large sailing vessel in the right foreground of the scene. A series of long, narrow canoes paddled by indigenous Africans moves the eye horizontally past a sandbar, which settlers referred to as the "bar", that extends into the water from the cape and finally to a single palm tree that anchors the left border of the picture.<sup>64</sup>

As the first published image of Liberia to reach an American audience, "View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Montserado" reflects the ACS' attempts to dampen fears about the two greatest challenges to early settlement: hostility from indigenous Africans and tropical disease. The first of these problems – African hostility toward the American colonizers – originated in response to the violent methods used by the ACS to claim Cape Mesurado for its African-American settlement, and it was no doubt further fed by the different cultural understandings of land ownership held by Americans and West Africans. After three years of frequent violence between the colonists and the Dei people

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<sup>64</sup> "Plate," 128.

living in the region around the Cape, a treaty of friendship was signed in May of 1825.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, tension and resentment would remain for many years.<sup>66</sup>

Appearing in the *Repository* just a month after the treaty of friendship was signed, “View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Montserado” nicely reflects the optimistic vision of Liberia that the ACS sought to articulate for its American viewership amidst a background of tense native-settler relations in the colony. The scene presents a shoreline

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<sup>65</sup> See Holsoe, “A Study of Relations,” 334-40; M. B. Akpan, “Gola Resistance to Liberian ‘Rule’ in the Nineteenth Century 1835-1905,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 11:1/2 (Dec. 1981-Jun. 1982): 3. As these sources note, the Dei region between the Saint Paul and Mesurado Rivers had once been quite populated and prosperous, but much of the property had been destroyed due to slave trading, and only a few villages remained by the time settlers arrived in 1822. A small village existed to the south at Cape Mesurado’s foot occupied by a chief named Bah Gwogro, or “King George”. He controlled the territory of the cape itself and the nearby islands in the bay. As was the case with other groups in the region, the Dei did not have a strong central government in charge of extensive territories. Their spokesman had died not long before, and a new representative had only recently been named. Just like the Gola chief Zolu Duma, this new Dei leader became known as “King Peter” among the Americans and Europeans. He lived in and controlled the town of Gawulun on what became Bushrod Island, and he also had control over the area to the east that became New Georgia. It was this “King Peter” that ACS agents had negotiated with in their efforts to secure land in 1821. The first months and years of settlement were extremely tense between the settlers and the Dei. When ACS agents and colonists arrived at the cape in March of 1822 to officially take control of the land, some of the Africans, including King Peter, refused to accept the group’s territorial claims and tried to return some of the payment they had received in the treaty. Their efforts were unsuccessful, and settlers began constructing houses. A small Dei village nearby ruled by a man named Bah Growgro was soon provoked when a British ship carrying thirty African recaptives pulled ashore. Bah Growgro’s people tried to try to take over the ship, and in the ensuing violence, the American colonists came to the aid of the British. Bah Gwogro’s people retaliated, destroying the colonists’ houses and blockading nearby Dazoe Island, to which settlers had fled. Two Americans who tried to leave the island to obtain water were killed. Eventually the situation calmed, and settlers were able to resume construction of their homes. By late April, the settlers were again formally in possession of Cape Mesurado, but the Dei were still hostile to their presence there. Tensions continued to increase throughout the year until several indigenous groups in the region launched an attack on November 11. It was quickly put down, with settlers mounting cannon fire on the Dei. On December 1, the Dei initiated another attack, but once again, they were quickly defeated by the settlers. A peace agreement was soon reached, but the Dei continued to resent the colonists’ presence at Cape Mesurado. During the following few years, settler-indigenous relations remained volatile. The situation became especially tense in the spring of 1824 when Dei chiefs attempted to enact an embargo on all goods being traded from the interior into the colony, stopping all trade into the region until September. Rumors of impending attacks circulated in the colony, causing fear among settlers. Meanwhile, the Dei, still resentful of the newcomers, dealt with the stress of warfare among themselves caused by competition over trade routes and goods, no doubt made worse by interference from the Americans.

<sup>66</sup> Holsoe, “A Study of Relations,” 342-44, 356. As this source notes, much of the early conflict between settlers and natives was the result of the Americans’ attitudes toward the slave trade, which continued to be practiced not far from their settlements.

free from the nearly constant threat of Dei attacks that in actuality hampered the first few years of settlement. Monrovia is shown carefully protected from the surrounding tropical vegetation, while the indigenous fisherman appear to be harmless and harmonious elements of the landscape. The fisherman depicted were likely the Kru, another local ethnic group routinely referenced in written descriptions of the Monrovia shoreline.<sup>67</sup> An article in the *Repository* printed two months before the engraving was published portrayed the Kru as peaceable, industrious, and morally sound. “Every thing I have observed in the Kroomen tends to convince me that they are very sensible to honour and dishonour,” wrote the author.<sup>68</sup> Although they were “apt to be very indolent” when paid according to the time worked, the writer went on, “they exert themselves exceedingly when the reward is proportioned to the labour.”<sup>69</sup> The article also depicted the Kru as naturally submissive to authority: “The submission of Kroomen to their superiors is carried so far, that when one of these commits a theft, for instance, the rest will run every hazard arising from judicial perjury, and resist every temptation of reward, rather than reveal it; and if there be no other mode of saving their superior from disgrace and punishment, they will take the crime on themselves, and suffer its penalty.”<sup>70</sup> The *Repository*’s reassuring written depiction of the Kru as honorable and submissive is given

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<sup>67</sup> For more on the Kru, see Jane Martin, “Krumen ‘Down the Coast’: Liberian Migrants on the West African Coast in the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 18, no. 3 (1985): 402. As Martin notes, the people who Americans and other Westerners came to refer to as “Kroomen” or “Krooboyes” were migrant laborers who had actually come from numerous locations on the West African coast. In Liberia, they were mostly associated with maritime labor.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Ludlam, Esq., “An Account of the Kroomen, on the Coast of Africa,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 2 (Apr., 1825): 50.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*



visual form in the engraving. They are shown rowing and fishing in the lower left of the scene, and one can be seen scaling a wine palm.

Though numerous, the Kru depicted are clearly overshadowed by the large American vessel in the right foreground of the scene, which flies one of the three prominent U.S. flags that hover over this coastal landscape. During the first years of settlement, colonization leaders were desperate for the U.S. government to demonstrate its authority over the region in order to intimidate the Dei and other would-be attackers. Dr. Eli Ayres, the ACS agent who had assisted Lieutenant Stockton in forcing King Peter to cede land to the Society, repeatedly pushed for a greater U.S. naval presence around Cape Mesurado in order to intimidate the Dei.<sup>71</sup> The U.S. government, however, refused to clarify its authority over Liberia, so settlers and ACS agents on the ground depended on U.S. naval officers present in the region to interfere in settler-indigenous relations, whatever their official orders from Washington.<sup>72</sup> The *Repository* engraving suggested that Americans held clear authority in this landscape, assuring readers that no Africans would threaten Liberia's promising future.

The second major challenge to the ACS' early settlement efforts in Liberia was tropical disease, particularly malaria and yellow fever. From the first years of colonization, the ACS sought to downplay or otherwise excuse the risk of tropical disease for settlers. Of the first 88 emigrants who sailed to West Africa under the auspices of the ACS in early 1820, at least 20 were dead by the end of the year, along with one ACS

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<sup>71</sup> Eugene S. Van Sickle, "Reluctant Imperialists: The U.S. Navy and Liberia, 1819-1845," *Journal of the Early Republic* 31, no. 1 (Spring, 2011): 112.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 111, 130.

official and two U.S. government representatives.<sup>73</sup> During an 1820 meeting, ACS managers dismissed these initial losses as the necessary cost of a noble endeavor, stating that, “at present we would request our friends not to be discouraged. The Board laments the unfortunate issue of this first effort, but they had no right to calculate upon the absence of those disasters, difficulties, and disappointments, which attend all human affairs, and which are ordered, or permitted, to attend them, for purposes of wisdom and goodness of which, though we may not see, we cannot doubt.”<sup>74</sup>

However, the ACS continued to receive reports of this “unfortunate issue” of disease and eventually launched a medical investigation into its prevalence.<sup>75</sup> The investigation was performed by a Dr. Henderson, who reported his findings to the Board of Managers in May, 1832.<sup>76</sup> Dr. Henderson concluded that the highest death rate among emigrants occurred soon after arrival in Liberia because they had to go through a period of acclimatization, or “seasoning”.<sup>77</sup> He also concluded that emigrants from non-malarial regions of the United States were at the highest risk of dying during this period, a finding that in fact holds up in the statistical analysis on Liberian mortality performed by historian Tom Shick.<sup>78</sup> “Locating emigrants on the coast immediately, and landing in the

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<sup>73</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 37.

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the Board of Managers of the American Colonization Society, 16 Oct. 1820, proceedings 1827-28, American Colonization Society Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., in Shick, “A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization,” 55.

<sup>75</sup> Shick, “A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization,” 55.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 57.

wet season, were considered the next two most unfavourable conditions for survival,” Shick explains.<sup>79</sup> Dr. Henderson recommended that emigrants from Georgia and South Carolina might go safely any time of year, but for the best chance of survival, the majority of emigrants “should leave America in November, say the 21<sup>st</sup>, so as to arrive about the first of January.”<sup>80</sup>

Despite these measures, the African “fever” continued to kill settlers at an astounding rate, but the ACS refused to acknowledge that the disease environment was a major problem for emigrants. The organization noted that the death toll among Jamestown and Plymouth colonists had been greater, and it frequently blamed settlers themselves for the problem.<sup>81</sup> As P. J. Staudenraus explains, ACS agent Gurley repeatedly “attributed death to foolish mistakes, such as leaving bed too soon after the initial attack, taking too much sun, or eating too much raw fruit. He insisted that the climate at Liberia was basically healthful.”<sup>82</sup> Rather than admitting the serious risk of disease in West Africa, colonization promoters presented Liberia’s tropical environment as an advantage to settlers, frequently describing it as a “Land of Perpetual Spring” or a “Garden of Eden”.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>80</sup> Minutes of the Board of Managers, 14 May 1832, in Shick, “A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization,” 56.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Grant “Sylvester” Walker, *A Conspiracy to Colonize 19<sup>th</sup> Century United States Free Blacks in Africa by the American Colonization Society* (Trafford Publishing, 2014), 70.

<sup>82</sup> Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement*, 102-103, in Shick, “A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization,” 57-58.

<sup>83</sup> For an example, see G. F. Disosway, Esq., “The Republic of Liberia,” *New-York Colonization Journal* 5, no. 1 (Jan., 1855): 2. This source claimed that in Liberia “may be found growing, in this land of perpetual spring, the orange, lemon, and mango, the luxuriant guava, the broad-leaved plantain, the fragrant white-blossomed coffee, and other tropical productions.”

With “View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Montserado”, the ACS attempted to communicate visually to its American audience that Liberia’s environment was only mildly tropical and did not present a major threat to the health of colonists. While dense forest covers the northern end of Cape Mesurado, home to Liberia’s recaptive community, the land to the south is virtually cleared of trees, suggesting that the American settlement is removed from the threat of tropical disease. Only one palm tree – the most recognizable symbol of tropicality – is included in the scene, framing the picture’s left border. The inclusion of one or sometimes two palm trees at the edge of the scene would become a ubiquitous feature of colonization pictures over the following decades, acting as a token signifier of Liberia’s African setting while suggesting that the colony’s exuberant tropicality was extremely controlled.

### **Development of Colonization Iconography**

“View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Montserado” became the basic prototype for subsequent depictions of Monrovia produced by the ACS and its auxiliaries. For example, a woodcut illustration printed on the cover of the *Third Annual Report of the Managers of the Colonization Society of the State of Connecticut* in 1830 was obviously based on the engraving (fig. 2.11).<sup>84</sup> Although the image’s width has been reduced, the same basic elements of the scene remain: a profile view of Cape Mesurado, including the village of Monrovia, Stockton Castle, and two American flags; a prominent ship in the right foreground; and a palm tree anchoring the left border of the picture. A

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<sup>84</sup> *Third Annual Report of the Managers of the Colonization Society of the State of Connecticut* (New Haven: Baldwin and Treadway, 1830), cover.

similar scene illustrated a lifetime membership certificate produced for use by local and state colonization societies (fig. 2.12). Made by the Baltimore lithography firm of E.

Weber & Co. probably in the 1840s, the scene presents the Monrovia shoreline from the same offshore perspective as the earlier *Repository* view, but the settler landscape has been further built up, with houses and churches covering much of the hillside except toward the tip of the Cape, which remains heavily forested.<sup>85</sup> More ships fill the foreground waterway, while the indigenous canoes have disappeared from the scene.

Clearly based on the earlier *Repository* view, Weber's illustration was the obvious source for another picture of Monrovia published around 1853 by the Philadelphia lithographic firm of Wagner & McGuigan. Entitled *Monrovia From Bushrod's Island* (fig. 2.13), the image was one of five lithograph views of Liberia made to accompany an official U.S. government report of a naval expedition to the West African coast.<sup>86</sup> As in

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<sup>85</sup> Erika Piola, "The Rise of Early American Lithography and Antebellum Visual Culture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 48, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn, 2014): 131. My attribution of the certificate's date as c. 1840s is based on the years that Weber & Co. was active, as documented in this source by Piola.

<sup>86</sup> See Senate Executive Documents and Reports (microform), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Part 3, Vol. 1, Doc. 1 (Washington: Congressional Information Service, 1987), 329-89; Donald L. Canney, *Africa Squadron: The U.S. Navy and the Slave Trade, 1842-1861* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 159-60. For a short biography of the expedition's commander, William Francis Lynch, see "William Francis Lynch (1801-1865)", accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/chron/civilwarnotes/lynch.html>. For a chronology of Lynch's naval career, including his activities with the Africa Squadron, see Naval History and Heritage Command, "William Francis Lynch," accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/research-guides/z-files/zb-files/zc-files-l/lynch-william-f.html>. As these sources describe, in October of 1852 Secretary of the Navy J. C. Dobbin ordered Commander Lynch to lead an expedition to the West African coast for the purposes of exploring commercial potential in the region. Among his tasks was the charge of finding the most suitable locations along the coast that a future exploring party could use to access the continent's interior. The expedition was carried out over the following six months, with Lynch returning to the U.S. in May of 1853. On October 17 of that year, Lynch submitted his official report of the voyage to Dobbin, along with a set of maps and sketches made during the expedition. The report documents Lynch's voyage aboard the steamer *Allegheny*, as it pulled ashore at various points along the West African coast from Gorée, Senegal to Cape Palmas, Maryland in Africa. The majority of Lynch's descriptions focus on the coast of Liberia itself, giving particular attention to the scenery, vegetation, progress of the American settlements, and customs of the various indigenous groups he encounters. Along with the report, Lynch apparently submitted to the Department of the Navy a set of maps and sketches made during the voyage;

Weber's view, Wagner & McGuigan's version depicts the Liberian capital city from a perspective similar to that used in the engraving of Monrovia published nearly three decades earlier in the *Repository*. This version, however, includes a stretch of land in the immediate foreground of the scene, effectively locating the viewer on the shore of Kroo Point, the tip of Bushrod Island that juts into Monrovia Harbor. As was visible in earlier images, the main area of settlement is situated partway down the arm of Cape Mesurado, while the cape's end remains more forested with fewer colonial buildings. The Monrovia townscape appears neat and orderly, consisting of numerous frame dwellings and a couple of churches dotting the hillside, as well as a row of larger warehouses along the city's docks. In contrast to the heavily forested landscape of the cape's northern tip, the urban center has been cleared of trees, and those that remain appear carefully placed.

The *Repository* view of Monrovia along with subsequent depictions of the capital city, including those by Weber and Wagner & McGuigan, illustrate the distinct colonization iconography that emerged during the first three decades of settlement. Emphasizing Liberia's coastal setting and usually including a three-masted ship and a palm tree, this visual framework also allowed for a representation of indigenous Africans as removed from the main area of American settlement. This clean separation is nicely illustrated in *Monrovia from Bushrod's Island* (fig. 2.13). In contrast to the neatly manicured landscape of Monrovia, the picture's foreground is wild and rocky, with a single palm tree anchoring the lower left corner of the scene. Just beyond this wild

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while the maps survive (figs. 3.26, 3.27), the sketches seem to be lost. Presumably, these now-lost sketches were used by Wagner & McGuigan to make their lithographs, but at least four of the five published views were clearly inspired by other images circulating through the American print press. Along with its official publication as a Senate document, the report was published in pamphlet form under the title *Report of Commander W. F. Lynch, in Relation to his Mission to the Coast of Africa*.

vegetation is a group of three indigenous Africans, recognizable by their clothing – two wear simply a cloth or skirt around their waists, while the other wears a hat and carries a basket. The tip of land just behind this figure group moves the eye toward two indigenous canoes. An American ship can be seen on the picture's right border, while the forested profile of Carey Island is visible in the left middle ground of the scene.

The same iconography that defined early representations of Monrovia also dominated visual depictions of other American settlements in Liberia. A good example is a painting of Cape Palmas (fig. 2.14), site of the Maryland in Africa colony, made in the mid-1830s by John H. B. Latrobe. Son of the prominent American architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, John Latrobe was president of the Maryland State Colonization Society (hereafter, MSCS) and played an influential role in establishing and promoting the settlement of free blacks from Maryland at Cape Palmas, 250 miles down the coast from Monrovia.<sup>87</sup> Entitled *View of Cape Palmas, Maryland in Liberia*, the painting was based on a now-lost sketch made by African-American settler Samuel Ford McGill.<sup>88</sup> In basing his work at least partly on the sketch of an emigrant, Latrobe was not unusual.

Throughout the first four decades of Liberian settlement, colonization promoters in

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<sup>87</sup> For more on Latrobe, see Eugene S. Van Sickle, *A Transnational Vision: John H. B. Latrobe and Maryland's African Colonization Movement* (Ph.D. diss., West Virginia University, 2005).

<sup>88</sup> For background on McGill's correspondence with MSCS leaders and his American medical school training, see Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland Colonization Society 1831-1857* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 119-21. Born in 1815, McGill was a member of a prominent early emigrant family in frequent contact with white colonization leaders in the United States. In 1836, he returned to America for a three-year period to attend medical school; he may have brought the sketch with him on his return, or it is possible he had already sent it to Latrobe, as he had been in correspondence with Maryland colonization promoters before his departure from the colony. It is possible that McGill's sketch may be one in the same with an unsigned early drawing of Harper (the main colonial settlement at Cape Palmas) now in the Library of Congress. See Library of Congress, "Harper," accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003689457/>.

America frequently sought the participation of settlers in creating images of the colonial landscape, not only because emigrants were often the people best positioned to fulfill this task. Images of Liberia made by settlers or based on their work also provided a form of visual eyewitness authentication to American observers, providing support for colonizationists' claims of the pictures' truthfulness and acting as another form of the positive settler testimony so highly valued by the ACS and its constituents.<sup>89</sup>

In creating his painting of Cape Palmas, Latrobe adopted a similar perspective as the *Repository* engraver had used to capture Cape Mesurado, using a body of water to place the viewer at a considerable distance from the main settlement. In formal terms, *View of Cape Palmas* embodies the traditions of Picturesque landscape painting, which first developed in late eighteenth-century Britain and became the dominant mode of landscape representation in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>90</sup> Following Picturesque conventions, the painting is divided into three main zones: a dark colored foreground including details such as plants and people, a bright middle ground, and a somewhat misty background.<sup>91</sup> In this case, the background consists of the American settlement on the Cape, comprised of numerous Western-style buildings that dot the hillside, and a lighthouse atop the promontory's tip. In the painting's sparkling blue-green middle ground, an indigenous canoe and a few American sailing vessels are visible. The foreground, dominated by dark earth tones, shows several

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<sup>89</sup> Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here'," 99-102.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 105-06.

<sup>91</sup> For more on the Picturesque, see Jeffrey Auerbach, "The Picturesque and the Homogenisation of Empire," *The British Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 2004): 48.



indigenous Africans engaged in their everyday activities, apparently unaware of the viewer's gaze. A pair of palm trees anchors the right border of the scene, drawing on the conventions of Picturesque framing. As Jeffery Auerbach argues, British artists painting in various regions of the British empire in this same period used the conventions of the Picturesque as a way to bring a sense of homogeneity to a vast empire defined by its difference from the metropole.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Latrobe's use of the Picturesque lent his painting of Cape Palmas a sense of familiarity at the same time that it articulated difference through the tropical details of palm trees and African bodies. The result is a depiction of Cape Palmas' African population as passive bystanders, mere decorations in a well established formula for landscape painting that Latrobe here applied to his rendition of the African landscape.

Latrobe's painting formed the basis of another lithograph, *Cape Palmas* (fig. 2.15), also made by Wagner & McGuigan to accompany the previously mentioned U.S. naval report.<sup>93</sup> Like the painted version, the lithograph places the viewer at a distance from the primary settlement depicted, allowing for a view of the Cape as a whole and at the same time a scene of placid settler-indigenous interaction in the foreground. Here, the profile of the Cape in the distance is nearly identical to that in the earlier painting: the

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<sup>92</sup> Auerbach, "The Picturesque and the Homogenisation of Empire," 47-48. As Auerbach argues, in depicting various regions of the British empire in this period British artists used the conventions of the Picturesque as a way to bring a sense of homogeneity to a vast empire defined by its difference from the metropole. Similarly, Latrobe's use of the Picturesque lent his painting of Cape Palmas a sense of familiarity at the same time that it articulated difference through the tropical details of palm trees and African bodies. The result is a depiction of Cape Palmas' African population as passive bystanders, mere decorations in a well established formula for landscape painting that Latrobe here applied to his rendition of the African landscape.

<sup>93</sup> The lithograph notes that the picture is "From Seager, From Latrobe". "Latrobe" clearly refers to John H. B. Latrobe, whose original painting must have been reproduced in some form by "Seager". It is unclear who "Seager" was or where his version of the picture circulated.

curving topography of the bluff, the buildings dotting its ridge, and the lighthouse at its end are all taken directly from Latrobe's scene. As in the earlier painting, the lithograph locates the viewer on a stretch of land facing the broad waterway that eventually narrows to become the Palmas River. In both pictures, two palm trees frame the right border of the scene, while several more clearly rendered Africans occupy the foreground space.

Wagner & McGuigan's lithograph, however, adds much more pictorial and narrative detail to the foreground space. A large tree has been added to the lithograph's left border, bringing more balance and framing to the scene. Additionally, more figures are present, including both Africans – again recognizable by their scant dress – and African-American settlers. The central figure depicted is an indigenous African with a muscular physique whose back is to the viewer. Holding a spear in his right hand, he gestures across the water with his left hand, as if welcoming and guiding the settler beside him into this African landscape. Nearby, other figures fish, tend children, and gaze at the Cape in the distance. Here as in other colonization pictures, the coastal view allowed for an image of peaceful settler-indigenous relations by physically separating the native landscape from the colonial one, in effect presenting Liberia's indigenous people as passive bystanders to the colonial project.

In reality, the native population inhabiting Cape Palmas and its vicinity were far from passive onlookers as African-American settlers began arriving on the scene under the auspices of the MSCS in 1827. For at least two centuries leading up to American colonization, the region had been occupied by the Grebo people, a subset of the larger and more widespread Kru ethnic group. Like other indigenous groups living on the Liberian coast, the Grebo had extensive previous interaction with Westerners, mostly

slavers, and they used their knowledge of European culture purposefully when dealing with the newcomers. For instance, when MCSC agents met with Grebo kings from the region surrounding around Cape Palmas in the early 1830s in an effort to secure land for the society, one of the native leaders known as “King Will” came dressed in American-style clothing.<sup>94</sup> As Penelope Campbell explains, King Will’s attire included “a blue broadcloth coat with metal buttons, white ruffled trousers which came only halfway down his legs, and dirty ruffled shirt.”<sup>95</sup> Not only does this incident reflect the Grebo’s previous interactions with Westerners; it also presents an image of Grebo agency far removed from that suggested by Latrobe’s painting of passivity and the subsequent lithograph of Cape Palmas produced by Wagner & McGuigan. Furthermore, as had been the case with the Dei at Cape Mesurado, the Grebo forcibly resisted the incursion of African-American settlement at Cape Palmas. Settlers’ land claims rested on an 1834 deed, but American ideas of land ownership were not shared by Africans.<sup>96</sup> As Harrison Ola Abingbade has noted, “among the Grebo and among most of the African people, land was transferable only by inheritance; the transfer of land by sale or cession was unknown and could be misunderstood.”<sup>97</sup> This cultural misunderstanding over meanings of land ownership would lead to conflict and violence between the Grebo and Maryland settlers for the next several decades.

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<sup>94</sup> Campbell, *Maryland in Africa*, 75.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Harrison Ola Abingbade, “The Settler-African Conflicts: The Case of the Maryland Colonists and the Grebo 1840-1900,” *The Journal of Negro History* 66, no. 2 (Summer, 1981): 95.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

The theme of indigenous Africans peacefully welcoming American settlers into the African landscape nevertheless remained a powerful trope in colonization visual culture. A good example is a lithograph of Bassa Cove released in 1837 by the PCS (fig. 2.16).<sup>98</sup> The Bassa Cove settlement was established in the early 1830s through the combined efforts of the Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania and the New York City Colonization Society.<sup>99</sup> Entitled, *A View of Bassa Cove*, the lithograph was, like Latrobe's painting, based on a now-lost sketch by a settler-artist. The PCS' newspaper, *The Colonization Herald*, advertised the picture, describing it as "a drawing made on the spot by Dr. Robert McDowall."<sup>100</sup> Robert McDowell was a Scottish-African surgeon stationed at Bassa Cove as colonial physician.<sup>101</sup> The Philadelphia lithography firm of George Lehman and Peter S. Duvall was commissioned to create the picture, which was reproduced for many years for a succession Pennsylvania-backed colonization materials such as society membership certificates.<sup>102</sup>

The central portion of *A View of Bassa Cove* depicts the neatly built houses and fences of Bassa Cove's settlers, which are considerably closer to the viewer than is the

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<sup>98</sup> Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here'," 100.

<sup>99</sup> Beverly C. Tomek, *Colonization and Its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration, and Antislavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 93.

<sup>100</sup> "View of Bassa Cove," *The Colonization Herald* 3, no. 54 (Jun. 17, 1837): 214; quoted and discussed in Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here'," 100.

<sup>101</sup> See Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here'," 100; Campbell, *Maryland in Africa*, 121. As Campbell notes, McGill spent a year apprenticing to MacDowell upon his return to Maryland in Liberia from medical school in the United States.

<sup>102</sup> Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here'," 100-101. For more on Lehman and Duval, see Erika Piola, ed., *Philadelphia on Stone: Commercial Lithography in Philadelphia 1828-1878* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press in association with the Library Company of Philadelphia, 2012), 98.

case with the Western settlements depicted in the *Repository* view of Cape Mesurado and Latrobe's painting of Cape Palmas. Yet as in those pictures, the viewer is here separated from the colonial settlement by a body of water, as is a group of three native Africans who occupy the left foreground of the scene. Wearing the same loincloths as the Africans in Latrobe's painting, the foreground figures become more of a focal point than their counterparts in the other landscape views. Two of the figures clasp their hands together in a sign of prayer and thanksgiving, indicating their conversion to Christianity. The standing figure on the right, meanwhile, gestures toward the American settlement in the background, acknowledging that the Americans are responsible for their new state of Christian enlightenment.

The lithograph's depiction of colonization benefitting eager African populations reflects the ideals of the Bassa Cove settlement's Pennsylvania Quaker founders. As scholars such as Beverly C. Tomek and Eric Burin have noted in recent years, the Pennsylvania colonization movement was distinct from that of other states in its overt anti-slavery stance and humanitarian initiatives. Tomek rightly points out that whereas national colonization advocates "such as Mathew Carey and Henry Clay had hoped that colonization of blacks to distant lands would save white Americans and their republican experiment," Pennsylvania colonization promoters like Elliott Cresson instead "focused on the movement's value as an agent to secure the end of slavery and the uplift of blacks throughout the world."<sup>103</sup> Such uplift included the Christian conversion and education of African natives. In one speech, Cresson claimed the African chiefs sought "equal laws,

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<sup>103</sup> Tomek, *Colonization and Its Discontents*, 95.

civilization and religion,” as well as “schools—factories—churches.”<sup>104</sup> As had been the case at other settlements, such expectations were naïve.

The lithograph’s depiction of African natives peacefully welcoming the black Pennsylvania newcomers also worked to conceal the darker history of African-settler hostilities that hung over Bassa Cove’s 1830s landscape. In June of 1835, members of the Bassa ethnic group attacked Port Cresson, the main settlement at Bassa Cove, killing around 20 colonists and destroying the town.<sup>105</sup> The American press quickly picked up the story, describing the act as outrageous and completely unwarranted. One Pennsylvania report described the victims as former “slaves of the best character”, with their new settlement promising “many blessings as a home for the people of color, and as another opening for the civilizing and christianizing of Africa.”<sup>106</sup> Stressing the benevolent motives of the settlers and colonizationists like Cresson who had worked to secure the land, the article further claimed that the settlement “was upon the very site of a recent slave market. A slave factory was purchased out and suppressed. And the whole was secured by what were regarded as adequate treaties, made with the natives.”<sup>107</sup>

In fact, from the time Pennsylvania group arrived at Bassa Cove, tensions had begun mounting between the settlers and the Bassa people. As historian Claude A. Clegg III explains, “as in the cases of other Liberian settlements, indigenous people were not

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<sup>104</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>105</sup> For a general summary of the attack, see D. Elwood Dunn, Amos J. Beyan, and Carl Patrick Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, Second Edition (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001), 268; Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 145. Various sources cite different numbers of colonists killed.

<sup>106</sup> “Bassa Cove Sufferers,” *Hazard’s Register of Pennsylvania*, vol. 16 (Nov., 1835): 312. Reprinted from *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

very receptive of the newcomers, whose cultural predilections were often at variance with local values and practices.”<sup>108</sup> The Bassa leader who organized the attack was known as “King Joe Harris”, a man who, according to Timothy J. Stapleton “feared that Port Cresson would block his trade contacts, including slaving, with visiting Europeans such as the Spanish.”<sup>109</sup> Eager to prove their experiment could be a success, colonization leaders in Pennsylvania and New York began plans to rebuild, and within a year a new settlement had been established at Bassa Cove.<sup>110</sup>

Released only about two years after the violence at Port Cresson, *A View of Bassa Cove* proclaimed the success of these colonizationists’ efforts. The settler landscape appears neat and prosperous, showing no signs of the recent destruction that wracked this location. The idea that this African-American presence at Bassa Cove was helping end the slave trade in that region is visually emphasized in the treatment of the three African figures. Like the abolitionist icon of the kneeling slave, these individuals wear only loincloths. While none are kneeling, two are grasping their hands together in prayerful, pleading gestures. It is notable that abolitionist iconography was here used to depict indigenous Africans, not enslaved Africans in the Americas, implying that in Liberia, former American slaves have been freed from the degraded condition in which they once lived in the United States and were enabled to help liberate their African brethren, also the victims of the transatlantic slave trade.

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<sup>108</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 145.

<sup>109</sup> Timothy J. Stapleton, *A Military History of Africa*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 89.

<sup>110</sup> Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 145.

### Picturing a “Reverse” Middle Passage

While the ACS’ perpetual use of the coastal view suggested harmonious settler-indigenous relations and a controlled tropical environment, it also implicitly engaged the theme of slavery. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the West African coast was nearly synonymous with the transatlantic slave trade in the popular imaginations of Americans and Europeans. Since the seventeenth century, European depictions of coastal West Africa almost exclusively focused on the region’s importance in the trade, frequently representing slave forts and castles. An image entitled “The North-West Prospect of Cape-Coast Castle”, which illustrated William Smith’s *Thirty Different Drafts of Guinea* (c. 1727, fig. 2.17), exemplifies this trend.<sup>111</sup>

As the abolitionist movement gained momentum in the late eighteenth century, Western representations of the African coast as a setting for the slave trade became more emotionally charged. A well-known example is George Morland’s *Slave Trade*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1788 and reached a broader audience through reproduction engravings by John Raphael Smith and others (fig. 2.18).<sup>112</sup> At the center of the picture, two white slavers grasp the arm of their African victim, who clasps his hands together in a pleading gesture reminiscent of that of Wedgwood’s kneeling slave. To the right, another slave trader holds the victim’s wife by the arm, pulling her and a small child toward a boat in the right foreground. In the boat, another captive weeps. Other victims, their arms tied behind their backs, are visible in the background. Two palm trees frame the right border of the scene, and the bow of a slave ship is visible

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<sup>111</sup> William Smith, *Thirty different drafts of Guinea* (London, c. 1727), plate 18.

<sup>112</sup> Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art, Vol. IV, Part 1*, 66-71.



at the picture's left edge.

Another important picture of the period conveying this theme was François-Auguste Biard's *The Slave Trade (Slaves on the West Coast of Africa)*, painted around 1833 (fig. 2.19). "Illustrating the cruelty and callousness of several types of slave traders and all the pains and humiliations suffered by the slaves," explains Hugh Honour, "the picture is an inventory of miseries."<sup>113</sup> The painting was reproduced in engraving and lithograph form and circulated internationally for many years, becoming one of the most recognizable images in the anti-slavery movement's visual arsenal by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>114</sup>

In contrast to popular anti-slavery depictions of the African coast, which emphasized its identity as a slaving center, colonization pictures suggested Liberia to be a site of freedom for both formerly enslaved Americans returning "home" to Africa and for the surrounding indigenous population, many of whom were still thought to be active participants in the trade. This protective mission was supported in colonization writing. Especially in the early years of settlement, the *Repository* and other colonization publications focused heavily on the ACS' efforts to eliminate the slave trade on the African coast and replace it with "legitimate commerce" in commodities. A letter from an ACS official published in the *Repository* in 1838, for example, explained how, "by this plan of Colonization we place, by one and the same act, outposts on her [Africa's] dark confines, which, while they radiate the gladsome light and renovating influence of religion and civilization; also prevent the introduction and continuance of that diabolical

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>114</sup> McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 181.

system of slave traffic.”<sup>115</sup> In 1846, the *Repository* proudly reported that, “for the distance of three hundred miles on the sea coast, the slave trade is abolished with the exception of one factory...”<sup>116</sup> The article continued by declaring that, “if at some future period, the whole coast shall be lined with colonies, imbued with the same spirit and established upon the same principle, the slave trade will have been entirely banished from the western shores of Africa.”<sup>117</sup> The ACS’ perpetual emphasis on Liberia’s identity as a coast suggested that the West African landscape had drastically changed from a center of slavery to one of freedom.

Once the U.S. abolitionist movement gained momentum in the 1850s after the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the ACS and its supporters began borrowing from abolitionist visual culture in more strategic ways. In line with anti-slavery imagery, colonization propaganda images became more narrative-based, offering sentimental scenes to their viewers and confronting the specific themes emphasized by abolitionists, particularly the horrors of the Middle Passage and the separation of families inflicted by the slave trade. An illustrated lifetime membership certificate issued in late 1856 by the PCS exemplifies this phenomenon (fig. 2.20).<sup>118</sup> Produced by prominent Philadelphia

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<sup>115</sup> R. McDowall, “Testimony Concerning Liberia,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 14, no. 7 (Jul., 1838): 203.

<sup>116</sup> “First Annual Report of the Illinois State Colonization Society,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 22, no. 3 (Mar., 1846): 77.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> My estimation of the release date of this membership certificate is based on references to its production in the PCS’ minute book. See 29 September 1856, p. 8; 21 October 1856, pp. 13, 15; 9 December 1856, pp. 18-19; Pennsylvania Colonization Society Constitution and Minutes, Lincoln University Special Collections and Archives, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.lincoln.edu/node/1340/special-collections-and-archives/digital-collections/library-colonization-society>.

lithographer P. S. Duval after a design by artist James Queen, the illustrated certificate was distributed to as many as 300 Pennsylvania supporters of colonization.<sup>119</sup> Entitled “View of Monrovia”, the illustration appropriates previously established colonization iconography, but the nature of the depiction has evolved considerably. Presenting a scene of African Americans arriving on Liberia’s shores, the scene suggests a narrative journey from left to right, West to East, bondage to freedom. In the upper left, black Americans disembark a three-masted American ship and are rowed by white boatmen to shore. At the center of the composition, their rowboat reaches a sandy coast, whose palm trees identify this setting as African. With the assistance of the white boatmen, the black passengers step foot on Liberian soil, where they are greeted by friends and relatives. The hillside beyond is dotted with Western-style houses and churches.

The power of the scene to convey support for colonization lies in its appropriation of abolitionist visual themes to suggest the journey to Liberia as a “reverse” Middle Passage. The ocean vessel at the left edge of the image recalls abolitionists’ emphasis on the slave ship as the primary site of horror for African bodies during their voyage from Africa to the Americas. Since the ACS’ first published view of Liberia (fig. 2.10), the three-masted ship had appeared in nearly every colonization picture, including the organization’s official seal (fig. 2.21), drawing an implicit connection between the Middle Passage and the journey to Liberia. Continuing the theme of slave confinement made popular by the *Description*, many anti-slavery images depicted slave confinement devices used during the Middle Passage or scenes of unclothed African captives tightly packed on the decks and in the hulls of slave ships (figs. 2.22-2.23). Frequently, anti-

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<sup>119</sup> 21 October 1856, p. 15, Pennsylvania Colonization Society Constitution and Minutes.

slavery depictions of these ships focused on the cruelty of slavers toward their human cargo or the miserable conditions aboard ship. In a scene entitled “Insurrection on Board a Slave Ship”, published in 1851 (fig. 2.24), slavers fire upon a deck full of African captives who have attempted to take over the ship. The slaves run toward the ship’s bow, and some jump into the sea in an attempt to escape.

The theme of slavers throwing innocent Africans overboard to be consumed by sharks became popular in nineteenth-century visual culture of the United States and Britain, appearing most famously in J. M. W. Turner’s 1840 painting *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying)* (fig. 2.25). Against a dramatic sunset and turbulent ocean waves, the blood and limbs of the ship’s victims are visible in the right foreground of the picture. The same subject appeared in an 1836 illustration in the *Slave’s Friend* (fig. 2.26). Here, two white slavers, one brandishing a sword, violently fling a captive African overboard. In the foreground, two other slaves who have been thrown in the water fight the ocean waves, while in the background, another is about to meet the same fate. Accompanying the picture was a poem written from the perspective of a repentant slaver, describing how the practice of throwing captives overboard was used as a punishment for those refusing to follow orders, and lamenting his sinful actions:

One woman, sulkier than the rest,  
 Would still refuse her food—  
 Hark! hark! e'en now I hear her cries!  
 I see her in her blood!

They flung her overboard—poor wretch,  
 She rested from her pain;  
 But when, O when! O blessed God,

Shall *I* have rest again?<sup>120</sup>

Whether associated with the horrific methods of confining human cargo or with the cruel actions of slavers, the inhumanity of the slave ships became a powerful icon of the Middle Passage in anti-slavery visual culture. The slave ship also played an important role in abolitionist scenes depicting the arrival of enslaved Africans in the Americas. A well-known example is the 1830 engraving *United States Slave Trade 1830* (fig. 2.27), wherein freshly arrived African bodies, foreign to American civilization, are inspected and abused by cruel Southern planters, whips in hand. In the distance at left, a rowboat brings more victims from the ship to American soil.

By the mid-1850s, colonization propaganda focusing on the three-masted emigrant ship as a vehicle for freedom, in contrast to the floating prisons of the Middle Passage, took on more detailed form in the writing and images produced about one particular vessel that transported emigrants to Liberia. The ship was called the *Mary Caroline Stevens*, and it was the first one built exclusively for the transportation of African-American emigrants to Liberia. Previously, the ACS had chartered numerous ships for the passage of emigrants, but with the donations of a handful of prominent ACS members – most notably John Stevens of Maryland, after whose two daughters the vessel was named – the Society built its own emigrant ship at a cost of almost \$44,000, which sailed on its first voyage in December of 1856.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> “A Slave-Ship”, *Slave’s Friend* 1, no. X (New York: R. G. Williams, for the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836): 14-15, Library Company of Philadelphia.

<sup>121</sup> See “The Ship Mary Caroline Stevens,” *New-York Colonization Journal* 7, no. 5 (May, 1857): 1; Alexander M. Cowan, *Liberia, as I Found It* (Frankfort, KY: A. G. Hodges, 1858), 7; Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*, 195; Allan Yarema, *The American Colonization Society: An Avenue to Freedom?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 2006), 47.

In describing and picturing the *Mary Caroline Stevens*, the ACS took care to portray the journey to Liberia as an experience in no way similar to the Middle Passage. In May of 1857, the *New-York Colonization Journal* published a woodcut illustration of the *Mary Caroline Stevens* (fig. 2.28).<sup>122</sup> The accompanying article boasted of the ship's impressive size and engineering, as well as the comforts it offered passengers. "The entire steerage is neatly painted and varnished," it explained, while the eight passenger staterooms in the ship's cabin were "ventilated by patent side-lights and Venetian blinds." The saloon cabin included "a handsome Gothic library and medicine case" and an 18-foot long walnut table, and it was painted "in imitation of oak, with an appropriate amount of gilt work."<sup>123</sup> Carved on the ship's prow was "a cornucopia, with fruit and vines extending from it," while its stern was decorated with the ACS' seal and motto.<sup>124</sup> For the ACS, the *Mary Caroline Stevens* was a material reflection of how Liberian colonization was part of a broader, divinely ordained plan to redeem the African race on both sides of the Atlantic.

Considering that the *Mary Caroline Stevens* made its first voyage to Liberia around the exact time that the PCS' lifetime membership certificate was issued, the three-masted ship that appears on the left border of Queen's "View of Monrovia" (fig. 2.20) may well have been imagined by viewers to be that very vessel. The picture appropriates the iconography of both the three-masted ship and the coast to remind viewers of the familiar abolitionist narrative of whites rowing blacks to shore, but its meaning is here

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<sup>122</sup> "The Ship Mary Caroline Stevens," 1.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

inverted. These black passengers arrive willingly, with the help of benevolent whites, to a familiar landscape where they will be embraced rather than abused. Presumably representing ACS officials, the well-dressed white men assisting these passengers are another important element of Queen's narrative. Among the most essential of these men is one who stands at the stern of the rowboat, resting his arm on a paddle; he has helped row these emigrants to shore.

In reality, it is unlikely that white ACS officials were ever responsible for rowing emigrants from ship to shore, as this task was routinely performed by Kru mariners. By replacing the Kru with white boatmen, Queen's picture conveniently avoids depicting the presence of indigenous Africans in this bucolic and hopeful landscape. At the same time, it patronizingly places the white-led ACS as the heroes in this story of African homecoming and ultimately racial uplift. The depiction of white boatmen and other presiding officials in the scene suggests that this African homecoming is only possible through the benevolence of whites, reflecting the abolitionist conventions of depicting blacks as inherently dependent on whites (and the ACS as inherently virtuous), as seen in stock abolitionist imagery like Wedgewood's kneeling slave.

At its heart, "View of Monrovia" is a scene of homecoming and family reunification. Two of the figures on shore raise their hats to hail their loved ones, who step foot toward shore. In the right foreground, two men who are perhaps brothers move toward each other, eager to embrace. This image of family reunification stands in stark contrast to popular scenes of slave auctions tearing families apart (fig. 2.9), suggesting that Liberia could "fix" the atrocities that slavery had inflicted upon black Americans. The idea that the voyage to Liberia could reverse the traumas of the Middle Passage on

black Americans is evidenced by other elements of the scene. Though still imagined to be dependent on the help of benevolent whites, Queen's emigrants present a stark contrast to the nude, supplicant slave popularized in anti-slavery visual culture. These emigrants, although represented with stereotypically distorted physiognomies, are nevertheless dressed in the latest American fashions, some wearing top hats and petticoats despite the intense tropical climate that made such fashions impractical. The dress of these emigrants marks them as having "arrived" not just on Africa's shores, but into a life defined by Western standards of refinement and prosperity.

Embedded in Queen's representation of these emigrants' dress was a controversy over the apparent "quality" of the emigrants whose passages to Liberia the ACS and its auxiliaries were funding. The production of the PCS' lifetime membership certificate occurred at a time when Pennsylvania colonizationists were in the midst of a major policy change. Around the mid-1850s, the PCS began to rethink its long-standing goal of primarily funding slave manumissions rather than the resettlement of black Philadelphians in Liberia. The change resulted largely from a report commissioned by the organization to investigate complaints from emigrants about the inadequate conditions upon arrival.<sup>125</sup> William Coppinger, one of the PCS leaders, "expressed reservations about moving scores of destitute bondspersons to a country whose resources were already overextended," explains Burin.<sup>126</sup> As a result of the report, some PCS officers began advocating for organization to move away from financing Southern manumissions.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 97.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.



Recently freed bondspersons, they argued, were often impoverished and lacked the skills to prosper on their own, in contrast to middle-class, educated northern blacks who might contribute their talents and resources to the colonization enterprise.<sup>128</sup> By the late 1850s, the PCS had shifted its focus to facilitating the emigration of middle-class black Philadelphians to Liberia.<sup>129</sup> Yet the PCS' decision, based on its belief that it was not productive to send unskilled and impoverished recently emancipated slaves to Liberia, offended the parent society. Reacting in fury, ACS Secretary William McLain wrote to Coppinger that, "I am sorry to find that you entertain so poor an opinion [of] 'newly emancipated negroes' as companions of your gentleman negroes!"<sup>130</sup>

The PCS's concerns about the supposed "quality" of emigrants echoed Stowe's admonitions at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In her "Concluding Remarks", Stowe advised that, rather than sending newly emancipated slaves to Liberia, "let the church of the north receive these poor sufferers in the spirit of Christ; receive them to the educating advantages of Christian republican society and schools, until they have attained to somewhat of a moral and intellectual maturity, and then assist them in their passage to those shores, where they may put in practice the lessons they have learned in America."<sup>131</sup> Illustrating those same "Concluding Remarks", Billings' figures in "Freedom to Africa" seem to represent just the type of emigration Stowe warns against. Wearing the humble dress of Southern slaves and assuming supplicating positions, they

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 98-99.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 97.

<sup>131</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 557.

do not appear to have yet received the “educating advantages” or the “moral and intellectual maturity” that Stowe insisted should precede any voyage to Liberia. With its depiction of what ACS Secretary McLain might have perceived to be “gentleman negroes”, Queen’s “View of Monrovia” reflected the PCS’ goal of sending only middle-class, educated Philadelphia emigrants to Africa. Perhaps the greatest irony of this image, however, is that like those slaves in the famous *Description* (fig. 2.8), these passengers are also victims of Atlantic commerce. Although they will not be bought and sold like those nameless black figures packed aboard the *Brookes*, their pictures here appear on a certificate of membership that would have been given to anyone who donated funds to the PCS.

### **Imagining an African-American Transformation**

The notion that Liberian colonization could reverse the effects of the Middle Passage on African Americans was supported further in colonization writing. The *Repository* frequently published poems and hymns that imagined the journey to Liberia as a homecoming to black Americans’ “native” land, where they could now be free from the oppression of slavery. Implicit in both colonization imagery and writing of the period was the idea that emigration to Liberia was part of a profound transformative experience that the African race was divinely destined to undergo. This idea can be observed in, for instance, the lyrics of one hymn, which the *Repository* noted was “Sung on the occasion of the departure of a party of Emigrants to Liberia”:

*Home*, where the hopes now centre,  
That once were vague and vain—  
Where bondage cannot enter,

To bind them down again:—  
*Home*—free from all oppression;  
*Home*—where the palm tree waves,  
*Home*—to their own possessions—  
*Home*—to their grandsires' graves!<sup>132</sup>

Here, Liberia is celebrated first and foremost as the African American's ultimate "home". It is a place defined by quintessentially American ideals of freedom, where oppression and bondage cannot enter and where, almost like a flag of liberty, "the palm tree waves". This "home" is a place where African Americans can "own possessions" and plant their hopes for the future, all while in the land of their fathers. Furthermore, their "return" to this land marks a certain transformation that they have undergone since they were first taken from it as slaves:

Not poor and empty-handed,  
 As first to us they came,  
 With superstition branded,  
 And want and woe and shame,—  
 Are we the race returning  
 Back to their native sod,  
 But we our laws—our learning—  
 Our freedom—and our God!<sup>133</sup>

These emigrants' previous time in slavery, the poem suggests, has actually been beneficial and perhaps even divinely ordained, transforming them from heathen race to a civilized one. In Liberia, they can live lives defined by American ideals of "civilization" – establishing a constitution modeled on that of the United States ("our laws"), Western education ("our learning"), civic freedom, and Christian religion.

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<sup>132</sup> "Departure of Emigrants for Liberia," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 26, no. 4 (Apr., 1850): 111.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

The idea that slavery had been a natural and necessary part of liberating Africans colored nearly all writing by whites on Liberian colonization in this period.<sup>134</sup> Westerners imagined that Africans had been bound by their own ignorance and oppression in Africa. These notions were conspicuous in proslavery literature, as well, often suggesting that African-Americans' lives in slavery were an improvement from the previous ones that they or their ancestors had experienced in Africa. Such an idea can be seen William J. Grayson's *The Hireling and the Slave* (1856):

In this new home, whate'er the negro's fate—  
More blessed his life than in his native state!  
No mummeries dupe, no Fetish charms affright,  
No rites obscene diffuse their moral blight;  
Idolatries, more hateful than the grave,  
With human sacrifice, no more enslave;  
No savage rule its hecatomb supplies  
Of slaves fore slaughter when a master dies:  
In sloth and error sunk for countless years  
His race has lived, but light at last appears—  
Celestial light: religion undefiled  
Dawns in the heart of Congo's simple child.<sup>135</sup>

Mrs. Henry R. Schoolcraft's *The Black Gauntlet: A Tale of Plantation Life in South Carolina* (1852) also advanced the idea that American slavery was a positive step in the overall progression of the African from savagery and suffering to enlightened civilization.<sup>136</sup> In the novel's conclusion, Schoolcraft quotes German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel in an attempt to show U.S. slavery as a natural stage in the liberation of the African race. "Hegel's Philosophy of History, an imperishable monument of human

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<sup>134</sup> Bruce A. Harvey, *American Geographics: U.S. National Narratives and the Representation of the Non-European World, 1830-1865* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 208.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-208.

genius,” she writes, “says ‘slavery is itself a phase of advance from the merely isolated sensual existence, a phase of education, a mode of becoming participant in a higher morality and the culture connected with it.’”<sup>137</sup> The same notions colored written descriptions of Liberia. In his *The Virginian History of African Colonization* (1855), the Reverend Slaughter claimed that, just as the “red man” was doomed to disappear from the American landscape, if the African had been left “like the Indian, in his native freedom, his would have been the fate of the Indian.”<sup>138</sup> Luckily for the African, according to Slaughter, “in the mysterious Providence of God,” the Anglo-American had “borne him along with him in his upward career, protecting his weakness and providing for his wants.”<sup>139</sup>

In this “upward career”, Liberian emigration came to be seen as the culmination in this narrative of black uplift. In *Ethiopia: Her Gloom and Glory, as Illustrated in the History of the Slave Trade and Slavery, the Rise of the Republic of Liberia, and the Progress of the African Missions* (1857), David Christy wrote that the “passion for equal rights and privileges” that had now “infused into their breasts” witnessed how African-American slavery “seems to have been but a preparatory step” in forming the “powerful nation” of Liberia.<sup>140</sup> And in his book *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors*

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<sup>137</sup> Mrs. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *The Black Gauntlet: A Tale of Plantation Life in South Carolina* (1852) reprinted in *Plantation Life: The Narratives of Mrs. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 405, in *ibid*, 208.

<sup>138</sup> Rev. P. Slaughter, *The Virginian History of African Colonization* (Richmond, VA: Macfarlane & Fergusson, 1855), iv.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>140</sup> David Christy, *Ethiopia: Her Gloom and Glory, as Illustrated in the History of the Slave Trade and Slavery, the Rise of the Republic of Liberia, and the Progress of the African Missions* (1857) (reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 90, in Harvey, *American Geographics*, 208.

in *Several Countries in the Interior of Africa, from 1849 to 1856* (1857), the Reverend Thomas J. Bowen, a noted Baptist missionary to Nigeria, observed how “African colonization and African missions arising from this slavery, and flowing back as a river of light and life upon the African continent.”<sup>141</sup> Like Grayson and Schoolcraft, colonizationists imagined that indigenous Africans still lived in a state of “merely isolated sensual existence” and that, having attained the virtues of Christianity and Western learning, American blacks would be ready to aid in the transformation of this Dark Continent, having already undergone such a transformation themselves.

The idea that emigration to Liberia embodied the culmination of an African-American transformation formed the central theme of an important but understudied example of colonization writing, the novel *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton's Experiments* (1853), by Sarah Josepha Hale.<sup>142</sup> Hale was a prolific American writer and the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, America's first women's magazine. *Liberia* was largely forgotten until the mid-1990s, when scholars of nineteenth-century American literature began to re-examine her novel and the way it, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, explored the possibility of Liberian emigration as a solution to the problems of slavery and race relations in the United States.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Thomas J. Bowen, *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa, from 1849 to 1856* (1857) (facsimile reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 60, in Harvey, *American Geographics*, 208.

<sup>142</sup> Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton's Experiments* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1853).

<sup>143</sup> Susan M. Ryan, “Errand into Africa: Colonization and Nation Building in Sarah J. Hale's *Liberia*,” *The New England Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (Dec., 1995): 558. See also the introduction to Hale's digital text online, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/proslav/halehp.html>.

*Liberia* tells the story of slave-owner Mr. Peyton, who wants to free his slaves. He tries a series of “experiments” to find the best way to do this, first establishing them up on a Southern farm, next in a Northern city, then in Canada, but they are apparently unfit for all of these experiences, so he finally makes the decision to ship them off to Liberia.<sup>144</sup> The rest of the novel gives an account of their lives in Africa and the ways that there, and only there, are they able to transform from the seemingly degraded state in which slavery has left them into Liberian citizens leading lives of freedom and prosperity.

As scholar Susan M. Ryan has demonstrated, *Liberia* is, at its heart, a story about nation-building.<sup>145</sup> In creating this pro-colonization narrative, she explains, Hale had to “present a population sufficiently helpless that its success in the United States is impossible but sufficiently powerful that its later achievement—the founding of a new nation—is credible.”<sup>146</sup> In actuality, Hale’s characters seem to undergo an inexplicable transformation just by the act of their relocation to Africa alone. In Liberia, for instance, their language changes from the stereotypical grammar of plantation slaves to proper English.<sup>147</sup> Hale also gives her characters more respectable, middle-class family relationships in Liberia than they had in the United States, implying that African colonization could solve what was considered one of the worst consequences of the slave trade – the separation of the family unit.<sup>148</sup> Additionally, their transformation is described

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<sup>144</sup> See the introduction to the digital text online, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/proslav/halehp.html>.

<sup>145</sup> Ryan, “Errand into Africa,” 577.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 571.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 572.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 573.

through the language of gender as they, in their own words, become “more like men” in Africa.<sup>149</sup> And finally, Mr. Peyton’s former slaves are now given power over a new underclass – native Africans.<sup>150</sup> As Ryan notes, *Liberia*’s “portrayal of African colonization was far more representative of white colonizationists’ beliefs” than was *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.<sup>151</sup>

### **Colonization Sentiment in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin***

Although Stowe firmly claimed that she was “not a Colonizationist,” ACS rhetoric nevertheless seeped into her portrayal of Liberian colonization in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. This comes through most distinctly in the letter Harris writes to “one of his friends,” which comprises a significant portion of the novel’s forty-third chapter. As the scholar Joe Webb has noted, Harris’ fictional letter bares a striking similarity to an actual letter “by a man of color” published in the *African Repository* in September of 1851, almost seven months prior to the serial publication of Chapter 43.<sup>152</sup> The “man of color” was Augustus Washington, the Hartford daguerreotypist who would emigrate to Liberia two years later.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Quoted and discussed in *ibid*, 571. For a more in-depth discussion of the way colonization promotional material engaged notions of African-American males becoming more masculine in Liberia, see Dorsey, “A Gendered History of African Colonization.”

<sup>150</sup> Ryan, “Errand into Africa,” 575.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 562.

<sup>152</sup> Joe Webb, “The George Harris Letter and *African Repository*: New Sources for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” *ANQ* 21, no. 4 (Fall, 2008): 31.

<sup>153</sup> Washington and his daguerreotypes are discussed further in Chapter Five of this dissertation.



Both Harris' fictional letter and Washington's actual letter bare the same essential framework.<sup>154</sup> Washington begins his letter by describing how, "I have been unable to get rid of a conviction long since entertained and often expressed, that if the colored people of this country ever find a home on earth for the development of their manhood and intellect, it will first be in Liberia or some other part of Africa."<sup>155</sup> Similarly, Harris declares early in his letter that, "the desire and yearning of my soul is for an African *nationality*. I want a people that shall have a tangible, separate existence of its own" (italics in original).<sup>156</sup> Criticizing contemporary proposals of African-American emigration to Haiti, Harris notes that, "the race that formed the character of the Haytiens was a worn-out, effeminate one."<sup>157</sup> Harris' gendered language mirrors Washington's assertion that African Americans will be able to develop their "manhood" in and only in Liberia.<sup>158</sup>

Both Washington and Harris then move to an explanation of their reasons for considering emigrating, acknowledging that such a decision will be criticized by their peers.<sup>159</sup> "I am aware, now," writes Harris, "that I shall have you all against me; but, before you strike, hear me."<sup>160</sup> Similarly, Washington explains, "I come forward alone,

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 31-32.

<sup>156</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 540; partially quoted in Webb, "The George Harris Letter," 32.

<sup>157</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 540.

<sup>158</sup> Webb, "The George Harris Letter," 31.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>160</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 541; partially quoted in Webb, "The George Harris Letter," 32.

joining with friend and foe in moving the wheel of a great enterprise, which, though unpopular with those it designs to benefit, must result in the redemption and enfranchisement of the African race.”<sup>161</sup> Washington goes on to position himself somewhere between the seemingly opposed forces of colonization in Africa and abolition in the United States.<sup>162</sup> “During the past thirty years,” he writes, “two influential and respectable associations have arisen in our behalf, each claiming to be the most benevolent, and each seemingly opposed to the intentions and purposes of the other.”<sup>163</sup> Washington suggests that, despite whatever the faults of the colonizationists and the abolitionists, some good may have come of both sides:

In taking a liberal and more comprehensive view of the whole matter, we believe that whatever may have been the faults, inconsistencies and seeming opposition of either, both have been instrumental in doing much good in their own way; and under the guidance of an all-wise Providence, the labors, devotion and sacrifices of both will work together for good, and tend toward a grander and more sublime result that either association at present contemplates.<sup>164</sup>

Also referring to “the struggle between abolitionist and Colonizationist,” Harris makes a similar suggestion: “Is there not a God above all man’s schemes? May He not have overruled their designs, and founded for us a nation by them?”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Quoted in Webb, “The George Harris Letter,” 32.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Augustus Washington, “Thoughts on the American Colonization Society,” in Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 189; partially quoted in Webb, “The George Harris Letter,” 32.

<sup>164</sup> Augustus Washington, “Thoughts on the American Colonization Society,” 191; partially quoted in Webb, “The George Harris Letter,” 32.

<sup>165</sup> Quoted in Webb, “The George Harris Letter,” 32.

For both Washington and Harris, the establishment of Liberia is imagined as an opportunity to overturn racism in the United States.<sup>166</sup> When the United States, writes Washington, “shall have removed from her national escutcheon that plague-spot of the nation, she will do more than all others in sending the light of liberty and everlasting love into every portion of the habitable globe.”<sup>167</sup> Similarly, Harris writes of a time when “free, enlightened America will... wipe from her escutcheon that bar sinister which disgraces her among nations, and is as truly a curse to her as to the enslaved.”<sup>168</sup> If Stowe’s use of the unusual word “escutcheon” provides even more evidence that she was inspired by colonization writings appearing in the *Repository* when crafting the forty-third chapter of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, so does her use of the word “Elysium”.<sup>169</sup>

Near the end of his letter, Harris writes, “you will call me an enthusiast: you will tell me that I have not well considered what I am undertaking. But I have considered, and counted the cost. I go to *Liberia*, not as to an Elysium of romance, but as to *a field of hard work*. I expect to work with both hands,—to work *hard*; to work against all sorts of difficulties and discouragements; and to work till I die. This is what I go for; and in this I am quite sure I shall not be disappointed.”<sup>170</sup> Another letter in the *Repository*, this one written by Liberian settler-statesman Hilary Teague and published in July of 1851, ends

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>167</sup> Washington, “Thoughts on the American Colonization Society,” 188; partially quoted in Webb, “The George Harris Letter,” 33.

<sup>168</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 542; partially quoted in Webb, “The George Harris Letter,” 33.

<sup>169</sup> Webb, “The George Harris Letter,” 33.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted in *ibid*.

with the writer declaring that, “I do not say every thing here is just what it should be. I do not say Liberia is an *Elysium*—by no means, there is room for improvement.—But... Liberia is now and always shall be preferred to all other places” (italics added).<sup>171</sup> The parallels in the letters’ particular vocabulary as well as the construction of their arguments shows that in crafting Harris’ letter, Stowe clearly drew from the recent writings of both Washington and Teague that had been published in the *Repository*.

Stowe’s fictional letter from Harris, furthermore, imagines emigration to Liberia as part of the broader, divinely ordained African-American transformation about which colonizationists frequently wrote. One of the most crucial ways it conveys a sense of national destiny is through its language of nationalism. Speaking of Liberia, Harris declares that, “having gone through a preparatory stage of feebleness, this republic has, at last, become an acknowledged nation on the face of the earth,—acknowledged by both France and England. There it is my wish to go, and find myself a people.”<sup>172</sup> In wishing to “find himself a people” and imagining that he can uniquely join them within the boundaries of the Liberian republic, Harris engages with the social constructionist theory of nation. In his seminal text, *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson defined the nation as “an imagined political community.” It is imagined, he argued, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their

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<sup>171</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 541.

communion.”<sup>173</sup> The nation, according to Anderson, is both *limited* and a *community*. It is limited “because even the largest of them... has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations,” and it is “imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”<sup>174</sup> The language of Harris’ letter implies that a critical part of the transformation that Liberia offers for African-American emigrants is the opportunity of becoming a full-fledged citizen of a republic *like* the United States but separate and sovereign.

In Harris’ discussion of the life he will lead in Liberia and his reasons for going there, it becomes clear that the community which Harris imagines in Africa is defined not only by its sovereignty and by the recognition of other nations but also by an additional marker: its racial difference from the United States. “I think that the African race has peculiarities, yet to be unfolded in the light of civilization and Christianity, which, if not the same with those of the Anglo-Saxon, may prove to be, morally, of even a higher type,” Harris writes.<sup>175</sup> Acknowledging that, “full half the blood in my veins is hot and hasty Saxon,” he nevertheless declares that, “My sympathies are not for my father’s race, but for my mother’s... I have no wish to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them... It is with the oppressed, enslaved African race that I cast in my lot; and, if I

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<sup>173</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983, reprint 1991), 6.

<sup>174</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

<sup>175</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 542.

wished anything, I would wish myself two shades darker, rather than one lighter.”<sup>176</sup>

Such racialized rhetoric configures the meaning of nationhood not only for Liberia as an “imagined community” of blacks, but also for the United States as essentially white in its national identity. In this way, Harris’ desiring for an African nationality underscores the constant references to Africa as the “home” or “native land” of African Americans in colonization propaganda of the period.

In Stowe’s text, Harris stands out as the type of achieving African American that colonizationists saw as uniquely fitted for emigration to Liberia. More than any of Stowe’s other black characters, Harris shows signs of having risen above the chains of slavery that once held him back.<sup>177</sup> Even in popular depictions, such as that which appeared in a set of playing cards based on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (fig. 2.29), Harris appears urban and upwardly mobile. Unlike George Shelby’s slaves, characters in the novel who embody the nineteenth-century romantic racialist ideal of submissive and docile blacks, Harris represents an able and assertive character that is potentially threatening to American racial hierarchies.<sup>178</sup> Not only is he educated, middle-class, and mixed race, he is also militant. As Elizabeth Ammons has noted, Harris “represents a character potentially out of the author’s control: an articulate advocate for racial equality in the United States.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 540.

<sup>177</sup> Harris’ Western education is evident in the letter. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Hollis Robbins note, for example, the reference to an “Elysium” shows off his Classical learning by referring to “the mythological paradise of Greek and Roman myth.” See Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Hollis Robbins, eds., *The Annotated Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 457, annotation 23.

<sup>178</sup> Ammons, “Freeing the Slaves and Banishing the Blacks,” 238-39.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 238.

And Harris is not the only character that Stowe, attempting to reconcile the sufferings of slavery with readers' fears of free blacks, ships off to Africa at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Except for the seemingly uneducated slaves on the Shelby plantation, forever loyal to their master, all of the novel's black protagonists either die (as in the case of Uncle Tom) or emigrate. Even the once heathenish slave girl Topsy transforms under the refining influence of her white caretaker, Miss Orphelia, into a Christian woman of "so much intelligence, activity and zeal, and desire to do good in the world, that she was at last recommended, and approved, as a missionary to one of the stations in Africa."<sup>180</sup> So too, Eliza, the Harris children, Cassy, and Cassy's son – a "young man of energy" – all end up in Africa.<sup>181</sup> Emancipated from slavery and therefore no longer under white control, George Harris, Topsy, Eliza, the Harris children, Cassy, and Cassy's son all represent a challenge to American racial hierarchies, creating a problem that Stowe dealt with by removing them from the United States altogether.<sup>182</sup>

## Conclusion

Stowe's choice to send so many of her surviving black protagonists to Africa, despite her apparent opposition to the colonization movement, speaks to the challenge of abolitionists in the United States at mid-century: how to envision a future in which America's slaves were emancipated without confronting the reality of racial integration that emancipation would bring to American society. The visual culture of abolitionism

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<sup>180</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 544.

<sup>181</sup> See *ibid*; Ammons, "Freeing the Slaves and Banishing the Blacks," 238.

<sup>182</sup> Ammons, "Freeing the Slaves and Banishing the Blacks," 238.

was successful in furthering its aims by conveying and sensationalizing the cruelties of the slave trade, but it failed to create a vision of post-emancipation American life, where the specter of racial integration loomed large.

Although Stowe sought to convince readers of slavery's injustices through a series of vivid and discrete scenes of plantation life, the textual "pictures" she created for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the literal ones produced by Billings were sometimes in tension, and this conflict is nowhere better evidenced than in the book's last illustration. The nuanced and at times confused treatment of colonization in the text of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is lost in "Freedom to Africa", which mirrored ACS visual culture in celebrating Liberia as the ultimate homeland and place of redemption for formerly enslaved African Americans. The assumption of a colonization narrative colored not only Billings' illustration for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but also popular interpretations of the story that swept American and British culture. The novel was so popular in both countries that, by 1853, both sides of the Atlantic were well steeped in an *Uncle-Tom* mania defined by an explosion of visual and material culture, from music and minstrel shows to popular lithographs and spin-off stories.<sup>183</sup>

In some of these cultural derivatives, Stowe's cautions about Liberia were ignored and the story was presented as overtly pro-colonization. For example, one minstrel troupe performing at Ordway Hall in Boston in January of 1853 produced a version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "in a series of ten tableaux" claimed to be created "in strict accordance with the book". The show included music and Chromatrope views, which were produced by

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<sup>183</sup> For more on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in visual and popular culture, see Morgan, *Uncle Tom's Cabin as Visual Culture*; Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005).



overlapping two magic-lantern projections.<sup>184</sup> The final tableaux, like the end of the novel, focused on the white Kentucky planter and friend of Tom, George Shelby. In the novel, Shelby frees his slaves, but they are so devoted to him that they beg not to leave, and Shelby assures them they can stay on as hired laborers. The Ordway minstrel production, however, created a completely new ending for Shelby's slaves. In this adapted version, Shelby "liberates his slaves, and tells them of 'Liberia,' a free republic on the shores of Africa." At this point, the playbill reports, a "Hymn to Freedom" was sung, and then the show closed "with a picture of Liberia, a free African tribe visiting the city, which dissolves into a Chromo tropes, view of FREEDOM TO AFRICA."<sup>185</sup> Unlike the original novel, the Ordway production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* overtly and intentionally advocated the emigration of free blacks to Liberia, erasing the threat of emancipated slaves remaining on American soil.

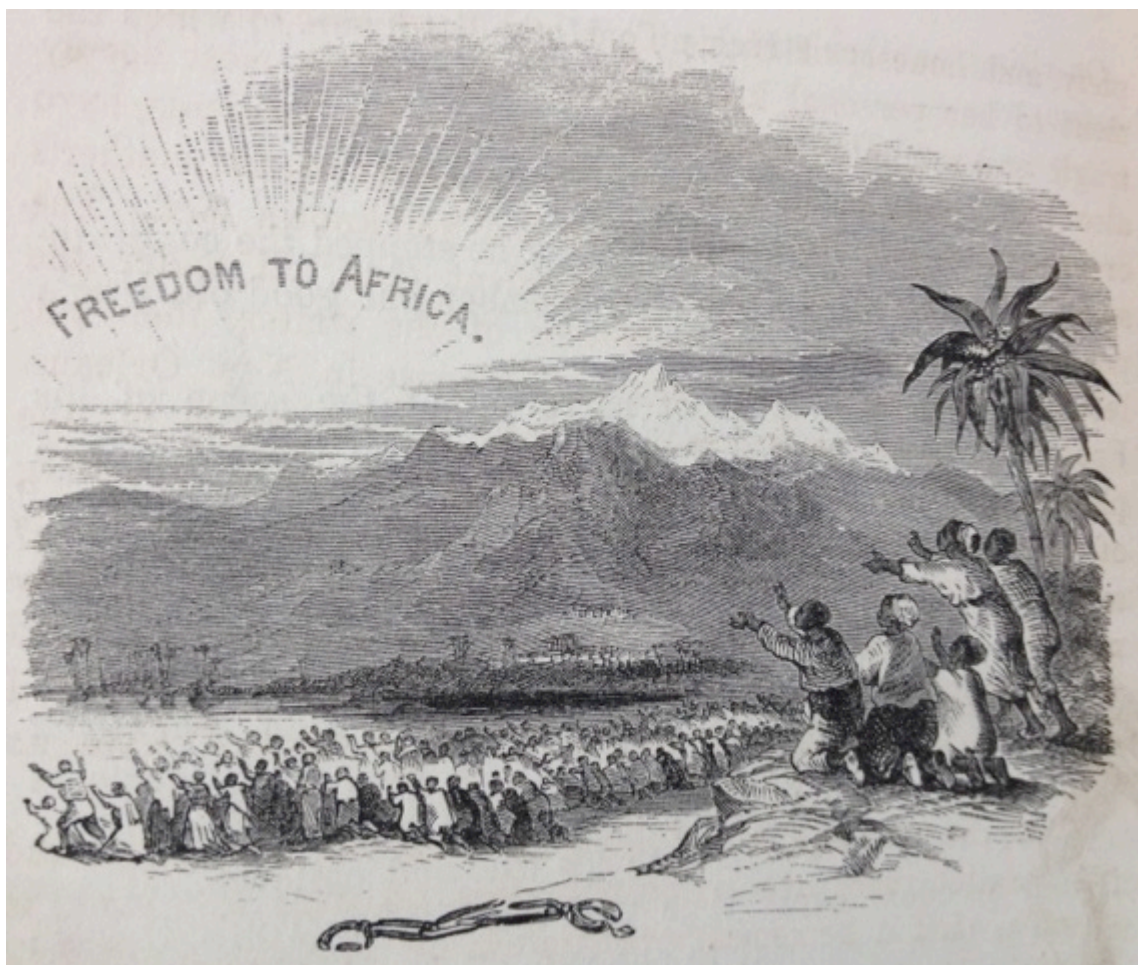
Considering that Jewett's deluxe edition of the novel had just been released in December, it is likely that the creators of the Ordway performance were inspired by Billings' final illustration, interpreting through it an overtly pro-colonization message in Stowe's text. The phrase "Freedom to Africa", which appears nowhere in the novel, was undoubtedly inspired by Billings' image, and regardless of Stowe's intentions, that illustration functioned to communicate clearly in a visual way what was portrayed more subtly in the story: that the best and most natural step for African Americans to take after being freed from slavery was emigration to Liberia.

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<sup>184</sup> Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania*, 68.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 69.

Historians have long been preoccupied with the ACS' mixed motivations regarding slavery, frequently positioning the organization at odds with the American abolitionist movement. Yet "Freedom to Africa" reveals a more complex and entangled relationship between colonization promoters and anti-slavery activists than scholars have traditionally acknowledged, a relationship that was negotiated through images as much as words. Just as abolitionists used visual culture to support their cause, the ACS depended on the power of images to promote its goal of resettling African Americans in Liberia. Although white American abolitionists advocated the emancipation of slaves in the United States, many were not comfortable with the idea of free blacks and whites living side by side. For this reason, the visual program undertaken by the ACS and its supporters was powerful and persuasive. It borrowed from the emotionally-charged iconography of abolitionists, but modulated that iconography to suggest Liberia as a "solution" to the atrocities of slavery and to the question of racial integration in America. In reappropriating stock imagery of the horrors of the Middle Passage from abolitionism's visual arsenal to suggest a pro-colonization narrative, Billings' scene of a long-awaited return to an African homeland reflects how the visual program employed by the ACS and its supporters to advocate the removal of free blacks from the United States seeped into popular culture, including abolitionist propaganda.



**Figure 2.1**

Hammatt Billings

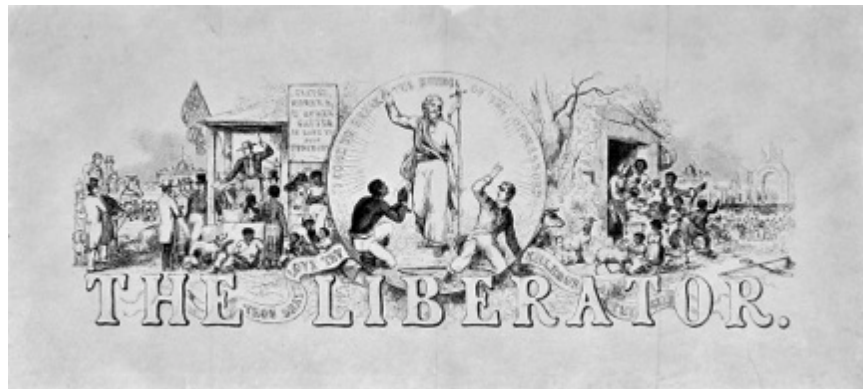
"Freedom to Africa"

Published in Harriett Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, Original Designs by Billings;

Engraved by Baker and Smith (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1853), 550

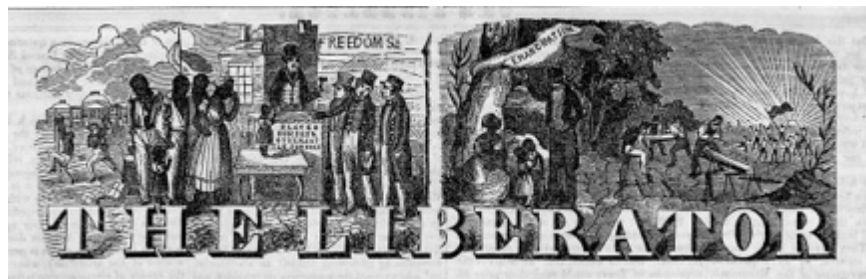
Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, University of Virginia Special Collections Library

Photo by author



**Figure 2.2**  
Hammatt Billings  
Masthead for *The Liberator*  
1850

Wood engraving  
Worcester Art Museum  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.3**  
David Claypoole Johnston  
Masthead for *The Liberator*  
1838

Wood engraving  
Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.4**  
Hammatt Billings  
Detail of fig. 2.2: Masthead for *The Liberator*  
1850

Wood engraving  
Worcester Art Museum  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)





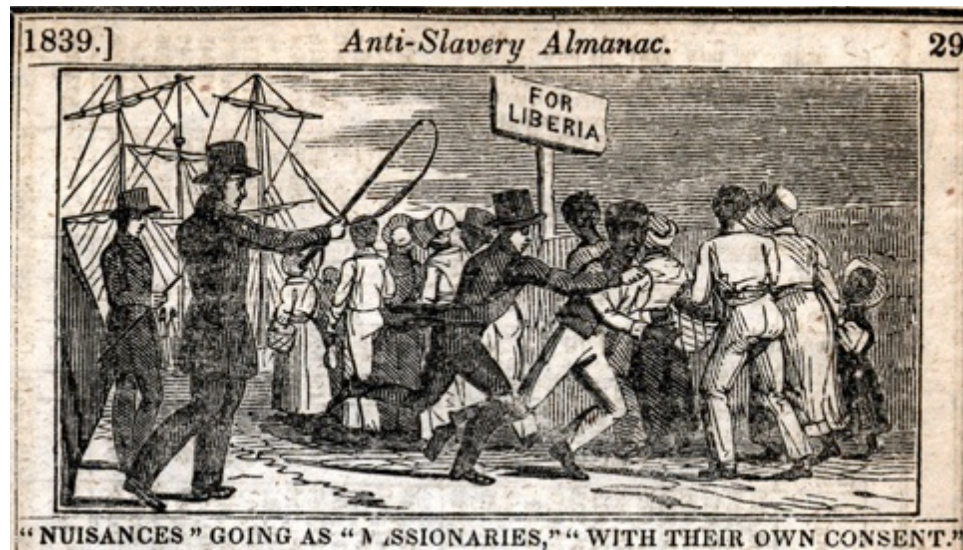
**Figure 2.5**

Hammatt Billings

“The fugitives are safe in a free land”

Published in Harriett Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, First Edition (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), 238.

[http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=utc/xml/stowe/gallery/utill52.xml&style=utc/xsl/utc\\_figs.xml&ent=utill527&n1=tpage&clear-stylesheet-cache=yes](http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=utc/xml/stowe/gallery/utill52.xml&style=utc/xsl/utc_figs.xml&ent=utill527&n1=tpage&clear-stylesheet-cache=yes) (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.6**

“‘Nuisances’ Going as ‘Missionaries,’ ‘With Their Own Consent’”

Published in *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1839* 1, no. 4 (New York: Published for the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839): 29

The Library Company of Philadelphia

<http://www.lcpimages.org/afro-americana/F44.htm> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.7**

Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd. & William Hackwood, modeler

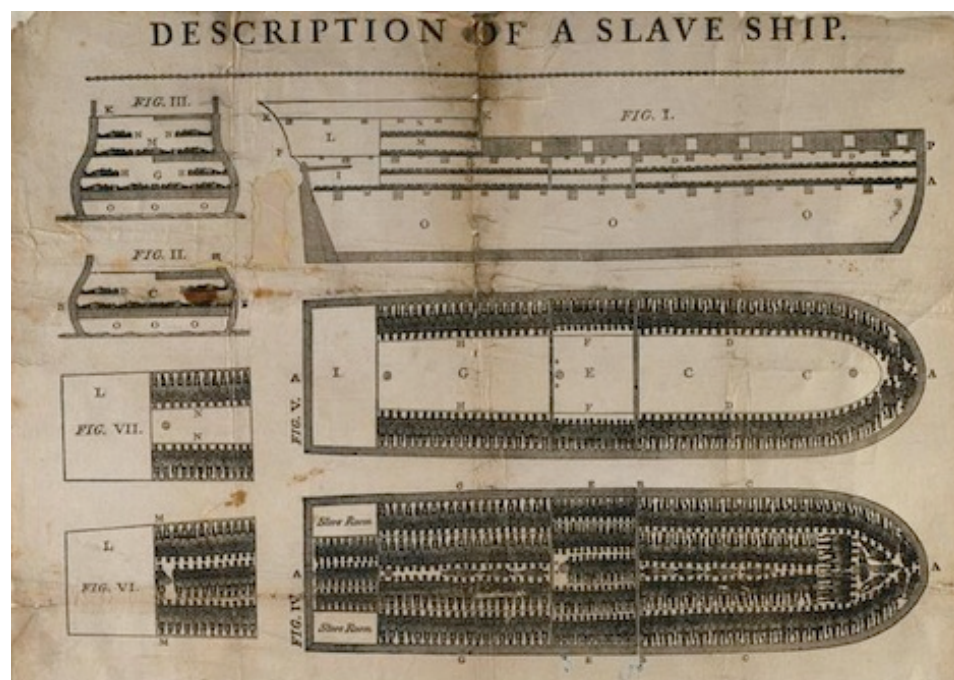
*Am I Not a Man and a Brother?*

1787

Black basalt on white jasper

Buten Museum of Wedgwood

[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.8**

James Phillips, printer (London)

*Description of a Slave Ship*

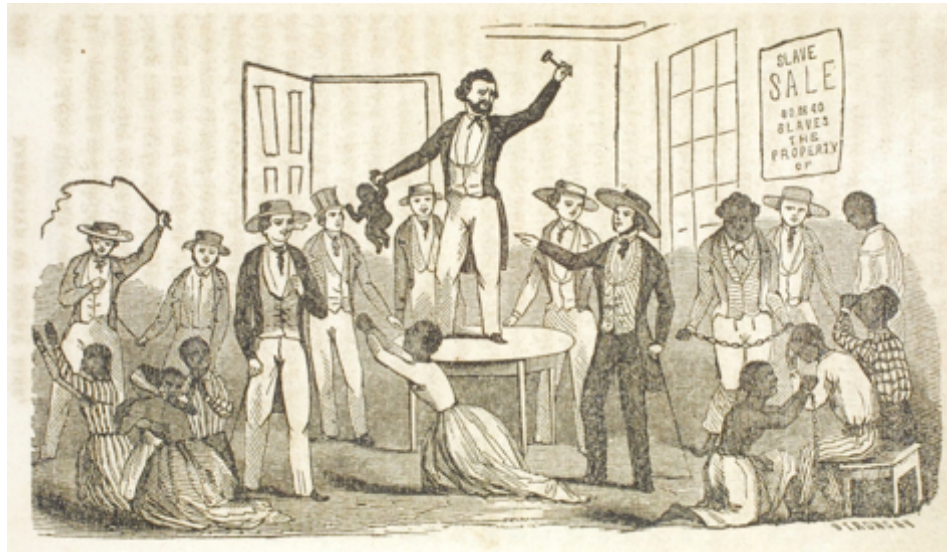
1789

Copper engraving

Hull City Museums and Art Galleries, Wilberforce House

[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)

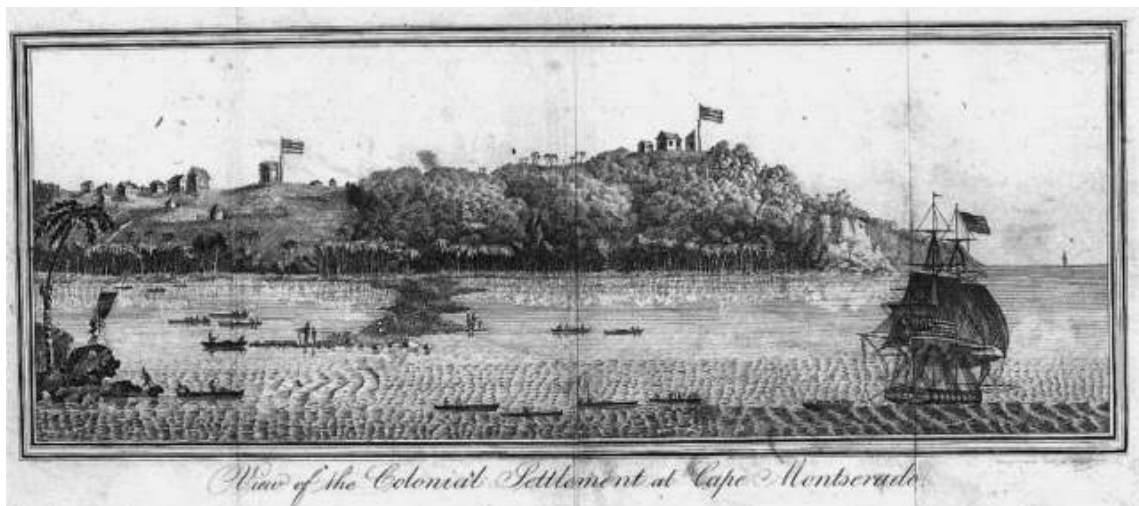




**Figure 2.9**

Published in Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: Published by the author, 1849), 201

Image Reference LCP-27, as shown on [www.slaveryimages.org](http://www.slaveryimages.org), compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library (accessed February 28, 2016)



**Figure 2.10**

“View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Montserado”

Published in the *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 4 (Jun., 1825): 129

Engraving

Journal Rare Book and Special Collections Department, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/images/montsera.jpg> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.11**

“A View of the Settlement at Cape Montserado in Africa”

Published in the *Third Annual Report of the Managers of the Colonization Society of the State of Connecticut* (New Haven: Baldwin and Treadway, 1830), cover

Wood engraving

Connecticut Historical Society

<http://connecticuthistory.org/liberian-independence-day/> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.12**

E. Weber & Co., lithographers (Baltimore)

Blank membership certificate for ACS auxiliaries with lithograph illustration entitled “Monrovia, Liberia”  
c. 1840s

Lithograph

Massachusetts Historical Society





**Figure 2.13**

Wagner & McGuigan, lithographers (Philadelphia)

*Monrovia From Bushrod's Island*

One of five views published in conjunction with the *Report of Commander W. F. Lynch, in Relation to his Mission to the Coast of Africa* (Senate Exec. Doc. 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Part 3, Vol. 1, Doc. 1, 329-89) 1853

Lithograph

Library Company of Philadelphia

Photo by author



**Figure 2.14**

John H. B. Latrobe, after a sketch by Dr. Samuel F. McGill

*View of Cape Palmas, Maryland in Liberia*

c. 1835

Maryland Historical Society

<http://www.mdhs.org/digitalimage/view-cape-palmas-maryland-liberia> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure. 2.15**

Wagner & McGuigan, lithographers (Philadelphia), after Seager, after John H. B. Latrobe  
*Cape Palmas*

One of five views that accompanied *Report of Commander W. F. Lynch, in Relation to his Mission to the Coast of Africa* (Senate Exec. Doc. 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Part 3, Vol. 1, Doc. 1, 329-89).

1853

Lithograph

Library Company of Philadelphia

Photo by author



**Figure 2.16**

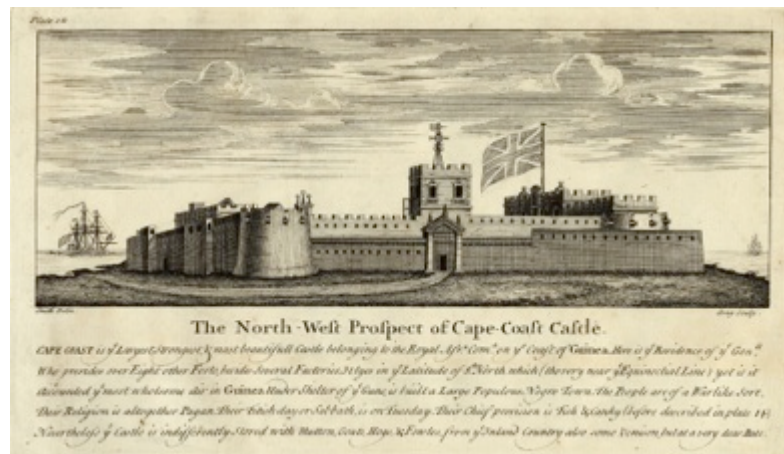
Lehman & Duval, lithographers (Philadelphia), after a sketch by Dr. Robert McDowell  
 "A View of Bassa Cove (in Liberia.)"

c. 1836

Lithograph

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2003670327/> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.17**

“The North-West Prospect of Cape-Coast Castle”

Plate 18 in William Smith, *Thirty different drafts of Guinea* (London, c. 1727)

Engraving

Image Reference mariners22, as shown on [www.slaveryimages.org](http://www.slaveryimages.org), compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library



**Figure 2.18**

John Raphael Smith, engraver; after George Morland  
*Slave Trade*

1814, after painting made in 1788

Mezzotint engraving

British Museum

[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed December 29, 2015)





**Figure 2.19**  
 François-Auguste Biard  
*The Slave Trade (Slaves on the West Coast of Africa)*  
 c. 1833  
 Oil on canvas  
 Hull City Museums and Art Galleries, Wilberforce House  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.20**  
 P.S. Duval & Co., lithographers (Philadelphia), after James Queen  
 Pennsylvania Colonization Society lifetime membership certificate with illustration entitled "View of Monrovia"  
 c. 1856  
 Lithograph  
 The Historical Society of Pennsylvania  
 Photo by author



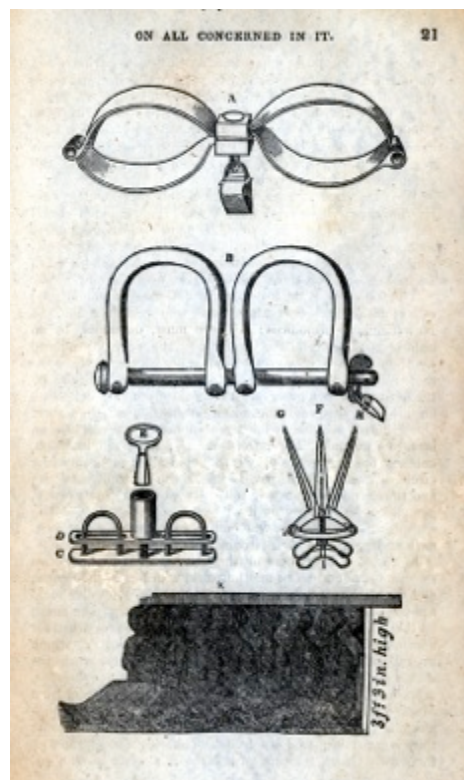
**Figure 2.21**

Henry Stone, engraver

Detail of fig. 3.2, American Colonization Society Lifetime Membership Certificate: Official Seal of the American Colonization Society  
c.1833

Gilder-Lehrman Collection

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/community/tags/featured-primary-source?page=8> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.22**

“Middle Passage: Instruments of Restraint and Torture”

Published in Lydia Child, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836), 21

The Library Company of Philadelphia

<http://www.lcpimages.org/afro-americana/F52.htm> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.23**

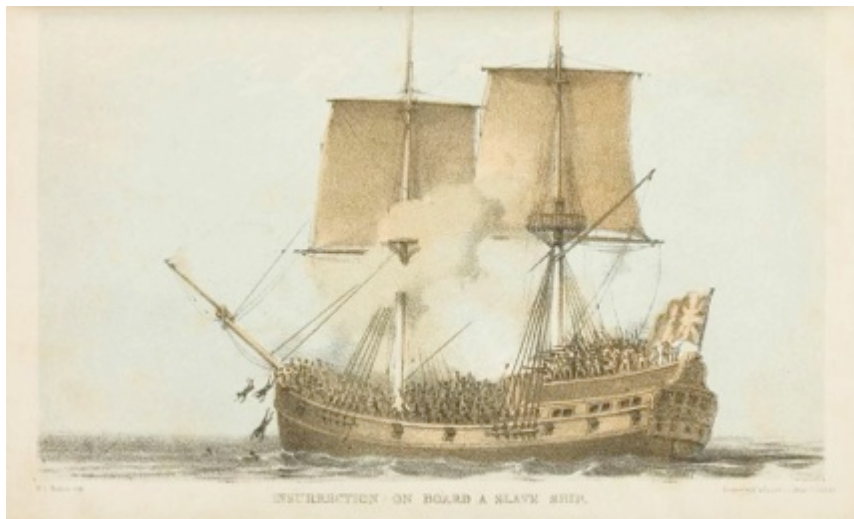
“The Africans of the Slave Bark ‘Wildfire’”

Published in *Harper's Weekly* 4, no. 179 (Jun. 2, 1860): 344

Engraving

Library Company of Philadelphia

<http://www.lcpimages.org/afro-americana/F241.htm> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.24**

W. L. Walton, lithographer; A. La Riviere, printer (London)

“Insurrection on Board a Slave Ship”

Published in William Fox, *A Brief History of the Wesleyan Missions on the Western Coast of Africa* (London: Aylott and Jones, 1851), facing page 116

Color Lithograph

Library Company of Philadelphia

[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed December 8, 2015)

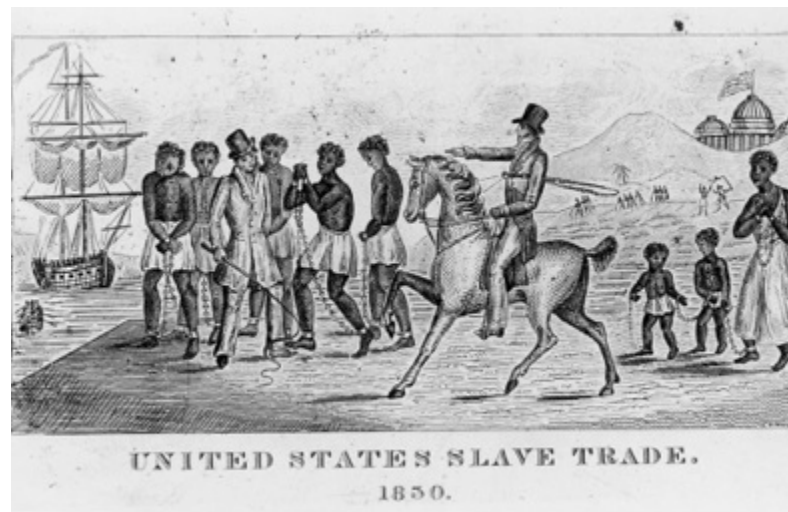




**Figure 2.25**  
 Joseph Mallord William Turner  
*Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)*  
 1840  
 Oil on canvas  
 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.26**  
 Illustration published in the *Slave's Friend* 1, no. X (New York: R. G. Williams, for the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836): 14  
 Wood engraving  
 Library Company of Philadelphia  
<http://www.lcpimages.org/afro-americana/F81.htm> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.27**

*United States Slave Trade 1830*

c. 1830

Engraving on copper

The New-York Historical Society

[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 2.28**

“The Ship Mary Caroline Stevens”

Published in the *New-York Colonization Journal* 7, no. 5 (May, 1857): 1

Reprinted from microform edition





**Figure 2.29**  
"George"

One in a set of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* playing cards published by W. & S. B. Ives  
c. 1852

University of Virginia Special Collections  
Photo by author

### Chapter Three

#### Civilizing Savage Africa: Mapping Empire in Liberia

In 1830, the first stand-alone map of Liberia was made available for American consumers under the title *Map of the West Coast of Africa, from Sierra Leone to Cape Palmas; including the Colony of Liberia* (fig. 3.1). Produced by the Philadelphia map publisher Anthony Finley, the map was based on the “surveys and observations” of Jehudi Ashmun, one of the U.S. government’s first agents in Liberia (1822-28) and in effect colonial governor. Marking the spatial and symbolic center of the image is the colonial capital of Monrovia. Other early settlements along the Saint Paul River are visible nearby, such as Millsburg and Caldwell. Moving away from this central region of American settlement, indigenous villages and trading posts dot the coast for a significant distance to both the north and the south. In contrast, the landscape to the east is blank, acknowledging a vast unknown African interior. A “Remarks” legend describes the character of the coast and its inhabitants, while an inset plan view of Monrovia locates the city’s principal buildings and landmarks. With its neatly gridded urban layout, Christian churches, and defensive fort, Monrovia here presents a striking contrast to the surrounding landscape, whose order is defined by the undulating contours of rivers and coastline rather than populated rectilinear blocks. Open land extending down the arm of Cape Mesurado suggests the capacity for further colonial settlement, while a “Proposed Town” situated about 80 miles south of the capital indicates the imminent expansion of Western settlement into this African frontier.

Preserved at the Library of Congress and in several other American archival

collections, *Map of the West Coast of Africa* will be easily recognizable to historians of the ACS and Liberian settlement.<sup>1</sup> With its use of color, inset plan of Monrovia, and otherwise rich detail, the map has become one of the most widely reproduced examples of colonization visual culture, frequently appearing as an illustration in present-day scholarship on these topics.<sup>2</sup> In such scholarly works, the map has been perpetually treated as a straightforward representation of geography; rarely have the authors reproducing it analyzed the image itself. In using Finley's map merely as illustration, scholars have overlooked its power as a critical text revealing the assumptions and motivations that guided colonization's early promoters. Far from a neutral representation, *Map of the West Coast of Africa* was a carefully constructed tool used by the ACS to promote its emigration project.

In his letter at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, George Harris imagines the colonization of Liberia as the first step in a grand project to transform the African continent. "Let us, then, all take hold together, with all our might, and see what we can do with this new enterprise, and the whole splendid continent of Africa opens before us and our children," he declares. Emphasizing the role of the United States in this noble endeavor, Harris' writes that, "*our nation* shall roll the tide of civilization and Christianity along its shores, and plant there mighty republics, that, growing with the

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<sup>1</sup> Finley's map of the West Coast of Africa was among the earliest maps made of Liberia. It is also the oldest of at least thirteen examples made between 1830 and 1870 that survive today at the Library of Congress. Most of these are printed, though a few examples are hand-drawn. These maps were produced by the ACS, the U.S. Navy, and individual travelers to the region.

<sup>2</sup> Recent titles that reproduce Finley's map include Everill, *Abolition and Empire*; Clegg, *The Price of Liberty*; McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*.

rapidity of tropical vegetation, shall be for all coming ages.”<sup>3</sup> Harris’ vision of planting “civilization and Christianity” on the coast of an African landscape covered in “tropical vegetation” mirrored the optimistically noble rhetoric of colonization promoters during the first decades of settlement. One of the ACS’ stated purposes in colonizing Liberia was “to spread civilization, sound morals, and true religion throughout the Continent of Africa.”<sup>4</sup> This mission was reflected in the Society’s official seal, which appeared on a lifetime ACS membership certificate issued in the 1830s (fig. 3.2).<sup>5</sup> The seal depicts a three-masted ship approaching the shores of Africa, the Eastern sun rising in the background. In the sky above is an eagle holding a scroll that says “Liberia”. At the top of the seal are the words “Lux in Tenebris”, Latin for “Light in Darkness”, and underneath is the inscription, “AM: COL: SOC: A. D. 1816”. The seal is flanked on both sides by vegetal decoration. The leaves on the left represent Eastern Hemlock or another American plant, while those on the right suggest tropical African vegetation. The presence of these two plants together was perhaps meant to symbolize the civilizing encounter between Americans and Africans that ACS organizers hoped Liberian settlement would engender.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that during the first decades of Liberian settlement, a distinct iconography emerged in colonization visual culture. Emphasizing

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<sup>3</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Illustrated Edition, 541.

<sup>4</sup> *Remarks on the Colonization of the Western Coast of Africa, by the Free Negroes of the United States, and the Consequent Civilization of Africa and Suppression of the Slave Trade* (New York: W. L. Burroughs’ Steam Power Press, 1850), 6.

<sup>5</sup> This date is approximate. As of 1842, anyone who donated \$30 to the ACS was considered a “life-member” and would have been presented with this or a similar certificate. See “Notices”, *The Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (Washington: J. & G. S. Gideon, Printers, 1842), 25.

Liberia's identity as a coast and frequently including a three-masted ship, these images appropriated recognizable abolitionist iconography to suggest that emigration could "reverse" the traumas of the Middle Passage upon African Americans. The frequent inclusion of a single palm tree and the peripheral presence of native Africans in these scenes, I also argued, participated in the ACS' efforts to minimize the seriousness of the two greatest challenges to early settlement: tropical disease and native hostility.

Building on these ideas and using Finley's *Map of the West Coast of Africa* as its anchor, this chapter further examines the landscape of Liberian settlement, considering how the ACS' mission to "civilize" Africa was articulated in terms of space, geography, and landscape. Produced less than a decade after the first African-American emigrants reached Liberia only to be confronted by hostility from local Africans and high rates of tropical disease, the map participated in a strategic effort by the ACS to convince American observers that Liberian colonization was successfully Christianizing and imposing order over an apparently wild and "long-benighted" African landscape. I situate Finley's map within a broader set of nineteenth-century cartographic representations of the Liberian landscape, considering how these images concealed the violence of settlement and validated the ACS's claims to contested territories. Ultimately, I argue that colonization promoters used maps to envision the transformation of the African landscape according to the ideals of a nascent nineteenth-century American imperialism.

### **Landscape, Empire, and Liberian Colonization**

In using the term "landscape", I refer neither exclusively to visual representations of Liberia nor to the actual, physical place, although both of these are important in my

analysis. Rather, I want to think about the Liberian landscape centrally as an *idea*. While this idea certainly animated both the construction of the actual settler built environment and its subsequent representation in colonization print culture, it also served as a form of discourse, concealing the violence of settlement, asserting power over contested territories, and responding to antebellum American anxieties about the prospect of racial integration in the United States. In conceptualizing the term “landscape” in this way, my analysis draws from the work of scholars such as W. J. T. Mitchell and Jill Casid. In his now-classic essay, “The Imperial Landscape”, Mitchell argued for a definition of landscape not as “a genre of art but a medium”; in other words, Mitchell divorced “landscape” from its classification as *object* (as in landscape painting), redefining the term as a *process* through which imperial power is exercised, specifically nineteenth-century European imperial power.<sup>6</sup> Building on the theorization of landscape conceptualized by Mitchell and others, Casid offers an analysis based on an expanded set of sources: popular visual culture, maps, and travel literature. For Casid, the imperialization of landscape is inseparable from the hybrid practices of actual gardening that shaped and emerged out of eighteenth-century European imperialism in the Caribbean, encoding notions about slavery, heterosexual reproduction, and miscegenation.<sup>7</sup>

The extent to which Liberian colonization participated in a nascent nineteenth-century American imperialism is a matter of debate among historians. Traditional

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<sup>6</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, Second Edition, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, 2002), 5, 5-34.

<sup>7</sup> Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

narratives of American history identify the Spanish-American War of 1898 as marking the start of U.S. imperialism. Most historians today, however, would acknowledge that, at least in terms of a federal territorial expansionist policy, American imperialism has much older roots, dating back to the Louisiana Purchase and moving into the Mexican-American War of 1846-47 and the period of vast U.S. territorial acquisition that began during that decade. Liberia occupies an understudied and ambiguous place in America's expansionist history due its location outside of (and indeed, an ocean away from) U.S. borders, as well as to the fact that it was established not by the U.S. government per se but by a private philanthropic organization. As Eugene S. Van Sickle has noted, "the colonization movement is rarely viewed in the context of American expansion," and indeed, traditional scholarship on Liberia has been reticent to view its establishment as related to American imperial ambitions in any way.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, the ACS' primary goal in establishing Liberia was different from that of most state-led imperial projects. Rather than seeking to expand American political borders or extract African economic resources, the ACS was centrally concerned with removing African Americans from the United States, though the reasoning behind this goal varied among colonization supporters, who held different views on how to solve the slavery "problem".

Yet despite the differences between Liberian colonization and traditional imperial projects, scholars have recently begun to acknowledge that the movement nevertheless participated in a form of early American imperialism, particularly when that term is expanded to include imperialisms of culture. Bronwen Everill has argued that in the

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<sup>8</sup> Van Sickle, "Reluctant Imperialists," 107.

colonization of both Liberia and Sierra Leone, “humanitarian intervention” – specifically anti-slavery activism – was deeply entangled with other forms of state-led and cultural imperialism.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Emily Conroy-Krutz has recently demonstrated that the early nineteenth century saw the emergence of a religiously motivated “Christian imperialism” led largely by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.<sup>10</sup> Conroy-Krutz locates Liberia as one of the sites toward which this Christian imperialism was directed.<sup>11</sup>

It is through this broader lens of American cultural imperialism that I wish to consider the process of Liberian place creation during the first four decades of colonization. From the beginning, the ACS and its constituents had to grapple with the fact that the West African territories that they were attempting to claim for black American emigrants were already inhabited by a large population of Africans, many of whom did not welcome the newcomers. Alongside and in conjunction with a range of different actors – including settlers, missionaries, U.S. government agents, commercial cartographers, and lithographers – colonizationists promoted a vision of the Liberian landscape that concealed the violence of settlement and that validated their claims to what were in fact contested territories. It was ultimately through the language of transplantation – that is, recreating an American setting in Africa – that the ACS and settlers alike imposed a form of American cultural imperialism over the indigenous

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<sup>9</sup> Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); for a discussion of Christian imperialism and empires, see pp. 6-13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-78.



landscapes of nineteenth-century coastal West Africa. As this chapter asserts, maps became an especially important tool through which colonization promoters envisioned the transformation of Africa's landscape according to American ideals of urban, agricultural, and political development.

### **The Authoritative Power of Maps**

The importance of maps in the ACS' emigration project is suggested by Sartain's portrait of Elliott Cresson, discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation (fig. 1.1). Holding a map of Bassa Cove, Cresson symbolically asserts his mastery over the Bassa territory being settled by black American Quakers through the efforts of Pennsylvania and New York colonizationists. Furthermore, Sartain's inclusion of a map within this painting – an image within an image – highlights how nineteenth-century viewers understood these two types of visual culture differently. Following the trends of upper-middle class American portraiture in this period, Sartain's composition is self-consciously theatrical. The neoclassical column, heavy drapery, and maritime background signal Cresson's elite social status more than they indicate an actual setting. Similarly, the African ethnographic artifacts, books, and map of Bassa Cove in the foreground are props signaling Cresson's character and interests.

If nineteenth-century viewers were aware that this portrait was on some level staged – as they most certainly were – their understanding of the Bassa Cove map was different. In this period, cartography was understood to be an exact science, presenting an

unbiased and unquestioned representation of a given space.<sup>12</sup> Scholars Thomas J. Bassett and Philip W. Porter have noted this “authoritative power of maps”.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the presumed scientific precision of maps led to the repeated cartographic representation of inaccurate information, such as the perpetual inclusion in nineteenth-century maps of West Africa of the Kong Mountains, a range that in fact did not exist.<sup>14</sup>

My analysis of Finley’s *Map of the West Coast of Africa* takes the assumption that although maps may appear to be scientific, unbiased representations of space, in reality they are highly constructed and refractive. They are *constructed* in the sense that their authors make a series of choices about what features to include or leave out, about which parts of the landscape to centralize or make peripheral, about what information to communicate through text, and about a myriad of other factors that result in the final product. In the words of Bassett and Porter, “maps are social constructions that are highly rhetorical in nature.”<sup>15</sup> Maps are *refractive* because the meaning of the geographical and spatial information they present will vary depending on the perspectives of both creator and viewer; in a sense, a map acts as a lens through which the realities of place and space might be manipulated and reframed for a viewing audience. As J. B. Harley has written, maps work “to frame their message in the context of an audience.”<sup>16</sup> Rather than being

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas J. Bassett and Philip W. Porter, “‘From the Best Authorities’: The Mountains of Kong in the Cartography of West Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 3 (1991): 399.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> For more on this topic, see *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> J. B. Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” *Cartographica* 26, no. 2 (Spring, 1989): 11, in Bassett and Porter, “‘From the Best Authorities,’” 399.

neutral or purely scientific, they reflect the particular assumptions and motivations of their creators, and they are in turn understood within the particular contexts in which they are received. In being constructed and contextual, maps are essentially political; that is, they participate in articulating power relationships. Far from a neutral representation of the Liberian landscape, *Map of the West Coast of Africa* was constructed directly from information about Liberia being circulated by the ACS. In turn, the Society used the map's "authoritative power" as a witness of its claims about the success of the young colony on Africa's shores.

### **Production and Circulation of *Map of the West Coast of Africa***

Anthony Finley (c. 1790-1840) was a map publisher working in the 1820s and 1830s out of Philadelphia, the center of American commercial cartography at the time. Though little is known about him, it is clear from the contributors noted in his atlases that he worked in the same circles as more prominent Philadelphia mapmakers of the period, such as Henry S. Tanner and Samuel A. Mitchell.<sup>17</sup> These commercial cartographers worked in a period that saw a rapidly growing popular demand for maps, as Americans sought more information about both the territories the United States was newly acquiring in the West and the world beyond America's borders. This growth of commercial cartography was also made possible by innovations in printing technologies that allowed maps to be produced faster and cheaper than ever before. Like other successful map publishers of this period, Finley capitalized on the popular American interest in U.S. and

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<sup>17</sup> Walter W. Ristow, *American Maps and Mapmakers: Commercial Cartography in the Nineteenth Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), 268.

world geography by compiling atlases as well as publishing single maps. His *A New General Atlas*, illustrating the geography of the United States as well as numerous regions of the world, first appeared in 1824 and was republished several times over the following decade.<sup>18</sup> Starting in 1831, the *Atlas* included *Map of the West Coast of Africa*.

Like other commercial map producers of his time, Finley frequently borrowed information from previously published maps in creating his designs.<sup>19</sup> In constructing *Map of the West Coast of Africa*, Finley drew from the only other published map of Liberia available at the time, a fold-out version that appeared in Jehudi Ashmun's *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823* (1826, fig. 3.3).<sup>20</sup> A white clergyman, Ashmun had been stationed in Liberia as a representative of both the Society and the U.S. government, serving as de-facto governor of the colony from 1822 until his death in 1828.<sup>21</sup> In 1825, he conducted a survey of Monrovia and the surrounding coastal region, the results of which informed the 1826 map. That image presents the section of African coast claimed by the ACS as Liberian territory by May of 1825. Receiving the most detail is Monrovia, represented by a gridded street plan running eight blocks long by four blocks wide (fig. 3.4). South of the city, neatly divided plots of land extending down the arm of Cape Mesurado represent the farm space allocated for

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 268.

<sup>20</sup> J. Ashmun, *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823* (Washington, D.C.: Way & Gideon, 1826).

<sup>21</sup> For an early pro-colonization biography of Ashmun's life and activities in Liberia, see Ralph Randolph Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun, Late Colonial Agent in Liberia. With an Appendix Containing Extracts From his Journal and Other Writings; With a Brief Sketch of the Life of Rev. Lott Cary* (Washington: James C. Dunn, 1835).

settlers' use.<sup>22</sup> North of Monrovia at the mouth of the Saint Paul River, an area identified as a "New Colonial Settlement" contains the first outlines of a grid plan (fig. 3.5). This was to become the city of Caldwell, located three miles inland on the south side of the Saint Paul, just east of Stockton Creek.<sup>23</sup>

Finley's 1830 map clearly drew from Ashmun's published survey in delineating Liberia's coastal geography and Monrovia's gridded street plan, but it contained far more detail than had been provided in the earlier version and bears witness to the growth of American presence in the region that had taken place in just four years (fig. 3.6). In Finley's map, Monrovia's urban plan has noticeably expanded, and in rendering it, the cartographer has included the locations of prominent buildings and public spaces, such as the Baptist and Methodist churches, the town market, and a public garden. Beyond Cape Mesurado, Caldwell is clearly marked, as are the other early settlements of Stockton and Millsburg (fig. 3.1). Unlike Ashmun's 1826 version, Finley's map is replete with details about the landscape of the coast and the various African groups living there, including written descriptions. Using different colors to distinguish the ACS's territorial claims from those of Great Britain to the north and the region that would soon comprise the MSCS's separate colonial settlement to the south, Finley highlights the presence of three main ethnic populations within Liberia itself. Inhabiting the region around Monrovia is the "Dey Tribe", numbering six to eight thousand people and described by Finley as

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<sup>22</sup> Settlers were promised farmland of various sizes depending on their sex and family size. Male and female heads of household could receive 20 acres of land, plus 10 more for a wife (in the case of male household heads) and five per child, and unmarried women were eligible for 10 acres. See McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, 167 (note 6).

<sup>23</sup> An 1867 map of the mouth of the Saint Paul River clearly identifies the geographical location of Caldwell, noting that it is three miles from the River's mouth. See *St. Pauls River, Liberia at its Mouth, Surveyed by Capt<sup>n</sup>. Kelly, Drawn by H.R.W. Johnson*, 1867, Endicott & Co. Lith., Library of Congress catalogue number 96684981, Geography and Maps Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

“indolent & inoffensive.” Just to the north are the “Feys or Veys” (Vai). With a population of twelve to fifteen thousand, they are described as “an active warlike and proud people.” And occupying the stretch of coast to Monrovia’s south are the “Bassas”, numbering 125,000 and described as “generally domestic, industrious and averse to war.”

The exact circumstances surrounding the production of *Map of the West Coast of Africa* are not clear. Aside from Ashmun’s 1826 map, the most obvious source for the information provided in Finley’s version is a letter from Ashmun published in the November, 1827 issue of the *African Repository*. For example, Finley’s descriptions of the Dei, Vai, and Bassa are clearly derived from Ashmun’s letter, which provides the same population estimates for these three groups and describes them with almost the exact same language. According to Ashmun, the Dei were “indolent, pacific, and inoffensive in their character: but equally treacherous, profligate, and cruel, when their passions are stirred, with the Veys.”<sup>24</sup> The “Fey or Vey tribe”, on the other hand, was “active, warlike, proud, and, with that of all their neighbours, deceitful.”<sup>25</sup> The Bassa, finally, were “domestic and industrious, many of them even laborious in their habits,” claimed Ashmun, noting also the “infrequency of wars among them.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the descriptions of Liberia’s geography provided in the “Remarks” section of Finley’s map come directly from the same source, as do the locations of many of the indigenous villages that appear on the map.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “Missions to Africa,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 9 (Nov., 1827): 259.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 260.

While Finley seems to have based the map largely on information derived from Ashmun's 1826 town survey and 1827 letter published in the *Repository*, less certain is Finley's source for the specific locations of buildings and landmarks in Monrovia, as this information had never before been published. There is no record suggesting that the ACS directly commissioned the production of Finley's map, but this is certainly possible and would explain how Finley knew the exact locations of Monrovia's prominent buildings and public areas, as well as some of the other geographical details that appear on the map. What is clear is that, once *Map of the West Coast of Africa* was published, the Society quickly sought to reproduce and circulate it, seeing it as a powerful tool to promote its cause. It appeared, for instance, in the beginning of the ACS' published annual reports for both 1830 and 1831.<sup>28</sup>

The same year that Finley published *Map of the West Coast of Africa*, he apparently produced another, similar map showing the entire African continent with an inset view of Liberia. In March of 1831, the ACS advertised this latter version in the *African Repository*.<sup>29</sup> According to that notice, this map of the African continent included smaller views not only of Liberia but also of Egypt and the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>30</sup> For some reason this version seems not to have survived in the archives, so its exact appearance is not known. However, the maps of the African continent and Egypt (as well

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<sup>28</sup> See *The Thirteenth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Washington: James C. Dunn, 1830); *The Fourteenth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Washington: James C. Dunn, 1831).

<sup>29</sup> "Finley's Map of Africa," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 7, no. 1 (Mar., 1831): 15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

as Liberia) that Finley included in his 1831 *Atlas* suggest how the various components of this more elaborate version appeared (figs. 3.7, 3.8).<sup>31</sup> Additionally, several other American map publishers who released continental maps of Africa in the mid-nineteenth century seem to have been working from this now-lost version by Finley, and their maps provide a good sense of how Finley's probably appeared. One example in particular, produced by the prominent Philadelphia map publisher Henry S. Tanner in 1848, has Finley's name as well as the date of 1830 in its copyright, suggesting its design was directly based on the version described in the *Repository* (fig. 3.9). Similarly, *Map of the West Coast of Africa* and its inset street plan of Monrovia became the basis for numerous other maps of Liberia subsequently produced by commercial publishers, the ACS, and the U.S. Navy. A good example is an 1845 ACS map produced by Randolph Coyle (fig. 3.10).

### **Crafting a Moral Geography of Africa**

The *Repository* advertisement for Finley's closely-related, now-lost African map claimed that it represented "all the latest and very interesting discoveries in African Geography."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, *Map of the West Coast of Africa* situates Liberian colonization within a broader American and European project to chart Africa's seemingly vast and mysterious landscape. Cartography had played an important role in the history of Western contact with Africa since Europeans started exploring the region in the fifteenth

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<sup>31</sup> Anthony Finley, *A New General Atlas* (Philadelphia: Clark & Raser, printers, 1831), 58, 59.

<sup>32</sup> "Finley's Map of Africa," 15.



century.<sup>33</sup> The earliest European maps of Africa often depicted exotic animals and people thought to be representative of various tribes on the continent, reflecting Europe's fascination with and desire to categorize the various animal and human inhabitants of a largely unknown landscape. A good example is a Dutch map made in 1644 by Willem Janszoon Blaeu (fig. 3.11).<sup>34</sup> By the eighteenth century, European maps of Africa increasingly reflected Europe's trading interests there. A 1710 map by Herman Moll, a German-born cartographer working in England, clearly identifies regions important to European trade, such as the Grain Coast, the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, and the Slave Coast (fig. 3.12).<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Moll includes inset views of important British trading outposts, such as Cape Coast Castle in present-day Ghana and the Fort of Good Hope at the continent's Southernmost tip.<sup>36</sup>

Maps of Africa made in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflect the West's growing interest in exploring the continent's lesser-known interior regions. This interest was reflected in the activities of the British Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, also known as the African Association. Founded in Britain in 1788 by a group of individuals that included scientists and naturalists, politicians and antislavery advocates like William Wilberforce, and merchants and bankers with a commercial interest in Africa, the African Association's express goal was

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<sup>33</sup> For more on this topic, see Andreas Massing, "Mapping the Malagueta Coast: A History of the Lower Guinea Coast, 1460-1510 through Portuguese Maps and Accounts," *History in Africa* 36 (2009): 331-65.

<sup>34</sup> Princeton University, "Evolution of the Map of Africa," accessed December 15, 2015, [http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual\\_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-continent/continent.html](http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-continent/continent.html).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

to further knowledge of the continent's geography.<sup>37</sup> Many of the African Association's members were motivated by the goal of gaining control of the gold trade. By the late eighteenth century, gold was one of Europe's most important commercial interests in West Africa.<sup>38</sup> As Bassett and Porter explain, "for centuries, monarchs and merchants sought to discover the source of the gold that reached the Mediterranean ports of North Africa via trans-Saharan caravans."<sup>39</sup> This quest for gold had been among the major reasons that Portuguese vessels began exploring the West African coast in the late fifteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Three decades later, Europe had gained considerable knowledge of coastal West Africa, but regions farther inland remained less well known.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the gold trade was worth a million pounds a year and was completely controlled by North African traders.<sup>42</sup> Many members of the African Association believed that discovering the direction of the flow of the Niger could lead to the establishment of an alternate route for transporting gold to North Africa.<sup>43</sup>

In 1795, the organization commissioned a young Scottish surgeon named Mungo Park to make an exploration of far Western Africa, known as Senegambia, a journey that resulted in Park's finding that the Niger flowed east as well as other new information

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<sup>37</sup> Bassett and Porter, "From the Best Authorities," 375.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 374.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 374-75.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 375.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

about the area.<sup>44</sup> In 1797, Park published his *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, which went through multiple editions in both Britain and the United States, inspiring other missionary-exploratory travel narratives set in West Africa.<sup>45</sup> The success of Park's narrative on both sides of the Atlantic highlights the popular, scientific, and commercial interest in West African geography that would continue to grow in the following decades. James Rennell's *A Map shewing the Progress of Discovery & Improvement, in the Geography of North Africa* (fig. 3.13) compiled much of the new geographic information gathered by Park and others.<sup>46</sup>

Whereas most Western maps of Africa made before colonization reflected European trading interests along the coast, *Map of the West Coast of Africa* and Finley's similar, now-lost African map were understood by the ACS as offering authoritative evidence that Liberian settlement was bringing Christianity and enlightenment to a "long-benighted", "heathen" landscape. In its *Repository* advertisement, the ACS proclaimed that none who purchased Finley's map of Africa would "fail to rejoice that civilization and Christianity begin to take possession of a country, from which their benign and regenerating influences have been so long excluded."<sup>47</sup> The Society's *Fourteenth Annual Report*, which included a fold-out edition of *Map of the West Coast of Africa* (fig. 3.1), emphasized how Africans were deeply desirous of the Western influence that the ACS

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> For an early edition, see Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: Performed Under the Direction and Patronage of the African Association, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London: W. Bulmer, 1799).

<sup>46</sup> Thomas J. Bassett, "Cartography and Empire Building in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," *Geographical Review* 84, no. 3 (Jul., 1994): 317-18.

<sup>47</sup> "Finley's Map of Africa," 15.

and American colonists would bring to Liberia. The report noted how, at the Society's annual meeting, Elliott Cresson had proclaimed that the native Africans "now ask for schools—factories—churches. Nearly 2000 freemen have kindled a beacon fire at Monrovia, to cast a broad blaze of light into the dark recesses of that benighted land."<sup>48</sup> Repeating an earlier idea put forth by early ACS organizer Henry Clay, New York colonization promoter Garrett Smith proclaimed to the meeting's listeners that "every emigrant to Africa... is a missionary going forth with his credentials in the holy cause of Civilization and Religion and free Institutions, and the colonies which we will establish, will be so many points, from which the beams of Christianity and Civilization will radiate on all that black empire of ignorance and sin."<sup>49</sup> Smith's description of the colonists as missionaries planting "Civilization and Religious and free Institutions" echoed the ACS' rhetoric of "Civilization, Commerce, and Christianity."<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly, much of the rhetoric in the *Fourteenth Annual Report* was articulated in geographic terms, crafting a moral geography of the African continent. The positive influences of "Christianity and Civilization", Smith explained, "must be poured in from the Western coast. The Northern boundary is within the dominion of the false Prophet [Muhammed], and no light is to be expected from that direction. If we look towards its eastern border, we look to the region of shadow of death."<sup>51</sup> Also speaking at the meeting, the Reverend C. Colton of Massachusetts similarly articulated Africa's

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<sup>48</sup> *The Fourteenth Annual Report*, iv.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>50</sup> Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

moral state in geographical terms, situating Liberia as the bright light of civilization that would eventually spread throughout the continent. Colton urged the Society's president to look "yonder, on the naked, and exposed coast of Africa—that region of the globe, which knows no law but passion—where the wickedness of man, the most fell and the deadliest, prowls with impunity—*there* stands and flourishes, and is fast rising into importance, a civil and well-ordered community of Africans!"<sup>52</sup> Continuing on, Colton proclaimed that, "there is in my mind, a moral grandeur, beaming out from that point of the shore of Africa... It is a bright spot, set upon the margin of an immense region, a region overhung for ages uncounted with one unbroken cloud of darkness."<sup>53</sup> That light, according to Colton, "now promises to show its blaze along those shores, and back into those regions, until that deep and vast Continent, from Cape de Verde to Gaudelfui, and from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Cape of Good Hope, shall stand up disenthralled, emancipated, regenerate."<sup>54</sup> For the ACS, the "authoritative power" of *Map of the West Coast of Africa* provided visual evidence that, as so many colonization promoters believed, Liberia shined as a beacon of civilization and enlightenment on the edge of a vast, degraded Africa.

For the ACS, the "civilization" of Africa was largely to be carried out through the evangelizing efforts of African-American settlers among the Liberian natives. Governor Ashmun proclaimed that "the settlement in Liberia, whether we consider its origin, materials, or situation, promises we think, not merely self-improvement, but to act with

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, xvi.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, xvii.

powerful and salutary influence on the tribes of Africa... It is the well known wish of their benefactors, that they [the settlers] should evince their gratitude, by showing a christian temper towards the barbarians, that they should conciliate, teach, and bless them, by their virtuous and pure example.”<sup>55</sup>

Many settlers also understood their purpose in Liberia to include the evangelizing of Africa’s native people. Writing to his former master John Minor, settler James C. Minor declared that he wished “to become one of the blowers of the Gospel trumpet.”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, settler Peyton Skipwith believed that he would “have more help in this dark benighted land, to try and civilize the heathens and bring them to know life and life eternal.”<sup>57</sup> Underlying settlers’ evangelical aspirations, however, was a deep assumption of the Africans’ inherent inferiority, often matched with a notable ambivalence about their own physical resemblance to the natives. “It is something strange to think that these people of africa are called our ancestors,” Skipwith wrote. “In my present thinking if we have any ancestors they could not have been liked [*sic*] these hostile tribes in this part of africa for you may try and distell that principle and belief in them and do all you can for them and they still will be your enemy.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “Colonization Society,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 2, (Apr., 1825): 36.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 65.

<sup>58</sup> Peyton Skipwith to John Hartwell Cocke, 22 April 1840, Correspondence, Box 98, Cocke Family Papers, 1725-1939, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. Published in Randall M. Miller, “*Dear Master*”: *Letters of a Slave Family* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 75.

## Imagining an African City

Finley's map reveals that the ACS' mission to "civilize" the continent was imagined to embody three major spatial transformations of the landscape: urbanization, agricultural development, and the imposition of political boundary lines. Of central emphasis in Finley's map is the presence of a city – or at least the appearance of one. By 1830, just over 1,500 black Americans had sailed to Liberia, but high mortality rates upon landing resulted in significant population losses.<sup>59</sup> Yet despite the relatively small size of Monrovia, Finley's inset town view immediately suggested the presence of an urban landscape, especially in juxtaposition to the numerous indigenous villages that dot the surrounding coast.

From the beginning, colonization promoters imagined that Monrovia would be a modern city on the edge of a rural and wild "uncivilized" Africa. An early, unrealized plan for Monrovia proposed by William Thornton embodies this ideal of an urban, cosmopolitan outpost on Africa's shores. Best known as the architect of the U.S. Capitol building, Thornton had assisted in laying out plans for Washington, D.C. and overseeing the construction of its first government structures. He had also been among a group of early American statesman, including Thomas Jefferson, who had promoted the colonization of black Americans in Africa as a solution to the slavery problem in the United States as early as the late eighteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Sometime in the early 1820s, ACS

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<sup>59</sup> See Shick, "A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization," 47; McDaniel, "Extreme Mortality in Nineteenth-Century Africa"; McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*.

<sup>60</sup> See Gordon S. Brown, *Incidental Architect: William Thornton and the Cultural Life of Early Washington, D.C., 1794-1828* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 93; C. M. Harris, ed., *Papers of William Thornton Volume 1 1781-1802* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 30-45.

managers asked Thornton to provide a design and recommendations for the settlement at Cape Mesurado. Thornton responded with an imaginative plan for a grand capital city at Cape Mesurado (fig. 3.14), as well as a lengthy letter describing this ideal future metropolis on the African coast.<sup>61</sup>

Thornton's African city was to be called "Christopolis" ("City of Christ"), immediately invoking its Christian mission as a civilizing influence on the edge of a vast "heathen" continent.<sup>62</sup> With its circular, radiating design, Thornton's plan evoked Charles L'Enfant's Washington, D.C. Its spacious center would include a tower, arsenal, and battery, features that the architect must have considered particularly important for an idealized city on the edge of a vast unknown and potentially dangerous African wilderness. More importantly, however, Christopolis would be a metropolitan outpost of modernity on the African coast. Thornton advised that, "the Streets run North & South, East & West, & that the whole City be traversed from angle to Angle both ways."<sup>63</sup> In proposing such a layout, Thornton was following the "grand manner" tradition of Baroque city planning. As Dell Upton explains, this design tradition "emphasized major urban landmarks cited on squares and circles that were linked by diagonal avenues cutting across a city's fabric."<sup>64</sup> In addition to L'Enfant's design for Washington, D.C. built along these lines, plans for several American cities in the early national period

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<sup>61</sup> Thornton to the managers, Colonization Society, 4 January 1825, W. Thornton Papers, reel 3, no. 1027, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Thornton's "Plan of the Town of Mesurado", also at the Library of Congress, is dated April, 1823, nearly two years before the letter was written.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 118.



followed a Baroque plan, including Detroit, Indianapolis, and Baton Rouge.<sup>65</sup> As was the ideal of the Baroque plan, Thornton's African city was to be punctuated by squares, with the public buildings positioned "round the interior of the Centre Square."<sup>66</sup> Thornton explained that "the Open Squares throughout the City would serve, not only to give Air to the various compact parts thereof, by their equal distribution, but they would serve for Churches, for Schools, Market-places, museums, Theatres, Public Gardens, Fountains, Statues &c."<sup>67</sup> Both the city's streets and squares were to be "laid down by numbers, so that no extension of the plan can ever effect [*sic*] them," although his plan indicates that the main thoroughfare would be called "Emancipation Street".<sup>68</sup>

Thornton's unrealized vision of the Liberian capital city reflected a basic assumption about what Africa needed in order to become "civilized": a rigid spatial order. In his letter describing the plan, Thornton even implied that Christopolis' design might eventually become a model for the indigenous Africans to imitate. If his recommendations for the city were to be shared with the "surrounding Chiefs in Africa", Thornton believed, they "may be of service to them, in placing & laying out their different Towns & cities." Seeing spatial order as a signifier of civility, the architect hoped that "the Establishment of this Colony... will render important & never-ending benefits to the race of men from whom the ancestors of these Colonists descended."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Thornton to the managers, Colonization Society.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. "Emancipation Street" is clearly identified on Thornton's plan (fig. 3.14).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Thornton's assumption that Africa needed a modern cosmopolitan city with a rigid spatial pattern reflected the underlying and widely shared belief among Westerners that Africans' "uncivilized" state was reflected in their ignorance of how to properly use land. The result, in the minds of ACS agents and colonists, was a West African landscape devoid of cities. The idea that West Africa was uncivilized because it was city-less was an undercurrent in countless American descriptions of the region during the first decades of settlement. Reporting in 1835 on the appearance of Cape Mesurado when the first settlers and ACS officers had arrived over a decade earlier, ACS agent Ralph Randolph Gurley wrote of a peninsula "covered with a lofty and dense forest, entangled with vines and brushwood; the haunts of savage beasts, and through which the Barbarians were accustomed to cut their narrow and winding pathways to the coast."<sup>70</sup> In Gurley's description, the African "Barbarians" were controlled by nature rather than in control of it. Gurley's Africans had neither urbanized nor cultivated the landscape; rather, they were capable only of establishing crude pathways through a tropical jungle, the domain of "savage beasts".

An 1825 *Repository* article by Ashmun entitled "Traits of the African Character" also promoted the idea that Africans were utterly controlled by tropical nature. Ashmun described how the local Africans completely lacked religion and deity, instead enjoying "animal existence in its perfection."<sup>71</sup> The comparison of indigenous Liberians to animals was not uncommon in nineteenth-century descriptions of the colony. Referring to

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<sup>70</sup> Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*, 123.

<sup>71</sup> J. Ashmun Esq., "Traits of the African Character," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 2 (Apr., 1825): 56.

Monrovia, one writer explained how, “less than a third of a century ago, the spot where now stands this beautiful and flourishing little metropolis was covered with dense forest, the solemn silence of which was disturbed only by wild animals, or occasionally by human beings apparently scarcely more civilized than their four-footed neighbours.”<sup>72</sup> In contrast to the American settlers’ ability to build the “beautiful and flourishing little metropolis” of Monrovia, the seemingly animalistic nature of the barbarous Africans was seen as a reflection of their apparent inability to cultivate and control the jungle landscape that surrounded them.

Similar sentiments about Africans’ uncivilized nature colored the published report of a U.S. naval voyage to the West African coast written by Commander William Frances Lynch in 1853. In describing the scenery upon reaching Cape Mesurado, Lynch crafted a narrative about the past and present of Monrovia’s landscape. Reporting on the appearance of Cape Mesurado from the water, he noted that “in the dense thicket which crowns the Cape was formerly a Fetish-house, where the natives worshipped some hideous idol,” and that on the nearby rocks had once been found the carcass of a thirty-two foot long boa constrictor.<sup>73</sup> According to Lynch, however, the presence of colonists had transformed this wild and idolatrous landscape. “On the summit is Fort Hill,” he wrote, “where, in December, 1822, in the infancy of the settlement, the heroic Ashmun, rising from his bed of sickness, with thirty-four brave colonists repulsed an assault made

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<sup>72</sup> “The President’s House at Monrovia, the Capital of Liberia,” *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* 2 (New York: Alexander Montgomery, 1853): 95.

<sup>73</sup> Senate Exec. Doc., 347-48. This was almost certainly the same boa constrictor mentioned in Chapter Four. Described as a “Boa Constrictor, caught near the American settlement at Cape Mesurado, and lived until its arrival at this port,” it was apparently captured by Dr. Eli Ayres and eventually donated to the Peale Museum in Baltimore. See Chapter Four, page 204.

by eight hundred savages.”<sup>74</sup> Three decades later, Lynch could report that the little city contained 300 hundred houses, many “neatly, and two or three handsomely, furnished.”<sup>75</sup> Each home sat on its own quarter-acre and “in almost every yard there were fruit trees—mostly the lime, the lemon, the banana, the paw-paw—and the coffee-tree.”<sup>76</sup> Lynch also described the other impressive buildings in town, including “five churches, all well attended.”<sup>77</sup> The landscape once home to fetish-worshippers had, according to Lynch, become a model Christian city. “I never saw a more thoroughgoing church community, or heard a greater rustling of silk, on the dispersal of a congregation, than here,” he wrote.<sup>78</sup> For Lynch, the transformation of Cape Mesurado from idolatrous and primitive to civilized and morally upstanding was distinctly connected to its urban development, embodying the careful cultivation of tropical vegetation within neatly fixed property lines and reflected in the Christian piety of its citizens.

This imagined contrast between the American colonists’ knowledge of how to properly use land – embodied in their construction of cities – and Africans’ lack of a “civilized” relationship is also reflected in American depictions of the indigenous built environment. A watercolor painting made by an unknown artist in the mid-1850s is typical in focusing on the seemingly crude, impermanent nature of indigenous housing

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. For more description of buildings, see pp. 348-50.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 349-50.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 350.

(fig. 3.15).<sup>79</sup> In the scene, nearly nude African natives, their features stereotypically exaggerated according to the visual conventions of this period, go about their daily activities within a setting of tightly-packed thatched dwellings with conical roofs. Other scenes focused on the Kru people, nearly always showing them in canoes (fig. 3.16), a convention that further suggested indigenous Africans to be naturally nomadic and thus without legitimate claims to the landscape.

The American assumption that Africans had neither permanent claim to the land nor an ability to control the tropical nature around them was seen as an explanation for their lack of cities and thus “civilization”. Yet Africans were capable of building cities, Westerners believed, as evidenced by the existence of fabled metropolises of the interior like Timbuktu.<sup>80</sup> More than Timbuktu, however, another legendary interior city grasped

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<sup>79</sup> My estimate of the watercolor’s date is based on the fact that a woodcut illustration clearly based on this picture was published in Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, *Western Africa: Its History, Condition, and Prospects* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 108. A very similar watercolor, labeled “Kroo Town”, is held in the University of Virginia’s Special Collections Library. The UVa example was also made by an unknown artist, and future research is needed to explore any links between the two pictures. See Drawings of Western Africa circa 1820-1850, MSS 14357 no.31, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. For more commentary on the UVa example, see Image Reference UVA18, as shown on [www.slaveryimages.org](http://www.slaveryimages.org), compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/detailsKeyword.php?keyword=drawings%20of%20western%20africa&theRecord=17&recordCount=22>. Thanks to Jerry Handler at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities for making me aware of the connection between some of the UVa West African drawings and Wilson’s 1856 book. Jerome Handler, email message to author, March 3, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Located in present-day Mali, Timbuktu had been a major trading center since the thirteenth century. It was also a major center of Islamic scholarship. In the early sixteenth century, the city was described in Leo Africanus’ *Descrittione dell’Africa*, sparking curiosity among Europeans, for whom Timbuktu increasingly became shrouded in fable. Commissioned by the African Association to discover the direction of the Niger River, Mungo Park came near Timbuktu but drowned before making it there. See Frank T. Kryza, *The Race for Timbuktu: In Search of Africa’s City of Gold* (New York: Ecco, 2006), xiv-xix, 11-21, 37-46. Rens Bod, *A New History of the Humanities: The Search for Principles and Patterns from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179. Marq de Villiers and Sheila Hirtle, *Timbuktu: The Sahara’s Fabled City of Gold* (New York: Walker & Company, 2007), 14, 241-50; Elias N. Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu: the Role of Muslim Scholars and Notables, 1400-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 14-18

the imagination of Liberian colonists in the early decades of settlement: the city of Musardu (Moussodougou, located in present-day Burkina Faso), then believed to be the “capital of the Western Mandingos”.<sup>81</sup> The term “Mandingo” related to the Mandinka people, part of the larger Mandé ethnic group of West Africa. As Alexander Peter Kup has noted, however, in the nineteenth century “Mandingo” was really “a general term used by Europeans for Muslim, whether Mandinka or not.”<sup>82</sup> In Liberia, the term was frequently used to describe any Africans that were Muslim or thought to be from the interior.

In contrast to the coastal groups with whom settlers had regular contact, the Mandingoes were imagined to be highly civilized, intellectual, and mercantile in nature.<sup>83</sup> King Boatswain, the local ally who had come to the colonists’ rescue during their skirmishes with the occupants of Cape Mesurado in the early years of settlement and thus became a hero in settler mythology, was thought by some Liberians to be a Mandingo warlord.<sup>84</sup> Many Liberian settlers as well as African Americans in the United States linked themselves with the purported superiority of the Mandingo by claiming to be of

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<sup>81</sup> The African-American explorer Benjamin Anderson used this phrase in the title of his 1870 exploration narrative. See Benjamin Anderson, *Narrative of a Journey to Musardu, the Capital of the Western Mandingos* (New York: S. W. Green, 1870); quoted and discussed in Warren L. D’Azevedo, “Phantoms of the Hinterland: the ‘Mandingo’ Presence in Early Liberian Accounts,” part 1, *Liberian Studies Journal* 19, no. 2 (1994): 221.

<sup>82</sup> Alexander Peter Kup, “Introduction,” in *Sierra Leone Journal, 1795-1796* (Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia, 27), ed. Alexander Peter Kup (Uppsala: Institutionen för Allmän och Jämförande Etnografi, Uppsala Universitet, 1967), 6, note 1, in Jeremy Coote, “‘The Complete Accountments of an Inhabitant of the Mandingo Country’: An Eighteenth-Century Collection from West Africa at the Pitt Rivers Museum,” *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 24 (2011): 155.

<sup>83</sup> Fairhead, et al., *African-American Exploration in West Africa*, 25.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

Mandingo origin themselves.<sup>85</sup> As Warren L. d'Azevedo describes, American colonists and other Westerners believed that the Mandingoes had “once represented a civilization which provided invidious contrast to the multiplicity of small societies of ‘savages’ in the forests along the western coast, and which was in some respects superior to their own.” More than any other group, the Mandingoes “were seen as the potentially dominant and effective force in the interior, the people with whom colonists would eventually share the great task of exploiting and elevating Africa.”<sup>86</sup> Unlike the apparently brutish “heathens” of the coast, but Mandingoes were seen as “civilized heathens”.<sup>87</sup> And unlike the local indigenous population, the Mandingoes were imagined to control grand fabled interior cities like Musardu.

### **A City on a Grid**

In designing his plan for the ACS’ settlement, Thornton clearly understood that to “civilize” Africa, the Society needed to establish a city on a wild coast thought to be essentially city-less. Ultimately, ACS managers did not follow Thornton’s vision for the African city, either in naming it “Christopolis” or in implementing a Baroque plan. Instead, they chose the simpler, rectilinear grid plan highlighted in Finley’s map and named it “Monrovia” after President James Monroe. It is not surprising that the ACS chose a gridiron plan for Monrovia. In the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the grid represented the most modern and progressive type of urban

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> D’Azevedo, “Phantoms of the Hinterland,” 197.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 200.

landscape pattern, promising to the new republic a certain kind of political, social, and economic order through its spatial form. New emphasis was given to the grid in urban developments for cities like Philadelphia and New York. As Upton explains, “the grid was more than a utilitarian or self-evident planning strategy... It was an intellectual program for the subordination of the landscape to republican life.”<sup>88</sup> While depictions of a given city’s grid plan might not provide a picture of that place in its fullness, or even from the perspective that its inhabitants would occupy, it evoked a sense of authority and order over the entire space. “The grid’s order presumes a bird’s-eye, or plan, view,” writes Upton. “Seen from above, without perspective, the entire order of the city is clear.”<sup>89</sup> On Finley’s map, this order stands in obvious contrast to the surrounding African landscape, proclaiming Monrovia as the central authority over this broader space.

The gridiron ideal also animated the planning and construction of new towns in the United States’ expanding Western territories, such as Cincinnati (fig. 3.17). The drive to lay down rigid, rectilinear spatial patterns in America’s new territories was motivated in part by assumptions about Native Americans similar to those that ACS managers held toward Africans. Like Africans, American Indians were imagined to be uncivilized in part because of their perceived inability to properly use land. This idea comes forth in President Andrew Jackson’s Message to Congress on December 6, 1830, which called for the removal of American Indians in the Southeast United States to territories west of the Mississippi River. “What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages,” Jackson declared, “to our extensive Republic,

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<sup>88</sup> Upton, *Another City*, 137.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 136.



studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion?”<sup>90</sup> The ACS used a nearly identical rhetoric of “Civilization, Commerce, and Christianity”, as Bronwen Everill has discussed, to validate its resettlement project and resulting claims to contested African territories.<sup>91</sup>

By emphasizing Monrovia’s grid plan in *Map of the West Coast of Africa*, Finley brought the Liberian landscape into conversation with other territories maintaining a new or ambivalent relationship to the United States. A comparison of Finley’s Liberian map with a map of Florida (fig. 3.18), also by Finley, illustrates how the grid connected distant spaces through a symbolic language of American authority and Republican values. Like *Map of the West Coast of Africa*, Finley’s *Florida* was included in the 1831 edition of *A New General Atlas* of 1831; in fact, these are the only two maps in the volume to include inset city plans. In the Florida map, two city plans are included: one of Tallahassee and one of Pensacola (fig. 3.19). Finley used similar conventions in rendering the Florida city plans as he did with that of Monrovia. With all three plans, Finley depicted the principal areas of settlement from above in a clean, linear format that emphasizes the cities’ gridded landscapes. Whereas no street names are given in the Monrovia plan, likely because Finley did not have this information or because these names were not yet firmly established by the time the map was made, street names do

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<sup>90</sup> “Transcript of President Andrew Jackson’s Message to Congress ‘On Indian Removal’ (1830),” accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=25&page=transcript>.

<sup>91</sup> Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 9.

appear in the plans for both Florida cities. With its small urban scale and coastal setting, Finley's rendering of Pensacola bears important similarities to that of Monrovia. Both include details of the cities' geographical surroundings, labeling bodies of water and nearby rivers, for example. Both plans also include a "References" section that identifies the main public areas in each city: churches, markets, and government buildings. Additionally, the city blocks with dark shading in the plans of the two cities delineate the areas of densest settlement, while the unshaded areas on the outskirts of town, accompanied by unnamed streets in the case of Pensacola, suggest vacant space for potential settlers.

That Finley's map of Florida was the only one besides that of Liberia to include inset town views in the *Atlas* is significant when one compares the histories of the two regions in this period. Florida had a long history of colonialism dating back to the beginning of Spanish rule in the early sixteenth century.<sup>92</sup> During the French and Indian War, Great Britain briefly gained control of the territory, but it returned to Spanish hands by the end of the American Revolution.<sup>93</sup> With the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819, Florida became a territory of the United States.<sup>94</sup> In 1822, the eastern and western portions of the region were combined to become Florida Territory, with Tallahassee established as its capital.<sup>95</sup> Florida would remain a territory of the United States until

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<sup>92</sup> Michael Gannon, *Florida: A Short History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 3-17.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-24.

<sup>94</sup> Gary Lawson and Guy Seidman, *The Constitution of Empire: Territorial Expansion and American Legal History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 90.

<sup>95</sup> Gannon, *Florida*, 28-29.

acquiring statehood in 1845.<sup>96</sup> Thus Florida became a U.S. territory at almost the precise time that Liberia became a territory of the ACS, and by extension, entered into an ambiguous political relationship with the federal government.

In both *Map of the West African Coast* and *Florida*, the presence of a gridded street plan celebrates the landscape's transformation into the American urban ideal while minimizing any evidence of indigenous resistance in the region. Just as both the ACS and Liberia's first settlers met with resistance from indigenous Africans upon attempting to colonize the West African coast, the federal government encountered conflict with the indigenous people of Florida Territory when it acquired that land. The establishment of Tallahassee as the territorial capital came at the expense of removing the Seminole Indians from that space, one of numerous events that spurred conflict between Florida's indigenous population and the federal government.<sup>97</sup> Like Finley's map of Liberia, *Florida* includes delineations of indigenous lands, most prominently those of the Alachuas and the Seminoles, though the latter are confined to a reservation. As was the case with the indigenous Africans in *Map of the West Coast of Africa*, Finley's map of Florida Territory uses inset town plans to centralize the position of American colonial settlements while relegating Florida's native population to the region's peripheries and erasing signs of conflict on the landscape.

Among the various geographic regions included in Finley's *Atlas*, Florida and Liberia shared another important characteristic that has significance in the context of the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 37. For more on this history, see Ron Field, *The Seminole Wars 1818-1858* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009), 3-7.

<sup>97</sup> Gannon, *Florida*, 27-40.

urban grid: both were tropical spaces. As noted previously, the tropical environment of Liberia was a serious, often fatal problem for emigrants, who contracted the malaria and yellow fever endemic in the tropics at astoundingly high rates. In the nineteenth century, it was widely assumed that disease was directly influenced by topographic and other geographic components of a landscape that encouraged or prevented the spread of “miasma”, a putrid essence carried in the air.<sup>98</sup> Tropical environments were assumed to be particularly prone to unhealthy miasmas, causing high rates of disease.

Thornton had certainly considered the health dangers of West Africa’s tropical environment when sketching out his plan for Christopolis. “In a Country which, from its great heats, is at all times considered as less salubrious than a more temperate clime,” Thornton wrote to the ACS managers, “it is peculiarly necessary to attend to the Situation that may be considered as the most healthy.”<sup>99</sup> Thornton had recommended choosing a location “high & Open to the general or prevailing trade Wind, or the most healthy wind from any quarter,” and his plan included a series of shaded walks that would provide “at all times a fine shade in travelling from one part of the City to another” and “give a sweetness a freshness & coolness to the Atmosphere.”<sup>100</sup> These “shady walks” were to include wild “Trees left standing from the Forest in their most Healthy & vigorous State, preferring those that are the most useful the best adapted to shade yet free from any Poisonous effluvium, or other bad qualities.” The broad streets, furthermore, would work

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<sup>98</sup> Upton, *Another City*, 56.

<sup>99</sup> Thornton to the managers, Colonization Society.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

“to prevent Diseases, & the spreading of such as are contagious.”<sup>101</sup> ACS managers certainly brought the same concerns about disease and environment into their plan for Monrovia. For viewers of Finley’s map, Monrovia certainly would have appeared healthy. In the early Republican spatial imagination, the grid plan was thought to promote health by allowing air to circulate freely through the city.<sup>102</sup> The grid plan implied order over nature, whether it came in the form of “savage” natives, unruly jungles, or devastating illness.

For ACS managers and many nineteenth-century observers, Monrovia’s grid plan worked toward another important goal in the colony’s development: promoting proper behavior among settlers. In the United States, the grid plan was thought to encourage morality and adherence to Republican social norms. The idea that a rigid urban spatial pattern could promote certain behaviors expanded beyond the realm of the urban streets, however. As Upton has demonstrated, “gridding” extended, for instance, to early nineteenth-century reforms in the architecture of prisons, hospital, orphanages, and insane asylums.<sup>103</sup> Properly ordered spaces, it was believed, could help reform and control urban society’s disorderly outcasts: criminals, cripples, orphans, and the mentally ill. In an unspoken but nevertheless similar way, the ACS’ black emigrants together formed a kind of misfit community for the organization and many of its supporters, who believed that their removal from the United States would ultimately benefit both them and America. While colonization promoters perpetually claimed that, having already

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Upton, *Another City*, 119.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 242-78.

received “civilization” and Christianity, Liberian colonists would have a benevolent influence upon the degraded African “heathen”, some observers feared that upon their “return” to Africa, these settlers might revert to the unruly traditions and seemingly animalistic natures of their ancestors. By implementing a rigid urban spatial pattern in Monrovia, ACS managers must have believed that they were insuring that emigrants would not degenerate upon arrival in the African environment.

In this sense, the choice to lay down a grid in Monrovia was not operating in a vacuum. A highly-ordered grid plan had also been used in the design of Freetown, Sierra Leone. Like Finley’s later *Map of the West Coast of Africa*, a 1789 map of the harbor of Sierra Leone includes an inset plan view of Freetown (fig. 3.20). As would be the case in Liberia, the imposition of a gridded street plan in Freetown and its subsequent cartographic representation emphasized the contrast between the rigidly ordered urban environment of the colonial settlement and the tropical landscape surrounding it.

### **“Africa is good enough for me”: Cultivating the Liberian Landscape**

In the American spatial imagination of the early nineteenth century, the civilizing urban environment embodied by the grid plan was inextricably entangled with the goal of establishing agriculturally productive spaces beyond the city to feed its residents.

Colonization writing and imagery reveal that the ACS’ mission to convert ethnic Liberians from their primitive, “heathen” state to Christianity and “civilization” was part of the larger ideal of transforming a wild and savage landscape into an orderly and productive space. In his 1850 book *Sketches of Liberia*, Dr. James W. Lugenbeel, a white American who served as the ACS’ colonial physician in Liberia in the 1840s, advanced a

vision of Liberia's future in which agricultural progress would be the means of transforming Africa out of its heathen and degraded state:

And thus, while the mind of the traveler is oppressed by the melancholy consideration of the moral and intellectual darkness of the scattered tribes of human beings, whose desolate-looking hamlets frequently meet his view, as he wends his way amidst the dense forests of the uncultivated hills and dales of Africa; he is encouraged to believe that the time will come, when this extensive "wilderness shall be made glad" by the labors of industrious agriculturists, and when this vast desert of intellectual and moral degradation "shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."<sup>104</sup>

For Lugenbeel, the deplorable condition of Liberia's indigenous people was inextricably bound up with the disordered, rampant state of the landscape they inhabited. Thus the land's "desolate-looking hamlets", "dense forests", and "uncultivated hills and dales" reflected "the moral and intellectual darkness" of those who lived there. The landscape itself – "a vast desert of intellectual and moral degradation" – was in need of redemption, a redemption that Lugenbeel promised would come through "the labors of industrious agriculturists".

In its "Remarks" section, Finley's map describes how the stretch of land depicted "abounds in rice, oil and cattle; and rivals in fertility any part of the African coast." The map's expansive claims complimented written descriptions of Liberia's agricultural promise that frequently appeared in the *Repository*. In an article published in the December, 1827 issue, for instance, Gurley declared that, "no country, it is believed, will more amply reward the labours of the husbandman." Commenting on the potential success of certain crops, he explained that, "rice is raised by the natives in great abundance, and requires but little labor for cultivation. Coffee, cotton, and the sugar-

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<sup>104</sup> J. W. Lugenbeel, *Sketches of Liberia: Comprising a Brief Account of the Geography, Climate, Production, and Diseases, of the Republic of Liberia* (Washington: C. Alexander, 1850), 8.

cane, grow spontaneously; and with due attention, may, doubtless, be advantageously produced for exportation.”<sup>105</sup> Similarly, the *New-York Colonization Journal* reported that “there are twelve millions of acres in the Liberian territory, much of which is very fertile, and most is susceptible to profitable cultivation. It has been ascertained that the produce of a cultivated acre is more than enough to support a man.”<sup>106</sup> By the 1850s, colonization promotional writing frequently described Liberia as a blossoming “land of perpetual spring.”<sup>107</sup>

An undated, hand-drawn map of the inland settlement of Careysburg made in the 1850s by John Seys, a white Methodist Episcopal missionary in Liberia, advances a vision of landscape defined by agricultural promise (fig. 3.21).<sup>108</sup> Presenting Careysburg surrounded by tribal territories, Seys’ map includes written notes focusing on the region’s agricultural potential. He notes, for example, that “undulating and well watered” lands can be found in “Qucah Country”, just west of Careysburg.<sup>109</sup> Seys’ perception and representation of the Liberian landscape resonates with his role as Protestant missionary. Ideas about geographical improvement in this period were closely linked to Biblical notions of dominion.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, such ideas about landscape were also tied to

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<sup>105</sup> “Letter from the Secretary of the Society, To Joel Early, Esq. of Greensborough, Georgia,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 10 (December, 1827): 295-96.

<sup>106</sup> Disosway, “The Republic of Liberia,” 1.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Michael Kimaid, “Of Land Ordinances and Liberia: Maps as Tools of Early American Territorial Expansion,” *e-Perimtron* 3, no. 4 (2008): 235-236.

<sup>109</sup> See discussion of this map in *ibid*, 235.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.



commercial aspirations. In the words of Michael Kimaid, “the idea that unproductive, chaotic spaces could be manipulated, controlled, and in essence domesticated was inherently bound up with the direction of capitalism and nascent industrialization in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>111</sup>

The links between the ordering of landscape, agricultural progress, and the saving of souls in Liberia are discernable in an 1838 hand-colored lithograph of the Mount Vaughan Protestant Episcopal Mission Station, built two years earlier at Cape Palmas (fig. 3.22).<sup>112</sup> The lithograph depicts the mission’s main buildings surrounded by a verdant, agriculturally productive, and highly linear landscape. The focal point of the scene is Mount Vaughan’s two mission houses, both sizeable white frame buildings with piazzas that sit atop the hillside. Just behind the larger building, the mission’s schoolhouse is visible. From the top of the hill a terraced pathway leads to a gated entrance. To its right are two smaller white structures: the house of a colonist and the more modest dwelling of the native head laborer, which faces a neatly planted vegetable garden. At the base of the hill, native laborers prepare the soil for further planting, while another African worker just beyond the fence line attends the “Native Cattle broken to the Yoke”. Here, the work of the mission appears to be one and the same with that of cultivating and claiming dominion over landscape.

ACS literature frequently boasted of the agricultural improvement that colonization was bringing to Liberia’s landscape. In his book, Lugenbeel wrote of “numerous other points along the St. Paul’s river, which are occupied by farmers,”

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 225.

granting “the banks of this beautiful stream present, in many places, the appearance of agricultural industry and comfort.”<sup>113</sup> Similarly, on travelling up the Saint Paul, the Reverend John Rambo reported that,

The scenery was not grand, but beautiful. The banks had been generally cleared—farms laid out and planted, and comfortable cottages erected—not exhibiting nature in her primitive wilderness, but blended with cultivation.<sup>114</sup>

A visitor to “Iconium”, the Liberian estate of settler Allen B. Hooper, described it as “one of the handsomest places we have ever seen.” Noting the impressive transformation of this landscape, the visitor described how “it is not yet two years since what is now his farm, was a complete wilderness” and “the home of the wild animals of the forest.” Yet it had become, according to this visitor, a productive agricultural space where “coffee and sugar cane are growing,” along with “well filled lots of cassada, potatoes, plantains, and other vegetables.”<sup>115</sup>

An observer who dined at another Liberian property also described an abundance of agricultural productions: “The first thing that caught my eye upon entering the house was a beautiful and large roasted turkey as any I ever saw in America, roasted chickens, beef, pork, cabbage, sweet potatoes, plantains, rice, all of African production; I was constrained to cry out Africa is good enough for me.”<sup>116</sup> A similar tone colored the Reverend Eli Ball’s description of the Saint Paul River town of Greenville. “If well built

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<sup>113</sup> Lugenbeel, *Sketches of Liberia*, 10.

<sup>114</sup> “Letter from the Rev. J. Rambo,” *The African Repository* 27, no. 8 (Aug., 1851): 227.

<sup>115</sup> “Visit up the St. Paul’s,” *The African Repository* 28, no. 8 (Aug., 1852): 240.

<sup>116</sup> Abraham Cauldwell, “To the New York Immigration and Agricultural Association,” *The African Repository* 28, no. 8 (Aug., 1852): 236.

houses, (some of them two stories and painted,) tables furnished with the necessaries, and some of the luxuries of life, dresses both comfortable and fashionable, and good farms in the country, furnish proof of families being above want,” wrote Ball, “then are those in Greenville above want.”<sup>117</sup> Frequently reprinted in the *Repository*, eyewitness testimonials such as these presented Liberian settlement as the catalyst for the unprecedented agricultural improvement of the African landscape.

### **Fixing Property, Claiming Territory**

Inherent in the ACS’ agricultural vision of order and prosperity for Liberia was the ideal of a landscape defined by fixed property. Orderly ownership is reflected in a town plan of Harper, the MSCS’s main settlement at Cape Palmas, drawn by settler John Revey in mid-1830s (fig. 3.23). The plan divides the township into lots, each identified with its owner’s name. The elevations of important buildings, such as the colonial office and prominent mission stations, are also included. The linear, organized appearance of Harper contrasts sharply with the undulating path of the adjacent Hoffman River and groups of tightly packed conical huts representing indigenous settlements. As in Finley’s map, Revey’s plan highlights the presence of Christian westerners while relegating indigenous spaces to the peripheries of the Cape Palmas landscape. Above all else, Revey’s representation of Harper stresses the presence of fixed property transforming the West African landscape. The desire to fix property through the implementation of gridded streets and fenced farmland extended to include the imposition of political

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<sup>117</sup> “Testimony of Rev. Eli Ball,” *The African Repository* 28, no. 11 (Nov., 1852): 343

boundary lines over larger tracts of territory. An early map of Liberia produced by G. F. Nesbitt, which provides a more accurate sense of the ethnic diversity that populated the coast in this period than does Finley's map, conveys such diversity through the imposition of fixed political boundary lines between "tribes" of people that in reality possessed a different understanding of land ownership than did Americans (fig. 3.24).<sup>118</sup>

In their increasing focus on the establishment of territorial boundaries, nineteenth century maps of Liberia bear important similarities to imperial European maps of Africa made later in the nineteenth century. In his discussion of the role of cartography in European imperialists' attempts to acquire lands in Africa, Thomas J. Bassett has argued that nineteenth-century maps of the region were "far from being neutral representations of African human and physical geography." Rather, "they contributed to empire by promoting, assisting, and legitimating the extension of French and British power into West Africa."<sup>119</sup> Although scholars continue to debate the extent to which Liberian colonization constituted an imperial project, early maps of Liberia undoubtedly shared many strategies with later nineteenth-century imperial cartography. Like maps created by later nineteenth-century imperialists, Liberian examples made in the 1830s-1850s sought to justify an outside presence in the region, to claim Western authority over the African landscape, and to suggest that through colonization, a space considered "savage" and disordered could transform into one that was productive and useful.

One way that Finley's map shared the strategies of later imperial examples was in

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<sup>118</sup> For more discussion of this map and its treatment of indigenous Liberian territorial boundaries, see Kimaid, "Of Land Ordinances and Liberia," 237-38.

<sup>119</sup> Thomas J. Bassett, "Cartography and Empire Building in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," *Geographical Review* 84, no. 3 (Jul., 1994): 316.

its use of scale. The “Remarks” section of Finley’s map states that, “the Colony of Liberia extends from Gallinas river to the Territory of Kroo Settra a distance of about 280 miles in length, along the Coast, & from 20 to 30 miles inland, (in some places much more),” including “within its Jurisdiction, the territories of several native tribes.” This 280-mile stretch of coast referred to corresponds to the majority of the coastal territory Finley rendered, encompassing all of the pink and red shaded regions on the map. An asterisk in the “Remarks” section, however, notes that, “the area at present under the actual jurisdiction of the Colony, extends from Grand Cape Mount, to Trade Town a distance of about 150 miles.” In other words, the apparent “Jurisdiction” of the colony encompassed only the territory shaded in red, a significantly smaller portion of the coast with a correspondingly smaller population of indigenous Africans than the broader expanse of the map would imply. Relating claimed space to seemingly claimable spaces beyond, the manipulation of scale here was undoubtedly based on the assertions of Ashmun and the ACS that the colony’s boundaries would soon be inevitably expanding to include this larger coastal territory. According to Bassett, “cartographic use of color and boundary lines furthered the aims of empire builders by claiming lands not yet effectively controlled by Europeans.”<sup>120</sup> In its treatment of scale to suggest that the ACS effectively controlled more land than was actually the case, Finley’s map foreshadowed many European imperial maps of Africa made later in the nineteenth century, which greatly exaggerated the amount of land under European jurisdiction.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 325.

Another strategy used by Finley that relates to later imperial cartographic techniques involved the inclusion of blank spaces. According to Bassett, “use of blank spaces... resulted from disregard of indigenous geographical knowledge and from attempts by Europeans to keep their knowledge secret.”<sup>121</sup> Yet nineteenth-century map viewers “interpreted blank spaces as areas open for exploration and ultimately colonization,” argues Bassett. “Rather than interpreting them as the limits of knowledge of African geography,” he explains, “imperialists presumed that the empty spaces were vacant and awaiting colonists.”<sup>122</sup> In Finley’s map, only the coastal region is named and detailed, while the interior landscape is left largely unarticulated. In effect, this blank space further centralized Monrovia’s place in this landscape while relegating indigenous territories to its peripheries, creating a Liberian frontier with unknown regions farther east.

While colonizationists used maps as a tool to assert authority over the Liberian landscape, some examples nevertheless offer clues to the reality of native resistance to American settlement. In an 1850 map of Liberia by D. McLelland (fig. 3.25), indigenous territorial areas are defined in two different ways, as Kimaid has noted.<sup>123</sup> Those regions whose original occupants had since accepted American settlers or been relocated farther East are called “counties”, such as “Bassa County” and “Sinoe County”. On the other hand, regions whose indigenous inhabitants continued to resist American authority are

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 322-23.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 324.

<sup>123</sup> Kimaid, “Of Land Ordinances and Liberia,” 239.

labeled as “countries,” for example “Vey Country” and “Queah Country”.<sup>124</sup> The division of indigenous African territorial claims into “counties” and “countries” was repeated in two maps made by the U.S. Navy during the Lynch expedition of 1853, one showing the Republic of Liberia and the other Maryland in Liberia, which still maintained its sovereignty under the care of the MCSC. The map of the Republic of Liberia (fig. 3.26) depicts the West African coast from Sherbro Island, Sierra Leone to Grand Sesters Territory, at the time the southernmost point of the Republic. The map surveys the coast in detail and includes inset views of the most prominent areas of settlement, including Monrovia and Cape Mesurado, Edina and Grand Bassa, the Junk River and Marshall, Cestos, the Sangwin River, and Sinou. Similarly, the map of Maryland in Liberia (fig. 3.27) surveys the coastal geography and includes an inset view of Cape Palmas.

The maps of Liberia and Maryland in Liberia produced on the Lynch expedition went further to justify settler claims to the territory in their use of treaty dates. Unlike any earlier maps of Liberia, these two examples made by the U.S. Navy inscribed order over the African landscape through a series of carefully articulated spaces, each labeled with the apparent date that the given portion of land was purchased or otherwise acquired from indigenous Africans. In effect, this strategy worked to enforce American ideas about land ownership onto the African landscape and also assert settler claims to spaces that remained contested long after the dates noted.

Around midcentury, conflict over Liberian territorial claims arose not only between settlers and ethnic Africans but also between the republic and various European

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

powers, namely Great Britain. For example, the northernmost region included on the Navy's "Republic of Liberia" map – identified as "Cassa Country" and labeled as "Purchased May 1852" – became the subject of conflict between Britain and Liberia in the early 1860s. The disagreement centered on where the borderline between Liberia and Sierra Leone rightly existed, and the Liberian republic, in trying to defend its claims to the territory, presented deeds and treaties made with the natives of the Gallinas and Sulima regions who had originally inhabited the area. The British rejected these documents as insufficient evidence of Liberia's claims to the territory, and the dispute was not resolved until 1885, when the present-day northern border of Liberia was finally established.<sup>125</sup> The incident illustrates how, despite the map's assertion of ownership to African lands, questions and contestation colored the claims of the various actors on the ground for many years into the future.

## Conclusion

The product of a unique moment in the history of American-African relations, *Map of the West African Coast* has become one of the most widely reproduced examples of colonization visual culture in modern scholarship on the ACS and Liberia. Yet its use in such scholarship is problematic. Few scholars have questioned the map's perspective or considered how the nineteenth-century context shaped its production and continues to frame historical understanding of the colonization movement and early settler-indigenous relations. The creation and nineteenth-century reproduction of Finley's map participated

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<sup>125</sup> Yekutieli Gershoni, "The Drawing of Liberian Boundaries in the Nineteenth Century: Treaties with African Chiefs versus Effective Occupation," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20, no. 2 (1987): 294-95.



in a larger effort by the ACS to shape American knowledge about the West African landscape, its indigenous inhabitants, and its ready suitability for settlement by African Americans. Against a background of tense and frequently violent interactions between settlers and indigenous West Africans, the map worked alongside other Liberian maps and landscape views to present the encounter between the two groups as one between “civilization” and “savagery”. In the process, these images concealed the violence of settlement and justified American claims to a contested landscape.

Like other visual and material representations of the Liberian landscape produced and circulated during the first decades of settlement, Finley’s map was not – nor has it remained – a neutral representation. Rather, like these other visual and material expressions, the map reflects the ideals and perceptions guiding the different individuals and groups involved in its production, particularly Finley and the ACS. As such, it reveals the motivations of colonization’s early promoters as well as the limits of their knowledge about West African geography and culture. In *Map of the West Coast of Africa*, the ACS’ mission to “civilize” Africa is articulated as a project to transform the landscape through the imagined order of the grid plan, the transformation of tropical natural disorder into neatly divided agricultural spaces, and the imposition of territorial boundary lines. Yet in privileging Monrovia as the central setting for the story of Liberian colonization, the map relegates indigenous histories to the landscape’s peripheries. Its depiction of only three major ethnic groups vastly underrepresented the actual ethnic diversity that populated the early nineteenth-century West African coast. Moreover, its depiction of those groups as inhabiting neatly divided territories assigned Western notions of land ownership to societies that understood land use very differently,

failing to capture the fluidity by which the various occupants of the region defined and divided their claims to landscape.



Figure 3.1

Anthony Finley, publisher (Philadelphia); J. H. Young, engraver (Philadelphia)  
*Map of the West Coast of Africa, from Sierra Leone to Cape Palmas; including the Colony of Liberia*  
 1830

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/96680499/> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 3.2**

Henry Stone, engraver

American Colonization Society Lifetime Membership Certificate  
c.1833

Gilder-Lehrman Collection

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/community/tags/featured-primary-source?page=8> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 3.3**

David R. Harrison, engraver

*The Territory of Liberia According to a Survey Completed in 1825 By Ashmun*  
Published in J. Ashmun, *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823*  
(Washington City: Way & Gideon, 1826)

University of Virginia Special Collections Library



**Figure 3.4**

David R. Harrison, engraver

Detail of fig. 3.4: *The Territory of Liberia According to a Survey Completed in 1825 By Ashmun*  
 Published in J. Ashmun, *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823*  
 (Washington City: Way & Gideon, 1826)  
 University of Virginia Special Collections



**Figure 3.5**

David R. Harrison, engraver

Detail of fig. 3.4: *The Territory of Liberia According to a Survey Completed in 1825 By Ashmun*  
 Published in J. Ashmun, *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823*  
 (Washington City: Way & Gideon, 1826)  
 University of Virginia Special Collections





**Figure 3.6**

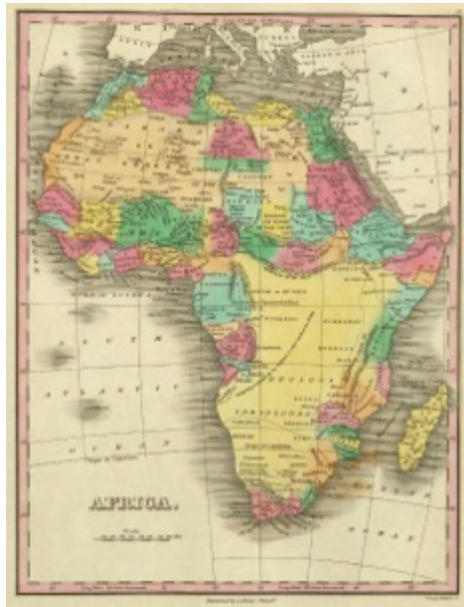
Anthony Finley, publisher (Philadelphia); J. H. Young, engraver (Philadelphia)

Detail of fig. 3.1: *Map of the West Coast of Africa, from Sierra Leone to Cape Palmas; including the Colony of Liberia*

1830

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96680499/> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 3.7**

Anthony Finley, publisher (Philadelphia); Young & Delleker, engravers (Philadelphia)

*Africa*

Published in *A New General Atlas* (Philadelphia: Anthony Finley, Clark & Raser, printers, 1831), p. 58

David Rumsey Map Collection

<http://www.davidrumsey.com> (accessed December 8, 2015)



**Figure 3.8**

Anthony Finley, publisher (Philadelphia); Young & Delleker, engravers (Philadelphia)

*Egypt*

Published in *A New General Atlas* (Philadelphia: Anthony Finley, Clark & Raser, printers, 1831), p. 59

David Rumsey Map Collection

<http://www.davidrumsey.com> (accessed December 8, 2015)



**Figure 3.9**

Henry S. Tanner, publisher (Philadelphia); J. H. Young & E. Dankworth, engravers (Philadelphia)

*Map of Africa*

1848

Wall map

David Rumsey Map Collection

<http://www.davidrumsey.com> (accessed December 8, 2015)



**Figure 3.10**

R. Coyle; E. Weber & Co., lithographers (Baltimore)

*Map of Liberia*

1845

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96684984/> (accessed January 4, 2016)





**Figure 3.11**

Willem Janszoon Blaeu

*Africae nova description*

Copperplate *carte à figures* map, published in volume 2 of Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Le theatre dv monde; ov Novvel atalas contenant les chartes et descriptions de tous les païs de la terre* (Amsterdam, 1644)

Rare Books Division, Princeton University Library

[http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual\\_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-continent/continent.html](http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-continent/continent.html)

(accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 3.12**

Herman Moll

*To the Right Honourable Charles, Earl of Perterborow and Monmouth, &c This Map of Africa... Is Most Humbly Dedicated*

1710

Copperplate engraving

Historic Maps Collection, Princeton University Library

[http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual\\_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-continent/continent.html](http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-continent/continent.html)

(accessed December 9, 2015)



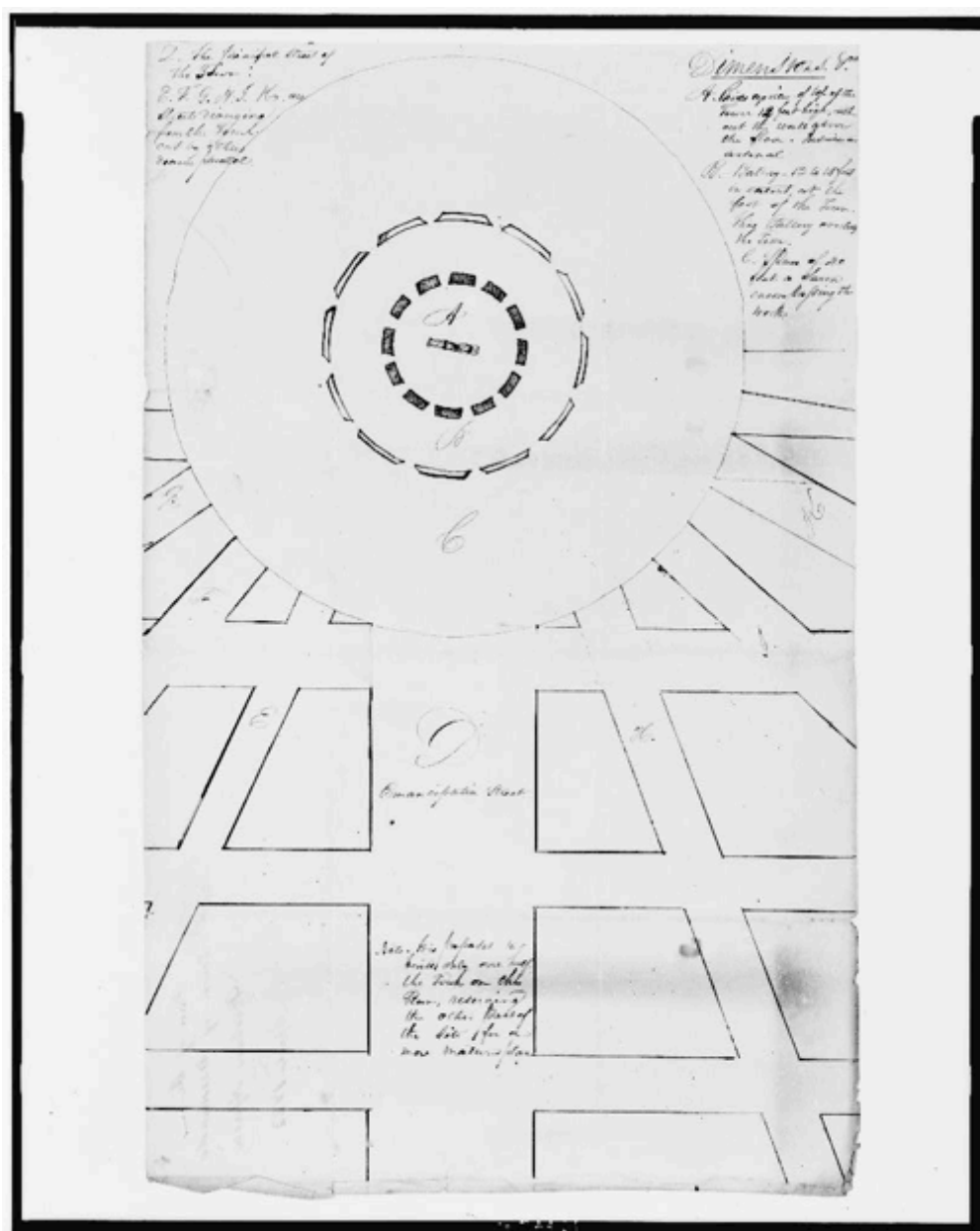
**Figure 3.13**

James Rennell

*A Map shewing the Progress of Discovery & Improvement, in the Geography of North Africa*  
1798

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2009583841/> (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 3.14**

William Thornton

*Plan of the Town of Messurado Western Africa, April 1823*

1823

Drawing

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/93505782/> (accessed January 5, 2016)



**Figure 3.15**

Unidentified artist

*Native town*

c. 1856 or earlier

Watercolor

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/00652569/> (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 3.16**

Unidentified artist

*Kroomen*

c. 1820-1850

Watercolor, crayon, and ink

University of Virginia Special Collections Library





**Figure 3.17**  
Oliver Farnsworth  
*Plan of Cincinnati*  
1819

Published in Charles Theodore Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens* (Chicago: Biographical Pub. Co., 1904)

Archives and Rare Books Library, University of Cincinnati

<https://www.libraries.uc.edu/arb/collections/urban-studies/cincinnati-maps.html> (accessed December 9, 2015)



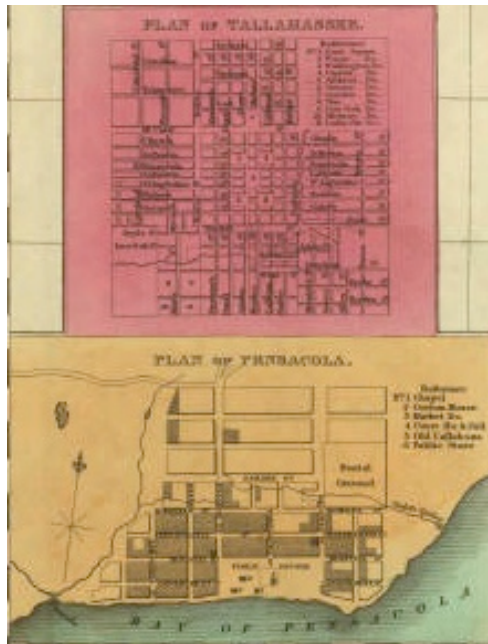
**Figure 3.18**

Anthony Finley, publisher (Philadelphia), J. H. Young, engraver (Philadelphia)  
*Florida*

Published in *A New General Atlas Comprising a Complete Set of Maps, representing the Grand Divisions of the Globe, ...* (Philadelphia: Anthony Finley, Clark & Raser, printers, 1831)

David Rumsey Map Collection

<http://www.davidrumsey.com> (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 3.19**

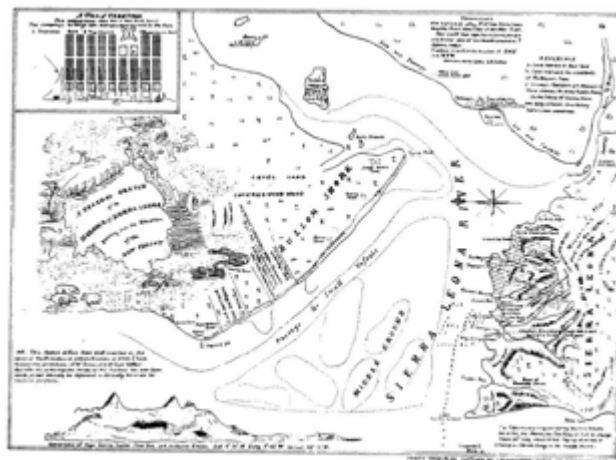
Anthony Finley, publisher (Philadelphia), J. H. Young, engraver (Philadelphia)  
 “Plan of Tallahassee” and “Plan of Pensacola”

Detail of fig. 3.18: *Florida*

Published in *A New General Atlas Comprising a Complete Set of Maps, representing the Grand Divisions of the Globe,...* (Philadelphia: Anthony Finley, Clark & Raser, printers, 1831)

David Rumsey Map Collection

<http://www.davidrumsey.com> (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 3.20**

Carl Bernard Wadstrom

*A General Sketch of the Harbour of Sierra Leona pointing out the Situation of the New Colony*  
 Tracing published in Carl Bernard Wadstrom, *Observations on the Slave Trade, and a description of some part of the coast of Guinea, during a voyage, made in 1787, and 1788* (London: James Phillips, 1789)

The Harriet Tubman Institute

[http://www.tubmaninstitute.ca/map\\_collection](http://www.tubmaninstitute.ca/map_collection) (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 3.21**

John Seys

*Location of Careysburgh, La.*

c. 1856

Pen and ink

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96684982/> (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 3.22**

William L. Breton, artist; P.S. Duval, lithographer (Philadelphia)

*Mount Vaughan / Scite of Protest. Episcopal Mission, Cape Palmas, West<sup>n</sup> Africa*

1838

Hand-colored lithograph

Library Company of Philadelphia

Photo by author



**Figure 3.23**

John Revey

*Plan of the Township of Harper and its vicinity at Cape Palmas*

c. 1836-42

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers, Maryland Historical Society

Reprinted from microform edition



**Figure 3.24**

G. F. Nesbitt & Co., lithographer

*Map of Liberia West Africa*

183-?

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96684983/> (accessed January 5, 2016)





**Figure 3.25**

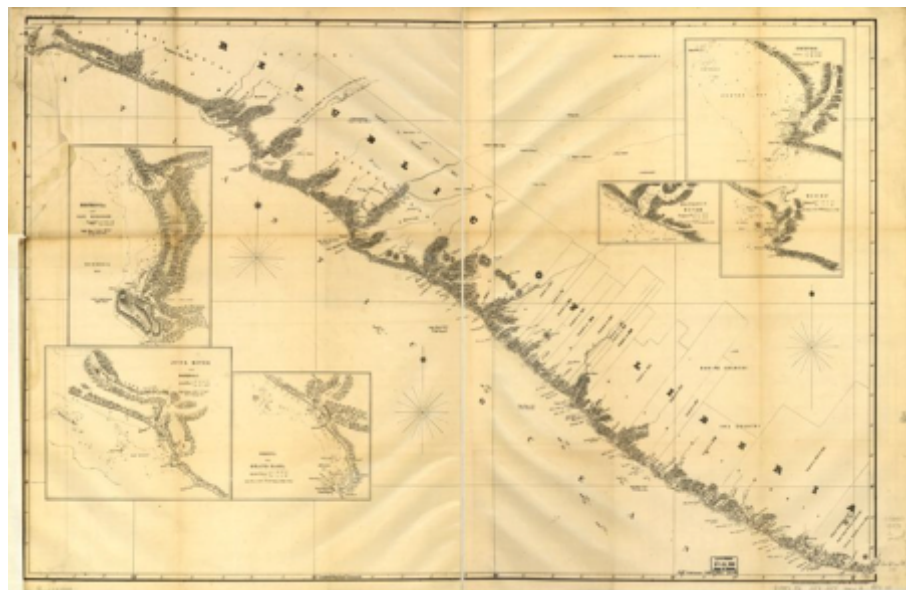
D. McLelland

*Map of Liberia Compiled from the best Authorities For the Report of Rev. R.R. Gurley on the Condition of Liberia*

1850

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96684988/> (accessed January 5, 2016)



**Figure 3.26**

United States Navy Department

*Republic of Liberia*

1853

Washington D.C.: U.S. Senate

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96684989/> (accessed January 5, 2016)



**Figure 3.27**

United States Navy Department

*Maryland in Liberia*

1853

Washington D.C.: U.S. Senate

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96684992/> (accessed January 5, 2016)

## Chapter Four

### Travelling Objects: Exhibiting “African Curiosities” in the Antebellum United States

In April of 1836, a new exhibit was introduced at the Peale Museum in Baltimore, a motley collection of art, ethnographic objects, and natural history specimens operated by Charles Willson Peale’s sons Rembrandt and Rubens Peale.<sup>1</sup> The exhibit was an ivory horn (fig. 4.1) made in Africa that had been donated to the museum by Daniel Whitehurst, a physician, newspaper editor, and ACS affiliate.<sup>2</sup> The accompanying label described the object as a “War-horn used by the Bassa tribe, and left on the battle ground after their attack on the Colonists at Bassa Cove Africa in 1835.”<sup>3</sup> The event referred to was the same one discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the Bassa attack on Port Cresson’s African-American Quaker settlers in June of 1835, news of which quickly reached American shores and was highly publicized in the popular press. Presumably Whitehurst had acquired the horn while he was in Liberia on an ACS-commissioned missionary and peace-keeping journey in the spring of 1835.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The horn is now at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>2</sup> For Whitehurst’s biography, see the finding aid to the Wheedon and Whitehurst Family Papers, collection number 04057-z, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, accessed December 30, 2015, [http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/w/Weedon\\_and\\_Whitehurst\\_Family.html](http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/w/Weedon_and_Whitehurst_Family.html).

<sup>3</sup> For the original label and other relevant records on the horn, see Accession File 99-12 C, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. See also William Hart, “Liberian Chiefs’ Horns Revisited,” *African Arts* 47, no. 2 (Summer, 2014): 60; “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum”, 2, Charles Coleman Sellers Collection, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>4</sup> “Report of the Managers to the American Colonization Society, at its Nineteenth Annual Meeting,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 1 (Jan., 1836): 18. During his time in Liberia, Whitehurst kept a regular diary, which was eventually published in several segments in the

On display in the Peale Museum, the Bassa horn brought American viewers face to face with a tangible, material relic of the tragic event they had read about the previous year. Yet supplied only with the description on the object's label, museum visitors did not learn of the object's primary function as a musical instrument. Also known as an oliphant, the horn survives today at Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and is of a particular type that art historian William B. Hart has identified as being made in what is now coastal Liberia and Sierra Leone in the first half of the nineteenth century and possibly earlier. Like similar examples that Hart has located in American and British collections, the Bassa oliphant has a lozenge-shaped mouthpiece surrounded by carved decoration and an incised line design on its body.<sup>5</sup> The Peales' identification of the object as a "War-horn" rather than a musical instrument reflects their limited knowledge of West African culture and their preconceived notions of Africans as violent and warlike. For the exhibit's viewers, the horn materialized Western perceptions of Africans as savage and in need of subduing, further justifying the contested claims of American colonists to the Liberian landscape.

The colonization of Liberia brought an unprecedented influx of West African artifacts like the Bassa oliphant into the United States in the antebellum period. John

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*Repository* between April and October of 1836. For the published journal entries, see "Mr. Whitehurst's Journal," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 4 (Apr., 1836): 105-11; "Mr. Whitehurst's Journal," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 5 (May, 1836): 144-50; "Mr. Whitehurst's Journal," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 6 (Jun., 1836): 177-84; "Mr. Whitehurst's Journal," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 7 (Jul., 1836): 209-16; "Mr. Whitehurst's Journal," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 8 (Aug., 1836): 241-46; "Mr. Whitehurst's Journal," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 9 (Sept., 1836): 273-81; "Mr. Whitehurst's Journal," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 10 (Oct., 1836): 307-15.

<sup>5</sup> See W. A. Hart, "Early-Nineteenth-Century Chiefs' Horns from Coastal Liberia"; W. Hart, "Liberian Chiefs' Horns Revisited."

Sartain's portrait of Elliott Cresson, discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, gestures to this phenomenon. In the left foreground of the picture is an assemblage of objects that nineteenth-century viewers would have immediately recognized as being of African origin (fig. 4.2). They include two spears decorated with leopard skin, a large ceramic gourd, a wooden sculpture, a woven basket or mat, a dagger, and a carved ivory horn similar to the Bassa example. Cresson may have owned these very artifacts, as many colonization promoters kept collections of *Africana* during these years. Yet it is also possible that Sartain rendered the African articles by studying examples of similar objects in various public or private collections in Philadelphia. Whichever the case, the depiction of these artifacts within Cresson's office points to the ubiquity and symbolic value of the African material culture that circulated through antebellum American collections.

Although contact between Westerners and Africans in the region that would become Liberia had existed through trade since the fifteenth century, the establishment of the colony in the early 1820s brought about the first sustained interaction between Americans and West Africans. Exchange in material commodities played a vital role in the development of American-African relations. While colonization promoters in the United States initially envisioned Liberia as a vibrant agricultural colony, many settlers found trade in such local commodities as rice, palm oil, and camwood to be far more lucrative and less laborious than farming. Within the first decades of settlement, Liberia's colonial elite was dominated by colonists growing wealthy through commercial trading and shipping ventures; historians have nicknamed these settlers Liberia's "merchant

princes.”<sup>6</sup> Yet the activities of settler-merchants formed just the commodity component of a much larger process of material exchange in fabricated objects and exotica that defined the early years of colonization. The sustained presence of Americans in Liberia – whether settlers, ACS agents, missionaries, U.S. naval personnel, or other travelers – resulted in the movement of iconic African objects across the Atlantic at an unprecedented scale.

This chapter examines the collection, circulation, and public exhibition of Liberian material culture and natural history artifacts in the antebellum United States. I draw from a range of sources including nineteenth-century museum inventories and donation books, information contained in the *African Repository* and other publications of the period, and close study of the objects themselves, many of which survive in contemporary American museums of anthropology and natural history. I begin by exploring the ways African artifacts, frequently referred to as “curiosities” for their presumed provocative strangeness, were exhibited in the United States in the years preceding Liberian colonization to provide a context for understanding the meanings of the displays that came later. Next, I discuss who participated in the collection of artifacts from Liberia and where these objects were ultimately displayed once on American soil. Finally, I move to an examination of the artifacts themselves, considering the wide range of Liberian object types that circulated in American collections and exploring what kinds of cultural work they performed there.

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<sup>6</sup> Dwight N. Syfert, “The Liberian Coasting Trade, 1822-1900,” *Journal of African History* 18, no. 2 (1977): 217.

By tracing how African artifacts entered and were exhibited in the United States before and during Liberian colonization, this chapter argues that objects were central agents in the development of American perceptions of Africa during the nineteenth century. In the early republic, I demonstrate, public exhibitions of African curiosities reflected Americans' limited knowledge of Africa's geography, history, and diversity. At popular venues like Peale's Philadelphia Museum, Africa was treated as a vague and monolithic continent populated by primitive but noble "savages". Exhibits of African artifacts in this period merged with stories of African-American patriotism, forwarding mythologies of prospective racial harmony between blacks and whites in the United States. As Liberian colonization brought unprecedented numbers of West African ethnographic and natural history specimens into American collections beginning in the 1820s, interpretations of these objects began to transform according to the goals and biases of exhibitors. For the ACS, which operated its own museum of Liberian curiosities in Washington, D.C. from 1827 to 1840, displays of West African artifacts provided tangible evidence of Liberia's rich natural resources and potential for colonial exploitation. As Liberian collectibles moved into more popular exhibition venues, however, artifacts often became more sensationalized, illustrating Africans' "heathen" state, apparent propensity for violence, and involvement in the international slave trade. And in a striking reversal, by midcentury some Liberian artifacts were being used by America's most eminent scientists to support emerging theories of racial difference and white superiority.

## Exhibiting Africa Before Liberian Colonization

The collection and display of African objects by Americans and Europeans predated Liberian colonization by three centuries. Western interest in obtaining and exhibiting Africana was a natural outgrowth of the European-West African trading culture that arose following the Portuguese voyages of “discovery” to the region beginning in fifteenth century. Few of the African items collected by Europeans in this early period of contact survive, and as Ezio Bassani and Malcolm McLeod have shown, it is nearly impossible to ascertain exactly what these first objects were.<sup>7</sup> However, records indicate that European collections of Africana in the early modern period contained many of the same types of objects that would be sought from Liberia in the nineteenth century, such as weapons, textiles, carvings, and musical instruments.<sup>8</sup>

Once in Europe, most early African collectibles landed in royal repositories. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century records indicate the presence of African artifacts in private collections across Europe, from England to Denmark to Italy.<sup>9</sup> As Michael M. Ames explains, “Cabinets featuring collections of both natural and artificial exotica became a common feature of royal and noble households throughout Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, forming ‘cabinets of curiosities,’ ‘cabinets of rarities,’ or ‘houses of curios,’ as they came to be called.”<sup>10</sup> As Ames describes, “These

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<sup>7</sup> Ezio Bassani and Malcolm McLeod, “African Material in Early Collections,” *The Origin of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, eds. Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1985), 246.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 249.

<sup>10</sup> Michael A. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 1992), 50.



cabinets were unsystematic and idiosyncratic in composition, and were filled to overflowing.”<sup>11</sup> A late seventeenth-century print depicting the collection of Ferdinando Cospi, a Bolognese nobleman, presents an idealized vision of such a cabinet (fig. 4.3).<sup>12</sup> These kinds of repositories contained man-made and natural curiosities from around the globe, often labeled with information that was inaccurate or fanciful. As Daniela Bleichmar explains, “vague and imprecisely used terms such as ‘India’ or ‘China’ did not stand for specific locations but for an exotic origin that was hard to pin down, remained unspecific, and could mutate unexpectedly.”<sup>13</sup> Yet while an object’s supposed geographic origins were often incorrect, they were not without meaning; the very fact that geographical origins were frequently edited in collection catalogues testifies to the perceived importance of this proof of an object’s exoticism.<sup>14</sup>

From the earliest period of European-West African contact, African artisans and merchants were producing collectibles were being produced expressly for European consumption. As Bassani and McLeod explain, “it is quite clear that within a few decades, at the most, of sea-contact with West Africa, Europeans were utilizing indigenous skills and materials for European ends,” the best example of this practice being the production of what are now known as the Afro-Portuguese ivories.<sup>15</sup> Made

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Daniela Bleichmar, “Seeing the World in a Room: Looking at Exotica in Early Modern Collections,” *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, eds. Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 26.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 19-20.

<sup>15</sup> Bassani and McLeod, “African Material in Early Collections,” 246.

mainly in Benin City and the Bulom and Sherbro regions of present-day Sierra Leone, these ivory productions – consisting of horns, spoons, and other vessels – acquired significant value and status in Europe, with as many as 200 still surviving today, such as a saltcellar in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 4.4).<sup>16</sup> The production of these ivories constitutes an early example of how African societies understood Westerners as a profitable market and produced objects specifically for their consumption.

The movement of African bodies via the international slave trade greatly facilitated the circulation of African material culture throughout the Atlantic world. Significantly, African items in both European and American collections were frequently grouped together with others obtained from African slaves in the Americas. Sometime before 1527, for instance, Dieppe ship-builder Jean Ango was recorded to have obtained objects from the Indies and Brazil as well as “ivory points, strange idols, ostrich feathers and skins of wild animals, brought home on his ships that had touched land along the coasts of Africa.”<sup>17</sup> In the New World, an interest in collecting Africana began as early as enslaved West Africans started arriving in the Americas, bringing objects and artistic traditions with them.<sup>18</sup> The first Euroamericans to become interested in collecting and

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 247.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Bassani and McLeod, “African Material in Early Collections,” 245.

<sup>18</sup> For scholarly literature on Africanisms, see Judith Wragg Chase, *Afro-American Art and Craft* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971); David C. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art / Alfred A. Knopf, 1976); Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976, 1992); John Michael Vlach, *The African-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990); Richard Price and Sally Price, *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983, 1984); Joseph E. Holloway, *Africanisms in American Culture (Blacks in the Diaspora)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill,

displaying these African artifacts were likely slave owners, who would have most frequently encountered them. A late eighteenth-century example of this trend is found in the 1780 inventory of the home of John Dauling, a Jamaican planter, which lists “A Negroe mask” among the owner’s possessions.<sup>19</sup>

The same confusion of African items with those of African Americans continued into the late eighteenth century as private collections were increasingly opened to the public in both Europe and the United States. The first public museum in the United States was Pierre Eugene Du Simitierre’s American Museum, established in Philadelphia in 1782. Although Du Simitierre’s primary goal in opening his private curiosity cabinet to the public was to display documents, objects, and artwork related to the American Revolution, he also put on view all sorts of other “curiosities”.<sup>20</sup> An advertisement for the museum indicates that among the items on display were “various Weapons, Musical Instruments and Utensils of the Negroes, from the coast of Guinea, and the West-Indies.”<sup>21</sup> Of Swiss birth, Du Simitierre had spent over a decade in the West Indies before coming to Philadelphia in 1765. It is likely that he acquired the majority of these items during his time there, as most Caribbean slaves in these years had arrived relatively

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NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Leslie King-Hammond, “Identifying Spaces of Blackness: The Aesthetics of Resistance and Identity in American Plantation Art,” in *Landscape of Slavery*, 58-85.

<sup>19</sup> Inventory Series 1B 11-3, No. 61: 1779, p. 141, Archives of Jamaica, Spanish Town, Jamaica. Thanks to Louis Nelson for bringing this reference to my attention.

<sup>20</sup> John E. Korasick, *Collecting Africa: African Material Culture Displays and the American Image of Africa, 1885-1930* (Ph.D. diss., Saint Louis University, 2005), 10.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Eugene Du Simitiere, *American Museum* (Philadelphia: Printed by Jon Dunlap, 1782); quoted in Korasick, *Collecting Africa*, 10.

recently from West Africa.<sup>22</sup> While the description of the “coast of Guinea” may indeed refer to Africa, it is also possible that it was intended as a reference to the Dutch-Caribbean stronghold of Guyana, home to a large population of enslaved Africans. Whatever the case, it is clear that objects obtained from Africans in the New World were being identified in the same category as those of African origin. Unfortunately, further speculation on the specific artifacts in the American Museum is challenging, as they have long been lost. Du Simitiere died in 1784, the Museum was closed, and its contents were auctioned off the next year.<sup>23</sup> The “Curiosities” sold included “Indian and African Antiquities, Dresses, Weapons, Utensils, etc.”<sup>24</sup> No record exists of what happened to these objects.<sup>25</sup>

During the few decades just preceding Liberian colonization, African artifacts had a regular presence in American collections. The Tammany Society’s American Museum, which operated in New York from 1791 to 1800, included in its display ornaments and various natural history specimens from Africa.<sup>26</sup> Farther south, the College of Charleston

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<sup>22</sup> Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 256. As Brown notes more broadly in his book, the high mortality rate of Caribbean slaves resulted in a steady stream of new enslaved Africans there.

<sup>23</sup> Korasick, *Collecting Africa*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Mathew Clarkson, *For sale at public vendue* (Philadelphia: Printed by Charles Cist); quoted in Korasick, *Collecting Africa*, 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> Korasick, *Collecting Africa*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> See Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird & Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 14-15, 19-20; Robert M. and Gale S. McClung, “Tammany’s Remarkable Gardiner Baker: New York’s First Museum Proprietor, Menagerie Keeper, and Promoter Extraordinary,” *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (April, 1958): 151-52, 154. The American Museum, also known as the Tammany Museum, operated full-time from 1791 to 1800, but its collection was occasionally open to the public in the following years, as well. The collection switched owners several times before being purchased by P. T. Barnum in 1841.

owned several items “From the Mandingoes on the Coast of Africa,” specifically “Part of the Skin of a large Snake- Bow & Arrows- Belt & Pouch- Dagger- Hammock- Sandals- Snuff box- Machine to guard their legs against the snakes- & an Arabian Manuscript,” all donated by a “Mr. McFarlane” in 1800.<sup>27</sup> Most public collections in this period, however, were short-lived, unorganized, and poorly documented, so knowledge of how many and what kinds of African items they contained remains limited.

An exception to this trend comes with the African items on view in Charles Willson Peale’s Philadelphia Museum, about which a good deal more information survives. A portrait painter and budding naturalist with an interest in collecting and ordering specimens of the natural and man-made world, Peale opened his museum in 1786, and it quickly became one of the most popular public spaces in the Early Republic. Most famously represented in Peale’s self-portrait of 1822, *The Artist in His Museum* (fig. 4.5), the Philadelphia Museum housed an array of biological, botanical, and archeological exhibits, including an extensive collection of stuffed birds, mineral deposits, and eventually his famous North American mastodon skeleton. Peale conceived of his Museum as a “world in miniature” and sought to order it upon the precepts of Linnaean taxonomy, then a modern system for classifying biological diversity by ranking specimens in descending categories of similarity or difference, such as *classes*, *orders*, and *species*.<sup>28</sup> The Philadelphia Museum occupied various sites, including Independence

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<sup>27</sup> Paul M. Rea, ed., *Bulletin of the College of Charleston Museum* 2, no. 6 (Oct., 1906): 53.

<sup>28</sup> Gary B. Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002/2006), 136.

Hall and the building originally home to the American Philosophical Society.<sup>29</sup> Two of Peale's sons, Rubens and Rembrandt, participated in the Museum's operation and eventually opened locations in other cities, including Baltimore and New York.<sup>30</sup> By the 1840s, however, it was closed, and many of its collections were sold to the famous showman P.T. Barnum.<sup>31</sup> Because of the Peale family's historical prominence and the great scope of its collecting and exhibiting activities, information about the contents of its museums – including African items – has survived better than that of many contemporaneous collections. An examination of known African artifacts belonging to Peale thus offers the best representation available of the kinds of African objects most popular in American museum collections in the period before Liberian colonization.

Surviving records of the Philadelphia Museum indicate that Peale owned numerous African items, mostly what would be now classified as ethnographic specimens such as musical instruments, clothing, and war paraphernalia.<sup>32</sup> Table 1 presents a list of specific African items documented to have been in the Museum during the three decades before Liberian colonization, ordered by date. Of the 21 items on the list, 18 are ethnographic objects and four are natural history specimens (one entry includes both). Of the 18 ethnographic entries, seven are weapons of some kind: bows, quivers, arrows, a lance, and a dagger. Six entries include some type of clothing or worn accessory, such as

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Coleman Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: Norton, 1980), 77-79.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 215-54.

<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.*, 2, 307-308; "Education and Entertainment for the Masses: Spectacle in Barnum's American Museum," accessed February 27, 2016, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA02/freed/Barnum/museumessay.html>.

<sup>32</sup> "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," Charles Coleman Sellers Collection, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

caps, pouches, and shawls. The remainder of the items consists of two musical instruments, a dish, a spoon, and some fishing lines. The four natural history specimens include the bones and teeth of a hippopotamus, various seeds and fruits, and several types of live birds.

While this table presents only a fraction of the African objects that Peale undoubtedly housed in his museum during these years, and although it is difficult to discern how representative this list might be, it still offers probable insights into the kinds of African items most commonly collected in this period and what qualities made them interesting to a public audience. Little is known about the specific donors whose names appear in connection with these early African accessions in the Philadelphia Museum, but they were probably representative of the kinds of individuals who sent other objects and specimens to Peale during these years. While some of Peale's items came from prominent scientists and explorers, many others were sent by sea captains, merchants, military officers, sailors, farmers, and doctors.<sup>33</sup> The Peale museum collections were dispersed in the middle of the nineteenth century, so it is difficult to trace how many survive. However, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University does own a number of original Peale artifacts, including several objects that seem to match the early African accessions in Table 1.

It is not surprising that weaponry and clothing are the two most common types of object listed in Table 1, as this emphasis on arms and apparel parallels a larger trend in

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<sup>33</sup> See Robert E. Schofield, "The Science Education of an Enlightened Entrepreneur: Charles Willson Peale and His Philadelphia Museum, 1784-1827," *American Studies* 30, no. 2 (Fall, 1989): 30; David R. Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and Its Audience* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 142.

terms of the gifts Peale most typically received during these years.<sup>34</sup> That several entries for bows, quivers, and poisoned arrows make up the majority of the weaponry on the list is also not unexpected. As David R. Brigham explains, “bows with poisoned arrows from South America and Africa were among the most deadly objects” exhibited in the Philadelphia Museum.<sup>35</sup> Several examples of bows, quivers, and poisoned arrows now in the Peabody may have been among those once owned by Peale and listed in Table 1 (figs. 4.6, 4.7). Other war-related items, like the lance and dagger that appear in the table, were also popular collectors items in this period. The dagger donated to Peale in 1801 may be one and the same with an example that survives in the Peabody today (fig. 4.8). Similarly, the clothing and worn accessories in the table were typical of the types of specimens that were on view in the Philadelphia Museum, and some of them are probably among surviving Peale objects at the Peabody, including a leather pouch, hat, comb, various bracelets, and several necklaces (figs. 4.9-4.13). The wooden spoon, dish, and one of the musical instruments apparently owned by Peale may also be among those items surviving at the Peabody (figs. 4.14-4.16).<sup>36</sup>

One of Peale’s most prized exhibits, a bow with quiver and arrows that had apparently once belonged to an enslaved African named Jambo, reveals a great deal about how African artifacts were interpreted in the Philadelphia Museum. Peale described this exhibit’s origins as follows:

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<sup>34</sup> Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic*, 142.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> The correlations between artifacts in Peale’s collections and objects presently in the Peabody Museum suggested here are based solely on the author’s own comparison of the records.



An African Prince, subdued in Battle, capitulated for his bow and quiver. A bauble bought his life. A British Merchant sent him to South Carolina, where he was sold as a slave.

A placid countenance, and submissive manners, marked his resignation, and preserved him, in all situations, the possession of his arms; the only companions he had left—the sole objects of his affections.

His stateliness and strength recommended him to Colonel Motte, a humane Master in whose service he died, in stedfast faith of a certain resurrection in his native state.

The Bow and quiver were preserved as relicks of a faithful slave in the Colonels family, who gratefully remember the services, the fortitude and the fidelity of the trusty, and gentle Jambo.

In the Campaign of 1781, the widow of Colonel Motte (who died a patriot) was banished from her House on the river Congaree, then fortified by a British Garrison; the Garrison was besieged by a small detachment from the American Army, whose approaches were soon within bow shot.

The Widow, who lived in a Cottage in sight of the *Fort*, was informed of the expedients proposed. Here, said she (presenting the African bow & quiver) are the Materials—Jambo never used these arrows, and I fear they are poisoned. Use them not, therefore, even against your Enemies. But take the bow. Any arrow will waft a Match. Spare not the House so you expel the foe.

The blazing roof produced submission. The Britains drop'd their arms. The Americans entered the House, and both joined to extinguish the Flames.

The Misfortunes of a Prince, and the Heroism of a Lady, are not uncommon. The Novelty is the Bow—a stem of genuine Bamboa—which, destined for the defence of Liberty in Africa, served the same cause in America, was preserved by an Officer of the Patriotic Army—presented to Mr. Peale, and deposited in his Museum.<sup>37</sup>

The colonel referred to in Peale's story was Jacob Motte, who owned Fairfield Plantation in Charleston County, South Carolina. After his death in 1780, his widow Rebecca Brewton Motte inherited the property along with its 244 slaves, which presumably included Jambo.<sup>38</sup> The "Officer of the Patriotic Army" mentioned in the story was Otho

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, 43-44.

<sup>38</sup> Steven D. Smith et al., "*Obstinate and Strong*": *The History and Archaeology of the Siege of Fort Motte*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina—South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2007) 12, University of South Carolina Scholar Commons, accessed February 25, 2016, [http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=anth\\_facpub](http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=anth_facpub).

Holland Williams, adjutant-general in the South to Nathanael Green and commander of a Maryland regiment.<sup>39</sup> He eventually donated the bow, quiver, and arrows to the Museum.<sup>40</sup>

In Peale's story, Jambo's bow was prized first and foremost for its heroic role in the American Revolution, reflecting Peale's nationalistic goals in the promotion of his Museum. Yet other attributes of the bow were also critical elements of Peale's narrative. On the most basic level, it was valued for the material out of which it was made; in Peale's words, it was "a stem of genuine Bamboa" (presumably bamboo). References to other African items on view in the Philadelphia Museum in this period suggest that materials and aesthetic appearance were important qualities to Peale. For example, descriptions of seven African items donated to the Museum by a "Mr. Morancy" in 1794 that were listed in *Dunlap and Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* on May 30 of that year highlight these attributes.<sup>41</sup> The gifts included "A tobacco pouch of well dressed leather, and handsomely coloured, by the natives of Africa," while "A cap made of the straw of Raffie, by the Senegal Negroes" was described as being "of elegant workmanship." Additionally, like Jambo's bow, an African bow and its string donated by Mr. Morancy were praised for being "made of bambou."<sup>42</sup>

Another important component of Peale's story about the bow was Jambo's alleged identity as an African prince. Like Jambo's bow, other African items on view in

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<sup>39</sup> Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, 44.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> "Late additions to Peale's Museum," *Dunlap and Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* (May 30, 1794): 3; "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 1.

<sup>42</sup> "Late additions to Peale's Museum," 3.

the Philadelphia Museum were valued for their supposed connections to African royalty. A bamboo bow, quiver, and arrows donated by Mr. Morancy in 1794 had apparently “belonged to an African king of Ahomet.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the African dish given to Peale by a “Mr. Soissons” in 1805 was described as having “belonged to a prince.”<sup>44</sup> That Peale described Jambo as an “African prince” rather than specifying his exact African ethnicity also parallels a trend in the Philadelphia Museum of labeling African items as simply “African” rather than identifying their precise geographic origins on that continent. James Sidbury has demonstrated that, “the terms ‘Africa’ and ‘African’ and the perception that the continent of Africa (or the sub-Saharan portion of it) comprises a unified cultural and/or ‘racial’ unit are European in origin,” and that this perception of a unified “African” identity arose in the British Atlantic between 1650 and 1750.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Jambo’s apparent identity as a prince related to a broader eighteenth-century trend among white Americans and Europeans of ascribing royal origin stories to some enslaved African subjects.

Peale characterized Jambo as a noble but childlike victim of both African violence and the Atlantic slave trade. This description mirrored popular abolitionist depictions of Africans as “noble savages” in this period. According to many anti-slavery writers, Africans had lived in a state of childlike innocence and primordial utopia until the slave trade, perpetuated by greedy Europeans, had begun to degrade their naturally free and

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1.

<sup>45</sup> James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

simple way of life. Yet stories like Jambo's suggested that the noble innocence of Africans could still occasionally be found among blacks in the United States, particularly those with royal African origins fortunate enough to have been brought up under the hand of benevolent whites like Colonel Motte. Another well-known story of a loyal African with royal origins and a benevolent white master was that of Peter Panah, the protégé of Carl Wadström, a Swedish Swedenborgian and abolitionist living in Britain. Like Jambo, Panah was rumored to have had a royal African past before becoming a victim of the slave trade. Apparently the son of the king of Mesurado, a title that would suggest he came from the region that is present-day Monrovia, he had been kidnapped by slavers and was eventually rescued from a ship at the London docks by Wadström.<sup>46</sup> About 1789, Wadström and Panah sat for a portrait by another Swedish artist in London named Carl Fredrik von Breda. Entitled *Portrait of a Swedish Gentleman Instructing a Negro Prince* (fig. 4.17), the picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year. In the portrait, Wadström is shown instructing Panah in classics and geography. Wearing the dress of a gentleman, Wadström points to the page as a parent would instruct a child, while Panah looks up at him reverently.<sup>47</sup> Panah's nobility is suggested by his muscular physique and gold jewelry, while a palm tree and earthen hut in the background visually place his geographical origins in Africa.

In Peale's story of the African bow and arrows, Jambo becomes an American version of Panah. Like Panah, Jambo was said to have been a prince before being sold into slavery. Despite his nobility, his refusal to part with his precious bow also reveals

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<sup>46</sup> Honour, *The Image of the Black*, Part 1, 56.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 54-56.

him to be childlike. Just as Panah is rescued from slavery by Wadström, Jambo is saved by a benevolent British merchant after being sold into slavery in South Carolina before he is again rescued by the kind and “humane” Colonel Motte. With a “placid countenance” and “submissive manners”, Jambo stands as a representation of the ideal slave: faithful, obedient, and needful of his master’s care. Motte, meanwhile, embodies the ideal late eighteenth-century slave owner. On display in the Philadelphia Museum, the bow illustrated a story of American patriotism and racial harmony between blacks and whites. Offering a sense of physicality to stories about noble, childlike Africans circulating through the Atlantic world, Jambo’s bow provided the Museum’s patrons with a firsthand, tangible experience with an imagined version of Africa.

Jambo’s bow also participated in advancing Peale’s notions of proper social and racial hierarchies. Peale believed that all living things of various types were capable of living in true harmony, as long as their natural hierarchical ranking was not disturbed.<sup>48</sup> As Brigham argues, “audience behavior at Peale’s Museum, the theater, civic festivals, and other public sites served as important cultural demonstrations of social structure and harmony,” forwarding notions of what constituted proper relationships between people of different races, genders, and religions.<sup>49</sup> Demonstrating blacks’ respect for and dependence on whites, exhibits like Jambo’s bow may have been a response to fears about slave insurrections.<sup>50</sup> In some cases, Peale’s exhibits tested the boundaries of accepted social and racial hierarchies, as with his displays of people with albinism or

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<sup>48</sup> Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic*, 144.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 125.

abnormal skin pigmentation. His 1791 painting, *James*, depicted “a person born a Negro, or a very dark Mullatoe, who afterwards became white.”<sup>51</sup> *James* is now lost, but an earlier portrait of an African child enslaved in South America who also had abnormal skin variation establishes a precedent for such subject matter (fig. 4.18).<sup>52</sup>

At other times, Peale examined the distinctions between humans and other species, such as with his 1799 “Ourang Outang, or Wild Man of the Woods” exhibit. The woodcut illustration included in the exhibit’s advertisement (fig. 4.19) itself put forth an idea of interspecies fluidity, presenting an ape according to the contemporary format of genteel portraiture.<sup>53</sup> In offering this exhibit to his museum audience, Peale reportedly asked, “How like an old Negro?” As Brigham argues, “for Peale the blurred lines between humans and apes could be explained in terms of race,” and thus “blacks stood a step closer than whites to the apes in Peale’s view of natural hierarchy.”<sup>54</sup>

Peale’s African artifacts contributed to the presentation of human and racial difference at the Philadelphia Museum. Yet as with displays of Africa in other American public spaces in this period, the boundaries between African and African-American were at times collapsed. An exhibit that Peale introduced in 1797 testifies to this amalgamation. It consisted of a group of wax figures representing “savages” from different parts of the world. In newspaper advertisements published widely that year, Peale described the

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<sup>51</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 132.

<sup>52</sup> Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic*, 130. For more on Mary Sabina, see “Mary Sabina”, accessed February 25, 2016, [https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums/hunterian/archive/exhibiting-difference/learning/resource\\_pack/About%20Mary%20Sabina.pdf](https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums/hunterian/archive/exhibiting-difference/learning/resource_pack/About%20Mary%20Sabina.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*.

exhibit: “Waxen figures of men, large as life, (some of them casts from Nature) are bare dressed in their proper habits, and placed in attitudes characteristic of respective nations. Here may be seen the North American Savage and the Savage of South America—a laboring Chinese, and the Chinese Gentleman,—the sooty African, and the Kamtschadle, with some Natives of the South Sea islands.”<sup>55</sup> The African figure’s sole description in the advertisement was “sooty”, undoubtedly a reference to his dark skin color, but also inflecting his identity with a tone of dirtiness and little else. One commentator at the time jabbed humorously, “since when, I pray you, has the ‘*sooty African*’ become a *curiosity* at Philadelphia?”<sup>56</sup> His question was a pointed reference to the growing population of free blacks in Philadelphia in these years, and it foreshadowed the ways exhibits of Africa would continue to be inflected by anxieties about American race relations throughout the nineteenth century.

Peale’s museum records offer the best representation of the types of African artifacts being collected and exhibited in the United States in the decades just preceding Liberian settlement – weaponry, clothing, and everyday objects – as well as of the various meanings with which museum proprietors and popular audiences endowed them. The Philadelphia Museum was certainly not the only place where such items could be found, however. Similar West African specimens were circulating on both sides of the Atlantic, fueling a trade in African exotica that would grow with the colonization of

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<sup>55</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Sept. 30, 1797): 3.

<sup>56</sup> William Cobbett, *Porcupine’s Works; Containing Various Writings and Selections, Exhibiting a Faithful Picture of the United States of America...*, vol. 7 (London: Printed for Cobbett and Morgan, at the Crown and Mitre, Pall Mall, May, 1801), 228.

Liberia.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the exhibits of Africana in the Philadelphia Museum and other popular spaces of the Early Republic, those that became conspicuous in the antebellum United States as a result of Liberian settlement were combined with an unprecedented amount of information, whether factual or fanciful, about the inhabitants and natural environment of West Africa and its suitability as a place for colonizing African Americans.

### **Known Liberian Artifacts in Nineteenth-Century American Collections**

Table 2 presents a list of 270 known artifacts and specimens collected in Liberia or its nearby vicinities and brought to the United States between 1821 and 1861. The table includes several types of data on each object: type (ethnographic, natural history, botanical, geological, agricultural, human remains, or other); date of collection, donation, or both (in some cases, only a general time period is assigned); the name of the collector or donor; the original repository for the item; and its current location, if known.

This list does not constitute a comprehensive survey of all the items collected from Liberia in the antebellum period and where they now reside. Many objects have been lost, the collection of many others was never recorded, and numerous records related to these artifacts are lost or contain partial or inaccurate information. Moreover, the circumstances of history have skewed the list in certain ways, privileging items that have been preserved in museum collections or that were recorded in nineteenth-century sources, such as museum ledgers and ACS publications. Undoubtedly, items that travelled from Liberia to the United States through the efforts of ACS officials or

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<sup>57</sup> For an earlier example of West African material being collected in Britain, see Coote, “‘The Complete Accoutrements of an Inhabitant of the Mandingo Country’.”



missionaries have survived at a higher rate than have those included with settler letters home. Additionally, certain types of objects are more likely to have survived into the present day than others. While samples of Liberian botany and agriculture were generally too fragile or perishable to last long after their arrival in America, a considerable number of ethnographic objects are still extant.

The objects listed in the table are also skewed toward the types of items easily identifiable as Liberian. Many natural history specimens once collected from Liberia, such as animal skins and stuffed birds, still exist on the storage shelves of contemporary museums, but it can be challenging for experts to place their exact geographic origins if early provenance histories are lost because the same specimen might be traced to numerous regions of West Africa or even the continent as a whole. Nineteenth-century Liberian ethnographic items, on the other hand, have a better chance of being identified as such by curators due to distinguishing stylistic characteristics. Although the data presented in Table 2 are somewhat skewed due to these historical and material factors, it nevertheless offers a new window into understanding what kinds of Liberian artifacts were collected and by whom, where they were exhibited, and how they helped reinvent knowledge about Africa in the antebellum United States.

### **Collectors and Collections of Liberian Artifacts**

As Table 2 shows, many different actors participated in gathering and displaying African “curiosities”, and once in the United States, these artifacts were displayed in various types of museums and exhibition spaces. Among the most important collectors of West African exotica in the antebellum period were ACS agents who travelled between

Liberia and the United States on official colonization-related business. The earliest recorded example of such collecting activities among ACS officers dates to 1824, when the Society's physician in Liberia, Dr. Eli Ayres, sent a "Boa Constrictor, caught near the American settlement at Cape Mesurado" to the Peale Museum in Baltimore.<sup>58</sup> A more sustained effort to gather Liberian artifacts that could be exhibited in the United States was undertaken a few years later by Jehudi Ashmun, the second U.S. agent to Liberia and the colony's first de-facto governor. In 1827, Ashmun shipped a sizeable collection of "curiosities" to the ACS' headquarters in Washington, D.C., where they were put on display in what the Society called its own "museum", a space that in fact constituted the first public collection devoted solely to African art and artifacts in the United States (Table 2, entries 1-31).<sup>59</sup> One visitor to the exhibit was Peter Williams, Jr., a free black New Yorker and founder of the first African-American owned newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*. After visiting the ACS' offices on a trip to Washington in 1828, Williams recorded his impressions in the *Journal*, writing that the gallery contained "many articles of African ingenuity from Liberia and the surrounding country, worthy of inspection."<sup>60</sup>

Following Ashmun's lead, other ACS representatives in Liberia began sending specimens to the Society's offices in Washington. In November, 1831, for instance, U.S. agent and colonial governor Joseph Mechlin, Jr. and colonial physician Dr. George P.

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<sup>58</sup> "Late Additions and Donations to Peale's Museum," *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser* 24, no. 25 (Aug. 2, 1824): 1. Ayres probably brought the boa constrictor with him upon returning to the United States in 1823, donating it to Peale's museum soon thereafter. See J. H. T. McPherson, *History of Liberia* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1892), 27.

<sup>59</sup> "Curiosities from Liberia," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 11 (Nov., 1827): 272-75.

<sup>60</sup> "Travelling Scraps. To Observer," *Freedom's Journal* (New York, August 29, 1828).

Todsens sent the ACS a box whose contents included “two glass jars, containing a large bat and a species of glow-worm,” “an elephant’s tail, with a highly ornamented handle,” “a few of our minerals, marked where they were found,” as well as “The two Bird, a skin of a Boa Constrictor, a large scorpion, a tarantula, and the bones of a very singular animal, the fur of which is of the finest kind.”<sup>61</sup> As such shipments arrived, they were put on display in the Society’s museum, which operated until about 1840. Various regional auxiliaries of the ACS also ran temporary and long-term exhibitions of African artifacts. For example, samples of Liberian productions were exhibited at a meeting of Cincinnati Colonization Society in November of 1834 and at an 1838 colonization promotional gathering in a Newark, New Jersey church.<sup>62</sup> And as late as 1863, the PCS was exhibiting Liberian “curiosities” in its Philadelphia portrait gallery of prominent colonizationists.<sup>63</sup>

The Liberian artifacts that were originally housed and displayed in the ACS’ Washington, D.C., headquarters changed owners several times during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Around 1840, the Society donated the entirety of its collection to the Washington Museum of Curiosities, owned and operated by amateur hobby collector John Varden. The Washington Museum was founded out of Varden’s home in 1836, displaying his massive curio collection to the public.<sup>64</sup> As the collection grew, it

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<sup>61</sup> “Latest from Liberia,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 7, no. 1 (Jan., 1832): 343-44. For another example, in which colonial governor Thomas Buchanan sent a specimen of Liberian hemp to the ACS’ office, see “African Hemp,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 1 (Jan., 1840): 5.

<sup>62</sup> See “Auxiliary Societies,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 3 (Mar., 1835): 90; “The Cause in New Jersey,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 14, no. 7 (Jul., 1838): 193.

<sup>63</sup> “Pennsylvania Colonization Society,” *The African Repository* 39, no. 11 (Nov., 1863): 337.

<sup>64</sup> “John Varden’s Washington Museum,” [<http://americanhistory.si.edu/souvenir-nation/vardens-washington-museum>], accessed February 25, 2016.

had eventually moved to the Masonic Hall on the corner of Fourth and D Streets, the former post office building, where it occupied the first and second floors.<sup>65</sup> In 1841, Varden's Washington Museum collection – including his Liberian artifacts – were absorbed into a massive exhibition of objects that filled the third floor of the U.S. Patent Office Building.<sup>66</sup> Housing historic American artifacts and naval spoils from around the globe, the extremely eclectic collection, much of which was technically owned by the U.S. government, operated under the auspices of the newly established National Institute for the Promotion of Science. Founded by scientist-diplomat Joel Poinsett in 1840, the organization positioned itself in contrast to what it saw at the crass entertainment offered by collections like P.T. Barnum's American Museum.<sup>67</sup> Instead, the National Institute sought to model itself after earlier organizations of scientific integrity, such as the American Philosophical Society and the Royal Society in London, acquiring and displaying specimens of the natural and man-made world for the purposes of enlightenment and the promotion of "useful knowledge".<sup>68</sup> Beginning in the late 1850s, the National Institute and its collections were incorporated into the Smithsonian Institution, where many of these early Liberian artifacts remain housed today.

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<sup>65</sup> William L. Bird, Jr., *Souvenir Nation: Relics, Keepsakes, and Curios from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, in association with Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2013), 23.

<sup>66</sup> Courtney Fullilove, *The Archive of Useful Knowledge* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2009), 39-40. With the purchase of his collection, Varden came on as unofficial curator of the collections at the National Institute.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 67, 70.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

The Washington Museum, the National Institute, and other popular museums of the antebellum period such as those owned by the Peale family also acquired Liberian objects directly from ACS officers in Liberia. Whitehurst's horn is a good example (fig. 4.1, Table 2, entry 55). Governor Mechlin donated at least two exhibits to the Peale collection in the early 1830s (Table 2, entries 40, 42).<sup>69</sup> Jacob W. Prout, a special agent to the MSCS, sent four different items to the Peale collections in 1832 (Table 2, entries 43-46), and at least two specimens were sent to American collections by Maryland in Africa governor James Hall during the 1830s (Table 2, entries 48, 116).<sup>70</sup> And in May of 1846, Dr. James W. Lugenbeel, ACS agent and colonial physician in Liberia from 1843-49, sent at least four ethnographic items to the National Institute in Washington, D.C. (Table 2, entries 169-72).<sup>71</sup> Other ACS officers known to have sent African objects to the United States include Thomas Buchanan, the second colonial governor; John Brown Russworm, governor of Maryland in Liberia from 1836-51 (Table 2, entry 237); Stephen Allen Benson, the second president of the Liberian republic (Table 2, entries 238-39); and Dr. Robert McDowell, the Scottish-African surgeon noted in Chapter Two who served as

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<sup>69</sup> See "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum", 2; Philadelphia Museum Co. Minutes, Dec. 31, 1831, 71, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>70</sup> For records pertaining to Prout donations, see "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum", 2; for references to Hall donations, see Ms. Coll. No. 3 #2, Sornberger, Jewell David Access. Book, etc. #2, Charles Coleman Sellers Collection, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Washington City Museum Day Book, John Varden Papers, 1829-1863, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>71</sup> See "Robe of a Mandingo priest," in "American Colonization Society – write-up", Series 4: Nineteenth-Century Collectors, Papers of Gordon D. Gibson, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; *A Popular Catalogue of the Extraordinary Curiosities in the National Institute, Arranged in the Building Belonging to the Patent Office* (Washington: Published by Alfred Hunter, 1855), 45.

colonial physician at Bassa Cove in the mid-1830s (Table 2, entries 256-59).<sup>72</sup> The most prolific ACS collector was Ralph Randolph Gurley, a clergyman and Society leader from 1822 to 1872 who gathered numerous African items (Table 2, entries 119-30, 174, 194-216) over several trips to Liberia, many of which still survive at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (hereafter, SNMNH).

Popular museums like the National Institute also received donations of Liberian exotica from individuals not directly associated with the colonization movement. Many of the first Liberian ethnographic items to cross the Atlantic after settlement began came by way of ships' captains who acquired them while anchored at Monrovia, such as Captain John Wightman of the *Oswego*, Captain B. S. Doxey of the *U.S.S. Cyane*, and Captain John Hanson of the emigrant ship *Liberia* (Table 2, entries 32, 33, 49).<sup>73</sup> Other seafarers known to have collected Liberian artifacts include U.S. naval surgeon Robert J. Dodd, Major John Hook, Commodore Matthew C. Perry, and a naval carpenter known only as "Mauve" (Table 2, entries 50-53, 118, 221, 217-19).<sup>74</sup> African specimens collected by travellers to Liberia also found their way into the collections of scientific and

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<sup>72</sup> For Russworm donation, see "Extracts from the Journal of an African Cruiser," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 21, no. 12 (Dec., 1845): 359; for Benson donations, see "Letters from Liberia," *The African Repository* 30, no. 5 (May, 1854): 154; for McDowell donations, see J. Aitken Meigs, M. D., *Catalogue of Human Crania in the Collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, 1857), 92.

<sup>73</sup> For Capt. Wightman's and Capt. Doxey's donations, see "Late Additions and Donations to Peale's Museum," 1. For Capt. Hanson's donation, see Ms. Coll. No. 3 #2: Sornberger, Jewell David Access. Book, etc. #2. Thanks to Professor William Hart at the University of Ulster for bringing these records to my attention.

<sup>74</sup> For Dr. Dodd's donations, see "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum", 2; for Major Hook's donation, see Washington City Museum daybook; for donations by Commodore Perry and "Mauve", see ledger book, vol. 2, p. 59, Anthropology Collections, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.

intellectual organizations, such as the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the Boston Aethenaeum (Table 2, entries 251-70, 222).<sup>75</sup>

Additionally, many Liberian artifacts reached American shores through the efforts of black and white missionaries in West Africa. As discussed in Chapter Three, the African colonization movement was closely linked with the growing impulse among English and American Protestants to bring Christianity to the “heathen” peoples of the world. Following Britain’s lead, Americans had begun establishing missionary organizations to promote this cause in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Their attention was initially geared toward converting Native Americans, but soon their zeal turned to other regions of the world.<sup>76</sup> Many who supported Liberian colonization, including a number of the ACS’ founders and leaders, were clergymen interested not only in resettling African Americans in Liberia but also in promoting the cause of African evangelism.

Like the larger colonization movement, Liberian missionary activity fueled an interest in collecting West African material culture and natural history specimens, following an earlier precedent established by British missionaries in Sierra Leone.<sup>77</sup> As Liberian settlement proceeded, publications by missionary societies and lecture tours by

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<sup>75</sup> See “Donations to Museum,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* (1858), ii, iii, vii; Meigs, *Catalogue of Human Crania*, 92, 94; W. A. Hart, “Early-Nineteenth-Century Chiefs’ Horns from Coastal Liberia,” *African Arts* 32, no. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 62; W. Hart, “Liberian Chiefs’ Horns Revisited,” 56-57.

<sup>76</sup> Eunjin Park, *“White” Americans in “Black” Africa: Black and White American Methodist Missionaries in Liberia, 1820-1875* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 3-4.

<sup>77</sup> For more on the collecting activities of British missionaries in Sierra Leone, see Coote, ““The Complete Accoutrements of an Inhabitant of the Mandingo Country””; William Hart, “Trophies of Grace? The ‘Art’ Collecting Activities of United Brethren in Christ Missionaries in Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone,” *African Arts* 39, no. 2 (Summer, 2006): 14-25, 86.

recently returned missionaries became one of the primary ways that Americans gained information about Africa, and oftentimes objects played an important role in these reports. Accounts of American missionaries and clergymen who had visited Liberia are littered with references to the exhibition of African specimens. For example, when Samuel S. Ball, an African-American barber and Baptist Elder from Springfield, Illinois, made a trip to Liberia in 1848, he returned home with a report on the beneficial possibilities of the new republic as a place for black American settlement.<sup>78</sup> The Colored Baptist Association of Springfield quickly printed his report as a pamphlet. At his homecoming appearance before the association, he reportedly “exhibited numerous African curiosities.”<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, no surviving records provide further information on what these objects were or where they went.

John Day is an example of a missionary-settler who regularly sent African “curiosities” to the United States, specifically to the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, the organization under which he worked as superintendent of Liberian missions. A Virginia native and brother of the well-known African-American cabinetmaker Thomas Day, John immigrated to Liberia in 1830. In a letter of April, 1848, Day wrote to his friend James Taylor, Secretary at the Foreign Mission Board that,

I have a lot of curiosities which I shall ship by the Packet. I lost a valuable collection of insects for want of something to preserve them. I shall send a few in spirits. I should have stuffed a crocodile’s skin which was shot on my farm, but had nothing to preserve it. The principle things I have are

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<sup>78</sup> Richard E. Hart, “Springfield’s African Americans as Part of the Lincoln Community,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 20, no. 1 (Winter, 1999): 49.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in R. E. Hart, “Springfield’s African Americans,” 51. For more on Ball, see Richard E. Hart, “The Ball Family: An African-American Family in Early Springfield, Illinois” (unpublished manuscript).



skins of beasts, knives of natives manufactory, Gree Gree, cloths, hats, war bags for ammunition. Cooking pot, spoon, bowls, some insects.<sup>80</sup>

Following up on the shipment, Day wrote of these African curiosities in another letter that June:

By the Packet I send a box of curiosities consisting of country cloths, skins of wild beasts, a bill of bird, head of a crocodile, an spoon[sic], some knives, gree gree and a jar of insects consisting of three termite queens and one king. A very correct and interesting account of these wonderful creatures may be found in the library of entertaining knowledge 4<sup>th</sup> vol 2<sup>nd</sup> part. In the jar is a chameleon, two kinds of scorpions, a centipede and sundry other things.<sup>81</sup>

Headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, the Mission Board that received Day's shipments may have exhibited them in some sort of foreign curiosity collection, as these displays were common in this period.

The items Day mentioned sending home were typical of those being collected from Liberia in this period. For nineteenth-century missionaries, objects were seen as powerful evidence of a given culture's need for the gospel, as well as of its ability to change under the careful guidance of proficient evangelists. As John E. Korasick explains, "the common practice was for the missionary to take an object as a sign of conversion; this is why missionaries from denominations that shunned smoking would gather pipes. Thus these objects could be signs of the success of the mission. They could also signify goodwill between the mission and neighboring people."<sup>82</sup> By sending such specimens to

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<sup>80</sup> John Day to James B. Taylor, April 7, 1848, John Day Correspondence, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. Transcribed in Janie Leigh Carter, "John Day: A Founder of the Republic of Liberia and The Southern Baptist Liberian Missionary Movement in the Nineteenth Century" (M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1988), 87.

<sup>81</sup> John Day to James B. Taylor, June 20, 1848, John Day Correspondence. Transcribed in Carter, "John Day," 98.

<sup>82</sup> Korasick, *Collecting Africa*, 13.

the United States, Day showed an awareness of the collecting interests of Americans as well as his own mastery of knowledge about the landscape and cultures he was encountering in Liberia.

In at least one case, Liberian collectibles were obtained as the basis for a missionary museum of objects from around the world. In October of 1834, a “Missionary Lyceum” was founded at Wesleyan University in Connecticut by Reverend Dr. Wilber Fisk, the university’s first president. The purpose of the Lyceum was to encourage missionary work among the Methodist university’s students through debates, lectures, literature, and artifacts collected from foreign missions.<sup>83</sup> The first corresponding secretary of the Lyceum, Daniel P. Kidder, wrote to Reverend R. Spaulding on November 6 of that year, announcing the formation of the Lyceum and requesting his “African curiosities” to be housed in the Lyceum’s museum.<sup>84</sup> Soon, Kidder also wrote to various missionaries, requesting artifacts for the museum. Liberian missionary John Seys responded by sending “a box of shells, &c, which I beg the gentlemen of the Lyceum to accept of, and to place, if they consider them of sufficient value, among the other curiosities of their cabinet.”<sup>85</sup> By 1848, Seys had sent at least 40 items to the Lyceum, many of which still survive in relatively good condition in Wesleyan University’s collections.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> “Guide to the Missionary Lyceum Records, 1834-1871,” Special Collections and Archives, Wesleyan University, accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/schome/FAs/mi1000-95.xml>.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Thanks to Professor William Hart of the University of Ulster for bringing the Seys collection to my attention.

## Specimens of the Natural World

As Table 2 reveals, many of the Liberian artifacts found in nineteenth-century American collections were specimens of the natural world. These varied widely, from agricultural productions like African cotton to stuffed birds and jars of insects. Some of these exhibits testify to the ways seemingly mundane items were considered “curiosities” to American collectors. An inventory of the Peale family’s collections, for instance, included examples of “Curiously grained wood from Africa”, a “Curiously twisted knot of wood from Africa”, and a “Curious Seed Pod, from Africa”.<sup>87</sup> Examples of African shells, nuts, and roots joined exhibits from the animal kingdom, such as the African snakes, seahorse, and animal skins that Varden displayed at his Washington Museum in the 1830s.<sup>88</sup> Some Liberian exhibits bordered on the spectacular, such as the live crocodile that Maryland in Liberia governor Dr. James Hall sent to the Philadelphia Museum in 1833.<sup>89</sup>

Specimens of the natural world formed an important component of the ACS’ museum when it opened in 1827, presenting Liberia’s landscape as agriculturally promising and rich in natural resources. The museum’s initial contents comprised the large shipment of “curiosities” sent by Ashmun in 1827, which was accompanied by a letter identifying its contents (Appendix 4.1).<sup>90</sup> Among the items on display were “two spools of cotton yarn” and five samples of “Country cloths... as manufactured and worn

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<sup>87</sup> “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 3.

<sup>88</sup> Washington City Museum Day Book.

<sup>89</sup> Ms. Coll. No. 3 #2, Sornberger, Jewell David Access. Book, July 8, 1833.

<sup>90</sup> “Curiosities from Liberia,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 9 (Nov., 1827): 272-75.

by the natives of Africa, between the Rio Grande, and Bassa”, presenting evidence of the superior quality of African cotton (Appendix 4.1, nos. 1-7).<sup>91</sup> “The cotton of which these cloths are fabricated, is of the fineness of the Sea-Island, but has a longer staple,” Ashmun explained. “The plant produces a crop in eight or nine months from the seed—but bears for at least five years, and attains to the height of an apple tree, but has a less spreading top.”<sup>92</sup> Specimens of “African Millet” and “Guinea Corn” (Appendix 4.1, nos. 11, 12), meanwhile, were described as being superior to the American variety of “Indian Corn”.<sup>93</sup> A spice sample called “Bird Pepper” (Appendix 4.1, no. 13) was described as being “equal in quality to the Cayenne—and a good article of trade with European vessels.”<sup>94</sup> Producing the spice was not difficult, Ashmun assured readers, explaining how “it grows spontaneously, and propagates itself, after once planted.”<sup>95</sup> Another spice (Appendix 4.1, no. 28) in the exhibit had, according to Ashmun, “in a great measure taken place, in our consumption, of Black Pepper, to which it will be found equal in pungency, and of a more aromatic flavor.”<sup>96</sup> While the Bird Pepper required initial planting, this unnamed spice would be even easier to obtain, as it was “the produce of a vine growing wild in the forest.”<sup>97</sup> Other specimens of Liberia’s rich natural environment

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 272-73.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 272.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 274.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 274.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 275.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

were showcased in the exhibit, such as “Specimens of the osseous part of the African squid, reduced to powder” (Appendix 4.1, no. 14), which “forms the common pounce, for the writing desk,” along with a root (Appendix 4.1, no. 15) whose “use in this country, is universal as a stomachic.”<sup>98</sup> On exhibit in the ACS’ office, these kinds of natural specimens complemented written testimonials about the colony’s agricultural potential that frequently appeared in the *Repository*.

The ACS’ natural history exhibits also presented West Africa as a savage frontier in need of a civilized black presence. One particular item that advanced such notions was a leopard skin donated by Ashmun in 1827. Williams, the *Freedom’s Journal* editor, recorded seeing the skin on his 1828 trip to the ACS’ exhibit. He wrote that he had seen “various specimens of cloth manufactured by the untutored natives; various implements of war, some of iron, and the skin of the tiger, a description of which was given in one of the numbers of the Repository.”<sup>99</sup> In referring to the skin as that of a “tiger”, Williams was making a common nineteenth-century mistake, as tigers are native to Asia, not Africa. The skin that hung in the ACS’ gallery was probably that of an African leopard, though it could also been another large sub-Saharan feline such as a cheetah. Whatever the exact species was, the animal skin had a storied past. In 1827, the *Repository* had printed an excerpt from Ashmun’s journal that recounted the harrowing experience of a group of settlers who had hunted the animal down.<sup>100</sup> “Several Tigers of the Leopard

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 274.

<sup>99</sup> “Travelling Scraps. To Observer.”

<sup>100</sup> “Extracts from the Colonial Agent’s Diary,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 9 (Nov., 1827): 276, 278-80.

species,” Ashmun explained, had recently begun showing up in the streets of Monrovia at nightfall, killing domestic animals in great numbers and making themselves an “intolerable nuisance to the settlement.”<sup>101</sup> With the help of some indigenous Africans and “Congo People” (Africans and Afro-Caribbeans recaptured from slave ships and living on Cape Mesurado), the settlers resolved to hunt the animal down. In dramatic detail, Ashmun recounted the perilous encounter, wherein the ferocious leopard attacked the hunters before finally being killed. “The skin of the Leopard, which proved so formidable an enemy, was preserved by Mr. Ashmun,” the *Repository* reported, “and may now be seen at our office.”<sup>102</sup>

Hanging in the ACS’ African exhibit, the leopard skin was a tangible emblem of what Americans imagined to be a savage and exotic African landscape. Yet in its association with the story of the leopard hunt, which Williams still remembered a year after its publication in the *Repository*, the skin also offered physical proof of one of colonizationists’ most powerful claims: that by emigrating to Liberia, African-American males could become “real men”. In the nineteenth century, as Tim Barringer has argued, “Africa became the theatre for the playing-out of European fantasies of masculinity, evident in the travel literature’s stylised accounts of gallant escapes and perilous encounters with lions or hostile natives, often matched by dramatic narrative plates.”<sup>103</sup> An illustration entitled “The Missionary’s Escape from the Lion” from David

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 278.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 276.

<sup>103</sup> Tim Barringer, “Fabricating Africa: Livingstone and the Visual Image 1850-1874,” *David Livingstone and the Victorian Encounter with Africa*, eds. Joanna Skipworth and John M. MacKenzie (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1996), 175.

Livingstone's *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1858) exemplifies this trend (fig. 4.20).<sup>104</sup> A similar scene was featured in an 1858 *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* series on Liberia (fig. 4.21). The writer described his encounter with a "full-sized tiger" while visiting the Liberian forests on assignment: "the scenery was indeed gorgeous, but the tropical splendor of an African forest reminds one of nothing so much as of the rouge and enamel that one sees in ancient pictures upon the countenance of Death! Beneath all this luxuriance and color there lurk visibly the seeds of pestilence and destruction in a thousand forms of animal life."<sup>105</sup> For the *Frank Leslie's* correspondent, the event revealed the dichotomous nature of Africa's landscape as both beautiful and dangerous.

Ashmun's narrative of the leopard hunt borrowed from the vocabularies of similar masculinizing events in popular travel narratives of Africa from the period. The manly heroes in Ashmun's story, however, were African-American males, such as Philadelphia settler "D. George", who in the heat of the hunt, "had the presence of mind to draw his cutlass, and the good fortune to use it with some effect."<sup>106</sup> As Bruce Dorsey has argued, antebellum white colonization rhetoric clearly suggested that Liberia offered African-American males the chance to transform from dependent, effeminate beings to manly, independent conquerors.<sup>107</sup> One black anti-colonization song responded to the claim in its

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<sup>104</sup> David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1858), 13.

<sup>105</sup> "Tour in Liberia—Unpleasant Predicament," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (Sept. 4, 1858): 218.

<sup>106</sup> "Extracts from the Colonial Agent's Diary," 280.

<sup>107</sup> Dorsey, "A Gendered History of African Colonization."

lyrics: “You say ‘it is a goodly land, Where milk and honey flow; And every *Jack* will be a *man* Who there may choose to go.’” The verse finishes with a hearty refusal of the ACS’ plan: “*I have a mind to be a man Among white men and free; and Old Liberia!* Is not the place for me!!”.<sup>108</sup> By placing Liberian settlers as the heroes of his narrative about a perilous leopard hunt in Africa, Ashmun’s narrative contributed to the idea that by going to Liberia, African-American males would have the opportunity to conquer a savage landscape and, in the process, claim a sense of manhood not accessible to them in the United States.

### **Ethnographic Displays**

The majority of artifacts collected from Liberia and exhibited in the antebellum United States were examples of West African material culture. To some observers, these items were valued for their aesthetic beauty and for the ways they exemplified the ingenuity and craftsmanship of indigenous communities around Liberia. The artifacts on display at the ACS’ museum, for instance, included a knife whose iron blade was, according to Ashmun, “of a much softer and more ductile quality, than either English or American” (Appendix 4.1, no. 8).<sup>109</sup> In his words, the knife “oxidizes in this climate less freely, and is for that reason, preferred by the natives for all ornamental uses, and for the manufacture of their implements of war.”<sup>110</sup> Additionally, the leather of the knife’s scabbard was described as “country tanned, and the whole article, having come from the

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 96.

<sup>109</sup> “Curiosities from Liberia,” 273.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*.



interior, is better done than similar work on the coast.”<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, a “Mandingo Havre-sack” (Appendix 4.1, no. 10) was made of “goat-skin, trimmed with ordinary tanned leather... produced by the tanning process,” while “a piece of African Wampum” (Appendix 4.1, no. 18) showed “one of the uses to which the immense quantity of beads imported into this country, is applied.”<sup>112</sup> Ashmun explained that, “The thread by which the beads of this belt are connected together, is the strongest of the size, which can be fabricated out of any material with which I am acquainted.”<sup>113</sup> So too, an example of the “ordinary Fishing Line of the coast, made of the inner cuticle of the palm leaf... is stronger than a hemp or linen line twice or thrice the size” (Appendix 4.1, no. 19).<sup>114</sup>

The same admiration for the design and construction of everyday African items colored an article in the *Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review* in 1852, which described how Africans “exhibit a remarkable degree of genius, and display in their numerous manufactured articles such a knowledge of mechanics as to agreeably surprise all who have heard of or been privileged to behold their handiwork.”<sup>115</sup> The writer elaborated at length on the high quality of African manufactures ranging from weapons to musical instruments to clothes, repeatedly noting the high level of skill and talent required to produce such objects. The article’s conclusion nevertheless managed to cast Africans in a negative light: “the native African, it is to be understood, is naturally

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 273-74.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 275.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> “African Arts and Manufactures” (from *Journal of Mining and Manufactures*), *Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review* 27, no. 2 (Aug., 1852): 253.

indolent; and although the various articles of labor here mentioned would perhaps convey the impression that they are an industrious people, yet the contrary is the fact.”<sup>116</sup>

Exhibitions of Liberian artifacts in the antebellum United States participated in an early ethnological interest in presenting an entire society through displaying everyday items of material culture. Thus as Table 2 shows, many of the exhibits were everyday articles such as tools, cooking utensils, and baskets. Whereas earlier exhibits of Africana usually identified items as generically “African”, those that appeared in the antebellum period often noted items’ specific geographic origins in Africa or the ethnic identities of their makers. Liberian colonization resulted in the circulation of more information about specific West African ethnic groups than had ever before been seen. These descriptions were sometimes used in interpreting a museum’s exhibits. At the National Institute in 1855, for example, there was an exhibit entitled, “Kroo’s Provisions for a Journey, from West Africa” (Table 2, entry 186). Alfred Hunter, who published a catalogue of the National Institute’s collection in 1855, described the exhibit as follows: “Kroos provisions for a journey. The Kroos are pilots and seamen from the western coast of Africa; called Kroo-men; are good pilots, and every vessel on the coast is obliged to employ them, as they are able to work when the Europeans find it almost impossible, on account of the climate. He brings his provisions of pounded corn, or more properly a large species of millet, eaten mixed with water and rum, when they can procure it.”<sup>117</sup> The container for these provisions still survives at the SNMNH (fig. 4.22), and when on display in the 1850s, it presumably held examples of millet and other Kru foodstuffs.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 254.

<sup>117</sup> *A Popular Catalogue of the Extraordinary Curiosities in the National Institute*, 44.

Items confirming Africans' alleged warlike inclinations made for particularly popular displays. Among these were war paraphernalia, such as spears, bows, arrows, lances, and daggers. Especially valued were ivory horns, usually called "war horns", such as the Bassa example that was exhibited in the Peale Museum in the 1836. At least one similar horn was included in Ashmun's donation to the ACS museum in 1827, and another example was collected by Captain John Wightman of the *Oswego* in 1823 and donated to the Peale Museum in Baltimore (Table 2, entries 19, 32).<sup>118</sup> William de la Roche, who was affiliated with the schooner *Eclipse*, which docked at Monrovia in the summer of 1827, also donated a "War horn" to Peale's collections (Table 2, entry 37).<sup>119</sup>

Sometimes, however, these horns were called "hunting horns", such as the "African hunting horn from Monrovia" that Governor Mechlin sent to the Peales in 1830 and another example that U.S. naval surgeon Dodd donated to the Peale collections in 1835 (Table 2, entries 40, 51).<sup>120</sup> Reverend Seys sent three "war horns" and an additional "horn" possibly of the same type to the Missionary Lyceum at Wesleyan University between 1834 and 1845 (fig. 4.23; Table 2, entries 83-86).<sup>121</sup> Additionally, ACS agent Gurley donated "1 Horn or Trumpet made from the tusk of an Elephant" to the Washington Museum in 1840, and another example came to Varden from the ACS just a

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<sup>118</sup> For Ashmun's donation, see "Curiosities from Liberia," 274. For Wightman's donation, see "Late Additions and Donations to Peale's Museum," 1.

<sup>119</sup> "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum", 2. Thanks to Professor William Hart of the University of Ulster for bringing this reference to my attention.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> *Catalogue of Curiosities in the Missionary Lyceum*, 1848, Missionary Lyceum Records, 1834-1871, Special Collections and Archives, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.

few months later (Table 2, entries 125, 142).<sup>122</sup> At least two ivory horns were also exhibited at the National Institute in 1855 (Table 2, entries 165, 172).<sup>123</sup> The Boston Athenaeum also acquired a similar horn in 1826, and in 1850 another example was on display at the Missionary Museum of the Andover Newton Theological Seminary in Massachusetts (figs. 4.24, 4.25; Table 2, entries 222, 223).<sup>124</sup>

While these types of horns were valued in part for the ivory of which they were carved, in antebellum collections they were also used as evidence of the supposedly threatening and warlike nature of West Africans. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Bassa horn exhibited at the Peale Museum in 1836 was presented as an object of war when in fact its primary purpose was as a musical instrument. As Hart explains, the term “war horn” might be compared to “executioner’s knife” or “witchdoctor’s mask”: “the kind of colorful ethnographic label that should probably be taken with a pinch of salt.”<sup>125</sup> Although their American collectors nearly always referred to them as “war horns”, these oliphants were in actuality “not exclusively used on occasions of war or for any specific military purpose,” explains Hart, “but rather were first and foremost ceremonial horns associated with chiefs and kept by hornblowers who

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<sup>122</sup> For the Gurley donation, see Washington City Museum daybook. For the donation to Varden, see “Sundrie Articles Collected for The Washington City Museum beginning the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1837,” John Varden Papers, 1829-1863, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>123</sup> See *A Popular Catalogue of the Extraordinary Curiosities in the National Institute*, 44; W. A. Hart, “Early-Nineteenth-Century Chiefs’ Horns from Coastal Liberia,” *African Arts* 32, no. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 64.

<sup>124</sup> See W. A. Hart, “Early-Nineteenth-Century Chiefs’ Horns,” 62, 65; W. Hart, “Liberian Chiefs’ Horns Revisited,” 57-58.

<sup>125</sup> W. A. Hart, “Early-Nineteenth-Century Chiefs’ Horns from Coastal Liberia”, 67.

formed part of the chief's official retinue."<sup>126</sup> Period references to the use of these horns for music in the *Repository* further suggest their primary purpose as musical instruments, at times connected with battle, rather than objects with a particular war-related function.<sup>127</sup> The Peale Museum's interpretation of the horn as being primarily connected to the warlike tendencies of West Africans was undoubtedly fed by and in turn reinforced popular rumors that the Port Cresson settlement had brought down a slave market that previously occupied the site.

A few years later, another incident of violence in Liberia sparked renewed interest in displaying African war items, this time at Varden's Washington Museum. The Museum's records from the 1830s indicate that Varden received several gifts and loans of Liberian ethnographic and natural history specimens, but the largest donation came in 1840.<sup>128</sup> That July, Varden announced the addition to his collection of "the whole of the curiosities of the African Colonization Society," a gift from Judge Samuel Wilkeson, general agent of the ACS.<sup>129</sup> According to *The North American and Daily Advertiser*, the objects had been "received at different times by the packets from that country" and included "all the battle implements which were taken by Governor Buchanan in the late war with the natives, together with the fetishes, etc. of the chiefs."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Washington City Museum Day Book.

<sup>129</sup> "Washington Museum—African Curiosities", *North American and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), issue 307 (Jul. 15, 1840): col. E. (reprinted from the *Globe*).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

The “late war” noted in the article referred to a recent violent scuffle between colonists and natives at the Methodist missionary station of Heddington, Liberia. On March 7, 1840, several hundred indigenous Africans staged an attack on Heddington but were fought off by only three or four African-American settlers, aided by perhaps four local allies.<sup>131</sup> Colonization promoters and the American press celebrated the actions of the colonists, whom they described as acting “with Spartan bravery” against “the fierce assault of three hundred of the barbarous natives.”<sup>132</sup> The *Repository* called the incident “one of the most extraordinary conflicts on record,” praising the settlers’ “bravery, perseverance and skill.”<sup>133</sup>

The incident was still a major topic in the *Repository* in July, when Varden opened his new African exhibit. According to one of the newspaper advertisements for the exhibit, the ACS’ donation was “very beautifully arranged by Mr. Varden, in a part of the Museum devoted exclusively to African productions.”<sup>134</sup> In actuality, few if any of the items on display in the Washington Museum’s new African exhibit were connected to the Heddington attack. The Museum’s records for June of 1840 list the receipt of the ACS donation, but few of the items given were related to war. Ethnographic objects like hammocks, baskets, and sandals were included in the donation, along with animal skins

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<sup>131</sup> See Park, “White” Americans in “Black” Africa, 99-100; Dunn, et al., *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, entry for “Gotorah”, 146; “Liberia,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 13 (Jul., 1840): 194 (reprinted from the *New York Journal of Commerce*).

<sup>132</sup> “The Late News from Africa,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 13 (Jul., 1840): 198 (reprinted from the *Philadelphia Christian Observer*).

<sup>133</sup> “Liberia,” *The African Repository*, 194.

<sup>134</sup> “City News: Washington Museum,” *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), issue 8548 (Jul. 8, 1840): col. E; “Washington Museum—African Curiosities,” *North American and Daily Advertiser*.

and other natural history specimens. The only objects in the donation that may have been exhibited as examples of the “battle implements” used at Heddington were an ivory horn, “2 Knives in the Scabards”, a “Bowe Quiver & Arrows”, and a javelin.<sup>135</sup> Like most of the items in the donation, however, these war objects had probably come to the ACS’ museum much earlier; many items in the donation correspond with those in Ashmun’s 1827 shipment. Varden’s African exhibit was, however, probably supplemented by another recent donation, “A Box containing Sundry articles of Africa” given by ACS agent Gurley that April. This gift contained various animal skins, a horn or trumpet made of elephant tusk, a “singular tooth”, a “Wooden Spoon for eating Mush with”, an iron spearhead, two porcupine quills, and a “Bag or Wallet made of Grass neatly plated by the Natives of Africa.”<sup>136</sup>

Thus visitors to the new African exhibit at the Washington Museum in the summer of 1840 would have seen primarily objects not related to war but rather to the natural and indigenous landscape of Liberia: numerous animal skins and zoological displays combined with a range of everyday indigenous objects like clothing and dishes, as well as a few pieces of native weaponry. However, Varden’s choice to highlight the display of “battle implements” from the “late war” with the natives in his advertisement for the new exhibit suggests that objects related to current news events – particularly ones about violence and war – were understood by museum proprietors like Varden to be of special interest to potential visitors. In crafting his advertisement as he did, Varden was

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<sup>135</sup> Washington City Museum Day Book.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

no doubt hoping that American awareness and interest in recent events at Heddington would bring increased business to his museum.

Among the Liberian ethnographic items frequently exhibited during these years were examples that engaged the theme of slavery, implicitly displacing American anxieties about the “peculiar institution” onto its apparent roots in African societies. Among the items on display at the ACS museum in 1827, for instance, was “country Flagellum”, which Ashmun described as,

An article of domestic use, which is never wanting in the families of African gentlemen. It is not applied to children, who are never disciplined in this country. Domestic slaves, and women, are those who derive from the implement, the chief advantages of its application, which, particularly as respects the latter, is neither slight nor seldom. The master of a large family commonly wears it in his girdle, and seldom draws it to inflict fewer than half a hundred.<sup>137</sup>

The same tone of violence colored a description of an exhibit at the Peale Museum sent from MSCS agent Prout: “Whips used by the African kings to flog their wives and slaves” (Table 2, entry 44).<sup>138</sup> At the same museum could also be seen “A slave hook used in taking prisoners by the Bassa tribe of Negroes” (Table 2, entry 54).<sup>139</sup>

At the National Institute, several West African items on display made reference to the slave trade. Case 29, which contained the greatest concentration of African items (Appendix 4.2), included an example of an African currency, which Hunter described as “Money from Africa. Another piece of the value of \$1.50; four of these buys a good sized

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<sup>137</sup> “Curiosities from Liberia,” 274.

<sup>138</sup> “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum”, 2.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



negro boy” (Table 2, entry 163).<sup>140</sup> In another case, one could see a “Specimen of a rope made from the grass on the Gold coast” that had apparently been “taken from a negro on board a slaver”.<sup>141</sup> And according to Alfred Hunter’s 1855 catalogue of the National Institute, the gallery contained “the stool of King Tom, of Rockbuca, Africa, the great slave-dealer” and a dress worn by his wife.<sup>142</sup> In 1843-44, Commodore Matthew C. Perry – the same man who would later become famous for forcibly opening Japan’s harbors to trade with the United States – had commanded the African Squadron, a U.S. naval mission charged with patrolling illegal slaving off the West African coast. As part of its duties, the Squadron was sent to the Liberian coast in 1843 to investigate the recent massacre of the captain and crew of the *Mary Carver*, an American merchant ship. The incident had occurred when the *Mary Carver* was harbored at Cape Palmas, the main settlement of the MSCS, to trade for camwood and ivory, and it was quickly blamed on the local Africans. During his investigation of the massacre, Perry met not only with Liberian governor Joseph Jenkins Roberts and Maryland in Liberia governor John Brown Russworm but also with a native chief known as “King Tom” from the village of Rockboukah, Liberia. It was surely this same “King Tom” whom Hunter identified as the original owner of the stool on display in the National Institute in 1855.

In actuality, Hunter’s attribution of the stool as belonging to this “King Tom” is less reflective of the object’s actual African origins than it is of how reports of current events in Liberia were often mapped onto museum objects. The provenance of the stool,

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<sup>140</sup> *A Popular Catalogue of the Extraordinary Curiosities in the National Institute*, 44.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

which still survives at the SNMNH, is unclear, although it probably was collected in Liberia during the first few decades of colonization. As with many of the Smithsonian's earliest ethnographic accessions, missing or conflicting information makes it difficult to positively identify the object's exact nineteenth-century history.<sup>143</sup> Made of wood and possibly attributable to the Grebo ethnic group, who occupied the southern coastal regions of Liberia, the stool separates into two portions, with the lower piece serving a double function as a vessel or container. In white writing on the upper part of the object are the names "W. Bruff" and "J. Varden". A printed card attached to the stool describes it as "The Royal Stool of King TOM of Rockbuca; mouth of the River Cavally: West Coast of Africa 1839." At the card's lower edge is another note: "Presented by Bruff 1841 Jo / 7<sup>th</sup>". Based on this information, the stool may in fact be the same as one that was recorded in Varden's Washington Museum day book during the late 1830s, described as "1 African Stool made out of a Solid block of wood – Afr Col. Society."<sup>144</sup> Varden's entry for the stool suggests that, if it is one and the same with the example that ended up in the National Institute, the man known as "W. Bruff" may have been working under the ACS when he acquired the stool.<sup>145</sup>

Whatever the actual origin of the stool, Hunter's attribution of it having belonged to a certain "King Tom", the "great slave-dealer" of "Rockbuca", is significant. By

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<sup>143</sup> "W. Bruff," in "American Colonization Society – write-up." The only known research to have been conducted on the stool was carried out by Gordon D. Gibson, who became the SNMNH's first African curator in 1958. Gibson's research on the stool was never published, but his notes and written research – including the above reference – is available at the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>144</sup> Washington City Museum Day Book.

<sup>145</sup> "W. Bruff."

asserting that the owner of the stool was a “King Tom” of “Rockbuca”, Hunter was clearly drawing from published reports in the United States about the African Squadron’s investigation of the *Mary Carver* massacre. His reference to this same King Tom being a “great slave-dealer”, however, was likely fanciful. It is not known the King Tom involved in the Perry’s investigation participated in the slave trade. Moreover, the name “King Tom” itself was used by Westerners to refer to a number of different West African chiefs going back to the late eighteenth century, so it is possible that Hunter confused King Tom of Rockboukah with another West African “King Tom” who did indeed have ties with slavery. Furthermore, because the records in the SNMNH as well as those in Varden’s Washington Museum suggest that the stool had been collected prior to the African Squadron’s time in Liberia, it is likely that the object had no actual connection to the King Tom involved in Perry’s investigation. Indeed, Varden was intensely displeased with the publication of Hunter’s catalogue because he considered it fanciful and inaccurate. In an 1856 letter he complained of “the Man Hunter disposing of such a spurious Catalogue at the foot of the Stairs leading to the National Gallery.” According to Varden, the catalogue had “many glaring faults and fallshoods [sic],” and he claimed that Hunter’s “grate [sic] wish to be thought very Smarte and Funney [sic] has entirely carried him away and made his book perfect nonsense.”<sup>146</sup>

The exhibition of King Tom’s stool and other Liberian artifacts related to the African slave trade participated in a broader antebellum practice of publicly displaying images and objects related to American slavery, particularly at abolitionist events in the

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<sup>146</sup> John Varden to Dewey, 5 March 1856, John Varden Papers, 1829-1863, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.

1850s. In 1851, for example, the Boston Museum advertised its wax exhibit, “Horrors of Slavery, as exemplified by seven figures, being actual likenesses of a slave-owner, a slave-driver, and their victims” (fig. 4.26).<sup>147</sup> Also popular in northern cities were antislavery moving panoramas, such as one called *Mirror of Slavery*, produced by the fugitive slave Henry “Box” Brown in 1850, which took viewers on a visual tour aboard a slave ship through the Middle Passage.<sup>148</sup> At these kinds of events, tangible objects related to the slave trade were sometimes exhibited to bring a sense of authenticity to the main attraction. William Wells Brown’s panorama *Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave*, exhibited in Britain in 1850, concluded with the display of an actual slave collar from the United States.<sup>149</sup>

Antebellum museums also frequently presented Liberian ethnographic items as evidence of the supposedly heathen and superstitious tendencies of indigenous West Africans. Hunter’s 1855 catalogue of the National Institute recorded the presence of a “Sceptre made of an elephant’s tail, from Western Africa”. According to Hunter, “this emblem of power is deemed very sacred amongst most of the tribes, and a person even accidentally touching it is put to death.”<sup>150</sup> Hunter also described a “Kroo-men’s medicine chest, or fetish.” Although it isn’t clear exactly what this item was, it was probably some sort of amulet or charm used for healing or protecting from illness. In

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<sup>147</sup> Advertisement for the Boston Museum, *The Barre Patriot* 7, no. 27 (January 17, 1851): 4. Thanks to Maurie McInnis and Christopher Oliver for bringing this advertisement to my attention.

<sup>148</sup> Christopher Oliver, “Civic Visions: The Panorama and Popular Amusement in American Art and Society, 1845-1870,” (Ph.D. diss, University of Virginia, 2016).

<sup>149</sup> Michael A. Chaney, *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 139-46.

<sup>150</sup> *A Popular Catalogue of the Extraordinary Curiosities in the National Institute*, 44.

Hunter's words, "they are very rare, and difficult to be obtained, as several declared they would part with life sooner than dispose of them."<sup>151</sup> Hunter's tendency to sensationalize the meaning of such exhibits was typical of how these kinds of ritual objects were misunderstood in American collections. A particularly graphic example is the description of an African charm or amulet housed in the Peale collections. According to an 1869 inventory, it contained "a human heart with a knife thrust in it, several fingers of murdered infants – claws of birds &c. &c...."<sup>152</sup>

Without a doubt, the most frequently collected item related to the religious and ritual practices of West Africans were small amulets or charms known as "gris-gris", sometimes Anglicized as "gregory". Numerous examples were exhibited in antebellum museums, and many still survive (fig. 4.27). Historically linked to Islam, gris-gris are amulets typically comprised of a small leather or cloth bag containing ritual items and small, folded pieces of paper with inscriptions from the Koran. Frequently worn around the neck or adorning buildings, gris-gris were used to protect oneself from evil spirits or for medicinal purposes. An early twentieth-century observer in West Africa described the prevalence of gris-gris, noting how they could be found "in all shapes and at all prices. You see them everywhere, at the entrances to homes, on hand weapons, around the necks of babies."<sup>153</sup> W. Reade, a British soldier in Ghana in the 1870s, described "a famous

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>152</sup> "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 4.

<sup>153</sup> Paul Marty, *Etude sur l'Islam en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1922), 133, in Robert E. Handloff, "Prayers, Amulets, and Charms: Health and Social Control," *African Studies Review* 25, no. 2/3 (Jun.-Sep., 1982): 187.

doctor of the Moslems” who “wrote certain words upon paper, sewed them up in leather cases, and sold them as charms against wounds in the war.”<sup>154</sup>

Other West African items related to Islam were popular exhibits in antebellum collections. Among the items that Maryland colonization agent Prout donated to the Peale museums in 1832 was “An Arabic manuscript from Liberia”. ACS agent Dr. Lugenbeel donated four items to the National Institute in May of 1846, at least three of which were apparently Muslim in origin. Old Smithsonian card files identify the items as the “Robe of a Mandingo Mussulman Priest, manufactured in the interior of Africa,” the “Case for the Koran of a Mandingo Mussulman Priest,” and the “Haversack of a Mandingo African Chief”.<sup>155</sup> Lugenbeel’s three donations, which he gave to the National Institute along with an ivory oliphant, were likely imagined to have belonged to the same individual – a Muslim priest or chief from West Africa. This fact is significant because it reflects how, in spaces like the National Institute, individual artifacts from non-Western cultures were not meant to be viewed in isolation from one another but as forming the accouterments of an entire society.<sup>156</sup> The robe and oliphant still survive at the SNMNH (fig. 4.28), and the Koran case – though now lost – may have resembled a similar example now in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford University.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> W. Reade, *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1874), 327-28, in Handloff, “Prayers, Amulets, and Charms,” 188.

<sup>155</sup> “Robe of a Mandingo priest.”

<sup>156</sup> For another example in which West African objects were collected and presented as belonging to a specific individual, see Coote, “The Complete Accoutrements of an Inhabitant of the Mandingo Country.”

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 158, 160.

The use of the term “Mandingo” was not isolated to these objects. As noted in Chapter Three, the term had geographical and mythic connotations as well. Liberian settlers believed that the Mandingo people (today known as Mande, many of whom are Muslims) lived in the African interior – a region largely unknown to Westerners – and contrasted them greatly with the “local Africans” of the coast. Unlike the coastal groups with whom settlers were familiar, the Mandingo culture was imagined to be highly civilized, intellectual, and mercantile in nature.<sup>158</sup> Throughout the antebellum period, “Mandingo” was the ethnic or geographical origin most frequently described in relation to West African exhibits. For example, the ACS’ museum had included a “Mandingo Havre-sack” made of goat skin and decorated with “black ornamental figures”, which appeared to have been “done with the ink and pen, employed by the Mandingoes in writing.”<sup>159</sup> In 1824, Captain Doxey of the *U.S.S. Cyane* donated to the Peale Museum in Baltimore a “Knife and Spear, used by a native of the Mandingo Tribe—The knife was in use twenty years.”<sup>160</sup> Similarly, Reverend Seys sent at least two “Mandingo” cloths to the Missionary Lyceum at Wesleyan University.<sup>161</sup> The *Merchant’s Magazine and Commercial Review* article referenced earlier noted that, “in making clothes, the Mandingoes are very expert to cut and sew shirts and other kinds of garments, and in making their caps and robes.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Fairhead, et al., *African-American Exploration in West Africa*, 25.

<sup>159</sup> “Curiosities from Liberia,” 273-74.

<sup>160</sup> “Late Additions and Donations to Peale’s Museum,” 1.

<sup>161</sup> *Catalogue of Curiosities in the Missionary Lyceum*.

<sup>162</sup> “African Arts and Manufactures,” 245.

The presence of so many “Mandingo” artifacts in nineteenth-century collections, for example, testifies not only to American intrigue with this seemingly mysterious interior civilization but also to the ways indigenous West Africans understood Americans as a profitable market for their artisanry. The Mandingo priest’s robe that hung in the National Institute in the 1840s, for instance, had apparently been purchased by Dr. Lugenebeel with “a half doz. brass tacks.”<sup>163</sup> The ubiquity of gris-gris in American collections was also undoubtedly the result of West Africans’ desires to profit from a Western hunger for “Mandingo” exotica. Paul Marty, who visited the Volta Basin in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the early twentieth century, explained that, “the business of [selling] amulets is bustling and why not since it is based on the extraordinary credulity of blacks, on their taste for the supernatural, and their untoward respect for the written word.”<sup>164</sup> Similarly, another observer noted that gris-gris “generally consist of a few sentences extracted from the Qu’ran and written upon slips of paper in Arabic by a priest or marabou who carries on a profitable trade in this branch of his profession, a high price being paid for them.”<sup>165</sup> And according to Marcel Monnier, a French journalist in the Volta Basin at the end of the nineteenth century, “Mande-Dyula do not declare war on superstitions of natives but rather attempt to derive a profit from them by selling gris-gris... In this colony of merchants, everything—even religion—is up for sale.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *A Popular Catalogue of the Extraordinary Curiosities in the National Institute*, 45.

<sup>164</sup> Marty, *Etude sur l’Islam*, 133, in Handloff, “Prayers, Amulets, and Charms,” 187.

<sup>165</sup> Anonymous, *Africa Past and Present* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1873); quoted in Handloff, “Prayers, Amulets, and Charms,” 187.

<sup>166</sup> Marcel Monnier, *Mission Binger: France Noir* (Paris: E. Plon, 1894); quoted in Handloff, “Prayers, Amulets, and Charms,” 188.



That West Africans saw Liberian settlers and other Westerners as a profitable market is further reflected in the design of a man's hat made by the Gola people of northwestern Liberia (fig. 4.29).<sup>167</sup> Reverend Gurley collected the hat during one of his trips there and eventually donated it to the Smithsonian in 1874, where it still resides. Made of local Gola materials such as fiber, cloth, cowrie shells, feathers, and leopard skin, the hat's shape resembles that of the top hats worn by Americo-Liberian settlers to all formal, public occasions. As Mary Jo Arnoldi and Christine Mullen Kreamer explain, "the craftsman who made this hat appears to have been emulating the formal headwear of the urban Americo-Liberian gentlemen, while adding decorations that were meaningful to the Gola."<sup>168</sup> The hat also serves as a reminder that West Africans adapted their material culture as dynamically and creatively as their American counterparts, borrowing from American culture just as Americans borrowed from African designs, despite Western assumptions that indigenous African culture was fixed in a "primitive", unchanging mode.

### **Liberian Crania and Emerging Racial Science**

Among the many Liberian objects that American collectors eagerly gathered in the antebellum period were indigenous African skulls gathered for scientific research. The nineteenth century saw the development of phrenology; that is, the scientific study of the shape and capacity of the head. Intrinsic in phrenology was the belief that measuring

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<sup>167</sup> Thanks to Mary Jo Arnoldi at the SNMNH for bringing this object to my attention.

<sup>168</sup> Mary Jo Arnoldi and Christine Mullen Kreamer, *Crowning Achievements: African Arts of Dressing the Head* (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Cultural History / University of California, Los Angeles, 1995), 31.

the physical characteristics of a person's head could reveal his or her moral and intellectual character.<sup>169</sup> A branch of phrenology was craniology – the study of skulls and specifically cranial capacity. Craniologists believed that the varying characteristics of the skulls of different racial groups and social classes could allow scientists to rank human groups according to hierarchies of superiority and inferiority. The most prolific collector of human skulls in the antebellum United States was a renowned Philadelphia naturalist named Samuel George Morton. By the time of his death in 1851, Dr. Morton had gathered over 1,200 human crania from around the globe, a collection that earned the nickname the “American Golgotha”.<sup>170</sup> In order to acquire so many crania, Morton sought the assistance of fellow scientists and physicians around the world. With the colonization of Liberia, Morton recognized a new opportunity to acquire natural specimens – including human crania – from coastal West Africa, and he sought the help of physicians on the ground in the colony.

By the early 1840s, Morton had acquired at least 16 African crania from Liberia. One of these was sent by Ezekial Skinner, an American physician and missionary who spent time in Liberia between 1834 and 1837.<sup>171</sup> Another four were provided by the

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<sup>169</sup> Frances Larson, *Severed: A History of Heads Lost and Found* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 170. For a more in-depth discussion of phrenology and the desire to collect skulls among nineteenth-century scientists, see pp. 167-207. As Larson notes, some published works on phrenology became extremely popular. George Combe's *The Constitution of Man* ranked second only to the Bible at the height of its sales. By 1860, one hundred thousand copies of the book had been sold.

<sup>170</sup> Ann Fabian, *Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 1. For number of skulls collected by Morton, see Larson, *Severed*, 181.

<sup>171</sup> Meigs, *Catalogue of Human Crania*, 92.

Scottish-African surgeon mentioned previously, Dr. Robert McDowell.<sup>172</sup> And in 1842, Methodist missionary-physician S. M. E. Goheen donated eleven examples that he had obtained in the colony<sup>173</sup>. In Morton's collection, these skulls were carefully classified not as generically African in origin, but as examples of specific ethnic groups: Dey, Grebo, Bassa, Gola, Pessah, Kru, and Eboe.

The descriptions that Skinner, McDowell, and Goheen sent along with these African crania offer intriguing clues about the lives – and ultimately the deaths – of the people whose skulls eventually came into Morton's collection. For example, Dr. McDowell sent the following description to accompany one of the Bassa skulls collected for Morton: “the skull of an African *Gree-gree man*, or doctor. For committing some crime he was tried by the ordeal of drinking *red-wood water*, and being found guilty, was cut in pieces, and thrown into the St. John's river, Grand Bassa, Africa, where his skull was found—a very good specimen of the Bassa tribe.”<sup>174</sup> Goheen's donations included an Eboe male and female who were apparently “hanged in Liberia for murder.”<sup>175</sup>

Exactly how these physicians in Liberia obtained these crania is unknown in most cases, but the historical records do provide clear narratives of how at least five of them were acquired – specifically, five skulls that Goheen described as those of “Negroes killed in the attack on Heddington, in Liberia.”<sup>176</sup> That conflict had occurred in 1840

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

when the large group of local Africans attacked the mission station at Heddington but were apparently defeated through the efforts of a small group of settlers, who were later treated as heroes in the American press. Settler Peyton Skipwith described the event in a letter to his former master, John Hartwell Cocke: “there was in that Town [Heddington] three Americans and they took there stand in the House and whipt the whole enemy. They killd on the feeld above 20 dead, and god he only knows how many was wounded and carread away.”<sup>177</sup> Skipwith also described how the settlers had obtained the head of the native leader, a man named Gotorah: “They then persued them and found the General’s [Gotorah’s] body slightly intomed about twenty miles from the feeld of Battle. His head was taken from his body and now made an ornament in the Hands of the Governor Buchanan.”<sup>178</sup> In a letter to ACS general agent Samuel Wilkeson, settler Sion Harris – who had been directly involved in the event – described the whole attack in gory detail, including how the heads had been obtained.

At about 12 o’clock 15 of King Governors men followed them [the defeated natives] and found Goterah whom they had hid about 15 or 20 miles from Heddington with the other dead. They returned about sundown and wanted a headman to go cut off[f] his head, they being common men would not. About 15 American came by this from Caldwell and we started toward Zodaquee, a headman, a recaptive. On the path we went about 15 miles and returned. Zodaquee went on after Goterah’s head and returned saying “here is Goterah’s head. You have killed him, for true. You have done this country good,” and shouted. Many wished the head but I reserved it for the Governor...<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Peyton Skipwith to John H. Cocke, April 22, 1840, Correspondence, Box 98, Cocke Family Papers, 1725-1939, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. Published in Wiley, *Slaves No More*, 53.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Sion Harris to Samuel Wilkeson, April 16, 1840, ACS records (microform), reel 154, no. 37. Published in Wiley, *Slaves No More*, 223.

Presumably Buchanan transferred Goterah's severed head to Dr. Goheen, who would have cleaned and prepared it for Morton. If Goheen's claims were correct, then at least four other native heads were obtained from deceased natives after the Heddington attack.

The descriptions that accompanied Morton's West African skulls speak to the violence of Liberian settlement and the vulnerability of certain types of people – criminals, “witches”, and defeated natives – in the colonial landscape. The histories of these “specimens” also reflect the ways their value and meanings changed depending on the contexts in which they were placed. Hours after the bloody conflict at Heddington, Goterah's head was a symbol to settlers of their defeat of a threatening and dangerous enemy. Significantly, in his description of the event, Harris clarifies that the settlers, “being common men” would not actually do the deed of procuring the head, and so the job was passed along to the African recaptive Zodaquee, for whom such an act was apparently not troubling. Thus settlers were able to celebrate the retrieval of Goterah's head without admitting their explicit complicity in such an “uncivilized” act. Once in Morton's collection in Philadelphia, however, all that remained of Goterah's head was an anonymous skull to be measured and studied and placed on the shelves of the Academy of Natural Sciences as a representative example of a “GOLAH Negro, warrior”.<sup>180</sup>

Morton's Liberian skulls ultimately became linked to an evolving racial science at midcentury. Morton, like many scientists of his day, believed that there were five basic races on planet earth: Caucasian, Mongolian, American, Malay, and Ethiopian.<sup>181</sup> In order to account for the perceived differences in these races, while still maintaining a

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<sup>180</sup> Meigs, *Catalogue of Human Crania*, 94.

<sup>181</sup> Fabian, *Skull Collectors*, 1.

belief in biblical creation, many scientists at the time resorted to *polygenism*: that is, the idea of multiple and separate creations. Under this theory, different racial groups were believed to actually constitute different species. While Morton never completely aligned himself with polygenism, his ideas certainly swayed in that direction, and other scientists saw in his collection proof of the theory's accuracy.<sup>182</sup>

One scientist who was inspired by Morton's collection of human crania was a European biologist named Louis Agassiz, who immigrated to the United States in 1847. Like Morton, Agassiz believed that polygenism best accounted for human racial difference. He first saw Morton's crania on a preliminary trip to the United States in 1846, writing home to his mother that the "collection alone [was] worth a journey to America."<sup>183</sup> Yet for Agassiz – like Morton and other scientists in their circle – the study of racial difference could not be entirely disentangled from his personal biases and belief in the innate superiority of the white race. Although Agassiz supported abolition, he found himself deeply disturbed by the black Americans he encountered in the United States. Upon returning to his Philadelphia hotel after visiting Morton's crania collection, Agassiz wrote to his mother that, "all the servants at the hotel I stayed in were men of color." He continued, describing his revulsion at coming into contact with these servants.

I scarcely dare tell you the painful impression I received, so contrary was the sentiment they inspired in me to our ideas of the fraternity of human-kind and the unique origin of our species.... Seeing their black faces with their fat lips and grimacing teeth, the wool of their heads, their bent knees, their elongated hands, their large curved fingers, and above all the livid color of their palms, I could not turn my eyes from their face in order to tell them to keep their distance, and when they advanced their hideous

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>183</sup> Quoted in Fabian, *Skull Collectors*, 113.

hand toward my plate to serve me, I wished I could leave in order to eat a piece of bread apart rather than dine with such service.<sup>184</sup>

As Ann Fabian aptly describes, for men like Agassiz and Morton, “scientific inquiry floated above the tangled politics of slavery and abolition.”<sup>185</sup>

Morton’s crania collection articulated differences not just between the five major racial groups he identified, but also among various people of the same general category. This is why, for example, his Liberian specimens were labeled according to their believed ethnic groups, information that complemented the examples of indigenous Liberian material culture on public display in America’s museums, also understood as examples of the equally artificially constructed cultures of the Mandingo, Bassa, or other imagined West African groups.

Yet this information was also sometimes used to understand the perceived differences not just among Africans but also among African Americans. This conflation between ideas about Africans and anxieties about African Americans in mid-nineteenth century racial science is nicely reflected in a set of daguerreotypes commissioned by Agassiz in 1850. By then, Agassiz was the most famous scientist in America. That March, he spoke at the third meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Charleston, South Carolina. To his Southern audience, he confirmed that the different human races were “well marked and distinct” and that they had not evolved “from a common center... nor a common pair.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 114.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 113-14.

<sup>186</sup> Quoted in Brian Wallis, “Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz’s Slave Daguerreotypes,” *American Art* 9, no. 2 (Summer, 1995): 44.

Dr. Robert W. Gibbes, another scientist at the conference, encouraged Agassiz to visit some of the plantations in and around Columbia, where he had close ties to prominent planters including the Hamptons, Hammonds, and Taylors.<sup>187</sup> Agassiz did so, and during his tour he selected a group of enslaved African Americans to be the subjects of a series of daguerreotypes that would provide credible evidence of his belief in racial differences. He selected slaves who he believed best represented various African ethnic groups. Writing to Morton, Gibbes described how “Agassiz was delighted with his examination of Ebo, Foulah, Gullah, Guinea, Coromantee, Mandrigo and Congo Negroes. He found enough to satisfy him that they have differences from the other races.”<sup>188</sup> To assist Agassiz, Gibbes arranged to have the enslaved individuals photographed in the studio of a local Columbia daguerreotypist named James T. Zealy. Gibbes documented the slaves’ names and origins, as well as the names of their owners.<sup>189</sup> He wrote to Morton in June of 1850 that, “I have just finished the daguerreotypes for Agassiz of native Africans of various tribes. I wish you could see them.”<sup>190</sup>

The resulting fifteen daguerreotypes, unknown to historians until they were discovered at the Peabody Museum in 1975, present seven enslaved individuals – five men and two women – each identified by their name, African ethnic origin, and owner (fig. 4.30). Nude or partially dressed and captured with frontal and side views, they

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 44-45.

<sup>188</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 45.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Quoted in *ibid*.



became ethnographic specimens in this elite Columbia portrait studio. Yet, as Brain Wallis has noted, these are not exactly portraits but rather typological photographs. As Wallis explains, “the early ethnographic research conducted by Morton, Agassiz, and other members of the American School of Ethnology depended on the collapse of the specific and the generic into ‘type.’”<sup>191</sup> Whereas the portrait was meant to capture the likeness of an individual, “the type represented an average example of a racial group, an abstraction, though not necessarily the ideal, that defined the general form or character of individuals within the group; it subsumed individuality.”<sup>192</sup> Thus through the medium of the daguerreotype, Agassiz’ seven enslaved subjects – Alfred, Jem, Jack, Drana, Renty, Delia, and Fassena – all of whom had likely spent their entirely lives in South Carolina – were characterized as typological examples of different groups in Africa – Foulah, Gullah, Guinea, Congo, and Mandingo. Western perceptions of African ethnic “types” – in part evolving out of the stream of Liberian artifacts populating the shelves of both popular museums and scientific collections – in this case became projected onto the identities of African Americans who may or may not have had any personal connection to those particular African ethnic origins attributed to them.

### **Settler Participation in Collecting African Curiosities**

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the ways African artifacts were obtained and exhibited by various Americans, including ACS agents, protestant missionaries, U.S. Navy personnel, museum exhibitors, and private collectors. I have also

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 49.

demonstrated that many Africans embraced the opportunity to profit from Americans' hunger for things African, and that in some cases they produced objects specifically for this Western market. However, another group of actors that played a critical role in collecting and disseminating African artifacts was the Liberian settler community.

Initially, colonists' collecting was linked more closely to survival than it was to presenting any specific vision of Africa to their loved ones and sponsors back home. Sending African curiosities to friends, family, and ACS officers in the United States was part of the transatlantic exchange in material goods upon which settlers were constantly dependent. Surviving settler letters to America are littered with requests for everyday items like fabric, food, building materials, and books. Writing to his former master John Hartwell Cocke, Peyton Skipwith requested "Flour & Pork" as well as "some Valuable Books for my family such as Historys &c &c" and "some writing paper, quills, & wafers."<sup>193</sup> Occasionally, settlers requested less necessary items such as the "little box of water colors, and some little brushes for drawing" that Day desired for the enjoyment of his young son.<sup>194</sup> Settlers frequently sent African souvenirs back across the Atlantic, often coffee and other examples of their agricultural achievements.

By the 1830s, however, some settlers were making more concerted efforts to obtain financial support by supplying Americans with African souvenirs. On March 8, 1835, Monrovia resident James Brown wrote to the editors of the *New-York Commercial*

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<sup>193</sup> Peyton Skipwith to John Hartwell Cocke, 25 June 1846, Correspondence, Box 117, Cocke Family Papers, 1725-1939, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. Published in Bell I. Wiley, *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 64.

<sup>194</sup> John Day to James Taylor, 23 October 1849, Correspondence of John Day, 1846-1859, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. Transcribed in Carter, "John Day," 160.

*Advertiser*. “I lately understand,” he explained, “that there are several gentlemen in the U. States, and for what I know, ladies too, wishing a collection of African curiosities, such as sea shells, flowers, fruits, &c.”<sup>195</sup> Eager to capitalize on the interests of these potential customers, Brown requested that the editors publish a notice advertising his ability to supply such orders. He continued by describing the impressive array of “curiosities” he could readily ship to American shores. Such souvenirs of Africa included cloth made by indigenous Liberians, botanical and horticultural specimens, natural history items such as “the feet and heads of birds” and “the skins of different animals”, and agricultural products like locally-grown coffee and Liberian fruit preserves.<sup>196</sup> Among the products he could supply, Brown noted that, “there is none more desirable than our beautiful Liberia wood, calculated to be worked into furniture of all kinds.”<sup>197</sup> Furniture requests, the letter explained, could be satisfied by Day, who was then living in Monrovia and whom Brown described as “a first rate cabinet-maker and a man of excellent character.”<sup>198</sup> As payment for his African curiosities, Brown requested cash, dry goods, and building materials for the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches, all of which were currently under construction.

Reprinted in other publications including the *Repository*, Brown’s advertisement for African curiosities relates to a larger phenomenon of Liberian settlers sending exotic souvenirs to individuals in the United States and requesting material support in exchange.

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<sup>195</sup> “James Brown,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 6 (Jun., 1835): 181.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

Yet it also stands out in the sheer diversity of objects it advertised, from pickled oysters to fine wood furniture, the latter of which was quickly requested by female colonizationist Margaret Mercer, who ordered two work-tables in exchange for goods.<sup>199</sup> That Brown listed such a wide variety of items suggests that he had a keen understanding of the broad range of consuming and collecting interests that Liberia held for the American public, and that he did not want to define his market too narrowly. By sending such items home, settlers like Brown and Day demonstrated that they could participate in the same transatlantic exchange of goods that brought them the flour they needed for bread and the nails they required to build houses. They also showed their awareness of the broader transatlantic trend of curiosity collecting that was sweeping nineteenth-century America.

After Liberia became an independent republic in 1847, its citizens used indigenous material culture and natural history specimens as part of a larger effort to gain diplomatic recognition by European powers and the United States. The most striking example of this effort was Liberia's participation in the 1862 Exposition in London, where the African republic displayed 123 zoological, agricultural, botanical, and anthropological specimens (Appendix 4.3).<sup>200</sup> The official American report of the fair described the Liberian displays as "highly indicative of the vast resources and commercial capabilities of the Liberian Republic," and noted that sixty of the artifacts

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<sup>199</sup> "Colonial Agriculture, &c," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 5 (May, 1836): 162. The article also notes that a "Mrs. Chambers of Baltimore" (likely Sarah Chambers), also had placed an order in exchange for goods, but it is not clear whether or not this was for furniture.

<sup>200</sup> "Liberian Articles at the International Exhibition, London, 1862," *Colonization Herald* (Dec., 1862).

would be donated to the African Aid Society of London to form “the nucleus of an African museum.”<sup>201</sup>

## Conclusion

More than a century after the American Civil War, Malcolm X would write in his biography that as a child, his vision of Africa was a place of “naked savages, cannibals, monkeys and tigers and steaming jungles.”<sup>202</sup> While that image was certainly fed by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century representations of Africa like Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the same basic vision of the continent as savage had been popularized much earlier in antebellum American exhibits of Liberian artifacts. The objects that travelled from Liberia to the United States during the first decades of colonization brought Americans face-to-face with an imagined idea of Africa as a place populated by savage beasts and equally savage people. Yet despite the impressive number of African ethnographic objects and natural history specimens that entered the United States in this period, scholars have yet to examine in any detail what these items were or how collectors used them in creating an idea of Africa in the American imagination.

Whereas the African exhibits in museums of the early republic, such as Peale’s Philadelphia Museum, often focused on the imagined noble origins of submissive enslaved African Americans, objects that came after colonization began became both tools in the ACS’ public relations arsenal and sources of popular entertainment. At the

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<sup>201</sup> J. P. Johnson, United States Commissioner, *Report on International Exhibition of Industry and Art, London, 1862* (Albany: Steam Press of C. Van Benthuysen, 1863), 89.

<sup>202</sup> Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 7.

ACS' museum, Liberian artifacts presented West Africa as ripe for colonial exploitation and as an African frontier awaiting the conquering and civilizing presence of African-American men. In popular venues like Peale's Baltimore Museum and John Varden's Washington Museum, on the other hand, Liberian artifacts were exhibited as relics of current news events from the colony, materializing rumors of West Africans as hostile and violent. By 1850s, however, the colonization-related context of some artifacts was lost in vast crowded collections like the National Institute. Nevertheless, even in these spaces Liberian articles continued to present Americans with an image of African difference that anticipated even more pejorative representations of the continent popular a few decades later during the European scramble for the continent.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the contexts in which these Liberian collectibles were displayed and the descriptions that accompanied them often also reflected contemporary American anxieties about slavery and racial difference at home. The classification and description of these objects according to their attributed West African ethnic origins became entangled with pseudo-scientific inquiries into racial difference and ultimately feeding notions of white superiority in the United States at midcentury. Meanwhile, some Liberian settlers like James Brown and John Day became critical actors in the trade in Liberian exotica, ultimately profiting from Americans' hunger for things African.



**Figure 4.1**  
Bassa horn  
ivory

Described on its original Peale Museum label as a ““War-horn used by the Bassa tribe, and left on the battle ground after their attack on the Colonists at Bassa Cove Africa in 1835”

Donated to the Peale Museum, Baltimore by Daniel Whitehurst, April 1836

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

Reprinted from William Hart, “Liberian Chiefs’ Horns Revisited,” 60



**Figure 4.2**

John Sartain, engraver (Philadelphia), after his own painting

Detail of fig. 1.1: *Elliott Cresson*

c. 1838

Mezzotint, etching, and stipple on cream wove paper

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

<https://www.pafa.org/collection/elliott-cresson> (accessed January 4, 2016)



**Figure 4.3**

Lorenzo Legati

*Museo Cospiano* (Bologna)

1677

The Getty Research Institute

<http://search.getty.edu/gri/records/griobject?objectid=2684193659> (accessed February 25, 2016)



**Figure 4.4**

Lidded Saltcellar

15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century

Ivory

Sapi-Portuguese, Sierra Leone.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/316442> (accessed January 6, 2016)





**Figure 4.5**

Charles Willson Peale

*The Artist in His Museum*

1822

Oil on canvas

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

<http://www.artstor.org> (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 4.6**

Bow

Wood, skin

Africa

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed February 25, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53211) may be the same one donated to Peale by Charles Wister in 1807 or James Morris in 1808. See "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 1.



**Figure 4.7**

Quiver and 16 poisoned arrows  
Leather, hide, reed, metal, sinew  
Bambarra, Africa/Sudan

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53191) may be the same donated to Peale by Mr. Morancy in 1794, Wister in 1807, or Morris in 1808. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1. For other possible bows, quivers, and arrows that may be among those once owned by Peale and listed in Table 1, see the following Peabody numbers: 99-12-50/53219; 99-12-50/53203; 99-12-50/53196; 99-12-50/53189; 99-12-50/53190; 99-12-50/53218; 99-12-50/53201.1; 99-12-50/53199.1; 99-12-50/53198; and 99-12-50/53197.1.



**Figure 4.8**

Knife  
Metal, wood  
Africa

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53230) may be the same dagger donated to Peale by Nathaniel Thomas in 1801. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1.

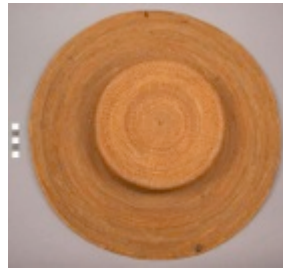


**Figure 4.9**

Leather pouch  
Leather, pigment  
Africa/Sudan

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53184) may have been the same “tobacco pouch of well dress leather” donated to Peale by Mr. Morancy in 1794. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1. For similar pouches that may be the 1794 Morancy donation, see the following Peabody numbers: 99-12-50/53180, 99-12-50/53181, 99-12-50/53182, 99-12-50/53183, 99-12-50/53185, 99-12-50/53187, and 99-12-50/53188.



**Figure 4.10**

Hat  
Fiber  
Africa

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53177) may be the “cap made of the straw of Raffia” donated to Peale by Mr. Morancy in 1794. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1. For another example that may be the Morancy hat, see Peabody number 99-12-50/53651.



**Figure 4.11**

Wooden comb  
Wood  
Africa?

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53250) may be among the objects donated to Peale by Mr. Morancy in 1794. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1.



**Figure 4.12**

Bracelet  
Brass  
Ashanti, Africa/Ghana

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53703) may be among those donated to Peale by Mr. Morancy in 1794. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1. For other bracelets that may be that may have been in the 1794 Morancy donations, see the following Peabody numbers: 99-12-50/53233, 99-12-50/53669, 99-12-50/53700, 99-12-50/53701, 99-12-50/53702, and 99-12-50/53704.



**Figure 4.13**

Necklace of calcite and glass beads

Stone, fiber, pigment

Mandingo, Africa

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53671) may be the same one donated to Peale by Miss Mary Pittner in 1813, or alternatively by “Mr. Etting” in 1827. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 2. For other necklaces that may be among those once owned by Peale, see Peabody numbers: 99-12-50/53672, 99-12-50/53673, 99-12-50/53674, 99-12-50/53675, 99-12-50/53682, 99-12-50/53683, and 99-12-50/53684.



**Figure 4.14**

Wooden spoon

Africa

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53292) may have been donated to Peale by Mrs. Elizabeth Brown in 1813. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1.



**Figure 4.15**

Wooden dish

Africa

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53273) may have been donated to Peale by Mr. Soissons in 1805. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1. For another example that may be the Soissons dish, see Peabody number 99-12-50/53272.



**Figure 4.16**

Guitar

Wood, hide, fiber

Africa/Sierra Leone

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

<http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/> (accessed January 6, 2016)

This item (Peabody number 99-12-50/53227) may be the “musical instrument of Mabigue, Africa” donated to Peale by Mr. Morancy in 1794. See “African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum,” 1.



**Figure 4.17**

Carl Frederick von Breda

*Portrait of a Swedish Gentleman Instructing a Negro Prince*

c. 1789

Oil on canvas

Nordiska Museet, Stockholm

[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 4.18**  
Unknown artist  
*Portrait of Mary Sabina*  
c. 1745  
Oil on canvas  
Royal College of Surgeons, London  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed December 10, 2015)



**Figure 4.19**  
“Ourang Outang, or Wild Man of the Woods”  
Advertisement for Peale’s Museum

*Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* (Apr. 13, 1799): 3

Retrieved from America’s Historical Newspapers, <http://www.readex.com/content/americas-historical-newspapers> (accessed January 6, 2016)





**Figure 4.20**

“The Missionary’s Escape from the Lion”

Published in David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1858), 13

<http://www.books.google.com> (accessed January 6, 2016)



**Figure 4.21**

C. Cullen, engraver

“Tour in Liberia—An Unpleasant Predicament”

Published in “Tour in Liberia—Unpleasant Predicament,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (Sept. 4, 1858): 218

Retrieved from Nineteenth-Century U.S. Newspapers, <http://gdc.gale.com/products/19th-century-u.s.-newspapers/> (accessed January 6, 2016)



**Figure 4.22**

“Kroo’s Provision Box”

Donated to the National Institute by John Cassin before 1855

Kru

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

Photo by the author



**Figure 4.23**

Horn

Likely one of the three “war horns” collected in Liberia by Reverend John Seys c. 1834-1843

Ivory

Wesleyan University World Instrument Collection

Reprinted from William Hart, “Liberian Chiefs’ Horns Revisited,” 61





**Figure 4.24**

Horn

Originally described as a “Bugle from Africa”, from the “River Galeneas” (Gallinas) and once belonging to “King Matar”

Donated to the Boston Athenaeum in 1827 by George Domett

Ivory

Vai

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

Reprinted from William Hart, “Liberian Chiefs’ Horns Revisited,” 58



**Figure 4.25**

Horn

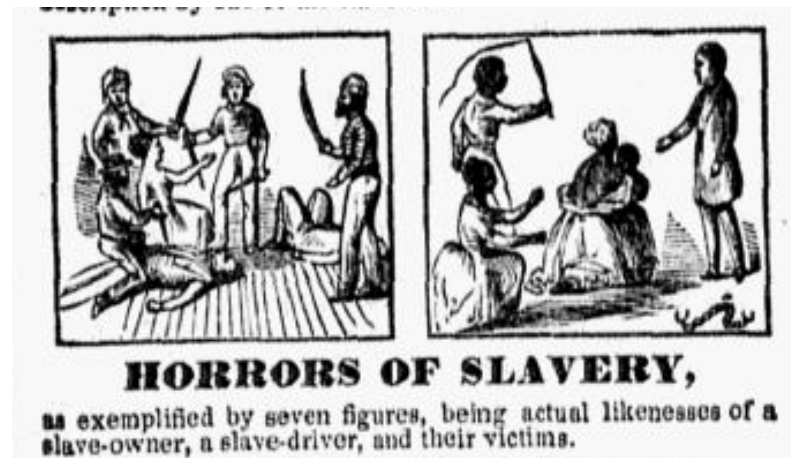
Originally described as an “African War horn, from Liberia”

Donated by Captain Caleb Grozer (or Grozier) to the Andover Theological Seminary, before 1829

Ivory

Peabody Essex Museum

Reprinted from William Hart, “Liberian Chiefs’ Horns Revisited,” 57



**Figure 4.26**

“Horrors of Slavery”

Detail, advertisement for the Boston Museum

Published in *The Barre Patriot* 7, no. 27 (January 17, 1851): 4

Retrieved from America’s Historical Newspapers, <http://www.readex.com/content/americas-historical-newspapers> (accessed February 19, 2016)



**Figure 4.27**

Amulets, also known as “gris-gris”

Collected by Mauve, Master Carpenter, U.S. Navy and donated to the National Institute, c. 1840s-1850s

Leather, horn, snake skin

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

Photo by the author



**Figure 4.28**

Oliphant

Described as an “African war-horn made of the tusk of an elephant”

Collected by James W. Lugenbeel, ACS physician in Liberia, and donated to the National Institute May 30, 1846

Ivory

Mandingo

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

Photo by author



**Figure 4.29**

Man's hat

Collected by ACS Agent Ralph Randolph Gurley, who donated to the Smithsonian in 1874

Fiber, cloth, cowries, feathers, and leopard skin

Gola, northwestern Liberia

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

Reprinted from Arnoldi and Kreamer, *Crowning Achievements*, 30



**Figure 4.30**

James T. Zealy

“Jack (driver), Guinea. Plantation of B. F. Taylor, Esq., Columbia, S.C.”

Two of fifteen daguerreotypes of seven South Carolina slaves, commissioned by Louis Agassiz  
March, 1850

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

<http://www.artstor.org> (accessed December 10, 2015)

**Table 4.1**  
**African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum, 1789-1818**

	Description	Type	Date Received	Donor	Current Location
1	Bow brought from Africa by the slave Jambo, and used to throw firebrands on the roof of Fort Motté, Revolutionary War (with quiver and arrows)	Ethnographic	1789	Otho Holland Williams	Bow unknown. Quiver and arrows: possibly Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard
2	A poisoned arrow from Africa	Ethnographic	1791	George Meminger	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
3	A quiver and poisoned arrows, &c, and a bow made of bambou, the string is also of bambou; these belonged to an African king of Ahomet	Ethnographic	1794	Mr. Morancy	Bow unknown. Quiver and arrows: possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
4	An instrument of musick, of Congo (Africa) called Bamboula	Ethnographic	1794	Mr. Morancy	Unknown
5	A musical instrument of Mabigue, Africa	Ethnographic	1794	Mr. Morancy	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
6	A tobacco pouch of well dressed leather, and handsomely coloured, by the natives of Africa	Ethnographic	1794	Mr. Morancy	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
7	A cap made of the straw of Raffia, by the Senegal Negroes; of elegant workmanship	Ethnographic	1794	Mr. Morancy	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
8	Lines made by the Africans on board of a prison-ship, out of Oacum; these lines were made by twisting the oacum... knees, and are in neatness of execution equal to any made with wheels.	Ethnographic	1794	Mr. Morancy	Unknown
9	Combs, bracelets, &c. used by the natives of Africa; also a variety of seeds and fruits of Africa...	Ethnographic, Natural History	1794	Mr. Morancy	Comb, bracelets: possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard

10	Lance from the River Sestos	Ethnographic	1801	Nathaniel Thomas (collected by Mr. Shute)	Unknown
11	Dagger from the Island Casusco	Ethnographic	1801	Nathaniel Thomas (collected by Mr. Shute)	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
12	Hippopotamus tooth from the Congo	Natural History	1801	Nathaniel Thomas (collected by Mr. Shute)	Unknown
13	Hippopotamus skull and jaws	Natural History	1805	Mr. Soissons	Unknown
14	Living birds: scarlet ibis, crown heron, widow birds, Senegal finch	Natural History	1805	Mr. Soissons	Unknown
15	African dish which had belonged to a prince	Ethnographic	1805	Mr. Soissons	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
16	Bow and quiver of poisoned arrows used by the Mandingo tribe, Sierra Leone	Ethnographic	1807	Charles Wister	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
17	Bow and quiver of poisoned arrows from Africa	Ethnographic	1808	James Morris	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
18	Wooden spoon and fork from Senegal	Ethnographic	1813	Mrs. Elizabeth Brown	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
19	An African ornament for the neck, a collar	Ethnographic	1813	Miss Mary Pitner	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
20	Algerine pocket book embroidered with gold	Ethnographic	1817	Mrs. Thompson of Alexandria	Unknown

21	African shawls made of bark	Ethnographic	1818	Mr. La Harminier	Unknown
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**Table 4.1 References**

1. Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, 43-44; "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 1.
2. "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 1.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, 206.
14. Ibid.
15. "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 1.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 2.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.



**Table 4.2**  
**Liberian and West African Objects in the United States, 1821-1865**

Description	Type/Maker	Date Collected/ Received	Donor/Collector	Original Location(s)	Current Location
1 Spear	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun, 2 <sup>nd</sup> U.S. Agent to Liberia, colonial governor (1822-1828)	American Colonization Society Headquarters Museum, Washington, D.C.	Unknown
2 Scabbard	Ethnographic	1827			
3 "Country cloth" 1	Ethnographic	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
4 "Country cloth" 2	Ethnographic	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
5 "Country cloth" 3	Ethnographic	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
6 "Country cloth" 4	Ethnographic	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
7 "Country cloth" 5	Ethnographic	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
8 "Spool of Cotton Yarn" 1	Agricultural	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
9 "Spool of Cotton Yarn" 2	Agricultural	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
10 "A Knife and Sheath"	Ethnographic	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
11 Splinters from Ashmun's house, Caldwell, Liberia	Other	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown
12 "A Mandingo Havre-sack"	Ethnographic, Mandingo	1827		ACS Museum	Unknown

13	"A specimen of the African Millet, in the ear"	Agricultural	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
14	"A specimen of the Guinea Corn, in the ear"	Agricultural	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
15	"A Specimen of the <i>Bird Pepper</i> , of the coast"	Botanical	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
16	"Specimens of the Osseous part of the African squid, reduced to powder"	Natural History	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
17	"A roof"	Botanical	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
18	"A country Flagellum"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
19	"A small War Horn"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
20	"A piece of African Wampum"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
21	"The ordinary Fishing Line of the coast"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
22	"A country Necklace"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
23	"Three Bark Sacks"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
24	"A Royal Snuff Box— <i>alias</i> —a Goat's Horn"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
25	"The Skull-cap of a large marsh fowl of the country"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown

26	"A Hat, such as are in common use to the leeward"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
27	"A Javelin, used as a missile"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
28	"A country Gig, or Spear"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
29	"A specimen of a Spice..."	Botanical	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
30	"One Powder Flask"	Ethnographic	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
31	Leopard skin	Natural History	1827	Jehudi Ashmun	ACS Museum	Unknown
32	"War-horn, made of Ivory, found at the town of Monrovia, Cape Mesurado, Africa, after the attack on the American colony, by the natives"	Ethnographic	Collected 1823, donated 1824	Captain John Wightman of the <i>Oswego</i> , arrived Monrovia May 24, 1823	Peale Museum, Baltimore	Unknown
33	"Knife and Spear, used by a native of the Mandingo Tribe—The knife was in use twenty years"	Ethnographic, Mandingo	Collected 1823, donated 1824	Captain B. S. Doxey, sailing master of the <i>U.S.S. Cyane</i> , arrived Monrovia end of March, 1823	Peale Museum, Baltimore	Unknown
34	"Boa Constrictor, caught near the American settlement at Cape Mesurado, and lived until its arrival at this port"	Natural History	1824	Dr. Eli Ayres, first ACS agent to Liberia	Peale Museum, Baltimore	Unknown
35	"Hat, dirk, fork, spoon, comb and necklace from Messurado, Africa"	Ethnographic	1827	"Mr. Etting"	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard

36	"African quiver of poisoned arrows, &c."	Ethnographic	October 25, 1827	"Fr. de la Roche" (likely William de la Roche, affiliated with the schooner <i>Eclipse</i> , arrived in Monrovia July/August 1827)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
37	"War horn"	Ethnographic	1827	"Fr. de la Roche" (likely William de la Roche)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
38	"African deer's foot tobacco stopper"	Ethnographic	1829	"Dr. Dewees" (likely William Potts Dewees, Pennsylvania physician)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
39	"Bow and quiver of poisoned arrows"	Ethnographic	1829	United Bowmen of Philadelphia (founded in 1828 by Titian Ramsey Peale)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
40	"African hunting horn from Monrovia"	Ethnographic	1830	"Mr. Mechlin" (Joseph Mechlin, Jr., U.S. Agent to Liberia, colonial governor, 1830-33)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
41	"African pouch"	Ethnographic	1830	George Roberts	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
42	A Boa 18 ft. in length from Liberia	Natural History	December 31, 1831	Joseph Mechlin, Jr. (see entry 40)	Peale Museum, Philadelphia	Unknown

43	“‘Lombos grecaree’ worn on the neck by the natives of Liberia, as a preservation from gunshot wounds. ‘There is a secret society among the natives called ‘Lombos’ similar to Masonry among the whites.’”	Ethnographic	1832	Jacob W. Prout (special agent to the Maryland State Colonization Society)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
44	“Whips used by the African Kings to flog their wives and slaves”	Ethnographic	1832	Jacob W. Prout	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
45	“Wig worn by the natives of Africa”	Ethnographic	1832	Jacob W. Prout	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
46	“An Arabic manuscript from Liberia”	Ethnographic	1832	Jacob W. Prout	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
47	“Cap and necklace worn by the natives of Africa”	Ethnographic	1833	“Mr. W. Carter”	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
48	“A (Living) Crocodile from Liberia Af”	Natural History	July 8, 1833	“Dr. Hall” (likely Dr. James Hall, Governor, Maryland in Africa, 1834-36)	Peale Museum, Philadelphia	Unknown
49	“A snake called king of the ‘Drivers’ by the Natives of Cape Palmas Africa”	Natural History	December 30, 1835	“Capt. Hanson” (likely Captain John Hanson of Liberia, ACS/PCS emigrant ship, 1829/1830)	Peale Museum, Philadelphia	Unknown

50	"Lance"	Ethnographic	1835	"Dr. R. J. Dodd, U.S.N." (Robert J. Dodd, U.S.N. surgeon from Philadelphia)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
51	"Hunting horn"	Ethnographic	1835	Robert J. Dodd, U.S.N.	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
52	"Knife"	Ethnographic	1835	Robert J. Dodd, U.S.N.	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Possibly Peabody Museum, Harvard
53	"Two tusks of hippopotamus"	Natural History	1835	Robert J. Dodd, U.S.N.	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
54	"A slave hook used in taking prisoners by the Bassa tribe of Negroes"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
55	"War horn used by the Bassa tribe and left on the battle ground after their attack on the American colonists at Bassa Cove, 1835"	Ethnographic, Bassa	Collected 1835, donated April 1836	Daniel Whitehurst, newspaper editor, physician, and ACS member and affiliate	Peale Museum, Baltimore	Peabody Museum, Harvard
56	"African dagger, ornamented with curious figures in gold leaf, head of which represents some monster"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
57	"Dagger, Bassa tribe"	Ethnographic, Bassa	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
58	"African dirk. Bone"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown

59	"African dirk. Excellent metal"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
60	"Finely carved quiver" with 12 iron-pointed arrows	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
61	"Iron-pointed arrows"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	"Eaton"	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
62	"Wrist ornament"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
63	"Necklace, Beads and Gold Tips"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
64	"Ankle Beads and Gold Tips"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
65	"Wrist Beads and Gold Tips"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
66	"African Chief's Comb. Made of cane"	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
67	"Curiously grained wood from Africa"	Botanical	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
68	"Curiously twisted knot of wood from Africa"	Botanical	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
69	"Curious Seed Pod, from Africa"	Botanical	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown

70	“African Amulet or Charm – contains a human heart with a knife thrust in it, several fingers of murdered Infants – claws of birds &c. &c....”	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
71	“Quiver of Poisoned Arrows from Africa”	Ethnographic	Before 1869	“Mr. A. Stocker” (Anthony Stocker)	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
72	“War Club From Africa”	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
73	“African Powder Horn”	Ethnographic	Before 1869	Unknown	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
74	“Bow and Arrow from Africa”	Ethnographic	Before 1869	“Geo. I. Curtis Esq.”	Peale Museum, Baltimore or Philadelphia	Unknown
75	“A box of shells, &c”	Natural History	1840	Reverend John Seys, Methodist missionary in Liberia	Missionary Lyceum, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT	Unknown
76	“Greegree” – “Worn as an amulet by the natives”	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
77	“Greegree” 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
78	“Greegree” 3	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
79	“Greegree” 4	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University



80	"Greegree" 5	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
81	"Greegree" 6	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
82	"Greegree" 7	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
83	"War Horn" – "Made from an elephant's tusk"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Music Department, Wesleyan University
84	"War Horn" 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
85	"War Horn" 3	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
86	"Horn"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
87	"African Scimitar"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
88	"Girdle & Knife"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Possibly Wesleyan University
89	"African Knife"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Possibly Wesleyan University
90	"Lady's Bracelet"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Possibly Wesleyan University
91	"Cap"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
92	"Spoon"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University

93	"Spoon" 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
94	"Spoon" 3	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
95	"Spoon" 4	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
96	"Mandingo Cloth"	Ethnographic, Mandingo	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Possibly Wesleyan University
97	"Mandingo Cloth" 2	Ethnographic, Mandingo	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Possibly Wesleyan University
98	"African Girdle" – "Worn at dances"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
99	"Comb"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
100	"Comb" 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
101	"Snuff-grinder"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
102	"Snuff-grinder" 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
103	"African Girdle" 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Possibly Wesleyan University
104	"African Hat"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Possibly Wesleyan University

105	"African Dirk"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
106	"African Dirk" 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
107	"African Dirk" 3	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
108	"Arrows"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
109	"African Cup"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
110	"African Cup" 2	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
111	"African Cup" 3	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
112	"African Cup" 4	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Wesleyan University
113	"Nut"	Botanical	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
114	"War-Club"	Ethnographic	1834-45	John Seys	Missionary Lyceum	Unknown
115	Two Leperd Shells of Africa	Natural History	April 1830	"James Dunn"	Washington Museum of Curiosities	Unknown
116	"An African root" (in bottle)	Botanical	October 1836	"Hall" (possibly Dr. James Hall, Governor, Maryland in Africa, 1834-36)	Washington Museum	Unknown

117	"The tail of an Elephant of Africa"	Ethnographic	October 1836	"J. S. Todd"	Washington Museum	Possibly SNMNH	
118	"A piece of Cotton Cloth manufactured in Liberia"	Ethnographic	October 1836	"Major John Hook"	Washington Museum	Unknown	
119	"Two African Snakes"	Natural History	September 6, 1837	"Loaned by Dr. James to be returned to R.R. Gurley" (Ralph Randolph Gurley)	Washington Museum	Unknown	
120	"One African sea horse"	Natural History	September 6, 1837	"Loaned by Dr. James to be returned to R.R. Gurley" (Ralph Randolph Gurley)	Washington Museum	Unknown	
121	"2 Red Deer skins. Bucks"	Natural History	April 1840	"The Rev <sup>d</sup> S. S. Gurley – African Agent" (Ralph Randolph Gurley)	Washington Museum	Unknown	
122	"1 Red Deer skin. Doe"	Natural History	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown	
123	"1 Bush Goat skin"	Natural History	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown	
124	"1 Water Deer – all handsomely marked" (skin)	Natural History	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown	
125	"1 Horn or Trumpet made from the tusk of the Elephant"	Ethnographic	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown	
126	"1 Singular Tooth"	Natural History	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown	
127	"1 Wooden Spoon for eating mush with"	Ethnographic	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown	

128	"1 Iron Spear Head"	Ethnographic	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown
129	"2 Porcupine's Quills"	Natural History	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown
130	"1 Bag or wallet made of Grass"	Ethnographic	April 1840	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Washington Museum	Unknown
131	"1 African Stool made out of a Solid block of wood" (possibly the same item in entry 164)	Ethnographic	Unknown	"Afr Col. Society" (ACS)	Washington Museum	Possibly SNMNH
132	"3 Moths"	Natural History	June 1, 1840	Loaned from the African Colonization Society (American Colonization Society - ACS)	Washington Museum	Unknown
133	"2 Hammock"	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
134	"5 Pieces of Cloth or Coverlid"	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
135	"1 Skirte or Tunick"	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
136	"1 Leopard skin" (possibly the same item in entry 31)	Natural History	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
137	"13 Black Monkey Skins"	Natural History	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
138	"2 Baskets"	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
139	"2 Grass Wallets"	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
140	"3 pr of Sandals"	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
141	"2 leather Wallets or Pouches"	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown

142	“1 Large Horn or Bugar of the Elephant Touth” (1 large horn or bugle of the elephant tusk)	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
143	“2 Knives in their Scabards”	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
144	“1 Bowe Quiver & Arrows”	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
145	“1 Javelin” (possibly the same item in entry 27)	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
146	“2 whips” (one possibly the same item in entry 18)	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
147	“1 Piece of Wild Cherry tree with the Vine that produces Warten”	Botanical	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
148	“Cap or Wigg W Ashmon [unreadable] Governor of the Colony”	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
149	“1 Cloth Cap”	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
150	“1 belst of beed work” (possibly the same item in entry 20)	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
151	“1 baggy or Wallet of sheep or Goat skin”	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
152	“1 Scull Cap of a large water Fowl” (possibly the same item in entry 25)	Ethnographic	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown

153	"6 pieces of Wood"	Botanical	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
154	"1 Tooth"	Natural History	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
155	"1 small Antelope Horn"	Natural History	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
156	"3 bottl of reptiles"	Natural History	June 1, 1840	Loaned from ACS	Washington Museum	Unknown
157	"Lemon from Liberia bread root"	Agricultural, Botanical	No later than 1855	American manufacturer, sent to the Mechanics' Fair	National Institute for the Promotion of Science, Patent Office Building, Washington, D.C.	Unknown
158	"Battle-doors from coast of Africa, with a remarkable perforation"	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
159	"Numerous curious shells from the coast of Africa" (possibly the same as items in entry 193)	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
160	"Specimens of thongs plaited of thin leather from Africa"	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
161	"Ivory ring worn by the natives of the west coast of Africa"	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
162	"Tiger tooth" (worn by the natives of the west coast of Africa)	Ethnographic, Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown

		Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
163	“Money from Africa. Another piece of the value of \$1.50; four of these buys a good sized negro boy”					
164	“The stool of King Tom, of Rockbuca, Africa, the great slave-dealer” (possibly the same item in entry 131)	Ethnographic	1839/1841	W Bruff/J Varden	National Institute	SNMNH
165	“Horn made of an elephant’s tusk”	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
166	“War spear and pipe-stem from Africa”	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Possibly SNMNH
167	“Cap and dress worn by a native African prince”	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
168	“Lady’s dress from western coast of Africa, worn by the wife of King Tom” (possibly the same item in entry 188)	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Possibly SNMNH
169	“Robe of a Mandingo Mussulman Priest, manufactured in the interior of Africa” <i>1855 catalogue entry</i> : “Robe of an African priest, from the interior of Africa, purchased with a half doz brass tacks”	Ethnographic, Mandingo	May 30, 1846	Dr. James W. Lugenbeel, U.S. Agent to Liberia and colonial physician, 1843–49	National Institute	SNMNH



170	“Case for the Koran of a Mandingo Mussalman Priest” <i>1855 catalogue entry</i> : “Case of a Mandingo priest used to hold the Koran, the Mohammedon Bible”	Ethnographic, Mandingo	May 30, 1846	James W. Lugenbeel	National Institute	Unknown
171	“Haversack of a Mandingo African Chief”	Ethnographic, Mandingo	May 30, 1846	James W. Lugenbeel	National Institute	Unknown
172	“African war-horn made of the tusk of an elephant”	Ethnographic	May 30, 1846	James W. Lugenbeel	National Institute	SNMNH
173	“African wool”	Agricultural	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
174	“Skins of various animals from the vicinity of Liberia, Africa”	Natural History	No later than 1855	R. R. Gurley (Ralph Randolph Gurley)	National Institute	Unknown
175	“Skull and paws of a chimpanzee, or orang-outang, from Africa”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Dr. William Brown	National Institute	Unknown
176	“Specimen of a rope made from the grass on the Gold coast, taken from a negro on board a slaver”	Ethnographic	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
177	“Green monkey from the coast of Africa”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
178	“The skull of the great African elephant. Teeth in excellent preservation”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown

179	“Shells, teeth, from river Niger, Africa”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
180	“African grouse”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
181	“African quail”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
182	“African uppo. Bucco, or barbet, from Senegal”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
183	“Bucco, or barbet, from Africa”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
184	“Melithreptus, or honey-eater, fine specimens from Africa and East Indian seas”	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown
185	“Skin of the boa constrictor from Africa” (possibly the same item in entry 192)	Natural History	No later than 1855	Unknown	National Institute	Unknown

186	<p>“Kroo’s Provisions for a Journey, from West Africa”</p> <p><i>1855 National Institute catalogue entry:</i> “Kroos provisions for a journey. The Kroos are pilots and seamen from the western coast of Africa; called Kroo-men; are good pilots, and every vessel on the coast is obliged to employ them, as they are able to work when the Europeans find it almost impossible, on account of the climate. He brings his provisions of pounded corn, or more properly a large species of millet, eaten mixed with water and rum, when they can procure it.”</p>	Ethnographic, Kru	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	SNMNH
187	<p>“Chief’s War Cap, made of the skin of a fish, (Genus Tetraodon) from West Africa”</p> <p><i>1855 National Institute catalogue entry:</i> “War cap from Africa, made from the skin of the porcupine fish, worn by the head men as part of their war equipage—W. Andrew’s Bay.”</p>	Ethnographic	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	Unknown

188	“Lady’s Dress, of matting” (possibly the same item in entry 168)	Ethnographic	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	SNMNH
189	“Kroo’s Medicine Chest”  <i>1855 National Institute catalogue entry:</i> “Kroo-mens’ medicine chest, or fetish. They are very rare, and difficult to be obtained, as several declared they would part with life sooner than dispose of them.”	Ethnographic, Kru	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	Unknown
190	“King’s Sceptre, made of an Elephant’s tail, from West Africa”  <i>1855 National Institute catalogue entry:</i> “Sceptre made of an elephant’s tail, from Western Africa. This emblem of power is deemed very sacred amongst most of the tribes, and a person even accidentally touching it is put to death.”	Ethnographic	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	Possibly SNMNH

		Ethnographic	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	SNMNH
191	"Gric-gric, or Gregory, a charm or Amulet, from West Africa" (possibly the same item in entry 220)					
	<i>1855 National Institute catalogue entry: "Gric-gric charms, worn by the Africans to preserve their person from evil spirits."</i>					
192	"Skin of a large Boa Constrictor" (possibly the same item in entry 185)	Natural History	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	Unknown
193	At least 46 specimens of shells from West Africa (possibly the same as items in entry 159)	Natural History	May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	Unknown
194	"Gree Grees" Or Charms	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
195	African Lyre (Obah)	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
196	Anklet	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
197	Anklet 2	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
198	Basket	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
199	Basket 2	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
200	Blouse-Like Garment	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
201	Carved Calabash	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH

202	Cloth	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
203	Cotton Cloth	Ethnographic, Fulani	1849	Ralph Randolph Gurley	National Institute	SNMNH
204	Cotton Cloth 2	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
205	Gourd Dipper	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
206	Grass Cloth	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
207	Grass Cloth Napkin	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
208	Jar	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
209	Knobbed Brass Ring Money	Ethnographic, Dan	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
210	Knobbed Brass Ring Money 2	Ethnographic, Dan	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
211	Leather Haversack	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
212	Leather Pouch	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
213	Length of Cloth	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
214	Paddle	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
215	Pipe	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
216	Water Jar	Ethnographic	Unknown	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Probably National Institute	SNMNH
217	Amulet	Ethnographic, Kru	Unknown	Mauve, Master Carpenter, U.S.N.	National Institute	SNMNH

218	Braided Cord	Ethnographic	Unknown	Mauve, Master Carpenter, U.S.N.	National Institute	SNMNH
219	Carved Wooden Spoons 3	Ethnographic	Unknown	Mauve, Master Carpenter, U.S.N.	National Institute	SNMNH
220	Antelope Horn, African Charm (possibly the same item in entry 191)	Ethnographic, Kru	Likely May 2, 1843	John Cassin	National Institute	SNMNH
221	Mask	Ethnographic, Kran	Collected 1843	Commodore Matthew C. Perry, U.S.N.	National Institute	SNMNH
222	Ivory Bugle or Horn	Ethnographic, Vai	1826	George Dornett	Boston Athenaeum	Peabody Museum, Harvard
223	African War Horn, from Liberia	Ethnographic	Before 1829	Captain Caleb Grozer (or Grozier)	Missionary Museum at Andover Newton Theological Seminary	Peabody-Essex Museum, Salem, MA
224	Seeds of senna	Botanical	1835	James Brown, druggist, Monrovia	Dr. McWilliams of Washington City	Unknown
225	2 work tables made of Liberian wood	Other	1835	James Brown	Margaret Mercer	Unknown
226	Glass jar containing a large bat	Natural History	1832	Colonial physician Dr. George P. Todsen or U.S. Agent and colonial governor Joseph Mechlin, Jr.	ACS Museum	Unknown

227	Glass jar containing a species of large glow-worm	Natural History	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen or Governor Joseph Mechlin, Jr.	ACS Museum	Unknown
228	Elephant's tail, with a highly ornamented handle	Ethnographic	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen or Governor Joseph Mechlin, Jr.	ACS Museum	Unknown
229	Some fine preparations of animals and insects	Natural History	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen or Governor Joseph Mechlin, Jr.	ACS Museum	Unknown
230	A few of our minerals, marked where they were found	Geological	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen or Governor Joseph Mechlin, Jr.	ACS Museum	Unknown
231	The "two Bird" (or 2 birds?)	Natural History	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen	ACS Museum	Unknown
232	Skin of a Boa Constrictor	Natural History	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen	ACS Museum	Unknown
233	Large scorpion	Natural History	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen	ACS Museum	Unknown
234	Tarantula	Natural History	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen	ACS Museum	Unknown
235	Bones of a very singular animal, the fur of which is of the finest kind	Natural History	1832	Dr. George P. Todsen	ACS Museum	Unknown
236	Specimen of African Hemp	Botanical	June 1839	Colonial Governor Thomas Buchanan	ACS Museum	Unknown
237	Monkey skins	Natural History	1845	John Brown Russworm, Governor, Maryland in Liberia, 1836-51	Commodore Horatio Bridge, author of <i>Journal of an African Cruiser</i> (1845)	Unknown



238	Small specimen of iron ore from the interior	Geological	1853	Stephen A. Benson, second president of Liberia	Mr. McLain (Rev. William McLain, ACS Secretary	Unknown
239	Small sack of coffee	Agricultural	1853	Stephen A. Benson	Ralph Randolph Gurley	Unknown
240	Country cloths	Ethnographic	1848	John Day, superintendent of Liberian Missions, Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention	James Taylor, Secretary, Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention	Unknown
241	Skins of wild beasts	Natural History	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
242	A bill of bird	Natural History	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
243	Head of a crocodile	Natural History	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
244	Spoon	Ethnographic	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
245	Some knives	Ethnographic	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
246	Gree gree	Ethnographic	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
247	Jar of insects consisting of three termite queens and one king	Natural History	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
248	Chameleon (in jar)	Natural History	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
249	Two kinds of scorpions (in jar)	Natural History	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown
250	Centipede (in jar)	Natural History	1848	John Day	James Taylor	Unknown

251	Julus, from Cape Palmas, West Africa	Natural History	April 6, 1858	Dr. J. M. Sommerville	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
252	Very large scorpion (from Monrovia, Liberia)	Natural History	June 8, 1858	E. T. Cresson (Elliott Cresson)	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
253	1 scorpion, 1 Scolopendra, W. Africa	Natural History	December 14, 1858	Dr. Ford	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
254	11 ants, W. Africa	Natural History	December 14, 1858	Dr. Savage	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
255	“Native African of the Dey tribe, Liberia” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Samuel G. Morton no later than 1857	Dr. Ezekial Skinner	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
256	“Native African of the Grabbo tribe, near Liberia: man” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1835 (or collected in 1835)	Dr. Robert McDowell	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
257	“Native African of the Bassa tribe of Liberia: woman” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1835 (or collected in 1835)	Dr. Robert McDowell	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
258	“Native African of the Bassa tribe of Liberia: man” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1835 (or collected in 1835)	Dr. Robert McDowell	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown

259	“Native African of the Bassa tribe” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1835 (or collected in 1835)	Dr. Robert McDowell	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
260	“Golah Negro, warrior, Liberia” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842, killed at Heddington, 1840	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
261	“Golah warrior” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842, killed at Heddington, 1840	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
262	“Pessah: man” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842, killed at Heddington, 1840	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
263	“Pessah: man” 2 (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842, killed at Heddington, 1840	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown

264	“Pessah: man” 3 (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842, killed at Heddington, 1840	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
265	“Krooman” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
266	“Krooman” 2 (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
267	“Dey: man” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
268	“Eboe: man” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
269	“Eboe: woman” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown
270	“Native African: woman” (skull)	Human Remains	Donated to Dr. Morton in 1842	Dr. S. M. E. Goheen	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	Unknown

**Table 4.2 References**

1. "Curiosities from Liberia," 272.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid, 273.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid, 273-74.
13. Ibid, 274.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid, 274-75.
21. Ibid, 275.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. "Extracts from the Colonial Agent's Diary," 276.
32. "Late Additions and Donations to Peale's Museum," 1. The *Oswego* was in Monrovia on ACS-related business.
33. Ibid. The *U.S.S. Cyane* was in Monrovia on ACS-related business.
34. Ibid.
35. "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 2.
36. Ibid; William Hart, email message to author, May 18, 2013.
37. African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 2; William Hart, email message to author, May 18, 2013; Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic*, 195.
38. African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 2.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Philadelphia Museum Co. Minutes, December 31, 1831, 71.
43. "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 2.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ms. Coll. No. 3 #2: Sornberger, Jewell David Access. Book, etc. #2.
49. Ibid.
50. "African Objects in the Philadelphia Museum," 2.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid, 3.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

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### Appendix 4.1 Letter from Jehudi Ashmun

Transcribed from "Curiosities from Liberia," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 11  
(Nov., 1827): 272-45

#### Curiosities from Liberia.

The following letter from Mr. Ashmun, gives a description of various specimens of African products and ingenuity now in our office; and to which we hope many others may be added by the return of the vessels employed in our service.

MONROVIA, JUNE 11<sup>TH</sup>, 1827

GENTLEMEN: You will receive by the *Doris*, a box containing the African Specimens described below, together with a spear and scabbard, which cannot be introduced into the box, viz:

*Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.*—Country cloths, of the common quality of the article, as manufactured and worn by the natives of Africa, between the Rio Grande, and Bassa. The average price at which they sell, is one Bar. The cotton of which these cloths are fabricated, is of the fineness of the Sea-Island, but has a longer staple. The plant produces a crop in eight or nine months from the seed—but bears for at least five years, and attains to the height of an apple tree, but has a less spreading top. The material of the trunk, is properly ligneous, and the appearance of the tree standing in the forest, has little to distinguish it from others, except the leaf and ramification, which remain those of the American cotton plant.

*Nos. 6, 7.*—Two spools of Cotton Yarn, wound upon the spindles, as spun in the manufacture of the article. These spools are at once, *spindle*, *spool*, and *shuttle*; the raw cotton being combed and roped in much the same way as in the preparatory process it undergoes in the European and American manufacture, is then spun upon the point of the stick passing through the centre of these specimens, the other resting on the ground. The spindle is held upright by the left hand, and twirled and fed by the other. One of these spools may be considered as a full day's work for an expert spinner. The operation of weaving is always performed in the open air. The warp is stretched between two stakes set in the ground, at the distance of ten yards asunder—and the threads alternately passed through two sets of inversely knotted harness, and lifted and depressed by their means, by the hand and foot, much on the same principle as in the common loom. Men are the weavers, and I believe can accomplish about ten yards in a day. The web will be seen by specimens 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, to be about 4 ½ inches in width. Not less than nine of these breadths, each one fathom in length, well stitched, make a merchantable cloth.

*No. 8.*—A Knife and Sheath—such as is worn by all the country people above the quality of slaves. The iron of the blade and handle is African, and of a much softer and more ductile quality, than either English or American. It oxidizes in this climate less freely, and is for that reason, preferred by the natives for all ornamental uses, and for the manufacture of their implements of war. The leather of the scabbard is country tanned, and the whole article, having come from the interior, is better done than similar work on the coast.



*No. 9.*—Some Splinters from the ruins of my house at Caldwell.—The composition seen on one of the shingles, is formed of an ochre, prepared in our settlements in great quantities, and at a very cheap rate—the only expense being the grinding of it—laid on with boiled palm oil. The roofs of nearly all the public buildings are coated with this composition, which is esteemed superior to Spanish Brown, laid on with linseed oil.

*No. 10.*—A Mandingo Havre-sack. The material is goat-skin, trimmed with ordinary tanned leather, of the country. The brown of this latter article is produced by the tanning process. The black ornamental figures appear to be done with the ink and pen, employed by the Mandingoes in writing.

*No. 11.*—A specimen of the African Millet, in the ear.

*No. 12.*—A specimen of the Guinea Corn, in the ear.

*Note.*—The Indian Corn, of an inferior species, grows in this country, but we have never obtained a crop to repay the labour of cultivating it. The ear, except of a small species, about six inches in length, does not fill, and few stalks produce more than one ear each.

*No. 13.*—A specimen of the *Bird Pepper*, of the coast. It grows spontaneously, and propagates itself, after once planted. It is equal in quality to the Cayenne—and a good article of trade with European vessels.

*No. 14.*—Specimens of the osseous part of the African squid, reduced to powder; it forms the common pounce, for the writing desk.

*No. 15.*—A root, of which the scientific name is not ascertained. Its use in this country, is universal as a stomachic, and gentle laxative. The taste of a decoction from it, is an agreeable bitter—and, I believe, it possesses all the medical virtues of the Gentian Root; a decotion in Madeira wine or brandy, forms a pleasant bitter.

*No. 16.*—A country Flagellum—an article of domestic use, which is never wanting in the families of African gentlemen. It is not applied to children, who are never disciplined in this country. Domestic slaves, and women, are those who derive from the implement, the chief advantages of its application, which, particularly as respects the latter, is neither slight nor seldom. The master of a large family commonly wears it in his girdle, and seldom draws it to inflict fewer than half a hundred.

*No. 17.*—A small War Horn.—This horn in a concert, plays tenor—one horn sustaining only a single part.

*No. 18.*—A piece of African Wampum. This specimen will discover one of the uses to which the immense quantities of beads imported into this country, is applied. The species of beads, in the piece, also show the only sort which are saleable in this district of the coast. Female children, till nine years old, (and those of the better sort,) wear commonly no other covering or ornament, except this belt, just above, and supported by the hips. After nine, till their marriage, females add a slip of cloth, four inches wide, and two to four feet long. At marriage, all assume a cloth.

The thread by which the beads of this belt are connected together, is the strongest of the size, which can be fabricated out of any material with which I am acquainted. It is of the cuticle lining the inner side of the fold or doubling of the palm leaf, and is stripped off in the form of a ribbon, about half an inch wide, and from two to four feet in length, according to the length of the leaf.

*No. 19.*—The ordinary Fishing Line of the coast, made of the inner cuticle of the palm leaf, (see article *No. 18*) and twisted by hand. These lines are used in canoes,

commonly from one to ten miles from the shore.—It is stronger than a hemp or linen line of twice or thrice the size.

*No. 20.*—A country Necklace, formed of a species of tough reed or grass, and dyed black—used by females who cannot afford to buy European beads.

*No. 21.*—Three Bark Sacks—woven entire on a black, and formed out of the inner cuticle of the palm leaf. (See *No. 18.*) These scrips are used by men and women, in much the same ways as our ladies' reticles.

*No. 22.*—A Royal Snuff Box—*alias*—a Goat's Horn.

*No. 23.*—The Skull-cap of a large marsh-fowl of the country.

*No. 24.*—A Hat, such as are in common use to the leeward. I took it from the head of one of King West's sons, at Trade Town, and paid a head of tobacco.

*No. 25.*—A Javelin, used as a missile—and good for a mark of the size of a man, about twenty paces. Country iron.

*No. 27.*—A country Gig, or Spear—made at a distance in the interior—and used in the wars of the country, more than all other weapons.

*No. 28.*—A specimen of a Spice, which has in a great measure taken place, in our consumption, of Black Pepper, to which it will be found equal in pungency, and of a more aromatic flavor. It is the produce of a vine growing wild in the forest.

*No. 29.*—One Powder Flask—stopped with a plug, cemented with country pitch.

## Appendix 4.2

### Excerpt from Alfred Hunter's 1855 National Institute catalogue, describing the contents of Case 29

Reprinted from *A Popular Catalogue of the Extraordinary Curiosities in the National Institute, Arranged in the Building Belonging to the Patent Office* (Washington: Published by Alfred Hunter, 1855), 44-46.

#### 44

Shoe with oyster shell curiously attached, found in the Potomac by the father of a young man while searching for his son, who was drowned in the vicinity.

Bottle containing an ear of corn and bat. The bat was found dead; the corn having taken it prisoner, and starved it to death.

Remarkable variegated colored bottle, found in the dock at Annapolis, with shells curiously attached.

Package of skin prepared without the pelt resembling parchment.

#### WINDOW OPPOSITE CASE 28.

Library of books made of specimens of forest trees. Each volume is formed from the wood of a tree, the name of which is inscribed on the bark attached to the back of the book. The interior contains specimens of the fruit, leaves, blossoms, and roots, with a cavity in the back for a paper containing a botanical description.

#### WALL OPPOSITE CASE 28.

No. 31. Keokuk, the celebrated Indian Chief.

No. 19. Landscape.

#### CASE 29.

Haversack of a Mandingo African chief.

Ivory ring worn by the natives of the west coast of Africa.

Tiger tooth—same.

Money from Africa. Another piece of the value of \$1.50; four of these buys a good sized negro boy.

*Lower shelf*—Curious specimens of Natural History; *lusus naturæ*, preserved in spirits.

A very great curiosity is seen here in the shape of a calf with two heads, but badly preserved.

French fabric made of silk and glass.

The stool of King Tom, of Rockbucca, Africa, the great slave-dealer.

African war-horn, made of the tusk of an elephant.

Bark of a tree from King George county, Virginia.

Plumbago from Raleigh, North Carolina, taken from the mine of Richard Smith.

*Lower shelf*—Minerals not assorted. Primitive limestone rock, having curious marks, discovered in Marion township, Chester county, Pennsylvania.

View of the harbor of Port Mahon, and the copper-plate from which it is printed; very valuable; presented by Louis Baker, late consul at Lagunayra.

Sceptre made of an elephant's tail, from Western Africa. This emblem of power is deemed very sacred amongst most of the tribes, and a person even accidentally touching it is put to death.

War cap from Africa, made from the skin of the porcupine fish, worn by the head men as part of their war equipage.—W. Andrew's Bay.

Horn made of an elephant's tusk.

Kroos provisions for a journey. The Kroos are pilots and seamen from the western coast of Africa; called Kroo-men; are good pilots, and every vessel on the coast is obliged to employ them, as they are able to work when the Europeans find it almost impossible, on account of the climate. He brings his provisions of pounded corn, or more properly a large species of millet, eaten mixed with water and rum, when they can procure it. Curious stalagmite, shape of a hand, from Iowa, presented in 1853; formed by drops from the roof crystalizing on the floor.

Entomogenous fungus from New Zealand.—J. B. Williams.

Painting on shells. Neptune with his trident waving the American flag, emblematic of the flag sweeping the seas, as the Dutch formerly had a broom at the mast-head.

The same; a tiger seeking his prey—painted by J. Goldsborough Bruff.

Artificial spider.

A tarantula, Vera Cruz.—W. B. Sinclair.

Kroo-mens' medicine chest, or fetish. They are very rare, and difficult to be obtained, as several declared they would part with life sooner than dispose of of them.

Case of a Mandingo priest used to hold the Koran, the Mohammedon Bible.

Preserved reptiles.

Black spider found near Rock Creek, Maryland.—B. Homans.

Gric-gric charms, worn by the Africans to preserve their person from evil spirits.—John Cassin.

Sandstone from Missouri.—David Myerle,

Nubia dinner table.

Cannel coal from Beaver county, Pennsylvania.—B. B. Davis.

Specimens of ancient pottery; the figure with wings represents Mercury.

Also No. 3. Mercury transforming Sosia's wife. Jupiter and Mercury, having descended to the earth upon a marauding expedition, Mercury takes the character of Sosia, when her tongue ranging rather freely, Mercury with his wand stills it, much to her astonishment, as she never knew her husband had such power before, and becomes quite submissive.

Lacrymatory found in an ancient tomb, used by the Romans to collect the tears when mourning for deceased friends.

Ancient lamp used in the tombs.

Three lamps from Herculaneum. This city was destroyed by ashes from Vesuvius, and the site of it remained unknown for 1,500 years, when it was accidentally found by a peasant digging a well. There are many curious and valuable articles taken from it and deposited in a museum at Naples specially devoted to the purpose.

War spear and pipe-stem from Africa.

Remarkable *lusus naturæ*—pig with disproportionate mouth inserted between the eyes, the ears near the shoulders.

Fœtus with human face and proboscis, cranium of same.—Alcara Denham.

Cap and dress worn by a native African Prince.

Lady's dress from western coast of Africa, worn by the wife of King Tom.

Indian red pipe stone, Coteaus des prairies, Sioux county.—T. N. Nicolle.

41 and 42. Mosaic taken from the temple of Diana, at Pompeii.—Captain Latimer.

Ancient inscriptions found in Pompeii.

The father of lobsters, when taken weighed 56½ pounds.

Palate of a drum fish taken at St. George Island.—Wm. Fisher.

Cancer digitalis, Cuvier, Pensacola harbor, found on the bottom of a United States vessel of war. Common English crab, bought at Billingsgate market, and met with for sale at the fish stands all through London.

Upper shelf.—Seven cases of insects.

Robe of an African priest, from the interior of Africa, purchased with a half doz. brass tacks.

Cylinders of glass, Baltimore Glass Works.

Artificial marble, Georgetown, D. C., made by Wm. H. Smith.

A model of the Nelson monument, Trafalgar Square, London, presented by the architect, Wm. Ralston; and a fac simile in miniature of the scaffolding corresponding with the monument by which it was erected.

An allegorical napkin, beautifully ornamented in damask work, from Saxony.

Mosquito fan.

Four cases of insects and boxes, not arranged.

Elegant specimen of natural history, from Prince Monfanoi, very excellent and highly interesting. Collection of fish, snakes, and vegetable formations. It is

## 46

curious to notice the bottles, showing that his royal highness had no glass factory in his dominions, as these are contained in oil, mustard, pepper, &c., bottles. The prince, in return, wanted some works on military or naval art, such as field exercises, heavy ordnance, and the science of war.

Moorish pottery of ancient style, showing no alteration for 1,500 years.—Geo. Reed.

Arabian sandals.—Captain Riley.

Chinese shoes, slippers, South America.—W. W. Carter.

Slippers, such as our grandmothers wore in fashionable society.—Anne O. Berry.

## CASE 30.

*Bottom shelf*—African wool; specimen of deer. A guanaca adult and one of her young, from South America. It is said that the wool is finer than any known. A deer from Patagonia, said to be the land of hurricanes and giants. Mr. Agate, of the exploring expedition, found them but little above the European standard of human stature.

## WALL OPPOSITE 30.

No. 32. Is-hu-sick, or Cornelia Barbour.

## CASE 31.

Sea elephants from the Antarctic Sea.—United States Exploring Expedition. Same.

These two were found lying asleep on the ice, and on being shot at, paid no attention but by raising the head, looking around, and returning to their former position. The boats were sent after them, and they were captured without much trouble. Dr. Holmes examined their stomach, and found nothing but well digested food.

29. Seal. Porpoise.

Lower jaw of a sixty barrel sperm whale, in excellent preservation; collected in the Pacific Ocean, by J. H. Johnson, Callao. It is eight feet long, has 129 teeth, and weighs 247 pounds.

## CASE 32.

Virginia deer. Deer horns.

Two deer horns locked together, found on the Cooloochachie, near the ground where Col. Harney commanded. These deer must have been engaged together in combat, got their horns interlaced, so that they could not separate from each other, and died from starvation, like Tantalus, in the midst of plenty.

Horn of a chamois, from the Alpine region, killed on the hunting ground of the Archduke John, of Austria. It would be a less crime to kill a human being, on these principalities, than one of these animals; from D. Jenifer, American minister to Austria.

45. Head of antelope, from the Cape of Good Hope.

Horns of moose.—by R. Coyle.

Moose head, and horns of a five year year old moose shot on the headwaters of the St. Johns River, Maine.

## CASE 33.

Pangolin. Cape coast Castle. Purser Bridge. *Ornythorinchos paradoxus*. The duck-billed paradox, a singular creature. In the first place, it lays its eggs, and when they are hatched, it suckles them at its teats.

Armadillo. Small; the flesh is very good eating; tastes like young roast pig; a very common dish in South America.

**Appendix 4.3**  
**“Liberian Articles, at the *International Exhibition, London, 1862*”**

Transcribed from the *Colonization Herald* (Dec., 1862)

**FIBRES.**

1. Bundle of fibre from the trunk of the bamboo tree. This fibre is taken from the external coating of the tree, and makes the strongest cordage of any material known to the aborigines; they use it for nooses in their snares for taking wild animals of the greatest strength.
2. Bundle of fibre from the leaf of the bamboo tree. This fibre is extensively used by the natives for finer articles manufactured from fibres.
3. Bundle of fibre from the palm tree—the same that produces the nut yielding the palm oil. This fibre is taken from the leaf.
4. Bundle of pine apple fibre. This fibre is taken from the leaf, which yields a considerable per-centage. Wild pine apples cover extensive fields in Liberia.
5. Bundle of fibre from the plantain tree.
6. Bundles of African hemp. Grows wild near the sea-shore, and may be collected in any quantity.
7. Bag manufactured from fibre No. 1.
8. “ “ “ “ “ 2.
9. Necklace (dyed) “ “ “ 2.
10. Caps “ “ “ 2.
11. Satchels “ “ “ 2.
12. Fancy mat.

**TIMBER**

13. Black Gum, grows on high land—from 60 to 70 feet high, about 3 feet across the stump, and may be cut in lengths of 20 feet.
14. Whismore, grows on high land and on low land—varying a little in grain and color according to the elevation. Grows 40 or 50 feet high, and affords a stock 25 feet long, 2 feet square.
15. Burwood, grows on high land mostly; found in small numbers in swamps. A large tree, 60 to 70 feet high, and from 3 to 4 feet across the stump.
16. Cherry-wood, grows the same as No 14.
17. Brimstone, grows tall and straight, like the white pine of North America; not so large, however, in diameter.
18. Box-wood, found on high land. Grows from 25 to 30 feet high, and from 8 to 9 feet across the stump.
19. Cedar, a large tree, very abundant. Grows on swampy land, and produces a stock from 20 to 25 feet, and from 12 to 15 inches square.
20. Iron-wood, not very abundant, hard and heavy; therefore but little used.

- 21. Black Oak, very abundant, with large crooked branches.
- 22. Mahogany, very abundant on the high lands of the interior.

#### COTTON.

- 23. Liberian Cotton, from native seeds. There are several varieties of cotton produced by the natives of the interior of Liberia, among with is the kidney seed, called by some Brazilian Cotton. The natives, 100 or 150 miles in the interior of Liberia, cultivate a considerable quantity of cotton, from which they manufacture many articles for their own use, besides a large number of country clothes, averaging about 2½ lbs. each, which they dispose of in trade to the seaboard tribes. At Montrovia they sell annually about 50,000 of these cloths, and the trade in them is steadily increasing. It is thought that by so me instruction in the art of cultivation, and suitable encouragement, these people may be induced to furnish the raw material in any quantity within a few years.

#### COFFEE.

- 24. Coffee, from light alluvial soil near the sea-coast.
- 25. Coffee, from stiff clay and gravelly soil of the interior. Coffee is found in a dwarfish state, growing wild in all parts of Liberia. Some suppose it to be indigenous, others that it was introduced by the Portuguese a few centuries ago. The coffee now being cultivated in Liberia is from plants originally procured from the forest, and is greatly improved by cultivation. From present indications, in a few years the exportation of coffee from Liberia will be very considerable, and its superior flavor will secure for it a corresponding demand in remunerative prices.
- 26. Dry Coffee berry, unhulled.

#### SUGAR.

- 27. Sugar. The soil and climate of Liberia are peculiarly well adapted to the growth of sugar cane. In no country perhaps does it grow more luxuriantly.
- 28. Syrup.
- 29. Molasses.
- 30. Country cloths manufactured by the natives of the interior, as referred to at No. 23.
- 31. Native Robes, manufactured for the exclusive use of chiefs of the country.
- 32. Blue cotton yarn, various shades of native dye.
- 33. White cotton yarn, native spun.
- 34. Liberian quilts.
- 35. Hammocks, manufactured from the fibre of the bamboo.
- 36. Rattan basket. This material is very abundant in Liberia.

## NATIVE MAKE.

37. Leather bag
38. Horse halter.
39. Otter skin pouch.
40. Leopard do.
41. Gazelle do.
42. Mountain Deer do.
43. Wild-cat do.
44. Tanned monkey skin.
45. Bullock's skin, ornamented with cowries.
46. Black money skin, with white tail.
47. Fancy morocco belts.
48. War spears.
49. Swords.
50. Hose, for agricultural use.
51. Razors.
52. Knives, with belts, etc.
53. Knife, used for war purposes.
54. Bill hook, agricultural implement.
55. Native whips.
56. " amulets.
57. " castanets.
58. " charms for the head.
59. " musical gourd.
60. " " horn, of ivory.
61. " wooden spoons and ladles.
62. " baskets.
63. Mandingo inkstand.
64. Earthen pot.
65. Leathern tanned from mangrove bark.
66. Fanner used for cleaning rice (Winnowing machine).
67. Earthen basin.
68. " water cooler.
69. Calabashes.
70. Gourd dipper.
71. Pipes.
72. Iron ore. Abounds in Liberia.
73. Specimens of various minerals.
74. Arrow root.
75. Cassava starch.
76. Ginger.
77. Clean rice.
78. Rough do.
79. Cocoa.



## OILS.

- 80. Palm oil.
- 81. Bleached palm oil.
- 82. Palm nuts—original state.
- 83. “ kernels.
- 84. Pea-nut oil.
- 85. Pea-nuts.
- 86. Vegetable fruit oil.
- 87. Palm kernel oil.
- 88. Cocoanut oil.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

- 89. Palm bud pickles.
- 90. Cabbage and turnip pickles.
- 91. Cranberry, preserved in sugar.
- 92. African cherry “ “
- 93. Pine apple “ “
- 94. Mango plums “ “
- 95. Assorted fruits “ “
- 96. Roots and leaves used for dyeing yellow.
- 97. “ “ “ blue.
- 98. “ “ “ dark brown.
- 99. “ “ “ light “
- 100. “ “ tatooing blue for skin and cloth.
- 101. “ “ making black ink.
- 102. Leaves used for setting yellow dye  
(a mordant).
- 103. “ “ blue “
- 104. “ “ light brown “
- 105. “ “ dark “ “
- 106. Elephant's tusk.
- 107. Black dye extracted from the bark of a forest tree
- 108. Camwood, for dying.
- 109. Cotton half hose, Liberian manufacture.
- 110. Turtlesbell comb, “ “
- 111. Straw hat, “ “
- 112. Gum Elastic (India rubber).
- 113. Mineral from which red ink is made.
- 114. Eddoe Starch.
- 115. Cassada flour.
- 116. Eddoe flour.
- 117. Elephant beetles.
- 118. Silk spider.

- 119. African spice.
- 120. African bird pepper.
- 121. Lady's work stand, by J. O. Hynes.
- 122. Imitation pine apple.
- 123. Cacaoon, taken from a tree called "Bastard Whispore," which grows to the height of forty or fifty feet. The insect is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, and one inch in circumference.

## Chapter Five

### **“A coloured America on the shores of Africa”: Imaging Liberian Nationhood in the 1850s**

In 1996, the Library of Congress received a large donation of historical Americana from a private collector in Philadelphia. Included in the collection was a watercolor rendering of the Liberian senate made in the mid-1850s by a young Liberian settler named Robert K. Griffin (fig. 5.1). Painted in a crude style reflecting Griffin’s lack of formal artistic training, the watercolor brings viewers into the Liberian Legislative Hall, where the process of representative government is taking place. A group portrait, the scene depicts actual Liberian politicians active in the Senate during this period. A key at the bottom of the picture identifies ten individuals by name, including six senators, the Liberian vice-president, and the Senate’s chaplain, clerk, and secretary. One of these men, Senator James Edward Roye, stands behind a slanted desk on the left side of the Hall and raises his hand as if making an oath or casting a vote. The other politicians observe him, as do two rows of spectators in the foreground of the scene, their backs to the viewer. Assisting the proceedings are a young boy identified as the “runner”, who waits at the left border of the picture, and the Senate’s sergeant-at-arms, standing guard in the lower right corner of the composition. Carved into the vaulted ceiling at the front of the room is Liberia’s official seal, flanked by the American flag on one side and the Liberian flag on the other.

Griffin’s watercolor was produced less than a decade after Liberia was declared an independent republic with a constitution and governmental structure modeled on those of the United States. The path toward Liberian independence had its nucleus in 1839,

when the Commonwealth of Liberia was formed. The Commonwealth formally joined the original settlement at Cape Mesurado with several nearby colonies that had been established by various state and auxiliary colonization societies, but it nevertheless retained an ambiguous political status under the ACS.<sup>1</sup> Liberian colonists became active in the Commonwealth's governmental affairs, with settler-merchant Joseph Jenkins Roberts appointed governor in 1841.<sup>2</sup>

Over the following years, the ACS struggled to support Liberia financially and pushed the settlers to declare independence. At the same time, the colony's ambiguous political status under the ACS became increasingly problematic for Liberian merchants, as foreign governments were reticent to pay docking fees and other duties to a nominally philanthropic society.<sup>3</sup> Led by the colony's merchant elite and with full support from the ACS, settlers declared Liberia a sovereign republic in July of 1847.<sup>4</sup> Although the ACS no longer held political authority over Liberia, it continued to promote and facilitate the emigration of African Americans there over the following decades. Several European nations formally recognized Liberia's independent status in the late 1840s, but the United States refused to do so until 1862.<sup>5</sup> Considered within this context, Griffin's watercolor is

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<sup>1</sup> George Klay Kieh, Jr., *The First Liberian Civil War: The Crises of Underdevelopment* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Jesse N. Mongrue, M. Ed., *Liberia: America's Footprint in Africa: Making the Cultural, Social, and Political Connections* (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2010, 2011), 19.

<sup>3</sup> See Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, 164; Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, 84.

<sup>4</sup> See Mongrue, *Liberia: America's Footprint in Africa*, 19-20; Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, 84.

<sup>5</sup> See Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, 136, 280; Yarema, *American Colonization Society*, 47.

a striking declaration of Liberia's legitimacy as a modern republic during its first decade after independence.

Beginning with an examination of Griffin's watercolor of the Liberian senate, this chapter explores how Liberian settlers and the ACS used visual culture to negotiate the meaning of Liberian nationhood in the 1850s. As other scholars have noted, Griffin's picture appears to have been made in conjunction with a set of daguerreotype portraits by the settler-photographer Augustus Washington. I explore the possibility that Griffin and Washington were involved in a joint project to produce a never-realized popular engraving of the Liberian senate, a possibility theorized by Library of Congress curator Carol Johnson two decades ago. Such a project, I argue, would have appealed to an American audience hungry for visual images of the young African republic. Around the middle of the 1850s, I demonstrate, the American press witnessed a surge of interest in Liberia's identity as a republic founded and governed by former African Americans. I argue that this spike in national attention to the subject, which occurred between about 1854 and 1858, was linked to new developments in image-making technologies – namely daguerreotypes and woodcut illustrations – which allowed for the circulation of seemingly authentic, “eyewitness” pictures of the African republic through the American press on an unprecedented scale. Colonization promoters and Liberian settlers became joint participants in the creation of such images, which presented Liberia as a “little America” in Africa, a miniature version of the United States inhabited and governed by blacks instead of whites. Yet the contradictions and ironies of recreating an American setting in Africa also become apparent through a deeper consideration of these images alongside a broader analysis of Liberian settler architecture and culture.

## A Portrait of the Liberian Senate

Little is known about Robert K. Griffin's life either before or after he emigrated to Liberia on Christmas eve, 1855 at the age of 19.<sup>6</sup> Departing New York on the barque *Lamartine*, he listed his occupation as "artist" on the ship's manifest, although he likely had little formal artistic training.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after arriving in Liberia, he painted two coastal views that eventually made their ways back to the United States, *Bassua Liberia* (fig. 5.2) and *Fish Town at Bassau Liberia* (fig. 5.3). Presenting Bassa Cove's white settler buildings against a rich green landscape and deep blue ocean foreground, the two watercolors are framed with pencil lines in a style that suggests they may have been intended to serve as the basis for eventual woodcut illustrations. In at least one case, Griffin did produce a sketch that was made into a woodcut, when *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* published his portrait of "A Family of Borlean Negroes, Liberia" in December of 1858; he may have produced others, as well.<sup>8</sup> It is not known how many other pictures Griffin may have made in Liberia, or if he maintained any other occupations after emigrating.

Although Griffin's watercolor is not dated, scholars Ann Shumard and Svend Holsoe have determined that it represents the fifth Liberian legislature in its second

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<sup>6</sup> The 1850 U.S. Census reveals that Griffin was from a large free black family living in Yonkers, New York. See "United States Census, 1850," database with images, Robert Griffin in household of Lydia Griffin, Yonkers, Westchester, New York, United States; citing family 243, NARA microfilm publication M432 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), accessed November 22, 2015, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCT9-JJT>.

<sup>7</sup> See Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here'," 155; "Bark Lamartine," *New-York Colonization Journal* 6, no. 12 (Jan., 1856). The ship's manifest also listed an Ellen E. Griffin, age 18, presumably Robert's wife.

<sup>8</sup> "Family of Borlean Negroes, Liberia," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (Dec. 13, 1858): 43.

session, which took place between December 1, 1856 and January 23, 1857, as this was the only period in which all of the specific individuals Griffin depicted were active in the Liberian senate.<sup>9</sup> The accuracy of this timing is further supported by the presence of black mourning cloth draped around the room, likely in commemoration of the recently deceased Liberian senator G. H. Ellis.<sup>10</sup>

Liberia's constitution and governmental structure were modeled on those of the United States, with some notable differences. At the head of government was the president, who was elected by popular vote and served a two-year term. Like the U.S. Congress, the Liberian legislature was a bicameral body composed of senators, who served four-year terms, and representatives, who served terms of two years.<sup>11</sup> In the Liberian senate, each of the republic's three counties – Montserrado, Grand Bassa, and Sinoe – was represented by two senators.<sup>12</sup> In Griffin's watercolor, Liberia's entire body of six senators can be seen presiding behind slanted desks on either side of the Hall.

Griffin's watercolor emphasizes the parallels between the republican ideals and legislative processes of Liberia and those of the United States. The setting itself bears witness to the ways in which Liberia is an American setting. Neither tropical nor exotic, the Legislative Hall embodies the material sensibilities of Americans in this period. The clothing of the politicians and spectators, the carpet at the front of the room, the wooden sideboard to its left, and the vase sitting in the nearby window all reflect Liberia's

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<sup>9</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 160.

<sup>10</sup> Carol Johnson, “Faces of Freedom: Portraits from the American Colonization Society Collection,” *The Daguerreian Annual* (1996): 266.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 160.

carefully constructed likeness to the United States. The presence of middle-class spectators observing the proceedings suggests the American ideal of government transparency and participation of the body politic in legislative decision-making.

Liberia's likeness to the United States is further thematized in other details of the picture. On the decorated arched wall at the front of the chamber is a carving of the Liberian seal (fig. 5.4). Similar to that of the ACS, Liberia's seal was described in *The African Repository* shortly after independence: "A dove on the wing with an open scroll in its claws. A view of the ocean with a ship under sail. The sun just emerging from the waters. A palm tree, and at its base a plow and spade. Beneath the emblems, the words REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, and above the emblems, the national motto, THE LOVE OF LIBERTY BROUGHT US HERE."<sup>13</sup> Emphasizing transatlantic arrival, agricultural improvement, and liberty, the seal and motto drew from American ideals of freedom and industry.

Flanking the seal in Griffin's scene is a set of flags, the most prominent among them being the flag of the United States on the right and the Liberian flag on the left. Referred to as the "Lone Star", the Liberian flag closely resembled that of the United States but had only one star.<sup>14</sup> Flags of other nations are visible behind these, most noticeably England's Union Jack just behind the American flag. Griffin's inclusion of these various international flags reflects Liberia's desire for recognition within the international community during these years. Soon after Liberia declared independence,

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<sup>13</sup> "Flag and Seal of the Republic of Liberia" [From the Liberia Herald], *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 24, no. 1 (Jan., 1848): 12.

<sup>14</sup> Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here,'" 169.



President Roberts had travelled to Europe, eagerly seeking the recognition of Liberia's new status by European powers. In 1848, England became the first foreign nation to recognize Liberia as a legitimate republic.<sup>15</sup> France followed in 1852, along with Brazil and Prussia.<sup>16</sup> By 1856, the Republic had also attained formal recognition from Lubeck, Bremen, and Hamburg.<sup>17</sup> When Griffin painted his watercolor in late 1856 or early 1857, the flags of these nations were presumably on display in the Legislative Hall. The United States had yet to officially recognize Liberia's national status, however. The similarly prominent positions of the Liberian flag and the American flag assert a sense of equality between the two nations and further suggest Liberia as an African reflection of the United States.<sup>18</sup>

### **Collaboration with Augustus Washington's Daguerreotypes**

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Griffin's watercolor is its status as group portrait, representing the faces of actual Liberian politicians active at this time. When Library of Congress curator Carol Johnson became aware of Griffin's watercolor shortly before its accession there in 1996, she realized that it was connected to another group of images already in the Library's collection: a set of eleven daguerreotype portraits of early Liberian statesmen, roughly contemporaneous with the watercolor, attributed to settler-

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<sup>15</sup> Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, 136, 280.

<sup>16</sup> See Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, 136; Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 104.

<sup>17</sup> Emma J. Lapsansky-Werner and Margaret Hope Bacon, eds., *Back to Africa: Benjamin Coates and the Colonization Movement in America 1848-1880* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 93, note 104.

<sup>18</sup> Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here,'" 169.

daguerreotypist Augustus Washington (figs. 1.2, 5.5-5.14).<sup>19</sup> Washington, who had once operated a successful daguerreotype business in Hartford, Connecticut, had emigrated to Liberia a year before Griffin. Upon arriving, he established a daguerreian studio in Monrovia, where he photographed many of Liberia's elite citizens during the 1850s. At the Library of Congress, 28 of Washington's Liberian daguerreotypes survive, but as Johnson noticed, eleven share a distinct set of attributes that suggest a connection with Griffin's watercolor.<sup>20</sup> Depicting the same individuals who appear in Griffin's picture, the daguerreotypes are noticeably staged, their sitters assuming poses that would have been odd for standard portraits of the period but that correspond to those in the watercolor. For example, Washington captured senate clerk Chauncy H. Hicks in profile, seated at a desk and seemingly paying attention to something taking place beyond the picture's left border (fig. 5.9). Similarly, Senator Royce was photographed with one arm raised just as it is in the watercolor (fig. 5.7)

A comparison of the watercolor composition and the group of daguerreotypes by Washington leaves little doubt that they were produced in conjunction with one another. In the key at the bottom of the scene, Griffin clearly identified the twelve individuals depicted in his scene (not including the spectators), all by name except for the young runner and the sergeant-at-arms. Washington's corresponding daguerreotypes portray the same individuals, also by name, in nearly identical poses. Moving from the runner at the left border of the watercolor, the group consists of James Skivring Smith, a young senator from Grand Bassa County; John Hanson, a prosperous merchant who also represented

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<sup>19</sup> Johnson, "Faces of Freedom," 265.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 265-66.

Grand Bassa County as senator; Senator Edward James Roye, formerly the Speaker of the Liberian House of Representatives and owner of a lucrative shipping business; Reverend Philip Coker, the chaplain of the Senate and a prominent religious leader in the republic; Chauncy H. Hicks, the young senate clerk; Beverly Page Yates, Vice-President of Liberia and President of the Senate, as well as a prosperous merchant and shipper; Yates' son James, the Senate's secretary; Alfred Francis Russell, senator from Montserrado County and proprietor of a successful coffee farm along the Saint Paul River; Sinoe County Senator Edward Morris, also a wealthy merchant; and Senator James Mux Priest, a religious and political leader in the republic. Although Griffin did not identify the sergeant-at-arms by name, Washington's corresponding daguerreotype reveals him to be a settler named Chancy Brown.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas relatively little study has been conducted on Griffin or his watercolor, Washington's daguerreotypes have drawn growing interest from scholars in recent years.<sup>22</sup> Scholarly interest in Washington is due not only to the fact that many of his daguerreotypes survive but also because he left a significant written record of his opinions about the colonization movement and his experiences in Liberia. The historian Wilson Jeremiah Moses has described one of his writings, an 1851 letter published in *The*

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<sup>21</sup> For this and more extensive biographical information on these individuals, see Ann Shumard, *A Durable Memento: Portraits by Augustus Washington, African American Daguerreotypist*, accessed December 26, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/awintro.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> For scholarship on Washington, see *ibid*; Scruggs, "The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here"; Johnson, "Faces of Freedom"; Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 179-83; Shawn Michelle Smith, "Augustus Washington and the Civil Contract of Photography," in *Visual Cultures—Transatlantic Perspectives*, eds. Volker Depkat and Meike Zwingenberger (Heidelberg, Germany: Universitätsverlag, 2012), 87-106; Shawn Michelle Smith, "Unredeemed Realities: Augustus Washington," in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). For the state of scholarship on Griffin's watercolor, see note 67.

*African Repository*, as “among the most convincing arguments for colonization written by a black man in the antebellum period.”<sup>23</sup>

Washington was born around 1820 in Trenton, New Jersey to a formerly enslaved African-American father and a South Asian mother.<sup>24</sup> As a young adult, he became active in the abolitionist movement, worked as a teacher, and gained sufficient education to attend Dartmouth College from 1842 to 1844, with the financial help of Lewis Tappan, a prominent abolitionist from New York.<sup>25</sup> The only African-American student there at the time, it was at Dartmouth that Washington learned daguerreotypy. Unable to continue financing his education, Washington moved to Hartford, Connecticut to manage one of the city’s African-American schools, but his focus soon shifted back to photography.<sup>26</sup>

In 1846, Washington opened a daguerreian business in Hartford, which by 1851 he could claim as “the oldest Daguerrian [sic] Establishment in this city.”<sup>27</sup> One observer noted that, “Augustus Washington, an artist of fine taste and perception is numbered among the most successful Daguerreotypists in Hartford, Connecticut. His establishment is said to be visited daily by large numbers of the citizens of all classes.”<sup>28</sup> Washington offered, “Portraits, Engravings, and other Daguerreotypes, neatly copied” as well as a

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<sup>23</sup> Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 183.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, “Augustus Washington and the Civil Contract of Photography,” 88.

<sup>25</sup> See Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 181; Smith, “Unredeemed Realities,” 101.

<sup>26</sup> Shumard, “Introduction,” *A Durable Memento*, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/awintro.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Shumard, “Augustus Washington in Hartford, 1844-1853,” *A Durable Memento*, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/awhart.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

wide selection of frames, cases, and jewelry to contain his pictures, ranging from expensive examples made of silver and velvet to more plain and utilitarian ones.<sup>29</sup>

Many of Washington's sitters were among Hartford's most prominent citizens.<sup>30</sup> Around 1853, for example, he photographed Eliphalet Adams Bulkeley, an attorney, businessmen, and politician in Hartford (fig. 5.15). Captured in three-quarter length, Bulkeley wears a dark coat, cravat, and vest, which conspicuously displays the chain of a pocket watch, a possession that only the wealthy could afford in this period. He looks just beyond the viewer with a serious expression, a scroll of paper held firmly in his hand serving to communicate the intellect and business acumen of the Yale-educated Bulkeley.<sup>31</sup> The picture is framed by an expensive silver-bordered case made by the Hartford firm of F. R. Slocum & Co. in 1853.<sup>32</sup> Washington photographed other members of the Bulkeley family, as well, including Eliphalet's niece Sarah Taintor Bulkeley Waterman (fig. 5.16). Around 18 when she sat for this portrait, Waterman wears an elegant dress with ruffled sleeves and a lace collar.<sup>33</sup> Her right arm rests on a table, symbolically bringing the parlor – the space understood to be the woman's sphere – into

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. See Washington's 1851 broadside at Shumard, "The Washington Daguerrean Gallery," *A Durable Memento*, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/brodside.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Shumard, "The Washington Daguerrean Gallery." See also Shumard, "Augustus Washington in Hartford, 1844-1853."

<sup>31</sup> For more on Bulkeley and this photograph, see Shumard, "Eliphalet Adams Bulkeley," *A Durable Memento*, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/eabulk.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> For more on Waterman and this photograph, see Shumard, "Sarah Taintor Bulkeley Waterman," *A Durable Memento*, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/water.htm>.

this Hartford portrait studio.<sup>34</sup> Her hair is parted at the center and smoothly swept into a bun, and her left hand holds a bouquet of flowers, again gesturing toward her femininity.

Washington's most recognizable Hartford daguerreotype portrayed the famous abolitionist John Brown (fig. 5.17).<sup>35</sup> During the 1850s, Brown would gain national notoriety by organizing violent insurrections in the name of abolitionism, first during the "Bleeding Kansas" conflict and later at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, for which he ultimately suffered the death penalty. When Washington photographed him in 1846 or 1847, Brown was living in Springfield, Massachusetts, not far from Hartford. Already a fervent supporter of the abolition movement, it was around this period that his views began turning more radical. After a speaking engagement in Springfield in 1847, Frederick Douglass spent an evening speaking with Brown and afterward recorded that, "from this night spent with John Brown in Springfield, Mass. 1847... I became all the same less hopeful for its [slavery's] peaceful abolition. My utterances became more and more tinged by the color of this man's strong impressions."<sup>36</sup>

Washington's portrait of Brown perhaps marks the first time the daguerreotypist used photograph for overtly political ends. Dressed in a dark suit and holding a flag in his left hand, Brown raises his right hand as if making an oath, perhaps a symbol of his vow to fight for the abolition of slavery. The slight blurriness of the raised hand bears witness

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<sup>34</sup> For more on the significance of the parlor in transatlantic black visibility, see Jasmine Nichole Cobb, *Picture Freedom: Remaking Black Visibility in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 13.

<sup>35</sup> For more on Brown and this photograph, see Shumard, "John Brown," *A Durable Memento*, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/brown2.htm>.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Joseph Carvalho III, "Abolitionist John Brown's Years in Springfield Ma. Transform His Anti-Slavery Thoughts and Actions," accessed December 26, 2015, [http://www.masslive.com/history/index.ssf/2010/04/abolitionist\\_john\\_browns\\_transformation\\_years\\_in\\_springfield\\_ma.html](http://www.masslive.com/history/index.ssf/2010/04/abolitionist_john_browns_transformation_years_in_springfield_ma.html).

to the long exposure time – 60 to 90 seconds – necessary to produce a daguerreotype in this period. Without the unseen supports and devices often used to keep the neck or other parts of the body still during the lengthy photographic process, Brown had to hold his raised arm as still as possible while Washington captured the image. Brown resolutely stares at the camera with a furrowed brow and an expression of total conviction. No ordinary nineteenth-century portrait, Washington's daguerreotype of Brown presents a militant revolutionary, someone with equal potential to be a great hero to society and a dangerous threat to his government.

Like most northern free blacks, Washington objected to the ACS' emigration plan.<sup>37</sup> By the early 1850s, however, the daguerreotypist's opinions on the subject began to evolve. While still critical of the ACS in certain ways, he also began to see the potential benefits that Liberia held for black Americans. On July 3, 1851, Washington described his views in a lengthy letter to the ACS, which the Society published in *The African Repository* that September.<sup>38</sup> Demonstrating his awareness of U.S. imperial expansion and the geography beyond American borders, Washington explained that,

Ever since the [1845] annexation of Texas, and the success and triumph of American arms on the plains of Mexico, I have been looking in vain for some home for Afric-Americans more congenial for their feelings and prejudice than Liberia. The Canadas, the West Indies, Mexico, British Guiana, and other parts of South America, have all been brought under review. And yet I have been unable to get rid of a conviction long since entertained and often expressed, that if the colored people of this country ever find a home on earth for the development of their manhood and intellect, it will first be in Liberia or some other part of Africa.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 182.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 184-97. As discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, that letter clearly provided inspiration for the fictional George Harris letter near the end of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*..

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 185.

Just as the United States was developing its national identity through a language of expansion and conquest, Washington saw the future success of African Americans as an extension of that geographical project in Africa. “A continent larger than North America is lying waste for want of the hand of science and industry,” he wrote, “a land whose bowels are filled with the mineral and agricultural wealth, and on whose bosom repose in exuberance and wild extravagance all the fruits and productions of a tropical clime. The providence of God will not permit a land so rich in all the elements of wealth and greatness to remain much longer without civilized inhabitants.”<sup>40</sup> Like many white supporters of colonization in this period, Washington saw the project of “civilizing, redeeming, and saving” the African continent as one to which “the colored men are more peculiarly adapted.”<sup>41</sup>

Washington’s convictions were grounded in the steadfast belief in the need for African-American uplift. “Ever since a lad of fifteen,” he wrote, “it has been my constant study to learn how I might best contribute to elevate the social and political position of the oppressed and unfortunate people with whom I am identified.”<sup>42</sup> Commenting on the condition of black Americans, he declared that, “we should be the last to admit that the colored man here, by nature and birth, is inferior in intellect, but by education and circumstances he may be.”<sup>43</sup> For Washington, the ultimate goal of allowing black

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 193.



Americans to develop their “manhood and intellect” was unattainable in the United States given its current prejudices and racial intolerance.<sup>44</sup> “I assume as fixed principle that it is impossible for us to develop our moral and intellectual capacities as a distinct people, under our present social and political disabilities,” he wrote, “and, judging by the past and present state of things, there is no reason to hope that we can do it in this country in [sic] future.”<sup>45</sup> Noting the efforts and limiting weaknesses of those groups in the United States aiming to help black Americans, Washington ultimately declared that, “we must mark out an independent course, and become the architects of our own fortunes, when neither Colonizationists nor Abolitionists have the power or the will to admit us to any honorable or profitable means of subsistence in this country.”<sup>46</sup> His only regret was that he did not emigrate five years earlier. As “strange as it may appear, whatever may be a colored man’s natural capacity and literary attainments,” he explained, “I believe that, as soon as he leaves the academic halls to mingle in the only society he can find in the United States, unless he be a minister or lecturer, he must and will retrograde.”<sup>47</sup>

Washington announced his plans to emigrate in the *Hartford Daily Courant*, acknowledging “the kind and liberal patronage of a discerning public [for] the last seven years.” He would close his business “not from any want of further success or patronage, but for the purpose of foreign travel, and to mingle in other scenes of activity and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 192.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 196-97.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 197.

usefulness.”<sup>48</sup> Washington left the United States for Liberia in early November of 1853, sailing aboard the *Isla de Cuba* along with his wife, Cordelia, their two-and-a-half year old son Alonzo Seward and one-year-old daughter Helena Augusta.<sup>49</sup> They arrived in Monrovia on December 16 with “less than \$500 in cash, but \$275 in goods for sale, and... \$500 worth of Daguerrean materials.”<sup>50</sup> Washington began teaching Greek and Latin at Monrovia’s Alexander High School while at the same time establishing a daguerreian business in the city.<sup>51</sup>

Within months of his arrival in Monrovia, Washington photographed Liberian President Joseph Jenkins Roberts, his wife Jane Waring Roberts, and his Vice-President Stephen Allen Benson.<sup>52</sup> Although the original three daguerreotypes have been lost, reproductions made by New York photographer Rufus Anson survive at the Library of Congress and provide a good sense of how the originals appeared.<sup>53</sup> Wearing a frock coat over a vest and cravat, President Roberts (fig. 5.18) sits at a slight angle to the camera, his hands resting on his lap. With a serious expression, Roberts’ eyes confidently meet the viewer’s gaze. Jane Roberts (fig. 5.19) is also captured seated at a slight angle to the camera, her eyes meeting those of the viewer. The three-quarter length portrait allows for

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Shumard, “The Washington Daguerrean Gallery”; see also Shumard, “Augustus Washington in Hartford, 1844-1853.”

<sup>49</sup> Smith, “Augustus Washington and the Civil Contract of Photography,” 97. The presumption that they left in early November is based on the fact that the voyage usually took over five weeks. See Johnson, “Faces of Freedom,” 269.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 182. For date of Washington’s arrival in Monrovia, see Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 93.

<sup>51</sup> Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 182.

<sup>52</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 44.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

a view of her modest but fashionable attire, consisting of a striped hoop skirt-dress with lace detailing on the sleeves and a white chemisette under her bodice. Her hair is parted in the middle and folded out over her ears before culminating in a bun, mimicking the most popular style in the United States, and she holds a folded fan in her lap. Also formally dressed is Vice President Benson (fig. 5.20), who directs his gaze at a slight right angle to the camera.

Washington's Monrovia sitters included not only Liberian politicians but also affluent citizens like Urias McGill (fig. 5.21). The brother of Dr. Samuel F. McGill (noted in Chapter Two of this dissertation), Urias had emigrated from Baltimore at the age of eight with his mulatto family. In Liberia the McGills became wealthy merchants, with Urias and his three brothers establishing various successful trading companies.<sup>54</sup> Washington's half-length daguerreotype of Urias McGill presents the sitter in a dark suit, hands firmly on his lap, his eyes meeting the viewer's gaze. The portrait is encased in an elegant brass and red leather double-case which also contains the daguerreotype of an unknown female sitter, probably McGill's wife (fig. 5.22). Wearing a modest dress and earrings, the unknown woman is captured in three-quarter length, echoing the positioning of Washington's Hartford sitters like Sarah Waterman (fig. 5.16). Notably, she holds a daguerreotype case in her hands, the same type of case that held the pictures of herself and Urias McGill.<sup>55</sup>

Washington's portraits of the McGills, President and First Lady Roberts, and Vice-President Benson participated in a transatlantic effort among people of African

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<sup>54</sup> Shumard, "Urias Africanus McGill," *A Durable Memento*, accessed December 27, 2015, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/mcgill.htm>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

descent to use photography to demand recognition as equals to whites in the United States. For example, several members of the Dickerson family, a middle-class African-American family in Philadelphia, sat for daguerreotypes around 1855. Some of their portraits may have been made by the African-American artist Robert Douglass, Jr. Among these daguerreotypes is one depicting an unidentified female member of the Dickerson family (fig. 5.23). She wears an elegant dark dress with lace at the cuffs and collar, a stylish broach, and earrings. Her hand rests on a table, upon it a book, suggesting her literacy and intellect. In sitting for daguerreotypes, middle-class African Americans like the Dickersons carefully selected their attire and props to demonstrate their free status and self-possession. As Shawn Michelle Smith argues, *self-possession* was “a racially circumscribed social status thought to determine one’s capacity for self-governance, and thus for full citizenship.”<sup>56</sup>

In portraying themselves as they did, African Americans on both sides of the Atlantic represented themselves in striking contrast to many of the photographic depictions of the black body being produced by whites in the United States. As discussed in the previous chapter, Louis Agassiz’ ethnographic slave daguerreotypes denied African Americans’ humanity and subjecthood, using the medium of photography to label and categorize enslaved individuals as scientific specimens and evidence of separate human creations. However, most popular representations of the black body, even those sympathetic to it, focused on its subjugation and enslavement. As discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the most iconic embodiment of this tradition was Wedgewood’s

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, “Augustus Washington and the Civil Contract of Photography,” 88.

kneeling slave, reproduced countless times in both Britain and the United States during the period of abolitionist activism. By the mid-nineteenth century, the same trend frequently circumscribed early photographic representations of black Americans. A good example is the portrait of an escaped slave named Gordon that was published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1863 (fig. 5.24). Based on a photograph and also circulated as a carte de visite, the *Harper's* illustration represents Gordon's heavily scarred back, undoubtedly the result of numerous whippings while in slavery.<sup>57</sup>

Focusing on the abused and abased black body in their representations of African Americans, abolitionists failed to represent a vision of how black freedom might appear. In fact, those opposed to abolition more frequently depicted the possibility of African-American freedom, but they did so in a way that made the prospect seem ludicrous and laughable. The cartoonist Edward Williams Clay's series "Life in Philadelphia" (1828-1830) presented blacks according to exaggerated racial stereotypes, often dressed in fine apparel but always revealing themselves to be buffoon-like and ultimately unfit for freedom. Plate number 13 of the sharply caricatured series (fig. 5.25), for example, depicts an African-American couple strutting in overly extravagant attire with the parodic caption of their conversation, "How you like de Waltz, Mr. Lorenzo? 'Pon de honour ob a gentleman, I tink it vastly indelicate. Only fit for de common people!!"<sup>58</sup>

Middle-class African Americans like the Dickersons and Washington's Liberian sitters used daguerreotypes to respond to these derisory of popular depictions and claim

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<sup>57</sup> For more discussion of this image, see McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 130.

<sup>58</sup> For image and quotation, see "E. W. Clay's Life in Philadelphia Series," accessed January 10, 2016, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/gallclayf.html>. My discussion of the treatment of race in Clay's series draws from Cobb, *Picture Freedom*, 113-17.

control over their own representations.<sup>59</sup> In doing so, they also forged a path rarely taken by African Americans, even those prominently involved in black intellectual life and print culture. As Jasmine Nichole Cobb has noted, “in the creation of their own print media, few people of African descent incorporated depictions of the body in their antislavery tracts or political documents,” instead focusing on the power of language and literacy to change perceptions of their race.<sup>60</sup> “After more than one hundred years of seeing the Black body printed in advertisements for slave auctions or fugitive capture,” Cobb goes on, “Black people printing their own documents may have felt that the proliferation of texts that accentuated the Black body would have only compounded the rampant problems of representation.”<sup>61</sup> The invention of the daguerreotype, however, offered African Americans new representational power. In the nineteenth century, photographs were thought to be completely objective, scientific replications of a moment in time. This offered black Americans a sense of control over their own representation, guarding them from the biases of white portraitists or the potential perception among white viewers that their portraits were unduly contrived.

Washington seized upon the new representational power of photography, extending it across the Atlantic into his Monrovia daguerreotype practice. The eleven portraits he made in conjunction with Griffin’s watercolor are especially striking examples of how people of African descent used the new technology to fight racist mythologies and claim status as equals to whites in the United States. Along with

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<sup>59</sup> Cobb, *Picture Freedom*, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Washington's daguerreotypes of President and First Lady Roberts and Vice President Benson, these are among the earliest photographs of black politicians ever taken. Posing before Washington's camera, these eleven men performed their identities as full citizens of a free black republic, in the process denying the racial biases and civic limitations they had faced in the United States.

One of the most significant ways in which Washington's eleven daguerreotypes dignify their subjects is by emphasizing that the work of these men is not the physical labor associated with American slavery but rather the work of the mind. As he did with many of the other sitters, Washington posed Beverly Page Yates at a desk, showing him at work in creating a new nation (fig. 1.2). Like the other men, Yates wears formal attire – a dark coat, vest, and cravat – indicating his elite social status. On the table before him is an open book or stack of papers, and beside it rests Yates' hand, which holds a scroll of paper. As in Washington's portrait of Hartford citizen Eliphalet Bulkeley (fig. 5.15), the rolled-up document in Yates' hand conveys to viewers that this sitter is educated, literate, and engaged in important work. The desk, papers, and scroll all become props in a performance of Yates' status not only as a free person but also as citizen, statesman, and intellectual.

Similarly, Washington photographed the young senator James Skivring Smith at a moment of work (fig. 5.5). Sitting behind a desk with pen in hand, he is writing, an activity that indicates his intellectual capabilities and his literacy. Several other sitters in the group were also captured in the act of writing or posed near written documents (figs. 1.2, 5.6, 5.9-5.13). Representing the black subject in the act of reading and writing was significant in this period because literacy was rare among African Americans. In South

Carolina, the state from which Smith had emigrated, it was illegal for a white person to teach an African American (free or enslaved) to read.<sup>62</sup> Captured by Washington in the act of writing, Smith unapologetically performs his literacy, demanding recognition as an equal to educated white Americans.

Perhaps the most notable way in which Washington's politician-sitters used daguerreotypy to claim equal status to whites in the United States was by making direct eye contact with the viewer.<sup>63</sup> In the antebellum South, enslaved blacks were expected to avoid prolonged eye contact with their white masters, instead keeping their eyes down during an encounter.<sup>64</sup> As the historian Peter Charles Hoffer has noted, "prolonged eye contact challenges existing power relationships," and that "in pairings of unequals, the subordinate or the defeated breaks eye contact first; continued eye-to-eye contact in such cases is a challenge or a threat."<sup>65</sup> Confronting the camera with a resolute gaze, James Mux Priest asserts himself as an equal to his (presumably white) viewer (fig. 5.13). Similarly, Reverend Coker firmly meets the viewer's gaze above a pair of spectacles (fig. 5.8). The intensity of these sitters' gazes is largely lost, however, in their translation in Griffin's watercolor, which reorients their attention to the legislative proceedings taking place in the scene. Yet by directly meeting the viewer's gaze in Washington's photographs, Priest, Coker, and several others refused to accept the American ideal of

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<sup>62</sup> Peter Wallentstein, "Antiliteracy Laws," in *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, ed. Junius P. Rodriguez (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2007), 172.

<sup>63</sup> Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here,'" 178.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Charles Hoffer, *Sensory Worlds in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 155.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



docile and submissive black servitude, instead reclaiming power over their own bodies, minds, and actions.

In the case of Senator Roye, self-possession was also enacted through the process of holding the body still through long exposure times (fig. 5.7). As Scruggs has noted, “blacks, often likened to children in white supremacist discourse, were presumed to be unable to control their primitive urges.” Furthermore, she points out, “Republican ideology required that leaders exhibit moral virtue and personal self-control so that they would act for the greater good, rather than in corrupt self-interest.”<sup>66</sup> Thus for Washington’s Liberian politician subjects, sitting for a daguerreotype in itself presented evidence of self-control. In the case of Roye specifically, wherein no supports were used to keep his arm steady during the exposure, his ability to stay still for the camera was a physical manifestation of his ability to carry out the oath which he was making.

### **Griffin’s Watercolor as a Study for a Popular Engraving**

In a 1996 article for the *Daguerreian Annual*, Johnson hypothesized that Griffin’s watercolor and Washington’s eleven corresponding daguerreotypes were made in tandem as studies for a never-realized engraving of the Liberian senate.<sup>67</sup> The idea that Griffin and Washington, perhaps in collaboration with a colonization promoter in the United

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<sup>66</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 176.

<sup>67</sup> Johnson, “Faces of Freedom,” 266-67. Following Johnson’s article, little was done to explore further the relationship between the watercolor and the daguerreotypes until 2010, when Dalila Scruggs included a chapter on the subject in her dissertation (discussed further in Chapter One of this study). Closely examining the daguerreotypes and their translation in Griffin’s picture, Scruggs’ analysis reflected her broader focus on the role of photography in promoting Liberian colonization and shaping nineteenth-century Liberian settler identity. For Scruggs, the joint visual project undertaken by Griffin and Washington reflects their efforts to present Liberia as an “egalitarian reflection” of the United States rather than simply a “heterotopic inversion” of it. Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 196.

States, may have wanted to produce an engraving of the Liberian senate makes sense when one considers the popularity of images depicting the U.S. senate in this period.<sup>68</sup> In fact, the Philadelphia merchant and colonization supporter Benjamin Coates sent such a print as a gift to the Liberian government on the very same voyage on which Griffin sailed, suggesting the possibility that the aspiring young artist saw the picture firsthand while on the ship.<sup>69</sup> That print was Robert Whitechurch's *The United States Senate, A.D. 1850* (fig. 5.26).<sup>70</sup> Based on a painting by Peter Frederick Rothermel, the engraving depicts the Kentucky senator Henry Clay introducing the Compromise of 1850 to the U.S. senate. Comprising five distinct bills aimed at reducing the growing conflict between the slave states of the South and free Northern states, the Compromise of 1850 was at time thought to be the renowned statesman's last major act as senator. Among his most intent listeners is the iconic John Calhoun of South Carolina, the third figure from the picture's right border, and equally respected Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster, sitting to the left of Clay with his head in this hand. Clay, Calhoun, and Webster are together remembered as the "Great Triumvirate" of the U.S. senate in this period, balancing the interests of the North, South, and West and dominating much of the political action of their era.<sup>71</sup>

Showing the political process in action, depictions of the U.S. senate like *The United States Senate* captured the imagination of the American public at midcentury and

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<sup>68</sup> Johnson, "Faces of Freedom," 266-67.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 267-68.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 268.

<sup>71</sup> *United States Senate Catalogue of Graphic Art* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), 19.

satisfied Americans' increasing demand for depictions of famous citizens and prominent national spaces.<sup>72</sup> Some were printed as single engravings, as in the case of Whitechurch's image, while other scenes appeared in the pages of popular illustrated magazines. Good examples in the latter category include "Interior View of the United States Senate, at Washington, D.C." (c. 1852, fig. 5.27), published in *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, and "Opening the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of [t]he Thirty Second Congress" (fig. 5.28), which appeared in *The [New York] Illustrated News* in 1853. Often, these scenes captured important or dramatic moments, such as when *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* published "The Assault in the U.S. Senate Chamber on Senator Sumner" (fig. 5.29) in 1856.<sup>73</sup>

The likelihood that Griffin's watercolor was intended as the basis for a popular engraving is further supported by the fact that it was made in conjunction with Washington's daguerreotype portraits. Invented in France in 1839 by Louis-Jaques-Mandé Daguerre, daguerreotypy was the earliest form of photography and became a popular form of portraiture in the United States during the 1840s. During that decade, engravers also began to use daguerreotypes in the creation of portrait prints in order to achieve an unprecedented level of realism and authenticity. This practice was used in an important predecessor to Whitechurch's engraving, an 1846 mezzotint entitled *United States Senate Chamber* (fig. 5.30). Like Griffin's later watercolor of the Liberian senate, *United States Senate Chamber* was the culmination of the work of multiple individuals. The mezzotint was made by engraver Thomas Doney and was based on a composition

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 16-17.

designed by the artist James Whitehorne. In creating the recognizable faces of the nearly one hundred specific individuals in the engraving, Doney worked from daguerreotypes taken by the New York daguerreotypist Edward Anthony.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, in 1856 R. Van Dien published a lithograph entitled *Daniel Webster Addressing the United States Senate in the Great Debate on the Compromise Measures of 1850*, produced using daguerreotypes by Eliphalet M. Brown, Jr.<sup>75</sup>

Whitechurch's engraving of Rothermel's painting also involved the use of daguerreotypes, although in a different way. Whereas Doney worked directly from Anthony's daguerreotypes in creating the visages in *United States Senate Chamber*, in the case of *The United States Senate, A.D. 1850* (fig. 5.26), Rothermel created the painted version using daguerreotype portraits made by an unknown photographer, and Whitechurch in turn based his print directly on Rothermel's painting.<sup>76</sup> As group portraits of American senators in the Senate chamber setting, popular prints like those by Whitechurch, Doney, and Van Dien depended on the efforts of the daguerreotypist, the artist, and the engraver to make a finished product that would be perceived as realistic and truthful. As the art historian Michael Leja has pointed out, "a convincing portrait likeness in this period required bringing together multiple media and multiple artists." In producing engravings like *United States Senate Chamber*, "truthfulness and stability were

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<sup>74</sup> Michael Leja, "Fortified Images for the Masses," *Art Journal* 70, no. 4 (Winter, 2011): 66-72.

<sup>75</sup> Johnson, "Faces of Freedom," 267.

<sup>76</sup> *United States Senate Catalogue*, 15, 19.

supplied by different media, and collaborations among practitioners skilled in each medium maximized the authenticity of a portrait.”<sup>77</sup>

It is possible, though not certain, that Griffin saw the Whitechurch engraving while aboard the *Lamartine*, inspiring him to create a parallel picture of the Liberian senate. Certainly by the time he was working on his watercolor, Griffin was familiar with Whitechurch’s image because it was hanging on the walls of the Liberian senate chamber and is even visible in the artist’s watercolor, just to the left of the clock behind Vice-President Yates (fig. 5.31).<sup>78</sup> The *New-York Colonization Journal* mentioned Coates’ “handsome present” of the Whitechurch engraving, calling it “a splendid engraving... forwarded to the Government of Liberia to be suspended in the Legislative hall.”<sup>79</sup> The presence of Whitechurch’s engraving of the U.S. senate within Griffin’s scene further emphasizes the ways Liberia’s government mirrored that of America. Presumably the same copy that Coates had sent to the Liberian government aboard the *Lamartine*, the inclusion of the engraving suggests the United States’ maternal role in the founding of Liberia and communicates that America was still the guiding inspiration for the Liberian nation. Griffin’s depiction of the Whitechurch engraving also reveals a certain self-awareness within the watercolor of its own representative power, a consciousness that it too is an object to be viewed and perhaps framed within an actual physical setting.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Leja, “Fortified Images for the Masses,” 81.

<sup>78</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 155, 159, 169-70.

<sup>79</sup> “A Handsome Present,” *New-York Colonization Journal* 6, no. 12 (Jan., 1856), in Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 159.

<sup>80</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 165.

Because of the popularity of engravings of the U.S. senate circulating in the United States and the practice among engravers like Whitechurch and Doney of employing artists and daguerreotypists in the creation of such prints, it seems likely that the production of an engraving of the Liberian senate was the ultimate, though unrealized goal of Griffin's and Washington's work. This likelihood is further supported by Griffin's inclusion of a key identifying the twelve specific individuals depicted, recalling the publication by Doney and Whitehorne of a key to *United States Senate Chamber*.<sup>81</sup> That Griffin's watercolor was meant to be a study for another work is further suggested upon close scrutiny of the picture, which reveals the presence of light outlines of some of the figures, presumably evidence of the artist's sketches (fig. 5.32).

If Griffin's watercolor was indeed intended as a study for a popular engraving, it is possible that the scene was – like contemporaneous American examples – meant to commemorate an important moment in Liberia's history, perhaps Liberia's annexation of Maryland in Liberia, the MSCS' former colony that had itself become an independent republic in 1854. Although the annexation did not officially occur until April of 1857, the move had been discussed in early February after the Marylanders appealed to President Benson for the Republic's help defending themselves from an impending attack by neighboring Africans.<sup>82</sup> The annexation marked one of the most important moments in Liberia's early history as a republic, representing its potential to expand beyond its original borders.

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<sup>81</sup> See "Key to the engraving of the U.S. Senate Chamber," *American Philosophical Society Digital Library*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://diglib.amphilsoc.org/islandora/object/graphics:7807>.

<sup>82</sup> Campbell, *Maryland in Africa*, 233-34, 236.

Whether or not the unrealized engraving would have commemorated the entrance of Maryland in Liberia into the Republic of Liberia, at the very least it would have emphasized to the American public that Liberia's government was functioning smoothly after its first major change in executive power. President Roberts had served as Liberia's president from 1848 to 1856, when he was succeeded by his vice president, Stephen Allen Benson. The successful leadership transition signaled the stability of the Republic and could have been among the reasons Griffin and others might have set out to produce an engraving of the Liberian senate in late 1856 or early 1857.

It is not clear whether Washington produced these eleven daguerreotypes before or after Griffin made his watercolor of the Liberian senate. The watercolor depicts most of the eleven figures in roughly the same poses as the daguerreotypes, with the exception that they are facing the opposite directions.<sup>83</sup> This reversal is most noticeable in the two figures seated in profile on either side of Vice-President Yates. Representing clerk Chauncy Hicks and Secretary J. B. Yates, they are both depicted facing the opposite direction as they are in Washington's daguerreotypes (figs. 5.9, 5.10). The pictorial reversal of Griffin's and Washington's images was undoubtedly a result of the fact that daguerreotypes capture laterally-reversed, mirror images of their subjects. When an engraving is made using a daguerreotype, the image is mirrored again, essentially undoing the initial reversal that appears in the daguerreotype.<sup>84</sup> Although mirror attachments could be used during the photographic process to return the reversed image to its original orientation, this was not done with Washington's images, perhaps because

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<sup>83</sup> Scruggs, "'The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here'," 193.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 193-94.

the daguerreotypist was anticipating that the engraver's work would in effect fix the reversal.<sup>85</sup>

If Washington's daguerreotype studies were made before the watercolor, then Griffin certainly worked from them in creating his scene, intentionally reversing the sitters' positions in anticipation of the reversal that would take place during the engraving process. Yet it is also possible that Griffin created all or part of his composition before Washington made the daguerreotypes, perhaps later adding detail to the subjects' faces after seeing those daguerreotypes. If this was the case, then Washington posed each of his sitters to replicate their positions in Griffin's picture, knowing that the daguerreotype's reversal of their poses would ultimately be fixed in the engraving process. Whichever was the case, Washington clearly posed his sitters in anticipation of their later lateral reversal by the engraver. This is especially evident in the daguerreotype of Senator Royce (fig. 5.7), captured in the act of making an oath or casting a vote. In Griffin's translation of the portrait (fig. 5.33), Royce's right hand is appropriately raised. In posing for Washington, Royce indeed raised his right hand, but because the daguerreotype laterally reverses its subject, it appears that Royce is raising his left hand. An experienced daguerreotypist, Washington was certainly aware that this reversal would occur. In fact, when photographing John Brown (fig. 5.17) a decade earlier in Hartford, Connecticut, Washington had the subject raise his left arm so that in the finished daguerreotype, it would appear that the arm raised was his right one.<sup>86</sup> If his portrait of Royce had been intended as an end in itself, Washington likely would have directed the sitter to raise his

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 194.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 193-94.



left hand, but Washington was instead evidently intending for the image to later be reversed, likely in the engraving process.

Griffin's watercolor of the Liberian senate and Washington's corresponding eleven daguerreotypes offer a revealing window into the desires of Liberia's elite political class less than a decade after independence. For Scruggs, the joint visual project undertaken by Griffin and Washington reflects their efforts to present Liberia as an "egalitarian reflection" of the United States rather than simply a "heterotopic inversion" of it.<sup>87</sup> Yet the question remains of how these artists' efforts would have been translated into a popular engraving had one indeed been produced.

### **Views of Liberia in the American Print Press**

If an engraving of the Liberian Senate had been published, it certainly would have fed the ACS' growing demand for seemingly authentic and reproducible images of the Liberian republic emphasizing its likeness to the United States. Liberia's resemblance to the United States had been a central theme in written descriptions of the colony ever since its establishment. One emigrant wrote in 1827 that, "Monrovia looks now like many many little towns in America, with nice stone or frame buildings, well painted or white-washed and can be seen to a considerable distance from sea." According to him, Liberia was "as happy a little community as any town you will find of its size in America or Europe."<sup>88</sup> Colonization promoters also spoke often of Liberia's potential to become

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>88</sup> Francis Devaney, "Testimony of Colonists," *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 8 (Oct., 1827): 250, in Herman, "Settler Houses," in Belcher et al., 146-147.

like the United States. “We are the guardians of a nation in the bud,” declared one colonizationist in 1828, “a miniature of this republic, a coloured America on the shores of Africa.”<sup>89</sup> Descriptions like this one emphasized the United States’ parental relationship to Liberia, casting the latter as a diminutive, infantile version of America.

In the 1850s, American descriptions of Liberia as a “miniature” United States became particularly ubiquitous as American magazines and newspapers sought to present readers with a picture of Liberia as an independent black nation. In 1858, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* described “this remote and almost unknown republic” of Liberia as “a parody upon our own.”<sup>90</sup> In the colonization press, as well, Liberia was treated as a reproduced, diminutive version of America. An 1854 article in the *Repository* entitled “The African America” called Liberia “a photograph of the United States. The lights are negative: the forms and outlines the same, though in miniature.” Continuing the photographic metaphor, the article described how, “the still ocean of the tropics reflects to her [America] a dark-browed image of herself.”<sup>91</sup> Here, Liberia becomes a mirror of the United States, different only in the skin color of its citizens. Like a photographic negative, Liberia is imagined to replicate America’s image, becoming miniature and “dark-browed” in the process.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> C. C. Harper to American Colonization Society, *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 3, no. 1 (Jan., 1828): 325, in Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, introduction page.

<sup>90</sup> “A Tour in Liberia”, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (Jul. 24, 1858): 123.

<sup>91</sup> “The African America,” *The African Repository* 30, no. 5 (May, 1854): 157 (reprinted from the *Journal of Commerce*, March 13, 1854).

<sup>92</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 1.

The first decade after Liberia's transition to independence coincided with a steep rise in the availability of cheap, reproducible imagery in the American print press. As Joshua Brown has noted, pictorial journalism took off in these years, as revolutions in print technology led to the founding of popular illustrated newspapers such as *Frank Leslie's*.<sup>93</sup> The colonization press took advantage of these developments in mass-market illustration, as well. In 1855, the *New-York Colonization Journal* began including woodcut images in every issue, and other colonization periodicals began including more frequent illustrations also. In producing illustrations of Liberia, American publishers frequently recycled previously circulated imagery, often originally made by the ACS or its auxiliaries. As a visual counterpart to the written testimonials of settlers that colonization periodicals frequently included, colonizationists also sought the involvement of Liberian citizens in crafting illustrations of the African republic that could forward the Society's goals. Additionally, they sought to use the new technology of daguerreotypy to provide a seemingly eyewitness and authentic picture of Liberia to their American audience.

These goals combined when the ACS commissioned Washington to produce a daguerreotype view of Monrovia that could be made into a woodcut illustration for colonization publications. During his first months in Liberia, Washington was in contact with several colonization promoters in the United States who were interested in obtaining daguerreotype views of the African republic. He apparently planned to make five views of Monrovia for the Reverend John Orcutt, corresponding secretary of the Connecticut

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<sup>93</sup> Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 22.

Colonization Society (hereafter, CCS). A view of Monrovia had also been requested by the Massachusetts and New York auxiliary societies, and Philadelphia colonization supporter Benjamin Coates (the same man who sent the Whitechurch engraving to the Liberian government) had apparently asked for two views.<sup>94</sup> It is not known how many of these requests Washington was able to fulfill. During his first months in Africa, the daguerreotypist focused on studio portraits as he recovered from the “fever” that befell so many new emigrants.<sup>95</sup>

By the summer of 1854, however, Washington had produced two views of Monrovia, which he sent to Dr. Lugenbeel, then serving as ACS recording secretary in Washington, D.C.<sup>96</sup> One of these pictures captured the Liberian executive mansion, while the other was a view of Monrovia taken from the lighthouse atop the high bluff at the tip of Cape Mesurado. Both daguerreotypes are now lost, but a woodcut reproduction of the lighthouse view survives, suggesting how the original appeared (fig. 5.34). Washington apparently indicated that he would try to send another view representing the town from the perspective of the anchorage at the mouth of the Mesurado River.<sup>97</sup>

On December 2, 1854, Dr. Lugenbeel wrote to Washington, indicating that he had received the daguerreotypes and expressing his dissatisfaction with the town view. He urged Washington to indeed send another picture, “which I hope will be much better than

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<sup>94</sup> See Marcy J. Dinius, *The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 166; Johnson, “Faces of Freedom,” 270.

<sup>95</sup> See Johnson, “Faces of Freedom,” 270; Dinius, *The Camera and the Press*, 164.

<sup>96</sup> Johnson, “Faces of Freedom,” 270.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

the view of Monrovia from the lighthouse;—if not, of course, it will not be of any use to us.” Emphasizing his desires for a picture that would be “of use” to the ACS, Lugenbeel explained that, “we should like exceedingly to get a good, clear view of Monrovia from the mouth of the river or some point near... Perhaps one of the little islands might be the best position of this you can best judge. But unless you can get a good clear picture it will not answer our purpose.”<sup>98</sup> Washington soon sent another daguerreotype, this time presenting Monrovia from the anchorage. As with the first view, only a woodcut reproduction survives (fig. 5.35). This second picture apparently met with Lugenbeel’s approval, for it was soon reproduced in various ACS promotional materials, including the January, 1856 issue of the *New-York Colonization Journal*.<sup>99</sup> Eventually, Washington’s first daguerreotype of Monrovia – that showing the city from the perspective of the lighthouse atop the Cape – was also published in the *New-York Colonization Journal*.<sup>100</sup> However, the correspondence between Lugenbeel and Washington noted above reveals that, while the view from the river was judged appropriate for immediate publication, the one taken from the lighthouse did not answer the ACS’ “purpose”.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Lugenbeel to Washington, December 2, 1854, ACS records, Reel 242, Series 2, Vol. 53 through Series 2 Vol. 54, p. 131, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>99</sup> “View of Monrovia, Liberia” *New-York Colonization Journal* 6, no. 12 (Jan., 1856): 1; the picture was reproduced for other materials as well, including the *Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New-York Colonization Society* (New York: John A. Gray’s Fire-Proof Printing Office, 1856), 30. See Johnson, “Faces of Freedom,” 270.

<sup>100</sup> “Monrovia and Messurado River,” *New-York Colonization Journal* 6, no. 6 (Jun., 1856); the picture was also reproduced for the *Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New-York Colonization Society*, 31.

<sup>101</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here,’” 89-90.

A comparison of Washington's two views of Monrovia sheds light on the reasons that one met with Lugenbeel's approval while the other did not. Presenting Monrovia from the lighthouse atop the high bluff at the tip of Cape Mesurado, Washington's first picture (fig. 5.35) places the viewer at a considerable distance from the Liberian capital, where can be seen a church and other structures on Ashmun Street, with a glimpse of the river behind them. The great majority of the picture space, however, is taken up by tropical vegetation. Although Lugenbeel was not satisfied with the picture, he was certainly well aware of Cape Mesurado's heavily forested landscape. In *Sketches of Liberia*, he had described the Cape as "a bold promontory, covered with massive forest trees and dense undergrowth; except in places which have been cleared."<sup>102</sup>

In contrast, Washington's second view (fig. 5.36) – showing Monrovia from the sand bar in the river – presents an environment in which nature is completely controlled, with few details left to suggest this setting is at all tropical. Architectural details of Monrovia's buildings are more visible, highlighting the city's modernity, prosperity, and American appearance. A prominent church near the right side of the hill indicates to viewers that this is a Christian, "civilized" landscape.<sup>103</sup> The accompanying article identified many of the visible buildings, such as the Methodist Church, "a good substantial stone building"; the Methodist High School, "the large house with the double piazza"; and "the warehouses on the Messurado river and the first line of houses on

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<sup>102</sup> Lugenbeel, *Sketches of Liberia*, 9.

<sup>103</sup> My argument here builds on that of Dalila Scruggs. See Dalila Scruggs, "'Photographs to Answer Our Purposes': Representations of the Liberian Landscape in Colonization Print Culture," in Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein, eds., *Early African American Print Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 203-30.

Ashmun street, on the crest of the hill.”<sup>104</sup> The article also emphasized the veracity of the image, claiming it to be “the truest view yet obtained of Monrovia” and stating that, “to those who have visited Liberia we can safely appeal for the very minute faithfulness of the picture.”<sup>105</sup> The image was reprinted many times in colonization publications and was used as the basis for other pictures; for example, the background landscape on the 1856 PCS lifetime membership certificate illustrated by James Queen (fig. 5.36) directly copies a portion of Washington’s second view.

In requesting that Washington produce a daguerreotype view of Monrovia, Lugenbeel evidently had a preconceived image in mind, and he was no doubt accustomed to depictions of Liberia that emphasized its coastal setting.<sup>106</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, coastal views dominated images of Liberia made in this period, implicitly bringing the colonization movement into conversation with anti-slavery sentiment by suggesting Liberia to be a beacon of freedom and “civilization” on a “long-benighted” African coast ravaged by the slave trade. Yet for the ACS, Washington’s view from the anchorage was preferable for other reasons, as well. Much more than the lighthouse view, the anchorage view presented Liberia as an American setting, emphasizing the built environment of the colonists rather than the tropical environment of the Cape. Additionally, by representing Monrovia’s coastal setting, colonizationists emphasized its separation from the United States, helping to create an image of Liberia as

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<sup>104</sup> “View of Monrovia, Liberia,” 1.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here’,” 96.

a “separate but equal” American heterotopia, as Scruggs has argued.<sup>107</sup> While Washington’s second view ultimately fulfilled this ideal, his first view suggests the perspective of a settler, someone situated within the Liberian landscape itself, someone for whom the tropical environment was a very real and unavoidable aspect of everyday life.

Suggesting the tensions between the ACS’ ideal vision of Liberia and settlers’ lived experience upon arriving there, Washington’s two views of Monrovia were produced at a time when the daguerreotypist was himself becoming more aware of, and vocal about, the challenges and contradictions of the colonization project. In a letter to Reverend Orcutt of the CCS dated February 8, 1854, Washington described his arrival and initial impressions of Liberia. He quickly “saw that the people here live in a style of ease, comfort and independence at which they can never expect to arrive in the States.”<sup>108</sup> He spoke of tropical splendor as well as his “first attack of fever”.<sup>109</sup> He also wrote of his success in the daguerreotype business. Charging “\$3 for the cheapest picture”, he explained that, “when I am able to work I go to my room and take some 20, 30 or 40 dollars worth of pictures a day.”<sup>110</sup> Yet he also warned that emigrants should not come to Liberia empty-handed. “I cannot encourage any body to come here who has not something of his own to depend on, aside from the aid he gets from the Society.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 1. My argument about Washington’s two views also builds on that of Scruggs. See *ibid*, 89-154.

<sup>108</sup> Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 199.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 199-200.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



Describing Liberia as “a country in which enterprising and industrious men can soon become rich,” Washington stressed that, “a man needs only a little capital, and that in goods, and he can get along well. But if he does not have something to do with his own it will go hard with him.”<sup>112</sup> Invoking a photograph metaphor and implying the ACS’ tendency to idealize conditions in Liberia, he declared that, “there is no use in covering up the dark parts of the picture.”<sup>113</sup>

The ACS published Washington’s letter to Orcutt in the June, 1854 issue of the *Repository*. It included a note acknowledging the author’s “intellect and good sense” but also rejecting his advice to emigrants about needing capital upon emigrating:

In one thing, however, we think Mr. Washington’s conclusion is rather hasty—that is, in not encouraging anybody to emigrate to Liberia with a [*sic*] capital. While we think it very desirable that every person emigrating to a distant country, should have ‘something of his own to depend on;’ yet, in view of the fact, that emigrants to Liberia, in indigent circumstances, are supported months after their arrival, and are furnished sufficient land for their support, if properly cultivated... and also in view of the fact, that many of the most prosperous citizens of Liberia arrived there with no other dependence than the aid they received from the Society; we would not discourage any person from emigrating simply because he might not have money in his pocket or goods to sell.<sup>114</sup>

Claiming that any emigrant, no matter how impoverished to begin with, could “live in ease, comfort and independence” provided they were willing to “go work”, the ACS’ note rejected the criticisms of Washington’s letter, essentially “covering up the dark parts of the picture” after all.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 200-201.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted and discussed in Dinius, *The Camera and the Press*, 164-65.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Ibid, 165.

Washington grew increasingly concerned about the hardships on the ground in Liberia and the ACS' refusal to accurately convey those to American observers. He spoke out about these doubts in a letter dated June 27, 1854, which was published six months later in the *Frederick Douglass Paper* and subsequently reprinted in the *New York Tribune*.<sup>116</sup> Entitled, "Liberia as It Is", Washington's letter emphasized that there were problems in Liberia that "no one has made known to the American public."<sup>117</sup> Washington criticized settlers' dependence on the indigenous Africans for survival. "When they [the natives] 'kick up a row' (which often happens) and make war among themselves, we can get no meat, sometimes for months."<sup>118</sup> In a similar vein, he expressed his concerns about the way the ACS and the ruling Liberian elite interacted with the natives, who "are not found in our schools, and seldom in our churches."<sup>119</sup> As he described, "While they [the ACS and Liberian elite] give no encouragement to educate among them [the natives], fearing they will get power some day, they sell them any quantity of muskets with which to blow out our brains."<sup>120</sup> Washington also decried "the sufferings of Southern emigrants after their arrival here," for whom food and provisions were often scarce and medical care ever scarcer.<sup>121</sup> He spoke of the "paucity of

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<sup>116</sup> Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 202.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 200.

physicians” in Liberia and the fact that the few doctors who were there gave almost all their attention to the wealthier class of emigrants.<sup>122</sup>

Yet Washington was not totally disparaging. “Some of my friends write me and inquire how I like the country,” he explained. “I may say, on the whole, first rate, and if I did not, I could return to the States to morrow, \$1,000 better off than when I came here six or seven months ago.”<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, he maintained his earlier advice that settlers come to Liberia not penniless but with cash or saleable goods in hand. “I invite my friends to come to Liberia,” he wrote, “but take care to have some little means to start with. You can earn it in American easier than in Africa—Where one succeeds with nothing, twenty suffer and die, leaving no mark of their existence.”<sup>124</sup>

The tensions between the ACS’ ideal, uncomplicated vision of Liberia and Washington’s more critical but still hopeful experience of the republic are reflected in the daguerreotypist’s two landscape views of Monrovia. While the experiences of settlers on the ground varied and were often extremely challenging, the ultimate picture that the ACS presented for American observers was an edited one, placing Liberia and those in it at a safe distance not only from the United States but often also from reality.

### **Picturing the Presidential Mansion**

The pictorial revolution in the United States led to the rapid circulation of particular images of Liberia in both colonization print culture and the American press

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 212.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

more broadly. Such images frequently emphasized Liberia's status as a republic nearly identical to the United States except for the skin color of its citizens. A good example illustrated the frontispiece of the Reverend Philip Slaughter's 1855 pro-colonization tract, *The Virginian History of African Colonization*. Entitled "President's House, Monrovia" the woodcut depicted the executive mansion of Liberia's first president, Joseph Jenkins Roberts (fig. 5.37). The picture was not original to Slaughter's book but had been circulating through the American and British press since 1853, when it first appeared in the *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, a British periodical published in both London and New York.<sup>125</sup> The original source for the woodcut, produced by the London engraver T. Williams, is not known. In these years, however, the governments of Liberia and Great Britain maintained a strong relationship, Britain being the first Western power to recognize Liberia as a legitimate nation.<sup>126</sup> The supportive diplomatic relationship that existed between the two countries presumably resulted in a representation of Roberts' house reaching London in the early 1850s and ultimately providing the basis for Williams' woodcut. Over the next two years, the same picture appeared in at least three American publications: *The National Magazine* in 1854, *The New-York Colonization Journal* in 1855, and Slaughter's book.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, at least three other, altered versions of the scene were published around the same period.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> "The President's House at Monrovia," *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* 2, no. 8 (New York: Alexander Montgomery, 1853): 96.

<sup>126</sup> Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, 136, 280.

<sup>127</sup> See "President Roberts—The Republic of Liberia," 204; Disosway, "The Republic of Liberia," 1; Slaughter, *The Virginian History of African Colonization*, frontispiece.

<sup>128</sup> Two of these were lithographs, one made by Wagner & McGuigan of Philadelphia to accompany Lynch's report for the senate (fig. 5.39) and another titled "Mansion-House of President

“President’s House, Monrovia” seemed almost to suggest that Joseph Roberts had brought Virginia’s genteel landscape with him when he left Norfolk for Africa in 1829. An Italianate, five-bay brick home with an arcaded veranda stands at the center of the scene. Surrounding the building is a manicured landscape of tasteful vegetation and finely dressed passersby. The picture presents a recognizably American setting with the exception of a few notable details: namely, the prominent palm tree anchoring the woodcut’s right border, the trio of indigenous Africans in the foreground, and the dark skin color of all the figures in the scene, together suggesting a microcosm of Liberian society.

In the mid-1850s, the American press garnished more attention on President Roberts’ house than on any other structure in the Liberian republic. “Among the most conspicuous edifices” in the capital city, explained one article, “is the elegant and substantial mansion of President Roberts—a two-story brick dwelling, with out-buildings, and located directly opposite the old government house, near the center of town.”<sup>129</sup> The *New-York Colonization Journal* reported that the mansion’s roof was “covered with zinc” and its “window frames of iron imported from England.”<sup>130</sup> Although neither an original floor plan nor any early renderings of the mansion’s interior are known to survive, written accounts suggest the house was as impressive on the inside

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Roberts” produced by A. Hoen & Co. of Baltimore. The third version appeared as an illustration in *Frank Leslie’s* in 1868. See “The Republic of Liberia, West Africa,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (Dec. 26, 1868): 235.

<sup>129</sup> See “President Roberts—The Republic of Liberia,” 202; Disosway, “The Republic of Liberia,” 2.

<sup>130</sup> “A View in Ashmun Street, Monrovia, West Africa,” *New-York Colonization Journal* 5, no. 11 (Nov., 1855): 1.

as it was on the outside. It was reported that, “the presidential mansion, like many other houses in Monrovia, is comfortably and elegantly furnished, the owner living in a style of ease, refinement, and affluence.”<sup>131</sup> One visitor recorded seeing “folding doors, walls hung with oil portraits, a tapestry carpet, embroidered curtains, and numerous books and ornaments.”<sup>132</sup> Captain H. Y. Purviance, commander of the U.S. Ship *Marion*, wrote that, “the President’s house is fitted up splendidly. I was ushered into a room about 45 feet long and 28 feet wide, covered with a Turkey Carpet, mahogany chairs and sofas, two centre tables covered with books and flowers in the midst, and portraits of his Excellency, wife and daughter.”<sup>133</sup> Included among the mansion’s interior furnishings was a twelve-foot long walnut table, a gift from Queen Victoria of England (fig. 5.38).<sup>134</sup>

A slightly altered, lithograph version of the picture was also produced by Wagner & McGuigan in late 1853 or 1854 as one of the illustrations released to accompany Commander Lynch’s official naval report (fig. 5.39). In his report, Lynch gave little detail about the mansion, but he did note that it was “the most imposing building” in Monrovia.<sup>135</sup> The primary difference between Wagner and McGuigan’s version of the scene and the woodcut (fig. 5.37) circulating through the popular press concerns the foreground figures, altered to better represent Lynch’s descriptions of Monrovia’s

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<sup>131</sup> See “President Roberts—The Republic of Liberia,” 202; Disosway, “The Republic of Liberia,” 2.

<sup>132</sup> Quoted in Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 73.

<sup>133</sup> “Letter from Captain H. Y. Purviance,” *The African Repository* 29, no. 9 (Sept., 1853): 272.

<sup>134</sup> “In pictures: Liberia’s museum,” *BBC News* (May 18, 2005), accessed January 5, 2016, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_pictures/4556849.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/4556849.stm).

<sup>135</sup> Senate Exec. Doc., 350.

inhabitants. Wearing the latest American fashions, most of the figures recall Lynch's descriptions of the fine dress of Monrovia's citizens.<sup>136</sup> Lynch also described the appearance of the native Africans roaming Monrovia's streets: "the most indifferently clad wore a long loose shirt, but their heads and legs were bare." Accordingly, the native Africans in the picture are easily identifiable by their dress. Additionally, the native in the central foreground, who carries an open book in his left hand, was clearly inspired by Lynch's description of an African he observed who was "reading apparently a book which he held before him as he walked."<sup>137</sup> Although this indigenous African has not yet adopted the "civilized" fashions of the American colonists around him, his ability to read suggests he is receiving a "proper" Christian education thanks to the benevolent influence of the American settlers around him.

The woodcut version of the picture (fig. 5.37) gave even greater attention to presenting Liberia as a landscape of civility with a noticeable social hierarchy. A trio of native Africans, clearly recognizable by their attire, form the obvious underclass of this Monrovia landscape. Their inclusion here was no doubt inspired by frequent descriptions of the native Africans' supposed subservience to the American settlers. According to one traveler, "all the American negroes have a number of the natives attached to their families, who act as servants and perform all the drudgery. The streets are full of these fellows, who walk about in their native costume—and native dignity."<sup>138</sup> Wearing top

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> George Brooks, "A. A. Adler's Journal of a Visit to Liberia in 1827," *Liberian Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (1968): 60, in Herman, "Settler Houses," in Belcher et al., 145.

hats and petticoats, the rest of the figures strolling and conversing in front of President Roberts' house are clearly members of the Americo-Liberian elite. The extent to which their activities are based on Euro-American notions of gentility is evident in the depiction of the male and female settler on horseback. In reality, there were few horses in Liberia because of their vulnerability to the West African disease environment.<sup>139</sup> While the depiction of the two figures on horseback was not based in accuracy, it nevertheless fed an image of Liberia's American settlers as having the ability to attain the same ideals of elite leisure as affluent equestrian gentry in the United States.

To some American observers, such an image of affluence and material display among blacks was uncomfortable. One traveller to Monrovia in 1860 acknowledged Liberian society's "degree of refinement and taste", noting that, "an aristocracy of means and education is already set up." At the same time, he disapproved of settlers' pretensions: "The people generally dress above their means, extravagantly so, and the quantity of kid gloves and umbrellas displayed on all occasions does not promise well for a nation whose hope rests on hard and well developed muscles."<sup>140</sup> That such a scene would have been shocking to many Americans only further supported the ACS' desire to prove to its American constituency that in and only in Liberia could black Americans attain the same ideals of civic freedom and material comforts reserved for whites in the United States.

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<sup>139</sup> Dalila Scruggs, "Colonization Pictures as Primary Documents: Virginians' Contributions," *Virginia Emigrants to Liberia Project*, accessed December 22, 2015, <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/liberia/pages/scruggs.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Charles W. Thomas, *Adventures and Observations on the West Coast of Africa and Its Islands* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1860), in Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, 151.



“President’s House, Monrovia” presented a stark contrast to typical images of black space circulating through 1850s American visual culture. Whether set on Southern plantations or the auction block, such representations usually focused on the enslaved condition of the vast majority of African Americans in the United States. One of the most famous depictions of slave life produced in the 1850s was Eastman Johnson’s *Negro Life at the South* (1859, fig. 5.40). As the art historian John Davis had demonstrated, Johnson’s painting depicted slavery ambiguously, appealing to both abolitionists and pro-slavery activists.<sup>141</sup> Yet regardless of how the politics of slavery were implicated in the picture, the sharp contrast between *Negro Life at the South* and “President’s House, Monrovia” is revealing. Johnson’s painting is practically an inventory of antebellum romantic slave stereotypes: the content banjo player at the scene’s center, the flirtatious mulatto woman on the left edge of the picture, and the unkempt yet seemingly happy children frolicking through this dingy back alley landscape of Washington, D.C.<sup>142</sup> The representation of elegant black space in “President’s House, Monrovia” could not be more different. Not only do the woodcut’s Americo-Liberian characters wear the latest American fashions, they are now free to move about the landscape in a new way. No longer confined to the plantations and grungy urban yards of black space in America, they now claim ownership over the open, genteel spaces of the Liberian capital.

Another woodcut entitled “A View in Ashmun Street, Monrovia, West Africa”, published in *The New-York Colonization Journal* in November of 1855, provides a better

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<sup>141</sup> John Davis, “Eastman Johnson’s *Negro Life at the South* and Urban Slavery in Washington, D.C.” *Art Bulletin* 80, no. 1 (Mar., 1998): 67.

<sup>142</sup> For more analysis of *Negro Life at the South* within the context of slavery in Washington, D.C., see *ibid.*, 67-92.

sense of the mansion's setting (fig. 5.41).<sup>143</sup> Occupying the central position in this woodcut, the executive mansion is recognizable by its first-story colonnaded portico. Since the production of the earlier woodcut, the building's second story piazza has now been covered, granting its facade the basic appearance it would retain for the rest of the nineteenth century. Roberts' dwelling was located on Ashmun Street, in the civic heart of Monrovia, situated between the homes of two other prominent Liberian citizens. Both of these structures are visible in "A View of Ashmun Street". On the picture's right border is the home of the Reverend Anthony Williams, a former Lieutenant Governor of Liberia who, according to *The New-York Colonization Journal*, had "for nearly thirty years... maintained a blameless Christian life in Liberia."<sup>144</sup> Built in 1832, Reverend Williams' home was apparently being used to house various Liberian politicians at the time the woodcut was published.<sup>145</sup> To the left of Roberts' home is the dwelling of Dr. Samuel F. McGill, brother of Urias McGill's brother and the same man who had supplied Latrobe with a sketch of Cape Palmas two decades earlier.<sup>146</sup> McGill's home is also visible in "President's House, Monrovia". The structure situated just past McGill's house in "A View in Ashmun Street" represents the Methodist Episcopal High School.<sup>147</sup>

Despite the fact that the Liberian executive mansion was situated in the civic and cultural center of Monrovia, "President's House, Monrovia" implied a more rural setting

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<sup>143</sup> "A View in Ashmun Street, Monrovia, West Africa," 1.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

than was actually the case. The woodcut suggested the kind of setting frequently depicted in the mid-nineteenth century by Romantic cottage architects like Andrew Jackson Downing. Downing's *Victorian Cottage Residences*, published four times between 1842 and 1852, included a plan for "A Villa in the Italian Style" (fig. 5.42), which resembled the woodcut of the Liberian executive mansion not only in the architecture of the structure depicted, but also in the house's picturesque setting, which included trees framing the scene and genteel figures strolling in the foreground.<sup>148</sup> The same ideals of American cottage architecture informed the design for a group of prefabricated "model cottages" commissioned by the ACS to be shipped to Liberia in the mid-1850s, reflecting how the organization sought to construct a Liberian built environment defined by American cottage design idioms popular in this period (fig. 5.43).<sup>149</sup> In suggesting that Roberts' home resembled a rural estate or genteel plantation, the woodcut distorted the mansion's actual setting within a congested thoroughfare. As a later nineteenth-century

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<sup>148</sup> Alexander Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences* (New-York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1842), between pp. 150 and 151; reprinted in Alexander Jackson Downing, *Victorian Cottage Residences* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1981), opposite p. 140.

<sup>149</sup> Sometime around 1856, the ACS hired Boston architect Luther Briggs, Jr. to design a prefabricated "model cottage" whose pieces could be shipped to Liberia and there erected. The Boston firm of Flint & Kent was hired as contractors for the project, appointed to produce and ship the materials for these cottages, the exact number of which was not recorded. Flint & Kent's contract with the ACS reveals that the cottages would be framed with "good sound pine or spruce lumber" and that their roofs were to be made of "good sound Hemlock boards" with cedar shingles. The contractors also committed to provide "all the weather and corner boards and Architraves for the doors and windows," partitions "of good pine or spruce," floors of the same material, staircases, interior and exterior doors "with suitable bull hinges, and Mortice Locks and mineral Knobs, pieces of hard pine or Eastern Spruce to be furnished for the thresholds," and "Window frames, made of boards, with plank sills in a neat substantial manner," along with good American or German glass. Accompanying the contract was Briggs' plan for these model cottages (fig. 5.44), showing a two-story structure that was perhaps intended to hold two families. The first story consisted of two living rooms, each 12.5 square feet and with its own entrance and stairway to the second level. A chamber of the same size was located above each living room. Although it is not known where in Liberia these "model cottages" were constructed or exactly how many were built, Briggs' design provides insight into how the ACS wanted the Liberian built environment to appear. See American Colonization Society records, microform series VI, vol. 12, reel 311, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

photograph of Ashmun Street reveals, the setting for Roberts' home hardly made it qualify for the status of a rural villa; in fact, Roberts owned a coffee plantation on the outskirts of the city that was far more rural than his city home.<sup>150</sup> Yet by portraying the mansion in what appeared to be a countryside landscape, colonization promoters suggested that in Liberia, African Americans could attain the same ideals of property ownership and countryside leisure as landed whites in the United States.

In rendering the mansion's setting more rural than it was in reality and in emphasizing the elite status of the figures in its foreground, "President's House, Monrovia" also clearly drew from the traditions of American house portraiture, particularly portraits of the homes of famous citizens. The mid-1850s American interest in visual and written descriptions of President Roberts' mansion paralleled the growing popularity in the United States of pictures of Mount Vernon, George Washington's estate on the banks of the Potomac River in Northern Virginia.<sup>151</sup> A good example of the popularity of Mount Vernon in American visual culture at midcentury is Currier & Ives' *The Home of Washington* (fig. 5.44). The symbolic importance of Mount Vernon in nineteenth-century American culture cannot be understated. As Lydia Mattice Brandt explains, "with few significant edifices in the new republic, it served as more than the home of the Washington family; just as Washington represented the nation, so did his

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<sup>150</sup> Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*, Second Edition, vol. 1, to 1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 155.

<sup>151</sup> For more on this topic, see Maurie D. McInnis, "The Most Famous Plantation of All: The Politics of Painting Mount Vernon," in *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art*, eds. Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hoffius (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 86-114.

house.”<sup>152</sup> “President’s House, Monrovia” was in visual conversation with popular nineteenth-century images of Mount Vernon, identifying the house of Liberia’s first president as having deep symbolic and national significance to the Liberian republic similar to the meaning Washington’s home held for Americans.

As the frontispiece illustration in Slaughter’s *The Virginian History of African Colonization*, the woodcut was set opposite the title page, which included a quotation that effectively provided a caption for the scene. “Africa gave to Virginia, a Savage and a Slave,” it read, “Virginia gives back to Africa a Citizen and a Christian.”<sup>153</sup> Originally spoken by the politician Henry A. Wise at an 1838 meeting of the Virginia Colonization Society, the quotation encapsulated the triumphal ideals of many white colonization supporters in the antebellum period, particularly when the word “Virginia” is expanded to refer to the United States as a whole.<sup>154</sup> Wise’s statement suggested that slavery and Liberian colonization were critical steps in a broader narrative of racial uplift that began and ended in Africa, and whose heroes were ultimately benevolent American slave-owners. On the opposite page, the woodcut of Roberts’ home visualized the culmination of such a narrative. No longer “savages” or slaves, black Americans enjoy life as Christian citizens of a modern republic, an American setting in Africa. Produced at a time when sectional conflict over slavery increasingly threatened the stability of the United

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<sup>152</sup> Lydia Mattice Brandt, “Early Views of Mount Vernon,” *Mount Vernon Digital Encyclopedia*, accessed December 22, 2015, <http://www.mountvernon.org/research-collections/digital-encyclopedia/article/early-views-of-mount-vernon/>.

<sup>153</sup> Slaughter, *The Virginian History of African Colonization*, title page.

<sup>154</sup> For the original quotation, see “Virginia Colonization Society,” *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 14, no. 4 (Apr., 1838): 123.

States, “President’s House, Monrovia” presented an ideal, even radical vision of black freedom and a separate, unified nationhood seemingly only possible in Liberia.

“President’s House, Monrovia” in effect imagined for American observers how a landscape successfully governed by blacks might appear. With the exception of the palm tree to indicate the mansion’s tropical location, the only obvious detail that distinguishes this setting from one in the United States is that all of its inhabitants – both elite and underclass – are black. Indeed, the publication of this woodcut was frequently accompanied by text that highlighted Liberia’s status as an independent nation like the United States, but governed and inhabited by blacks instead of whites. The front page of the January, 1855 issue of *The New-York Colonization Journal* presented the picture, at the same time announcing that, “the capacity of the colored man for self-government is no longer problematic, but is fully demonstrated by the Republic of Liberia.”<sup>155</sup>

“Residence of President Roberts” gave visual form to the idea that Liberia was an American setting in Africa, at the same time presenting the establishment of Liberia as the pinnacle in a divinely-ordained transformation of the African race.

### **Americo-Liberian Settler Architecture**

Presenting the executive mansion as an American setting transplanted to Africa, “President’s House, Monrovia” complemented colonizationists’ written descriptions of the material landscape emigrants could expect to find upon reaching Monrovia. In *Sketches of Liberia*, Lugenebeel described how, “the dwellings of many of the citizens of

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<sup>155</sup> Disosway, “The Republic of Liberia,” 1.

Monrovia are not only comfortably, but elegantly, and some of them richly, furnished, and some of the residents of this bustling metropolis live in a style of ease and affluence, which does not comport with the contracted views of those persons, who regard a residence in Africa as necessarily associated with the almost entire privation of the good things of this life.”<sup>156</sup> Descriptions of Monrovia frequently noted its orderly street plan, neat gardens, and American appearance. Lugenbeel described how the city “is laid off with as much regularity as the location will allow; and the streets, of which there are about fifteen in number, have received regular names.”<sup>157</sup> Another traveller described how, “the town is regularly laid out, with wide streets, intersected by cross streets at right angles, and are shaded in some places with the orange, the mango, plum, and other tropical trees.”<sup>158</sup> Emphasizing the permanence and tasteful appearance of Monrovia’s architecture, Lugenbeel described the houses as “generally one story or a story and a half high: some are two full stories. Many of them are substantially built of stone or brick; and some of the best houses are built partly of both these materials.”<sup>159</sup>

In descriptions of Liberia’s built environment, particular structures were frequently mentioned, such as the state-house, which Lugenbeel described as, “a large stone building, which was erected in 1843-4, at an expense of nearly five thousand dollars.”<sup>160</sup> Upon visiting Monrovia, the Reverend Rambo reported that “the public

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<sup>156</sup> Lugenbeel, *Sketches of Liberia*, 9-10.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>158</sup> “Colonization—Liberia” (from the *New-York Spectator*), *The African Repository* 27, no. 10 (Oct., 1851): 310.

<sup>159</sup> Lugenbeel, *Sketches of Liberia*, 9.

<sup>160</sup> Lugenbeel, *Sketches of Liberia*, 9.

buildings in Monrovia are three stone churches, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian; a court house and jail, both of stone, a frame government house, a stone market house, a frame female asylum, and a light-house of wood and stone on the promontory.”<sup>161</sup> He also noted the presence of “several commodious stores near the wharves, partly of stone and partly of wood.”<sup>162</sup>

The three churches that Reverend Rambo recorded seeing were frequently touted in published and private descriptions of Monrovia. Benjamin Griswold, an American seafarer who visited Monrovia in 1842, wrote in his journal that, “the Methodist Church here is of stone & a very good building – large enough to seat 500 or 600 persons perhaps. They have likewise a seminary & a building is being erected for a Female seminary. The Methodists have likewise a Native Chapel, as it is termed, where they hold religious services for the good of the natives who reside near them and among them. This service is held on sabbath evening – sometimes 30-40 or 50 attend.”<sup>163</sup> For these writers, the presence of well-attended Christian churches spoke to the high moral character of settlers as well as their freedom to worship according to their own conscience. Whereas settlers hailing from northern cities may have had some experience with organized black churches, many of those from the South had not had the opportunity to participate in organized religion beyond the plantation, much less to serve as leaders in the church.<sup>164</sup> As Bronwin Everill explains, “membership in a formal church was a new concept for

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<sup>161</sup> “Colonization—Liberia,” 310.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Journal of Benjamin Griswold, 22 January 1842, p. 37, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

<sup>164</sup> Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 60.



many of the settlers who had emigrated as newly freed slaves,” and thus “the church was one of the centre pieces of settler life, with evening prayer meetings, regular revivals, and a strictly observed Sabbath.”<sup>165</sup> Former slaves such as Samson Ceasar, who had emigrated from Buchanan, Virginia, felt that in Liberia he could participate in religious life and serve God in ways he had not been able to in the United States. In a letter home, he wrote that although he had attempted to fulfill his religious duties in America, “the people in Buchannon Stood in my way in trying to Serve god.”<sup>166</sup>

While colonization promotional material focused on the neat and attractive appearance of the Liberian landscape, the descriptions of other visitors were sometimes less positive. Missionary Thomas J. Bowen wrote that Monrovia presented “a straggling bush-grown weatherbeaten appearance, similar to some old towns in Mexico.”<sup>167</sup> And in his journal, seafarer Benjamin Griswold wrote that, “the appearance of Monrovia as you enter its harbor from the North west would be charming – but being nothing but a collection of a few miserable huts – with a few exceptions only there is nothing inviting in a view from the water... Of cultivation you can scarcely speak unless you talk about things that are not nor have ever been.”<sup>168</sup>

For some visitors, the variety of housing types also revealed the sharp inequality among settlers that Washington had spoke out about after arriving in Liberia. Writing for the *Christian Recorder* in 1878, Mandeline Hildebrand acknowledged that, “many of the

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 61.

<sup>167</sup> Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours*, 31, in Herman, “Settler Houses,” in Belcher et al., 105.

<sup>168</sup> Journal of Benjamin Griswold, 22 January 1842, 36.

houses of the wealthy class of people are large and handsome. They are mostly surrounded with wide porches and verandas, which keeps them much cooler than when the sun darts its rays directly upon their sides.”<sup>169</sup> Yet Hildebrand also described how, “the dwellings of the poorer class of people are small frames containing from one to four rooms.” According to Hildebrand, “few of them are plastered or lined, and glass windows are not very plenty, a heavy wooden shutter answering all purposes for light and ventilation.”<sup>170</sup>

President Roberts’ home followed a trend among the wealthiest minority of Liberian emigrants to build ostentatious dwellings that recalled the “Big Houses” of the antebellum plantation south. Among the first buildings erected in this style sat directly opposite Roberts’ mansion and had actually been built not as a private residence but as the first government house for the colony’s white leaders. Built in 1825, one traveler described the building:

The house consisted of only two rooms on each floor, with halls between, opening on a broad verandah above as well as below; but east of it was a line of three separate buildings, making a part of the establishment when in full keeping. These were—a storehouse, on the street—behind that a small building, for the servants, and, a little further back, the kitchen, the whole being arranged on the Southern plan—of a dwelling-house distinct, with the domestic arrangements under separate roofs.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Mandeline Hildebrand, “Western Africa,” *Christian Recorder* (Apr. 25, 1878); in Herman, “Settler Houses,” in Belcher et al., 105.

<sup>170</sup> Mandeline Hildebrand, “Western Africa,” *Christian Recorder* (Mar. 7, 1878), in Herman, “Settler Houses,” in Belcher et al., 105.

<sup>171</sup> D. Francis Bacon, *Wanderings on the Seas and Shores of Africa* (New York: Joseph W. Harrison, 1843), 104-105, in Herman, “Settler Houses,” in Belcher et al., 100.

With its open-passage plan and outbuildings, the design of the state house effectively mimicked the building complexes of southern plantations.<sup>172</sup> Built by settlers, the structure's resemblance to the Big Houses of the Plantation South undoubtedly signified authority and power over the surrounding landscape.<sup>173</sup>

Although no comprehensive study of Americo-Liberian architecture has ever been conducted, Bernard L. Herman's analysis of settler building traditions in the town of Arthington, Liberia (established by African-Americans from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia in 1869-72) revealed notable patterns of architectural continuity between the plantation spaces of the American South and Liberia's settler landscape.<sup>174</sup> The houses of Liberia's most elite settlers often mimicked the appearance of Southern plantation architecture. A good example is the Joseph James Cheeseman house in Edina, Liberia (fig. 5.45). Like Monrovia's state-house, the most opulent settler homes usually contained an open-passage plan with a staircase to the upper levels.<sup>175</sup>

As Herman has noted, the center-passage plan was an adaptable feature of elite settler architecture in Liberia, varying depending on the surrounding environment and lifestyles of its occupants.<sup>176</sup> In the agricultural settlements established outside of Monrovia along the Saint Paul River, "the lower floor was divided into parlors, dining room, and sometimes sleeping chambers; the upper floors were set aside for additional

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<sup>172</sup> Herman, "Settler Houses," in Belcher et al., 100.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 95-150.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 100-101.

sleeping areas and private quarters.”<sup>177</sup> Nineteenth-century descriptions of Monrovia’s two-story dwellings suggest a slightly different division of space suited to their more urban context. One visitor described how, “the houses in Monrovia are generally two stories high, the lower one designed for servants, store-rooms, &c., being built of stone; and the upper one with bed-rooms, parlors, and piazzas for the family, built of wood.”<sup>178</sup> In appropriating the Big House architecture of the American South, the homes of wealthier settlers presented an image of American authority over the African landscape. “With their two-story verandas, stair-passage plans, symmetrical five-bay fronts, and multiple living spaces and sleeping chambers,” Herman explains, “these buildings presented the image of property and permanence sought by the majority of new immigrants.”<sup>179</sup>

The homes of most colonists were more modest in scale and design, however. An illustrated German travel narrative from 1890 included a depiction of the type of Liberian house typical of more middling emigrants (fig. 5.46).<sup>180</sup> The houses built by middling emigrants often consisted of a single story with a veranda, entry room, sleeping room, and back room; field research suggests that this back room was often subdivided into two or three smaller rooms.<sup>181</sup> The most common type of house found on the nineteenth-century Liberian landscape, however, consisted of a single room with a veranda in front

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>178</sup> Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours*, 32, in Herman, “Settler Houses,” 101.

<sup>179</sup> Herman, “Settler Houses,” in Belcher et al., 101.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 105-107.

and a lean-to in the back.<sup>182</sup> As with American vernacular architecture of the nineteenth century, this most modest type of house design on the Liberian landscape has not survived as well as the more elite homes, so less is known about these houses.<sup>183</sup>

In their letters home, colonists spoke of their plans to build bigger and better houses with hope and ambition. In 1853, settler Armistead Miller reported proudly that,

I can now tell you that I have drawn my lot in Monrovia, lot No. 433, on Broad street; a most beautiful situation, on a high place, where I can stand and see all over town; and if I am ever able to build a house on it, I can build it where the water will run off when it rains. And if I can find the means to improve my lot, it will soon be worth several thousand dollars, because it is one of the best situations, and is on the best street in town.<sup>184</sup>

Many settlers held the hope of building large plantation-style properties up the Saint Paul River, such as Sion Harris, who according to the *Repository*, “has commenced agriculture on a more enlarged scale, some distance up the river, on a beautiful site he has lately purchased—he intends erecting on it a large brick house, and the material are now being collected for the purpose.”<sup>185</sup>

Whether in town or upriver, many settlers proudly reported their success in Liberia through descriptions of their buildings and properties. Drawing on the language of masculinity so often used in colonizationists’ descriptions of Liberian colonization, settler Samuel D. Harris declared that, “when I came to Liberia, I came here to be a man amongst men. I have drawn my land, and built me a house twenty by sixteen feet, and

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 108-109.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>184</sup> “Letter from Liberia,” *The African Repository* 29, no. 4 (Apr., 1853): 126.

<sup>185</sup> “Items from the Liberia Herald,” *The African Repository* 28, no. 8 (Aug., 1852): 239.

cleared eight acres of land. I have it in arrow-root, ginger, coffee, rice, potatoes, and cassada, and are doing well. Mrs. Harris raises chickens and ducks to the amount sometimes over a hundred. I am raising sheep and goats, and carrying on my carpenter's shop too."<sup>186</sup> And settler Jasper Boush happily reported that, "I live in my own house, on my own farm of 80 acres, and eat every day of my life, provisions and bread stuff of my own raising."<sup>187</sup>

Yet while many settlers reported their material successes in Liberia, others struggled to attain these ideals, expressing their frustrations in letters home. Armistead Miller, the man proud to own a lot on Broad Street in Monrovia, was concerned because "the law of Liberia is, that I have to build a house on it within two years, with a shingled roof and plank floor; so, except I can get the means to build the house, the law will take it from me."<sup>188</sup> Even more frustrated was settler Richard McMorine, who wrote that,

I Cannot Save anything, so I Cannot Build me a good house. Now I said that the First thing that I did was to Build me a house so it was. But it was not such a one as I would like to have. When we Come to this Country we have to Build Such as we Can But After that we want a better one. So I am not able to Build me one. It will Cost Double in this Country to Build what it will in the unted Stats so to Build such a one As I would want would Cost about 700 hundred and so I Cannot Get one.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> "From Samuel Dabney Harris," *The African Repository* 27, no. 8 (Aug., 1851): 231.

<sup>187</sup> "Letter from Jasper Boush" (from the *Virginian Colonizationist*), *The African Repository* 28, no. 9 (Sept., 1852): 286.

<sup>188</sup> "Letter from Liberia," 126.

<sup>189</sup> Richard McMorine to Johnston Pettigrew, June 1858, in Bell I. Wiley, *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 277-78, in Herman, "Settler Houses," 99.

Like those of many settlers, McMorine's initial building efforts were meant to produce temporary housing that could later be replaced with something better.<sup>190</sup> Yet McMorine's words reveal the reality that many struggled to ever achieve their goal of building "a good house".

### **Guadillar Farm**

The contradictions between the American press' celebration of Liberia as an idyllic American setting in Africa and the actual, somewhat rougher, experience of landscape is reflected in an illustration published *Frank Leslie's Illustration Newspaper* in August of 1858.<sup>191</sup> Part of a series entitled, "A Tour in Liberia" the picture depicted Guadillar Farm (fig. 5.47), the home of Liberian settler William Richardson, located twelve miles up the Saint Paul River from Monrovia.<sup>192</sup> At the center of the image is a sizable two-story farmhouse seated on a hill overlooking the river, which runs through the right middle ground of the scene. Fronting the house is a manicured farmscape, in which tiny workers, livestock, and farm implements are visible. The work of the farm is supported by several additional buildings, including a group of structures placed in a straight row behind the main house. Dense tropical foliage in the immediate foreground and distant background suggests the extent to which Richardson's farm has been cleared and cultivated.

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<sup>190</sup> Herman, "Settler Houses," in Belcher et al., 97.

<sup>191</sup> "A Tour in Liberia. Guadillar Farm, St. Paul's River," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (August 21, 1858): 178.

<sup>192</sup> "A Tour in Liberia" was published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in six installments between July 24 and September 25, 1858.

The article that accompanied the illustration presented Guadillar Farm and its proprietor in highly positive terms. “In a word,” wrote the author, “Guadellar [sic] Farm is one of the pleasantest and most flourishing spots our artist saw in his tour through Liberia.” It was impressive not just for its beauty but also for its agricultural success, it being “one of the most flourishing farms in all Liberia.” According to the writer, “the manner in which his [Richardson’s] farm is laid out is a model for all, and indeed it is generally admired.”<sup>193</sup> Celebrating Richardson’s agricultural success, “Guadillar Farm” suggested that through the efforts of American settlers, the “savage” and uncontrolled landscape of Africa could be ordered and cultivated, fulfilling one of the primary goals of the colonial ethos to make land productive.

“Guadillar Farm” is troubling, however, in its similarity to American plantation scenes of this period. In depicting Guadillar Farm as a model agricultural landscape, the *Frank Leslie’s* staff of artists that produced this picture drew from the conventions of house portraiture common in the antebellum United States, particularly in the plantation South. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it was common for Southern planters to commission portraits of their properties. These images typically focused on the house of the proprietor surrounded by a manicured, expansive landscape while minimizing signs of the slave labor involved in keeping the property running.<sup>194</sup> A good example is Edward Beyer’s *Bellevue, the Lewis Homestead, Salem, Virginia* (fig. 5.48), made in 1855. The painting depicts the plantation of Andrew and Maria Lewis in Roanoke County, Virginia.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> John Michael Vlach, “Perpetuating the Past: Plantation Landscape Paintings Then and Now,” in *Landscape of Slavery*, 17.



At the center of the image is the Lewis' pristine white two-story home, which rises above the surrounding landscape, visually and literally asserting ownership and control over that space. Extending to the right of the mansion is a cluster of outbuildings, while a gesture to the agricultural productivity of the space is visible in the foreground and right middle ground of the picture, where tiny slave laborers can be seen working in the wheat fields. As John Michael Vlach notes in reference to this painting, Beyer depicted the enslaved workers "as nothing more than the reliable and necessary equipment required for a successful harvest." Furthermore, "at the minute scale with which they are rendered, they are merely tiny figures that enhance the visual prominence of the house that rises over them."<sup>195</sup>

Similar sentiments apply to "Guadillar Farm". There, the mansion house of the farm's proprietor is situated near the center of the scene, rising on a hill and visually dominating the landscape around it. Various auxiliary buildings surround the main building, from the row of outbuildings extending behind it to the structures appearing in the image's foreground. The accouterments of labor – farm equipment and people – are present but completely dwarfed by the proprietor's home and the expanse of landscape surrounding it. The notable similarity between "Guadillar Farm" and paintings like *Bellevue* is underscored by the description of Richardson's farm given in the *Frank Leslie's* article. While the writer did not use the word "plantation", his description of the property suggested just that. Most American readers of this period would have been impressed with the scale of this operation, which included "a farm-house, a sugar-house,

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 21.

seven rice-houses, and some outhouses.”<sup>196</sup> As if to downplay the labor necessary for this enterprise, which predominantly grew sugar and coffee, the writer claimed that, “such is the fertility of this soil, that, although his farm is only about one hundred acres, it produces such an abundance of crops, that Mr. Richardson is rapidly accumulating a very large fortune.”<sup>197</sup> Yet at the same time, the article indicated that to keep such a large farm running, Richardson depended on the efforts of many people: thirty to fifty settlers and sixty natives, plus an additional 70 who transported the crops to Monrovia for sale, suggesting that backbreaking labor and the resources to hire workers were a crucial element of successfully cultivating this landscape. Yet by drawing on the iconography of American plantation scenes, the image ultimately raises questions about the roles indigenous Africans were intended to play in a cultivated and “civilized” African landscape.

Indeed, some American colonists were suspected of creating a system of indigenous labor all too familiar to formerly enslaved emigrants recently emancipated from plantations in the American South. The irony of this system and its repercussions in settler society were alluded to in a letter by colonist Peyton Skipwith, who wrote to his former owner George Hartwell Cocke that, “their is Some that hav come to this place that hav got rich and anumber that are Sufering... those that are well off do hav the natives as Slavs and poor people that come from america hav no chance to make aliving for the

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<sup>196</sup> “A Tour in Liberia. Guadillar Farm, St. Paul’s River,” 178.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

nativs do all the work.”<sup>198</sup> For earnest laborers like Skipworth, the presence of an indigenous laboring underclass not only recreated American slavery but also took away precious opportunities from needy settlers. While celebrating the successful creation of a “coloured America on the shores of Africa,” “Guadillar Farm” also reflects the problematic nature of that ideal.

## Conclusion

By the late 1850s, an elite settler hegemony had been established in Liberia that would endure until the 1970s and in some cases into the present. In 1930, a League of Nations special commission determined that “the settler government of Liberia engaged in forced labor and other slave-like practices,” as David P. Forsythe has noted.<sup>199</sup> As the United States was coming to the brink of civil war over the issue of slavery, many of Liberia’s early “merchant princes” and statesmen – including Joseph Roberts and Senator Alfred Russell (fig. 5.11) – were establishing large sugar and coffee plantations on the Saint Paul River. As was the case with Guadillar Farm, the success of these enterprises generally depended on the exploitation of indigenous labor. Even Augustus Washington took up farming on the Saint Paul after a few years in Liberia. In an 1864 letter published

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<sup>198</sup> Peyton Skipwith to John Hartwell Cocke, 10 February 1834; Correspondence, Box 77, Cocke Family Papers, 1725-1939, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. Published in Randall, “*Dear Master*”, 58.

<sup>199</sup> David P. Forsythe, *Human Rights and Peace: International and National Dimensions* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 105.

in the *Repository*, he described how his farm was flourishing, producing “sugar cane, coffee, rice, cassada, potatoes” and employing 50 people.<sup>200</sup>

The first decade after Liberia’s transition to independent nationhood coincided with a rise in the availability of cheap, reproducible images in American print culture. Fascinated by the notion of a modern republic governed and inhabited completely by blacks – many of them formerly enslaved in the United States, the American press used this new technology to visualize Liberia as an Edenic “Little America” in Africa. Colonization promoters facilitated the creation and dictated the interpretation of many such images, eager to prove “the capacity of the colored man for self-government” in Liberia. They seized upon the talents of settlers like Washington and the technology of daguerreotypy in order to present a visual witness to their written claims about Liberia’s success, editing settler pictures as necessary to suit their “purposes”.

It seems likely that Griffin’s watercolor of the Liberian senate and Washington’s corresponding eleven daguerreotypes were intended as studies for a published engraving that, like other images discussed in this chapter, would have circulated in American print culture as proof of Liberia’s successful transition to independence. Yet such an engraving was never made, leaving the watercolor and daguerreotypes in a sense unfinished.<sup>201</sup> Yet on another level, they stand as perhaps clearer reflections of the promises that representative self-government held for Liberian settlers like Griffin and Washington. Never able to call themselves full citizens of the United States, these men used visual

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<sup>200</sup> Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, 223.

<sup>201</sup> Along similar lines, Scruggs notes that Washington’s daguerreotypes “required a final reversal in print in order for the message to be complete,” further discussing the implications of this. See Scruggs, “‘The Love of Liberty Has Brought Us Here,’” 193.

culture to celebrate the potential for black citizenship in their new home across the Atlantic, in the process demanding recognition as equals to whites in the United States. The pictures they created survive as reflections of the hopes they placed in a Liberian future. Whether those hopes were ever fulfilled for Griffin is unknown, as records pertaining to his life disappear after 1858. While many emigrants were ultimately disappointed that Liberia did not fulfill all the ideals that the ACS had promised it would, Washington was one of the exceptions. In one letter to the United States, he gladly proclaimed that, “I love Africa, because I can see no other spot on earth where we can enjoy so much freedom.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Quoted in Johnson, “Faces of Freedom,” 272.



**Figure 5.1**

Robert K. Griffin

Drawing of the Liberian Senate

c. 1856/1857

Watercolor, ink, and graphite

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96521350/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

**Figure 5.2**

Robert K. Griffin

*Bassua Liberia*

c. 1856

Watercolor and pencil

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/93504550/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

**Figure 5.3**

Robert K. Griffin

*Fish Town at Bassau Liberia*

c. 1856

Watercolor

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/00652570/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

**Figure 5.4**

Robert K. Griffin

Detail of fig. 5.26: Drawing of the Liberian Senate

c. 1856/1857

Watercolor, ink, and graphite

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/96521350/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**(Left): Figure 5.5**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*James Skivring Smith*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664356/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

Approximately 31 years old when he sat for this daguerreotype, Smith had emigrated from Charleston, South Carolina at the age of eight. Within his first year in Liberia, he was orphaned when his parents died of “African fever”. As a young adult, he studied medicine under ACS physician James Lugenbeel, eventually going back to the United States to further his studies before returning to Liberia and serving as ACS physician at Sinoe and later Grand Bassa. He was elected a senator for Grand Bassa County in 1855. Like many others photographed by Washington in this group, Smith served Liberia in various prominent political positions throughout his life, including Secretary of State, Vice-President, and eventually President for a short period from late 1871 to early 1872. See Shumard, “James Skivring Smith,” *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/skirvsmth.htm>.

**(Right): Figure 5.6**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*John Hanson*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664314/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

A former slave from Baltimore, John Hanson had purchased his freedom before sailing to Liberia in 1827 at the age of 36. Like many other members of Liberia’s early ruling class, Hanson became a prosperous merchant before entering politics. While Liberia was still a colony, he served on the Colonial Council, and after Liberia gained independence in 1847, he became a senator. Hanson was approximately 65 years old when he sat for this portrait with Augustus Washington. See Shumard, “John Hanson,” *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/hanson.htm>.





**(Left): Figure 5.7**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*Edward James Roye*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664425/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

A native of Newark, Ohio, Edward James Roye was raised in a prosperous African-American family. Before emigrating to Liberia in 1846, Roye attended Ohio University and was a successful businessman in Indiana. In Liberia, he built a lucrative shipping business supplying the United States and Britain with camwood, palm oil, sugar, coffee, and ivory. By 1870, he was apparently worth \$200,000. His political career began in 1849, when he was elected to the House of Representatives and also chosen as its speaker. Elected to the senate in 1856, Roye would eventually go on to serve as a Chief Justice of Liberia's Supreme Court. He was elected president of Liberia in 1869 but ultimately served less than two years in that position, being forced out due to accusations of financial corruption. See Shumard, "Edward James Roye," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/roye.htm>.

**(Right): Figure 5.8**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*Philip Coker*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664349/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

It is not clear when the Reverend Philip Coker emigrated to Liberia, but by 1852 he was engaged as a clergyman and missionary for the Methodist Episcopal Church there. Over the following decade, he worked in several regions of Liberia, eventually serving as the Church's presiding elder for the Monrovia district before his death in 1828. At public and political events, Coker frequently offered prayers and benedictions. He was serving as the chaplain of the Liberian Senate when he sat for this daguerreotype with Washington. See Shumard, "Philip Coker," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/coker.htm>.



**(Left): Figure 5.9**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*Chauncy H. Hicks*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664315/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

Born in Liberia, Chauncy H. Hicks was only about 20 years old when he posed for this daguerreotype with Washington. Hicks's father, Nugent M. Hicks, was an emancipated slave who departed Philadelphia for Liberia in 1830. Nugent eventually grew prosperous through trading and commercial ventures, becoming one of Liberia's leading "merchant princes". Chauncy was probably able to secure his position of clerk due to his powerful father's connections. See Shumard, "Chauncy H. Hicks," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/hicks.htm>.

**(Right): Figure 5.10**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*James B. Yates*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664361/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

Son of Vice-President Beverly Page Yates, James B. Yates was about eighteen when he sat for this daguerreotype with Washington. Like Hicks, James was born in the Liberian colony. He would eventually marry the Reverend Philip Coker's daughter, Margaret, becoming a widow when she died young in 1862. During the 1860s and 1870s, he was to hold several government positions including representative for Montserrado County, treasurer of Liberia under President Smith, and Liberian postmaster general. He was also an active member of Monrovia's Trinity Church, serving as church treasurer and vestryman. As was surely the case with Hicks, James' ability to secure the position of secretary was undoubtedly due to his connections with those in power, his father being the Vice-President at the time. (See Shumard, "James B. Yates," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/jyates.htm>).



**(Left): Figure 5.11**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*Alfred Francis Russell*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664354/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

Born to a white father and a mixed-race enslaved mother in Lexington, Kentucky in 1817, Russell was emancipated and sent to Liberia with his mother and four siblings at age fifteen. As a young man, he performed missionary work for the Methodist church. He built a large and successful farm on the Saint Paul River, where he had more than 8,000 coffee trees; he eventually also grew sugarcane on the property. He was active in the senate throughout the 1850s and during much of the following two decades as well. In 1881, Russell was elected Vice-President of Liberia under Anthony W. Gardner. Gardner resigned his position due to ill health in 1883, leaving Russell as president, a post he only held a short time. See Shumard, "Alfred Francis Russell," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/russell.htm>.

**(Right): Figure 5.12**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*Edward Morris*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664347/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

A former slave from Mississippi, Edward Morris emigrated to Liberia in 1838 at around the age of 26, joining the Mississippi State Colonization Society's settlement at Sinoe. Like other members of Liberia's elite ruling class, Morris grew prosperous through trade. He eventually served several terms as senator and later held the office of Superintendent of Sinoe County. See Shumard, "Edward Morris," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/morris.htm>.



**(Left): Figure 5.13**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*James Mux Priest*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664350/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

James Mux Priest was raised in slavery in Anderson County, Kentucky. His owner, Jane Anderson Meaux, educated and freed Priest, sending him to Liberia as a visitor to report back on the condition of former slaves there. After returning to the United States, he was further educated and became a Presbyterian minister, ultimately returning to Liberia, where he established Sinoe's first Presbyterian Church in 1848. For the remainder of his life, he held various religious and political leadership roles, including Vice-President and associate justice of the Supreme Court. He also assisted in establishing the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Liberia, which according to Ann Shumard, "became the most politically influential and socially prestigious organization of its kind in the country and long remained a symbol of Liberia's powerful elite." See Shumard, "James Mux Priest," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/priest.htm>.

**(Right): Figure 5.14**

Attributed to Augustus Washington

*Chancy Brown*

c. 1856/1857

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664297/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

Chancy Brown was approximately 36 years old when he sat for this daguerreotype with Washington. A former slave from North Carolina, Brown and several family members emigrated to Liberia in 1842. Once there, he initially worked as a shoemaker, but by 1856 he was serving as the Senate's sergeant-at-arms, a role that entailed maintaining order during meetings. See Shumard, "Chancy Brown," *A Durable Memento*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/cbrown2.htm>.





**Figure 5.15**

Augustus Washington  
*Eliphalet Adams Bulkeley*  
 c. 1853

Quarter-plate daguerreotype

The Connecticut Historical Society

<http://connecticuthistory.org/augustus-washington-1820-1875-african-american-daguerreotypist/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.16**

Augustus Washington  
*Sarah Taintor Bulkeley Waterman*  
 c. 1853

Sixth-plate daguerreotype

The Connecticut Historical Society

<http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/water.htm> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.17**

Augustus Washington, photographer

*John Brown*

c. 1846/1847

Quarter-plate daguerreotype

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

<http://npg.si.edu/exh/awash/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**(Left): Figure 5.18**

Rufus Anson, after Augustus Washington

*Joseph Jenkins Roberts*

c. 1854

Copy sixth-plate daguerreotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664353/> (accessed December 10, 2015)



**(Right): Figure 5.19**

Rufus Anson, after Augustus Washington

*Jane Waring Roberts*

c. 1854

Copy sixth-plate daguerreotype

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664352/> (accessed December 10, 2015)



**Figure 5.20**

Rufus Anson, after Augustus Washington

*Stephen Allen Benson*

c. 1854

Copy sixth-plate daguerreotype

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664294/> (accessed December 10, 2015)



**(Left): Figure 5.21**

Augustus Washington  
Urias Africanus McGill  
c. 1854

Hand-colored sixth-plate daguerreotype  
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664344/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

**(Right): Figure 5.22**

Augustus Washington  
Unidentified woman, possibly the wife of Urias Africanus McGill  
c. 1854

Hand-colored sixth-plate daguerreotype  
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/2004664345/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

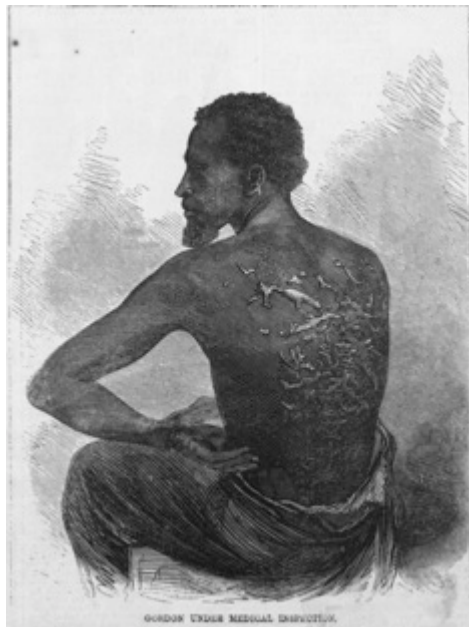


**Figure 5.23**

Unknown photographer, possibly Robert Douglass, Jr.  
Unidentified member of the Dickerson family, Philadelphia  
c. 1855

Quarter-plate daguerreotype  
Library Company of Philadelphia  
<http://lcpdams.librarycompany.org:8881/R?RN=903776826> (accessed February 25, 2016)





**Figure 5.24**

“Gordon Under Medical Inspection”

Published in *Harper's Weekly* (Jul. 4, 1863): 429

Wood engraving based on photographs by McPherson & Oliver  
 Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/89716298/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.25**

Edward Williams Clay, artist; S. Hart & Son, publishers (Philadelphia)

“Life in Philadelphia” series, plate no. 13

1829

Aquatint cartoon

Library Company of Philadelphia

<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/gallclayf.html> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.26**

Robert Whitechurch, engraver, after a drawing by Peter Frederick Rothermel  
*The United States Senate, A.D. 1850*

c. 1855

Engraving

John M. Butler and Alfred Long, publishers (Philadelphia)

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/92504428/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.27**

Unidentified artist after Augustus Theodore Frederick Adam Köllner

"Interior View of the United States Senate, at Washington, D.C."

Published in *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, c. 1852

Hand-colored wood engraving

United States Senate Collection

[http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/common/image/Ga\\_chamber\\_38\\_00051.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/common/image/Ga_chamber_38_00051.htm) (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.28**  
 Frank Leslie  
 “Opening the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of [t]he Thirty Second Congress”  
 Published in *The [New York] Illustrated News* (Jan. 1, 1853)  
 Hand-colored wood engraving  
 United States Senate Collection  
 Reprinted from *United States Senate Catalogue of Graphic Art*, 17



**Figure 5.29**  
 “The Assault in the U.S. Senate Chamber on Senator Sumner”  
 Published in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (June 7, 1856)  
 Wood engraving  
 United States Senate Collection  
[http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/common/image/Ga\\_chamber\\_38\\_00292.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/common/image/Ga_chamber_38_00292.htm) (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.30**

Thomas Doney, engraver, after a design by James Whitehorne and daguerreotypes by Edward Anthony

*United States Senate Chamber*

1849 (original, 1846)

Mezzotint engraving

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/2003666712/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.31**

Robert K. Griffin

Detail of fig. 5.1: Drawing of the Liberian Senate

c. 1856/1857

Watercolor, ink, and graphite

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/96521350/> (accessed January 7, 2016)

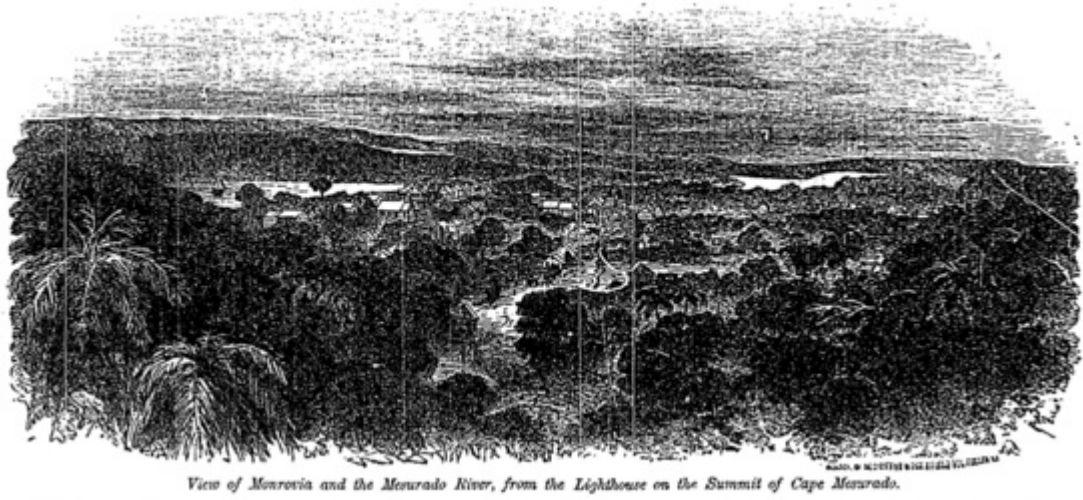




**Figure 5.32**  
 Robert K. Griffin  
 Detail of fig. 5.1: Drawing of the Liberian Senate  
 c. 1856/1857  
 Watercolor, ink, and graphite  
 Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/96521350/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.33**  
 Robert K. Griffin  
 Drawing of the Liberian Senate  
 c. 1856/1857  
 Watercolor, ink, and graphite  
 Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division  
 Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/96521350/> (accessed January 7, 2016)



*View of Monrovia and the Mesurado River, from the Lighthouse on the Summit of Cape Mesurado.*

**Figure 5.34**

After Augustus Washington

“View of Monrovia and the Mesurado River, from the Lighthouse on the Summit of Cape Mesurado”

Published in the *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New-York State Colonization Society* (New-York: John A. Gray’s Fire-Proof Printing Office, 1856), 31

Wood engraving

<https://archive.org/stream/ASPC0002361900#page/n29/mode/2up> (accessed January 7, 2016)



*View of Monrovia from the Anchorage.*

**Figure 5.35**

After Augustus Washington

“View of Monrovia from the Anchorage”

Published in the *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New-York State Colonization Society* (New-York: John A. Gray’s Fire-Proof Printing Office, 1856), 30

Wood engraving

<https://archive.org/stream/ASPC0002361900#page/n29/mode/2up> (accessed January 7, 2016)



**Figure 5.36**

P.S. Duval & Co., lithographers (Philadelphia), after James Queen  
Detail of fig. 2.20: Pennsylvania Colonization Society lifetime membership certificate with illustration  
entitled "View of Monrovia"

c. 1856

Lithograph

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Photo by author



**Figure 5.37**

"President's House, Monrovia"

Published in Rev. P. Slaughter, *The Virginian History of African Colonization* (Richmond: MacFarlane & Ferguson, 1855), frontispiece.



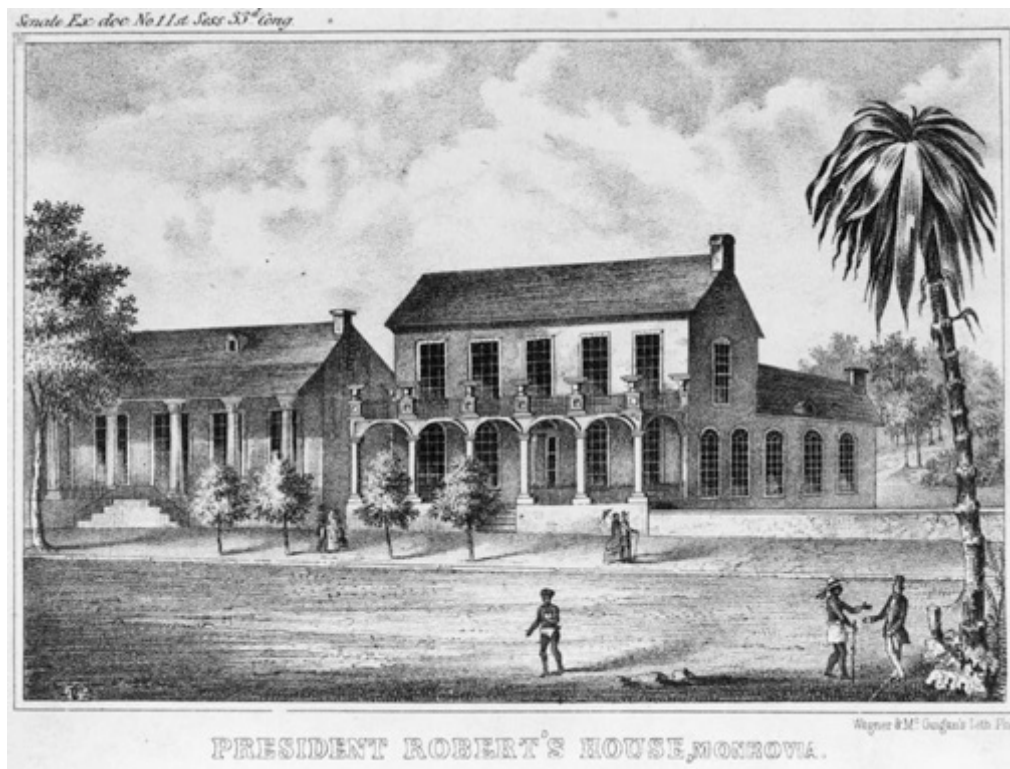


**Figure 5.38**

Dining table given to Joseph Jenkins Roberts by Queen Victoria of England  
Walnut

Liberian National Museum

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_pictures/4556849.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/4556849.stm) (accessed January 5, 2016)



**Figure 5.39**

Wagner & McGuigan, lithographers (Philadelphia)

*President Robert's House, Monrovia*

Senate Executive Document No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, (Dec. 5, 1853-Aug. 7, 1854)

Lithograph

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/item/93505618/> (accessed December 9, 2015)





**Figure 5.40**  
 Eastman Johnson  
*Negro Life at the South*  
 1859  
 Oil on canvas  
 New-York Historical Society  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed January 5, 2016)



**Figure 5.41**  
 “A View in Ashmun Street, Monrovia, West Africa”  
 Published in the *New-York Colonization Journal* 5, no. 2 (Nov., 1855): 1  
 Reprinted from microform edition

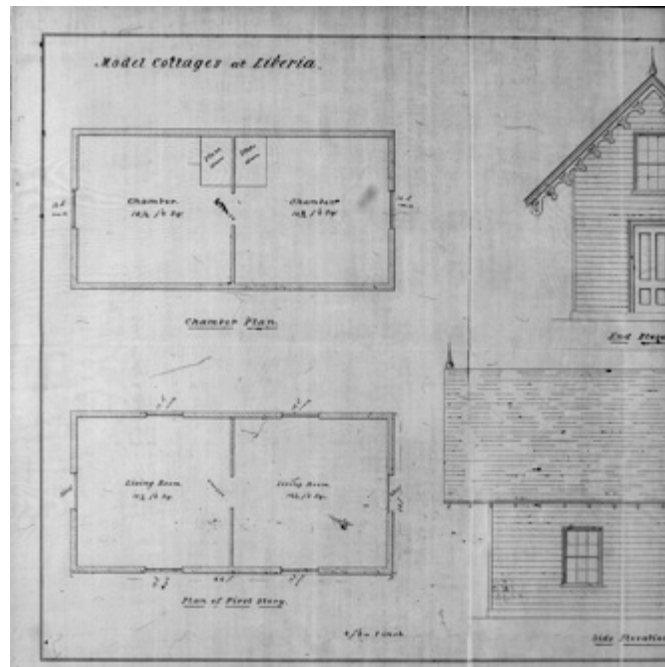


**Figure 5.42**

“A Villa in the Italian Style”

Published in Alexander Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences* (New-York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1842), between pp. 150 and 151

Reprinted from Alexander Jackson Downing, *Victorian Cottage Residences* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1981), opposite p. 140



**Figure 5.43**

L. Briggs, Jr., architect (Boston)

Section of a set of plans for “Model Cottages at Liberia”

1856

American Colonization Society records, Library of Congress  
Reprinted from microform edition (Series VI, Vol. 12, Reel 311)



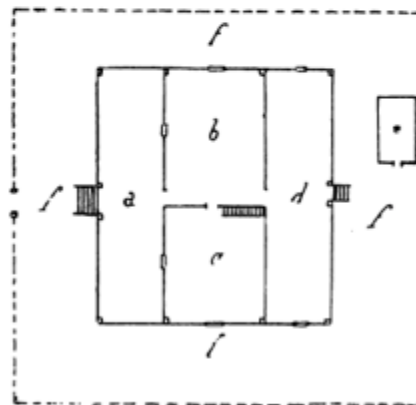
**Figure 5.44**  
 Currier & Ives, lithographers  
*The Home of Washington*  
 c. 1856-72  
 Hand-colored lithographs  
 Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress  
[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org) (accessed December 9, 2015)



**Figure 5.45**  
 Max Belcher, photographer  
 Joseph James Cheeseman House  
 Late nineteenth century  
 Edina, Liberia  
 Reprinted from Belcher, et al., *A Land and Life Remembered*, 71



Schema eines Farmerhauses mit Grundriss.



a. Veranda. b. Empfangszimmer. c. Schlafzimmer.  
d. Hinterraum. e. Küche. f. Hofraum.

**Figure 5.46**

Single-story frame house type, Liberia

Published in J. Büttikofer, *Reisebilder aus Liberia: Resultate Geographischer, Naturwissenschaftlicher und Ethnographischer Untersuchungen während der Jahre 1879-1882*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1890), 153.

Reprinted in Belcher et al., *A Land and Life Remembered*, 105.





**Figure 5.47**

“Liberia—Guadillar Farm, St. Paul’s River, Twelve Miles From Monrovia.—From a Sketch by Our Own Correspondent”

Originally published in “A Tour in Liberia. Guadillar Farm, St. Paul’s River,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (Aug. 21, 1858): 178.

Reproduced in Thomas Powell, ed., *Illustrated Home Book of the World’s Great Nations: Being a Geographical, Historical and Pictorial Encyclopedia. Describing and Illustrating the Scenes, Events, Manners and Customs of Many Nations, from the Dawn of Civilization to the Present Time, Embellished With Over One Thousand Engravings, by the Most Eminent Artists* (New York: The Werner Company, 1898), 487.

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t6pz56f2g;view=thumb;seq=1> (accessed January 5, 2016)



**Figure 5.48**

Edward Beyer

*Bellevue, the Lewis Homestead, Salem, Virginia*

1855

Private Collection

<http://www.the-athenaeum.org/art/full.php?ID=18278> (accessed January 5, 2016)

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

At the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris, the American painter Edwin White exhibited a small genre scene entitled *Thoughts of Liberia, Emancipation* (fig. 6.1).<sup>1</sup> Made in 1861, the same year the United States entered into the bloodiest and most defining conflict in its history, the picture depicts an enslaved African-American man bundled up beside a fireplace. Like Eastman Johnson's better-known paintings of slave life from this period, White's painting captures a moment in the everyday, lived experience of slavery. A cold and dingy cabin, walls cracking, constitute the physical space of enslavement, but it is the psychological experience of the slave that becomes most compelling in this image. Tacked to the door on the left side of the canvas is a print with the title "Hayti", one of the locations to which many freed African Americans chose to emigrate in the nineteenth century. Yet White's title indicates that it is not Haiti but rather Liberia that is the subject of this man's thoughts. In his hand is a newspaper, presumably reporting on the African republic that by this time had been receiving African-American emigrants for four decades.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, colonization, emancipation, and visual culture were deeply entangled in antebellum American culture. White's enslaved subject appears to face the same decision shared by many African Americans of this period: emigrate to Liberia as a condition of manumission, confronting the challenges of an alien tropical environment and likely never seeing loved ones again? Or continue to live in

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Troyen, "Innocents Abroad: American Painters at the 1867 Exposition Universelle, Paris," *The American Art Journal* 16, no. 4 (Autumn, 1984): 26.

bondage? As the painted subject ponders this choice and the weight of its consequences, White is perhaps asking viewers to do the same. Was emancipation worth the cost of severing all personal ties and beginning a new life in on a continent of savage and barbaric repute? Would a future in Liberia be worth the loss this man would inevitably endure by going there? Was a life in Liberia really any better than one spent in this cold, dilapidated slave cabin? Evoking such questions, *Thoughts of Liberia, Emancipation* visualized a nuanced, thoughtful, and ultimately ambivalent perspective on African-American emigration forty years after the establishment of Liberia as colony on the West African coast for free black Americans.

This dissertation has explored how various actors on both sides of the Atlantic used visual culture to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the African colonization movement between 1821 and 1861. In Chapter Two, I traced the development of a distinct colonization iconography consisting of the African coast, the three-masted ship, and the palm tree. I demonstrated that by using this visual formula, colonization promoters sought to conceal the greatest challenges to settlement – namely, tropical disease and hostility from the local Africans – and simultaneously present the journey to Liberia as a “reverse” Middle Passage for African Americans, rectifying the sufferings of enslavement. Influencing anti-slavery visual culture like Hammatt Billings’ “Freedom to Africa” even while mainstream abolitionists professed vehement opposition to the ACS, colonization imagery posed Liberian emigration as the ideal alternative to the looming possibility of racial integration in the United States.

Chapter Three examined how the ACS’ mission to “civilize” Africa was articulated cartographically in terms of space, geography, and landscape. Finley’s *Map of*

*the West Coast of Africa* and other maps of Liberia produced in this period participated in a strategic effort by the ACS to convince Americans that Liberian colonization was successfully Christianizing and creating order over an apparently wild and “long-benighted” African landscape. Concealing the violence of settlement and validating the ACS’ claims to African territories, the cartographic strategies used in these maps foreshadowed those employed by European imperialists later in the century. Despite the traditional scholarly refusal to consider Liberian colonization within the broader framework of empire, early maps of Liberia demonstrate the extent to which the claiming of African territories by the ACS and its emigrants was imperial in nature, begging for a broad rethinking of colonization’s history within this context.

In Chapter Four, I considered the collection, circulation, and exhibition of indigenous Liberian material culture and African natural history specimens in antebellum American museums that resulted from the colonization movement. I demonstrated that the influx of Liberian “curiosities” into antebellum collections fed a growing American hunger for African exotica, while at the same time displacing American anxieties about race and slavery at midcentury onto the people and cultures of West Africa. Ultimately, exhibits of African artifacts in the antebellum United States displayed an image of African difference that anticipated representations of the continent made popular a few decades later during the European scramble for the continent. As in the case of the previous chapter, my analysis in Chapter Four reveals the need for greater investigation of Liberia’s place within an emerging culture of nineteenth-century imperialism in Africa.



Chapter Five considered how Liberian settlers and the ACS used visual culture to make meaning of Liberia's status as an independent republic in the 1850s. I argued that Griffin's watercolor of the Liberian senate and Washington's corresponding daguerreotypes of early Liberian statesman participated in a larger effort on both sides of the Atlantic to create and represent Liberia as a "Little America" in Africa. Considering how this goal was expressed in both the American press and settler architecture, I demonstrated that the process of recreating an American setting in Liberia was one fraught with ironies and contradictions, as elite settlers ultimately established plantation landscapes dependent on the exploitation of indigenous labor. In fleeing the oppression of the slave landscapes of the American South, the wealthiest and most successful emigrants recreated such settings in Africa and repositioned themselves at the top of their social hierarchies.

This dissertation has sought to fill noticeable gaps in the literature on both the African colonization movement and antebellum American visual culture. While additional scholarship on the visual culture of Liberian settlement is undoubtedly needed, this project has contributed important insights to both fields of study. For scholars of the ACS and Liberian colonization, I have demonstrated that images and objects played a central role in the creation of Liberia as the very American *idea* of freedom and prosperity in the antebellum American imagination. The circulation of popular prints, book illustrations, paintings, architecture, daguerreotypes, and African material culture and natural history specimens became critical actors in the antebellum landscape, inventing and reinventing popular perceptions of Africa and notions about the destiny of black Americans in the Atlantic world. For scholars of antebellum American art history, a

field that has long overlooked the rich visual culture of African colonization, this dissertation has demonstrated that the ACS and Liberia have much to reveal about how race, slavery, and geography were encoded in nineteenth-century American artworks. As the field continues to expand toward the study of American art in transnational contexts, scholarship on Liberia's role in the creation of American and transatlantic visual discourses promises to provide important new discoveries. It is my intention that this dissertation will provide a springboard from which scholars in these and other disciplines can further explore the visual culture of Liberian colonization and related topics.

Between the time White painted *Thoughts of Liberia, Emancipation* in 1861 and when he exhibited it in Paris six years later, a war was fought and the institution of slavery was abolished in the United States. Although the ACS would continue to facilitate the emigration of small numbers of black Americans to Africa throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries, Liberia and the philanthropic organization that established it would never again assert the same symbolic power in American consciousness that they had in the antebellum period. While controversy over the African colonization movement silently disappeared from mainstream American political rhetoric after the Civil War, those Americans who emigrated to Liberia continued to face a host of challenges. Ultimately, abandonment by their American sponsors, high mortality rates in Africa, naïve unpreparedness and disorganization fed by ACS propaganda, and the hostility of the people they displaced and enslaved (who were far more capable than the settlers portrayed them to be) prevented many emigrants from reaching the ideals they had been promised.

The eventual failures of this colonizing experiment have had far-reaching effects on the descendants of these settlers, left reliant on the external economic support of the Firestone Rubber Company and locked in perpetual strife with indigenous group. These conditions erupted in a coup in 1980 followed by violent Civil Wars in the 1990s and early 2000s, ironically forcing many descendants of the original American emigrants into exile in the United States, the very place from which their ancestors once fled in the hopes of bettering their lives. Like so many elements of the colonization movement's history, White's painting is unresolved. The sobering sense of uncertainty about Liberia's meaning that permeated the picture in 1861 remains palpable, and indeed relevant, for viewers over 150 years later.



**Figure 6.1**

Edwin White

*Thoughts of Liberia, Emancipation*

1861

Oil on canvas

The Robert L. Stuart Collection, New-York Historical Society

<http://www.the-athenaeum.org/art/full.php?ID=20783> (accessed January 8, 2016)

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