RESURRECTING VOICES

The Philadelphia Black Experience

A Podcast By the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Episode 2 — Seeking Freedom: William Still and the Underground Railroad
Featuring guest speaker Morgan Lloyd
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Table of Contents

Resource Guide

Resources at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

- Journal C of the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia kept by William Still
    - William Still assisted freedom seekers escaping enslavement as they were secretly shuttled into Philadelphia in the mid-1800s. From 1852 to 1857, Still kept a journal describing these encounters in painstaking detail, recording their names, physical characteristics, personalities, and other details. Still's meticulous entries offer unique insight into the secretive network known as the Underground Railroad.
    - View full transcript of Journal C.

- Leon Gardiner Collection of American Negro Historical Society records
    - The American Negro Historical Society was founded in 1897 by Black Philadelphians to document the “Black Metropolis,” as it is called by Michiko Quinones and the Philadelphia 1838 Black Metropolis history project. This 16-box and 35 volume collection features administrative records, reports, minutes, speeches, membership lists, portraits, and more items documenting the life of the American Negro Historical Society. The collection also includes materials on the Banneker Institute, Pythian Baseball Club, Lebanon Cemetery, and other Black organizations. Founders and members Robert Adger, W.M. Dorsey, and Jacob C. White included their materials in this collection. Leon Gardiner, a historian and postal worker, was an avid collector of African American ephemera, clippings, and other memorabilia. He donated his collection to HSP in 1934.
    - View digitized records from the Leon Gardiner Collection.

- Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers
    - Founded in 1775 as the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society was established as the first society committed to the cause of abolition in America. In the late 1780s, their mission expanded to include

improving the living conditions of Black Pennsylvanians. The records of PAS span over two hundred years of the society's history, and include minutes, correspondence, financial documents, manumission records, indentures, and more.
    - View digitized records from the Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers.

- View other Black history collections at HSP.

Resources at the Library of Congress

- Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938
    - Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938 contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery, collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) of the Works Progress Administration, later renamed Work Projects Administration (WPA).

- Black History Collection, 1623-2008
    - The Black History Collection spans 1623-2008, though it primarily concentrates on the period between 1800 to 1865. Materials in this collection include correspondence, financial documents, court records, slave deeds, family papers, military records, birth records, and more. Please note that this collection is not available to view digitally, but is open to researchers at the Library's Manuscript Reading Room.

- Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers
    - Chronicling America features millions of newspaper pages from across the United States published through 1963. Researchers can search these newspapers by state, ethnicity, and language.
    - View African American newspapers published in English in Pennsylvania.

- African American Perspectives: Materials Selected from the Rare Book Collection
    - This digital collection provides a comprehensive examination of the history and culture of African Americans. It mainly consists of two collections housed in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division: the African American Pamphlet Collection and the Daniel A.P. Murray Collection, spanning from 1822 to 1909. The majority of the works

were authored by individuals of African-American descent, while a few were written by others addressing significant subjects within African-American history.

- View selections related to Philadelphia.

Additional Resources

- The 1838 Black Metropolis
    - The 1838 Black Metropolis is a project founded by Michiko Quinones and Morgan Lloyd. The project asserts that the Black Metropolis was “a city within a city built by more than 20,000 free Black people in Philadelphia in 1838.” The project includes an interactive website featuring digitized primary sources (many of which are housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania), maps, educational tools, blog posts, and more.
    - View the 1838 Black Metropolis digital archive.
    - Select articles (James G. Bias, C. L. Reason)
        - James G. Bias
        - C.L. Reason

- Last Seen Project: Finding Freedom After Slavery

- Newspapers, Censuses, and Additional Records
    - 1870 U.S. Census
    - Freedmen’s Bureau Records
    - Penn State’s Pennsylvania Newspaper Archive
    - Newspapers.com
        - subscription required (PA free to onsite researchers at HSP)
    - NewspaperArchive.com
        - subscription required
    - GenealogyBank.com
        - Subscription required

- Other online resources relating to tracing enslaved ancestors:
    - Digital Library on American Slavery
    - Freedom on the Move
    - North Carolina Runaway Slave, Notices, 1750-1865
    - Texas Runaway Slave Project - East Texas Digital Archives (sfasu.edu)
    - Georgetown Memory Project
    - The Beyond Kin Project

Glossary (in order of mention)

Black Metropolis: Coined by the 1838 Black Metropolis history project and movement; a term describing the “city within a city” of free Black people in nineteenth century Philadelphia.

William Still: (1821-1902) A Black Philadelphian abolitionist, businessman, historian, writer, and conductor of the Underground Railroad. Known as the “Father of the Underground Railroad.”

London Coffee House: A location in the Old City neighborhood of Philadelphia where enslaved people were examined and auctioned to enslavers.

Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME): A church founded in 1794 by Richard Allen (1760-1831), a Black minister and writer. The first independent Black church in the United States. Still located at 419 South 6th Street in Philadelphia.

Harriet Tubman: (1822-1913) A Black nurse, abolitionist, and conductor on the Underground Railroad who rescued approximately 70 people from enslavement. Tubman was born in enslavement in Maryland and escaped to freedom.

Journal C: A journal kept by William Still from 1852-1857 documenting the people and families he encountered working with the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee and as a conductor of the Underground Railroad. Hosted and preserved by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

***The Underground Railroad*:** A book written and self-published by William Still in 1872 featuring personal narratives of enslaved people and their journeys along the Underground Railroad.

Fugitive Slave Act: A law passed in 1850 as a compromise between Northern and Southern states that required enslaved people to be brought back to their enslavers, including those who escaped to free states.

James Forten: (1766-1842) A prominent Black abolitionist, veteran, and businessman native to Philadelphia. An original member of the Free African Society.

C.L. Reason: (1818-1893) A Black Philadelphian mathematician, linguist, and professor. The first Black college professor in the United States. Helped found the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee and served as Principal of the Institute for Colored Youth between 1852 and 1856.

Institute for Colored Youth: A school for Black students founded by Quakers in Philadelphia in 1837. Eventually became Cheyney University of Pennsylvania.

Jacob C. White, Sr.: (1806-1872) A Black Philadelphia entrepreneur, abolitionist, barber, physician, cemetery owner, and agent of the Underground Railroad. A member of the First African Presbyterian Church, Vigilance Committee, Free African Society, and the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

The Wall: A term describing the pre-1865 period where it becomes difficult to find genealogical information about Black Americans.

Nanticoke: An Indigenous people from the Chesapeake Bay and Delaware area. Part of the Algonquian language group, located in the northern part of modern-day United States and Canada.

Lenni Lenape: Also called the Delaware people, a semi-nomadic Indigenous people from the area of eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and southern New York.

Spring Garden Street: A major street that passes through multiple neighborhoods in Philadelphia from the Schuylkill River to the Delaware River.

Francisville: A neighborhood in North Philadelphia.

Northern Liberties: A former industrial neighborhood of Philadelphia that has become a popular area for artists and nightlife, largely through the process of gentrification.

Benjamin Lay: (1682-1759) A white Quaker abolitionist, author, and early vegetarian. A radical anti-slavery activist who worked to convince his fellow Quakers to abstain from and denounce slavery.

Center City: Philadelphia's center featuring the city's central business district, Old City, and several neighborhoods.

Germantown: A neighborhood in Northwest Philadelphia featuring many historic sites. One of the oldest sections of the city.

James Logan: (1674-1751) A Scots-Irish colonial American who served as the fourteenth mayor of Philadelphia. Colonial secretary to William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania. A slaveholder in Pennsylvania.

Stenton: The country home and plantation of James Logan, completed in 1730. Passed down through six generations of the Logan family. Though Logan was a Quaker, Stenton was a site of slaveholding in Philadelphia. Still located at 4601 North 18th Street in Philadelphia.

Chew Family: A prominent white family tied to Philadelphia's elite. Family history goes back to 1622 in Jamestown, Virginia. Owned Cliveden, a family estate passed down through generations that was a site of enslavement in Philadelphia.

Cliveden: A historic house in Germantown. Built between 1763 and 1767. Housed the Chew family and their staff, both enslaved and in service. Still located at 6401 Germantown Avenue in Philadelphia.

Richard Allen: (1760-1831) A Black minister, writer, and community leader native to Pennsylvania. Founded Mother Bethel AME as a safe place for Black Philadelphians to gather and worship.

Germantown Mennonite Meetinghouse: A site of worship built in 1770 for Mennonites, who settled in Germantown in the late 17th century. Houses the desk belonging to Thönes Kunders (1653/4-1739), co-settler of Germantown, that was used to sign the 1688 Petition Against Slavery, the first abolitionist protest in the United States. Still located at 6133 Germantown Avenue in Philadelphia.

Johnson Family: The family of John Johnson and later Samuel and Jennett (Rowland) Johnson, white anti-slavery activists belonging to the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Johnson House: A historic site in Germantown originally owned by the Johnson Family. A prominent stop on the Underground Railroad and meeting place for abolitionists like William Still and possibly Harriet Tubman. Still located at 6306 Germantown Avenue in Philadelphia.

Germantown Freedmen's Aid Association: A women's philanthropic group formed in the 1860s that supported the physical and educational needs of Germantown's Black community.

Lucretia Mott: (1793-1880) A Quaker abolitionist and women's rights activist. After being excluded from the World Anti-Slavery Convention due to her sex in 1840, united with fellow activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton to create a women's rights convention, the first of its kind in Seneca Falls, New York.

Amy Hester "Hetty" Reckless: (1776-1881) An abolitionist who escaped enslavement by fleeing from Salem, New Jersey to Philadelphia. Operated a stop on the Underground Railroad, ran a women's shelter that employed needy women, and focused on elevating education for Black Americans.

John Henry Hill: An enslaved man who physically fought his way off the auction block in Virginia, escaping to freedom in Philadelphia. Worked with William Still to become a prominent abolitionist in Canada after leaving the United States.

Washington Square: One of Philadelphia's five original squares laid out in the 1683 map of the city created by William Penn and his surveyor general Thomas Holme. It was referred to as Southeast Square until the early 1800s.

Congo Square: The former colloquial name for Washington Square in Philadelphia. The square was occupied by free and enslaved Black Philadelphians and served as a place to celebrate, sing, socialize, and maintain connections to Black and African languages, music, and traditions.

Yoruba: A language spoken primarily in southwest and central Nigeria.

Ewe: A language spoken in West Africa, primarily in Ghana and Togo. Part of the Gbe language group.

Fon: A language spoken by the Fon people primarily in Benin, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, and Gabon. Part of the Gbe language group.

Octavius Catto: (1839-1871) An American educator and activist who was born free in the South and moved north, spending much of his life in Philadelphia. Served as the Principal of the institute for Colored Youth, where he obtained his education. Helped create a Black company to fight in the Civil War. Killed in an altercation between Black and white Philadelphians on his way to the polls.

***A Quest for Parity: The Octavius V. Catto Memorial*:** A twelve-foot bronze statue with a granite base and pillars created by sculptor Branly Cadet (1966-). Unveiled in 2017 outside of Philadelphia's City Hall.

Robert Purvis: (1810-1898) A mixed-race abolitionist based in Philadelphia for most of his life. Helped establish the American Anti-Slavery Society and served as President of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society between 1845 and 1850.

James J.G. Bias: (1807-1860) A Black Philadelphian physician present in many abolitionist groups in the city. His home was a meeting place for the Vigilance Committee and a stop on the Underground Railroad, shared with his wife Eliza

Bias, who also performed medical care and helped freedom seekers coming through the home.

Henrietta Duterte: (1817-1903) A Black funeral home owner and abolitionist from Philadelphia. The first female mortuary owner in the United States.

Vigilant Association of Philadelphia: An abolitionist and Black aid group founded in 1837 by Robert Purvis in Philadelphia.

Alice Brown: A formerly enslaved Black woman who posted an ad in the *Baptist Vanguard* of Little Rock, Arkansas looking for her family members by name.

***Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery*:** A history project that digitizes and transcribes newspaper ads from Black Americans searching for their families after being separated by enslavement and migration. Features success stories of individuals who used the ads to piece together their family histories.

Henry Box Brown: (1815/1816-1897) A Black American born enslaved in Virginia who shipped himself to freedom in Philadelphia in 1849. An outspoken abolitionist.

Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia: A secret division of the Vigilant Association of Philadelphia that collected and managed funds to operate the Underground Railroad. Operated between 1837 and 1852. Reorganized in 1852, when a new Vigilance Committee was created during a meeting of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.

Lear Green: (c. 1839-1860) A young woman born enslaved in Baltimore who escaped enslavement by shipping herself in a trunk via steamboat to Philadelphia.

Full Transcript

Selena Bemak: Welcome back to Resurrecting Voices: the Philadelphia Black Experience, a podcast brought to you by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and funded by the Library of Congress. Founded in 1824, this year marks the 200th anniversary of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Since our founding, HSP has collected an astonishing array of documents that bring the people of the past into conversation with us today. Alongside the collections of the Library of Congress, these records serve as the basis for this podcast.

I'm your host, Selena Bemak, and I'm thrilled to be your guide as we embark on a journey through these narratives of 19th and 20th century Black Philadelphia. Join us and our guest speakers to uncover the stories, resilient voices, and vibrant culture that shaped this pivotal period in history.

Today, we are joined by guest speaker Morgan Lloyd, genealogist Katy Bodenhorn-Barnes, and our project advisor Stephanye Watts. Morgan Lloyd is a curator, public historian, educator, and activist whose work centers on holistic and decolonial centering of Black, Brown, and Indigenous histories, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Lloyd has held fellowships with various institutions, and she is currently in her second year of Montclair University's Stories Invincible Journalism Fellowship for the City of Camden, New Jersey.

Acting as the co-founder and president of the 1838 Black Metropolis educational nonprofit, she works to reclaim, rewrite, and restore the lives of free Black people who lived in Philadelphia in the early 19th century, as well as those in its surrounding region. Recently, the organization, 1838 Black Metropolis, received the Library Company's Biannual Innovation Award.

She also serves as the programming coordinator and lead interpretive guide at the African American Museum in Philadelphia. We hosted her counterpart, Michiko Quinones, for a discussion of the 1838 Black Metropolis in our last episode.

Freedom has been a theme of Philadelphia's history since the city of Brotherly Love's inception. Founded upon the desire for religious freedom, the 19th century ushered in Philadelphia as a safe haven for freedom seekers escaping chattel slavery by becoming a major stop on the Underground Railroad. Known as the "Father of the Underground Railroad," William Still served in many capacities within this network. And as I hear it, Morgan, you and Mr. Still have something very special in common.

Morgan Lloyd: Yes, and that is simply being from South Jersey. I'm so sorry for everyone who is Pro-Philly exclusively to join this podcast. But here's the thing. South Jersey has an incredible, rich, and vibrant Black history that often goes missing within the textbooks, within the common understanding, unless you're from the area. And I do a lot of research within that region, and also, I descend from it.

The way I like to explain it for all of my Philly folk who are thinking about tuning away from this episode, our Broad Streets have always aligned. If you think of Camden, New Jersey and the city of Philadelphia, the roots are still the same. And it's proven in history that between South Jersey as well as Philadelphia, especially during the 19th century, there was a vast communication that happened between both of the cities and through South Jersey at large.

And one of the best ways I can try and explain it is, again, I love Philadelphian history. And I'm sure you guys tuned into the previous podcast with my friend Michiko from 1838, but there is such a beautiful antebellum history.

Inside, let's say, Camden, New Jersey, there's this fantastic place that was called Fettersville way, way, way back in the day. And in Camden, I do a lot of research. I go into their archives very frequently. And believe it or not, if you were, let's say, someone who was sitting at the auction block here in the city of Philadelphia, there is a historical marker for one that did exist called the London Coffee House.

Inside of the Camden Historical Society, there is evidence that people swam across the Delaware to escape being auctioned off. And there were women who were standing on the other side of the river ready to assist you.

There's this phenomenal AME church, sibling, if not a younger sibling of Mother Bethel AME here in the city of Philadelphia. And there are incredible, riotous stories of pastors jumping into action when they hear the sounds of someone being kidnapped to either be put back into enslavement or forcibly be put into enslavement, or a pastor would quite literally beat a bounty hunter down. Women from the church sitting on their porches will gather together to make sure that no harm is done to these people.

And I forgot to mention. While Philadelphia was still navigating the word “enslavement,” and what it means, and how to actually execute it, South Jersey was free before most of this country. So it was a safe haven, not just Camden, New Jersey, but Lawnside, New Jersey. If you're familiar with Harriet Tubman, she loved Cape May, New Jersey.

My family is from Gouldtown and Bridgeton, which basically means there were a lot of Black and Native American existences that often defied all expectations. So in order to really understand Philadelphia, sometimes you have to think about the networks that were created between these two places. Because at the end of the day, if Harriet Tubman is taking, let's say, someone by way of the Underground Railroad over to, let's say, Cape May, New Jersey, who is she going to trust? And how is she going to get them to Philadelphia? It is the networks of people on the in-between that makes that happen.

And that kind of brings me into the key focus of today, which is Mr. William Still. William Still is phenomenal, again, because he is a deep South Jersey guy. And this is very, very critical. And just stick with me while we're here. But William Still, he wasn't born into enslavement. He was not a Harriet Tubman success story. But actually, his parents had escaped from enslavement, moved his family into New Jersey, where he and his siblings were able to live a fantastic life amongst Black and brown people who were navigating this new American story. As he grew older, I can only imagine all of the stories and all of the people that he interacted with, right?

If you were, let's say to go to school or go to the market, there are some people who are from South Jersey, but also, there are people who are hiding in plain sight to navigate through the Underground Railroad or decide if this is the place that they want to go. In that umbrella, what are their life experiences? What are their longings? What are their hopes? What are their dreams? They probably arrived without their mothers, their brothers, their sisters. They probably are really hesitant to go up to let's say Canada or New York, to Philadelphia, or just stay where they are.

I'm sure that sparked some curiosity in him. Also, in his parents taking flight, they left behind his older siblings. So it's kind of unsurprising to imagine that this young man eventually moved to the city of Philadelphia to try and advocate for Black life and trying to make sure that people could be reunited with their families, and that their stories would be preserved. And so, when I think of Mr. William Still coming into the city, he kind of hit the ground running.

In the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, there are some records that also say that this young man was incredibly charming. He was quite handsome, and he had a way with words. So he found himself into some favorable positions simply for being the man that he was.

And in his becoming, he aligned himself with the abolitionists here in the city of Philadelphia. Finding his voice amongst theirs, probably learning the strategy and their causes, he eventually ended up becoming a prominent figure here, and created his own organization when he didn't feel like the abolitionists were really aligned with all of his goals.

So we have his fantastic Vigilance Committee now here, in the city. And when I think about this, it's kind of incredible in part because one, with Mr. William Still, some people say that he also helped to kind of create the original YMCA amongst all the other things that he had going on. He was a prominent business owner. He had networks of people, but also, it wasn't about a status with him, at least in my interpretation. I will leave that to you all to decide.

But with William Still, he really seemed to me to really care about the everyday person, and meeting them where they are, and creating networks of people who also cared about the everyday person. In this work that he did, he wrote down these two incredible texts. Well, one kind of broke off from the other, but they're called Journal C and the Underground Railroad.

Picture this. William Still sitting at a desk. Very simple home in the 1850s. It's probably dimly lit, candle lights everywhere, and suddenly a woman bursts through the door. Her clothes are tattered, she's a little bit disheveled, but he invites her in. Probably has a doctor nearby because it is actually canon within his books, and has a couple other women ready to receive her. And then the first thing he asks, this woman who now has definitely clarified that she came by way of the Underground Railroad, maybe she traveled for days on end, she's tired, she's exhausted. And he asks her for her story.

It's not only her story, it's bigger than that. He sees her. She is more than a number, probably what she experienced while being enslaved. She was the quantity of her value. She is more than just being a Black woman navigating. She is a whole person who deserves equal rights, freedom, and treatment.

And she's probably very stressed. Maybe she's worried about her family. She wants to reconnect with her sons. She thinks that someone went to Canada, or she thinks someone is in southern New Jersey. So what he does is he'll write down not only her name, how old she thinks she is, her story. He'll describe the way she looks.

She'll add mention that she is seeking out her relatives. And then alongside the other people in the room, or someone who's down the street, they make sure that she has enough money, she has some clothes on her back, and a safe place to rest.

Selena: This journal that he was keeping, that would have been a pretty dangerous thing to have in the context of the Fugitive Slave Act, wouldn't it?

Morgan: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Because think of this. If someone is escaping, more than likely, they would have had their names in a newspaper somewhere. Someone is seeking them out. Someone who is worth arguably thousands of dollars, because they were property over people, is now navigated away from where they were from. It's very dangerous to have every single person who escaped in one text. So he had to be very secretive about it, and they probably hid them very, very well.

But one of the coolest things of this, or out of this, it's that, because he wrote down these hundreds and hundreds of stories, one, we were able to witness per his text that some of these people were able to reconnect with their relatives, including himself. One of his eldest brothers who he didn't get to experience as a child suddenly appeared, and now they are reunited as a family because he decided to ask these key questions and give people this network of support.

But also, in writing down all of these stories, we get a glimpse into the realities of enslavement for some people, which is really important because sometimes when we talk about enslavement here, in the United States, it's kind of a two story situation. Someone is in the house, and someone is in the fields and beyond that, there's not too much of a story.

But there's so much nuance. And believe it or not, there is so much joy in some of these people's stories. In part because they are free, but because in their lives, in their enslavement, they found love. They are taking off to go find the person that they loved, and I feel like we're going to get into this later. Please know there is someone shipping themselves very soon.

But also, we're witnessing people who are now giving birth to their first children who will be the first people in their family history to ever be born free on American soil. There's so much color that gets added to Black history, and overall American history when you consider the people who existed in the quote unquote “mundane.” And he realized that. So he made a tool. He was able to immortalize all of the other people who were able to make that happen.

Selena: William Still is recording this in his journal, which he calls Journal C, but we don't know of any Journal A or Journal B that may have existed beforehand or any Journal D or E that may have come afterward. We have Journal C and we can only make assumptions from what he told us himself.

Morgan: Yeah. I would love if someone magically discovered if A or B existed. But with C, we kind of have to use our own imaginations and fill in the blanks a little bit. Because again, there are so many people in Journal C alone. And when, let's say, Michiko and I do statistical data for everyone who's escaping, we realize that people are coming into the city of Philadelphia, into southern New Jersey by the hundreds, by the twenties.

I can guarantee that there are people beyond what is written, beyond who chose to go into his office, the ones that were able to be published inside of these texts. So yeah, we can only fill in the blanks based on what is written. And there is so much that is written.

When I read the stories of his arrivals, I like to read them to match whatever calendar date I'm actually living in, because it's kind of impactful to imagine, you know, I'm just trying to get to work today, and I need a cup of coffee. But 200 years ago, there was a woman who arrived, and her clothes were tattered, and she ended up fighting off the guy at the auction block on the same exact day. And the stories that I've run into are just so captivating, and so incredible.

And there's something that's often missing within the Black and brown communities when we think of history, and that's simply images. A lot of us go missing. We have our key figures who typically get immortalized, but the everyday Black person does not typically have an image of their ancestor within this timeline.

And so, it's a blur. And that blur is, at least to me, kind of hurtful. It is not my ancestors' fault, but it's as if the ancestors don't deserve to have a face. So, with his stories, what I like to do is I want to give them back their face, take them from the text, remove them from being some mythical story, and use the descriptive language that he used to bring them back into life so someone can see, potentially, their ancestor who was written in this text.

And even if it's not their direct ancestor, they are an ancestor within the Black and brown community who deserves to be acknowledged for existing, and surviving, and thriving despite the American conditions. As an artist in my practice and hot take, I'm going to say something crazy. I like to do AI art every now and again, ethically, ethically. So every now and again, I go and generate these AI images because it's immediate. The joy I feel is immediate, so everyone else needs the same immediacy. It is so selfish to just be doing this for myself. Everyone needs it. And within the community that we are gradually building on the 1838 social media, so many people are just in awe.

I have children who are in shock that some of these figures look just like them. I have people who are oddly attracted to some of the men, and it's kind of hilarious because some men are described to be quite handsome, and you know, there's more descriptive language about their exact curl pattern and the way they carried themselves. I work very hard to make sure the AI generates that swagger. There are some women who have boyfriends from the context of the past. And also, actors see themselves knowing that they now can play roles and know that their look was actually historically appropriate.

We've even run into descendants because of this. By immediately publishing some of these AI images and just attaching them to the direct line within Journal C, we have people who are now realizing that their mythical ancestor, who they all generally understand, like, “Oh, his name was Benjamin Franklin, and he came to Philadelphia with two children around this time. I've heard this story. My grandmother said it.” They found him. And if not him, they found someone who is just like him. And there's a high potential that that could be that very ancestor that began their American story. There's something so healing to that.

Selena: The imagery that you generate through these AI renderings too, with these arrival stories attached to them, also feels really celebratory. We're celebrating their arrival here. We're welcoming them into the city and onto the next path in their journey, wherever they're headed next, whether they stay here or whether they move on, it just has a celebratory feeling to it.

Morgan: Yeah, that's my intention. No matter how complex their story was to get here, they made it to the city of Philadelphia. They survived. They made it, and now they get to imagine what their life looks like. And

I think it's very important to celebrate the spirit even if they were just passing through. Because that one little moment of joy for them was a catalyst for a life that we can't even begin to imagine. Unless we do find the genealogical facts, which is equally as exciting for me, a baby genealogy nerd.

Selena: So this information William Still collected in Journal C that allows us to paint these pictures, he didn't just write this down in his journal. He took this and did more with it, right? With the Underground Railroad?

Morgan: Mm-hmm. So with William Still and the work that he did, he really expanded it beyond the book. One, again, he had this network of individuals that I just want to emphasize a little bit, because inside Journal C, you might pass by a couple of names, right? Like there's this guy named C.L. Reason. And, you're just going to see his name in the book and think, “Oh, well, this is a man who's coming through. He's a, an ally of some kind, a champion.”

But then if you really look into it, Mr. Reason is the Principal for the Institute for Colored Youth. He is actually the Standing Director for the Institute of Colored Youth, who was only here for a very brief period of time in the city of Philadelphia, but he is a key leader.

They would have meetings offsite, convening with one another to make sure that all of these different systems were working to the closest to perfection. He would have meetings with everyday doctors like Jacob C. White. Jacob C. White was one of Philadelphia's finest doctors, actually living right down the street from Mother Bethel and down the street from the original Institute for Colored Youth location.

He would take this work and use it to one, immortalize these people, but also to give evidence that they had care, and give evidence that community care is very important and valuable. Because you'll notice, sometimes they would go to different doctors for different needs, this dental work, here's a record to prove that this person received this money, to prove that this person was able to get good clothing.

And I think it's really exciting sometimes, as I go into the archives, as I go into this history, and I run into Jacob C. White again and he is just a casual dentist, and they might be talking about how he fixed, I don't know, James Forten. That's the moment in history that often gets emphasized. But because William Still worked so hard to ensure that there was a powerful network of people, it's fun to think that behind closed doors, this man is caring for so many people who are escaping.

James Forten, that's the story. But the medical care that goes to the richest Black man in America is also being extended to these people who are simply trying to exist, and figure out what that means, because now they have even more permission to exist unapologetically.

Selena: William Still was thinking holistically, and he was thinking long-term, because he takes this data and publishes it. And it allows so many people to reconnect with their own families and to really understand the work that went into this.

Morgan: It is a genealogical goldmine, to say it in the simplest terms, to look into this text and find all of these names, all of these places, all of these locations down to the date. If it aligns with your family's story, you have begun to see a bigger view of your family. And by having this data too, it emphasizes the magnitude of people who were taking flight, and the magnitude of the everyday people who were doing

the work to ensure that all of the people who were trying to escape, all of those freedom seekers had that support.

And all of their names are listed. And if you really dig into it, if you're really determined, you can go into places like HSP, into even old medical records, if you ask a hospital for permission, and you might even be able to find your ancestor who was receiving care in accordance to what is stated in those texts.

And even if not, for many people who identify as being Afro descended, there is this complex situation that is often called the wall. When you go and do your genealogical research, you go on ancestry.com, it's not about DNA, you want the names, the places. And then when you hit 1865, that's it. That's as far as you can go.

If you have one ancestor who exists before the wall, it is a miracle in and of itself. And here we have this text that dances not too far from where the wall often exists. So there's hope. If you know your ancestor found their way to a place here in the North or to a place extended beyond the city of Philadelphia, if they made it, you now have a view of your family's life prior to mass emancipation.

Katy Bodenhorn-Barnes: To your point there, I think one of the things that really helps with that is I noticed in Journal C that it even gives aliases. So if they had changed their name either for safety or for their own personal reasons, that's the kind of thing that can get really easily lost in history and become a brick wall in and of itself. So the fact that he would write that down helps you overcome that. It's incredible.

Morgan: Right. And a silly, I wouldn't call it silly, but a really cool fact about it too is, many people wanted to go to Canada, right? And there was this young gentleman, who wrestled his way to freedom, quite literally beating down five men who were selling him at the auction block. His name is John Henry Hill. For anyone who is interested, you can definitely check it out in Journal C. You can come, drop by, visit Journal C because it lives here at HSP, but also it is accessible online on their website. That's how I'm able to very quickly generate those images.

He has an AI image if you're ever interested in checking out the socials or the website. But young Henry was about 25 years old being sold in Virginia. And clearly, he did not want to be sold. He wanted freedom. Like pretty much everybody.

So at the auction block, right before he's about to be sold, he beats up five men who were trying to sell him, and bolts, and finds his way eventually into the city of Philadelphia. One, I can only imagine the bounty on his head. And two, just judging from his incredible strength, I'm sure he was also, as property, worth a ton of money. So they were looking for him.

He eventually ends up with William Still, because William Still, he is the person to go to in these matters. And William, for a brief moment, takes this young man under his wing. William describes him as being incredibly charming and handsome. Probably saw himself in this man.

But then, his time with him got cut short because he realized, “Oh wait, my protege is one of the highest bounties right now. You gotta go.” So they worked together to make sure that Henry makes his way to Canada. And Henry writes letters to William Still back and forth, back and forth. It was actually inside of The

Underground Railroad. Like the letters were inside of it at some point. It's listed in Journal C as that. And young Henry becomes the William Still of Canada.

Selena: Wow.

Morgan: So the same systems that William set up to look out for people, this young man in Canada is now also implementing. So by way of William Still, we also can reach out to our Canadian Black brothers and sisters and Afro-descended relatives, because one kid just took a risk.

Selena: I think that's a good segue into recognizing that Philadelphia was not the landing point for most of these people that knocked on William Still's door. This was just a stop on their way to their next destination.

Morgan: Yep. I hate to bring it back to Southern New Jersey, but boy, did they love to go to Southern New Jersey. That's how I came into existence, because someone who was working out in greater Pennsylvania, somehow found his way down to Gouldtown, New Jersey and married this beautiful Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape woman. And that's how my family's branch began to exist. And it's very common within that. There are many people from Philadelphia, descendants of James Forten even, who would go to Lawnside, New Jersey.

So I can only imagine how many freedom seekers also wanted to go into that area and just set up roots, and call it a place to be, by way of William Still, who I'm sure would testify that the trees are beautiful, and you'll be okay if you just stick in these certain areas, you know? And then New York was becoming a hotspot, so many people started to go in that direction. It just goes on and on.

Selena: All right, we're going to take a quick break. Stay tuned because when we come back, we'll take a closer look at how the Underground Railroad operated in Philadelphia and we'll also dive into finding your own ancestors in these stories.

[Break]

Selena: Welcome back to Resurrecting Voices. Now, the belief of many Americans is that Philadelphia is where one could liberate themselves. But we talked about earlier that this was just a pass-through for a lot of people. Slavery was also a part of the fabric of our city, Quakers included.

So Morgan, can we dive into some of the differences between what slavery looked like here in the northern part of the East Coast versus in the South?

Morgan: Absolutely, because it is vastly different. When we think of a southern experience of enslavement, again, I tapped into this earlier, we're thinking of people who are working out in agricultural fields more than likely. We are thinking of people who are living on large-scale plantations and having an overall horrible experience, though it is true for all. Also, what we are looking at is at least a certain point in history, there were more ports and cities that were taking in people. There was a large amount of trading amongst those states once, of course, it was illegal to import more West Africans.

It was rough, but it's also kind of the way that we imagine enslavement. When we think of slavery, the first thing we're thinking of is someone picking cotton in the hottest day in Montgomery, Alabama. Here in the North, slavery was still true for many, but not for all.

As I had mentioned previously, Southern New Jersey was an exception. Northern New Jersey was a bit different. And then here in the city of Philadelphia, upon us creating this great city, there was this very interesting six-month clause that was created where if an enslaved person was brought here to the city of Philadelphia with their enslaver and stayed here with their enslaver for the duration of six months, they would immediately become free.

Now, when we think of Philly, make it smaller. Because many parts of Philadelphia were not quite the Philly we understand today. We're thinking more of like a Center City view, barely even kissing Spring Garden Street, Francisville, Northern Liberties. Well, Northern Liberties was included, but it broke up a little bit more. And many people, as you can probably tell from the layout of the city, weren't necessarily working out in fields.

But something that also made this experience very unique for folks here in this region is the dynamic of the Quakers simply existing. Because when we think of Quakers, we typically imagine them as the original abolitionists. It's kind of a hot take, but sometimes when you read textbooks, it's normally viewed through a white storytelling of history. So the Quakers are the forefront of freedom. They are our allies. They are our freedom seekers. They are the ones who are doing the work to ensure that Black folk will be free, and that peace and love goes everywhere in the name of God.

And yet, when I think about South Jersey, there's a split between the two houses of Quakers. In South Jersey, they've come to realize that enslavement is not necessarily correct. And yet in the North, Quakers did not come to the same agreement. And so that is how South Jersey is able to exist in such a way. They're completely different branches and factions and other things.

But many of the folks in south New Jersey were really trying to make sure that Black folk were being supported on their way to freedom seeking or at least supported them enough that they deserved to be free. So that's kind of the complex dynamic out of the two.

But also, when I think of the Quakers, it makes me think of a few of our freedom seekers who are from, let's say, southern New Jersey. A few of them had some really horrific experiences of enslavement and they would escape to the city of Philadelphia because of how cruel some of those Quakers were.

So there are people who are escaping because of the cruelty of some of the Quakers within the community. If not Quakers, but some of the, what one would imagine, more peaceful Christians within the Southern New Jersey community prior to, of course, mass emancipation.

So there were movements that were done across southern New Jersey, across greater Pennsylvania to try and advocate against this mistreatment by way of select factions of the Quaker community. And one of my favorite Quakers who is truly an ally is Benjamin Lay. And if you're unfamiliar with Benjamin Lay, he's quite the icon for a number of reasons. One in part is he was a person who was experiencing dwarfism.

But also, Benjamin Lay was quite radical to such a degree that he would go into Quaker meetinghouses, or he would go into services and kidnap a child to show everyone how horrible it is to take someone away from their family and force them to stay away by way of enslavement. He would go in looking like he was bloodied, covering himself in like berry juices to show the harms of enslavement. He was quite radical, and also one of the first recognized American vegetarians. He was kind of cool. He lived in a cave. It's a whole, he has a lore. He has a lore to say the least, but his work was effective.

It truly was because at the end of the day, if you are a person who is Quaker, who has not yet sided with freedom, or has not sided with the way in which freedom should be executed, he made sure it was memorable. He made sure that you would at least contemplate it in the most inconvenient ways possible because enslavement is inconvenient for the people experiencing it. Here's a taste. I'm going to take your child for 24 hours. Don't worry, they're fine. And bring them back again.

Selena: That is radical.

Morgan: Absolutely radical!

Selena: The Underground Railroad in Philadelphia also extended outside of what we now know as Center City, and in some parts, which may not have even been considered as part of the city until the 1850s, like Germantown.

And with that, I'd like to welcome Stephanye Watts, who is our podcast advisor, but also serves as a community engagement coordinator for Historic Germantown, which is a partnership of historic houses in Northwest Philadelphia. Stephanye is a Philadelphia native from the northwest section of the city and is now serving that same community.

Stephanye Watts: Hey! I'm really excited to talk about this because coming into my role at Historic Germantown, I learned about my own neighborhood. I'm originally from Logan, which is named after James Logan, who was many things in Philadelphia at its inception, including an enslaver. News to me that the home my mother still lives in was part of a 500-acre plantation. And Germantown is where I went to school. So really excited to kind of talk about how slavery and anti-slavery activism coexisted in uptown Philadelphia.

A lot of people know about the Johnson House, which is one of the sites of historic Germantown. It's located on the corner of Germantown and Washington Lane. That's the most famous, probably, historic house in Uptown. But there are two houses also in the same neighborhood, Cliveden and Stenton, where slavery existed. Cliveden is interesting because Richard Allen was once enslaved at Cliveden.

The Chew family was a piece of work. They had a couple plantations on the East Coast and because of the six-month rule that you talked about, were cycling enslaved people. It was pretty awful, pretty horrific.

And there was one woman that was enslaved named Charity who finessed her way because she was supposed to go the very next day back down South to another Chew plantation, another Chew plantation. And she accidentally hurt herself and had to stay in Philadelphia and became free because she was a day after her six-month cutoff time.

Selena: She found the loophole.

Stephanye: Found the loophole! So you have to imagine, we're talking about Quakers and this branding of Quakers, and yes, there were anti-slavery efforts happening as early as 1688 in Germantown. And there's actually a marker at Manheim in Germantown, speaking to the 1688 Germantown anti-slavery protest that happened, and the desk where the petition was signed is actually at Germantown Mennonite Meetinghouse for anybody that wants to visit. Shout out to the Mennonites. I know you got some Mennonite blood in your, in your, in your line.

Morgan: Black Mennonite. It's a whole journey in my genealogy. A journey.

Stephanye: This episode is literally your genealogy.

Morgan: Honestly.

Stephanye: And so, while the Quakers are, yes, doing these antislavery efforts, again, like I said, you still have the Logan family, the Chew family, and others who are also having people in bondage. So we're going from 1688, to the mid-1700s, to the Revolutionary War to now 1850 with the Johnson family.

Samuel and Jeanette Johnson had 12 children, and the second and third generations of the Johnson family were very heavy in the anti-slavery movement. They were members of the American Anti-Slavery Society as well as the Germantown Freedmen's Aid Association. And this is where William Still comes in, right?

Folks like Lucretia Mott, Harriet Tubman, William Still, all the girls were rolling up in Johnson House and other secret locations nearby to aid freedom seekers in gaining their freedom and again, whether they were staying in Philadelphia or going ahead up to Canada.

There are stories of folks being stashed in the attic at Johnson House. There's a really famous story about the roof at Johnson House, and so the very rich anti-slavery history in Philadelphia is very true. We don't want to take anything away from it, but we also need to understand the fact that it was also being pushed against very strong pro-slavery efforts in the same very small, close-knit Germantown neighborhood.

Morgan: You have me thinking, when I was talking about people escaping and you start name dropping Harriet Tubman. You know, Lucretia Mott. You make me think of this woman named Hetty Reckless who used to hang out with them. And she was someone who escaped enslavement in South Jersey due to her abusive enslaver and eventually like moved in with those communities. So I wonder if there was a Jersey girl there too.

Stephanye: But it's a really cool history to think about and to think about the ways in which enslaved and free Black people interacted and crossed each other's paths so often and so regularly in ways that may have not existed in the Deep South.

It also makes me think about the ease of transfer of helping folks, right? Because the interaction was way easier, and they crossed each other's paths way more than in the South. So it's like you can be going to run an errand and you just happen to see William Still chilling, and you pull him to the side like, “I'm trying to get out, what's up?” And next thing you know, you're on your way to Canada.

Morgan: I wonder what that must have been like to be a major figure in the Black community because you are easy to access. Of course, you want to help everyone in the community, but that must have been overwhelming.

Stephanye: Mm-hmm. And also, this whole thing has to be secretive. So it's also like, why are y'all pulling up on me right now? Like, “Go around the back, go around the back.”

Morgan: Oh my gosh. Again, he couldn't have been carrying around Journal C. Like, it's too easy. He's a sitting duck. I mean, it's not all covert. Oh!

Selena: I think it also emphasizes that he's working with a network of people. He's not doing this on his own. I mean, he's doing a lot of it, but he is not doing it on his own at all.

We're going to take a quick break, just one more, but when we come back, we'll take a look at some of those other conductors of the Underground Railroad. But if you're interested in anything Stephanye and Morgan have been talking about so far, the Logan and Chew family papers are both at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[Break]

Selena: Welcome back to Resurrecting Voices. So far, we've talked a lot about William Still because he was so integral to this work, but it's important that we also discuss the network of folks that worked with him to keep the train moving, pun intended. Are there other significant folks you'd like to highlight, Morgan?

Morgan: Oh, there are so many people, so I'm going to try and limit myself, but I'm very excited to share. I was also talking about, again, Charles Reason. Something I didn't emphasize about Charles Reason, William Still's network of people, they were a Black diasporic experience. And I think that's really important to emphasize because again, sometimes we imagine Black people in the context of history as having the same experience, the same appearance, the same nuances from the same places, but that is so far from the truth.

What I think alone of Washington Square, back when it was regarded as Congo Square, where people could speak in their indigenous languages unapologetically from Haitian Creole, to Yoruba, to Ewe, to Fon to French to Spanish. Of course, it would be necessary to have a team who represents people of all of those backgrounds because even people who were escaping from Louisiana spoke Haitian Creole.

And so I want to emphasize Reason because not only was he the head of the Institute for Colored Youth, but he is also a Haitian refugee in exile from the Haitian Revolution, a proud mulatto man, and who knows the nuances that came with that. And his emphasis on the languages came more than likely from his experiences.

Something to note about Reason, Villanova has this absolutely incredible virtual exhibition that talks about the experiences at the Institute for Colored Youth in its early years, around the time when Octavius Catto,

who is a phenomenal abolitionist leader, baseball player, creator of the first illegal eleven regiments of the colored troops turned legal, and he has a statue in City Hall.

This overall incredible man was a professor. But when you look at the roster of professors at that institution, only, I believe two or three actually have the proper title of “professor” because you had to go and have a traditional quote unquote “collegiate” experience to gain the title of being a professor, i.e. attending a white institution to get that accreditation. So Reason was one of the few professors there.

So there is a myriad of experiences that I'm sure could really lend a helping hand to people who were escaping, because now they have this opportunity where they meet this man who is beyond the definition of what freedom looks like for you, was encouraging you to seek out your own American journey and story.

We have Robert Purvis, who is another fantastic man of the diasporic experience. He is Moroccan by way of enslavement, which is really cool and really funky. Many times when I speak with students, they're kind of in shock that he identified as an abolitionist because according to the pictures, which do not have the completion of his complexion, he could pass any day he wanted to. And yet he was one of our most radical and unapologetic figures within the Black historical narrative here in the city of Philadelphia.

Of course, we have Jacob C. White, James G. Bias, who's another fantastic doctor. But one that I really want to dig into is Miss Henrietta Duterte. And I say that because one, what a name. It's kind of iconic. But also, because she is a part of an incredible legacy of people traveling by way of boxes.

Now, for those that are unfamiliar with Henrietta, she was a coffin maker, which is very rare. She was one of the first Black women to be working in this industry. She eventually came up with the conclusion, well, hey, nobody's going to look into a casket. And so it became a fantastic tool to navigate with for people who were escaping. And if you want to imagine where she was, by the way, because she is one of our first Black women, woman undertaker, she lived down the street from Mother Bethel, quite literally across the street, a little bit to the left. If you go on 1838blackmetropolis.com, you can actually see where she lived on the map.

In her fantastic legacy, one, I find it kind of cool and eerie and a little creepy, as you take this risk that could cost you life or death, you are in a coffin the entire journey. And it also is really cool to me because many people have heard of Henry Box Brown. He is the Henry Box Brown. And for those of you who are listening who are unfamiliar with that or with this man, Henry Box Brown is most famous for shipping himself in a box, Henry Brown, who shipped himself in a box.

He was enslaved in the Deep South and then found this wonderful opportunity where he could put himself inside of a box and someone shipped him to William Still in the Vigilance Committee. Growing up, I always imagined that it was a narrative that was often white. The opening of the box was a success for white people, Quakers, and it's a success for everyone, by the way. It's American history.

But if you ever look up the image of Henry Box Brown freeing himself, the way I like to say it is “The bowtie never lies.” William Still is always there. That man in the bow tie who looks a little disgusted, honestly, with opening that box, because one can only imagine what happens to the human body in the 72 hours of traveling in a box.

It was a success by way of William Still, and this is a wonderful connection. But he wasn't the only one. We had Henrietta, who is shipping people in coffins, and we have– so I've counted thus far in my journey with Journal C. Bear with me now, I'm reading it every single day since I started picking up the book, so I haven't done the full 365 days yet.

But I have encountered more women shipping themselves in boxes than men. And by more women, I mean exclusively women. There are two that stand out to me. There is this one young lady, her name is Lear Green. I love her dearly because again, she paints a bigger picture of why people escaped. It's not just about freedom sometimes. Sometimes it's about your dreams.

This young woman was enslaved in the Virginia area, and she met this young, handsome, free young Black man and they fell in love. And eventually he left. So she, her mother and his relatives, his free relatives collaborated together to ship her to freedom. His aunt was going to travel back to the city of Philadelphia. And so, they placed Lear inside of her trunk on the steamboat to get back to the city. She was the luggage.

She came to the city, and it's noted that when she arrived in the luggage, she wasn't passed off like the other luggage was. She wasn't processed in the same way. She was transported by way of another route. And if you ever go on 1838, you would very quickly be unsurprised by me saying that, because a lot of Black men worked at the ports. To be a porter was such a popular job.

So someone had a system somewhere at the docks where they had seen this before, or they know how to navigate very quickly. And eventually she landed at what would later become her future mother-in-law's house. So she ended up with this young man. Incredible. And might I add, she couldn't have been older than 18 years old. Just a little extra sprinkle.

Then there's this other woman who blows my mind because she shipped herself in a box and arrived within the same, about four block radius, more than likely, as this other young lady to a woman's house. And she has a very covert alias. So we don't really know this woman's name. But when the box arrived, the woman already knew what was going on because so many people have shipped themselves in boxes. I'm sure there are stories that are not recorded due to unsuccessful journeys. And so she immediately calls in William Still and all the other folks that are a part of this network because she needs support. What if someone is sick? What if someone is dead?

They crack open the box and the woman is in a comatose state. They take her up into the bedroom. They make sure she's laid down very well. They're looking after her and eventually she wakes. And they also come to realize that she's pregnant.
Thankfully, her health was able to be regained, but because of the risks that she took, she gave birth to the first free person in her family since the time they were brought to this Western world. It's so incredible. And also, something that we don't emphasize enough, which is simply the power of Black women.

Selena: Why do you think it was almost exclusively women doing this?

Morgan: Oh, there's so many things I could say about that as a Black woman. But I think the simplest way to explain it. There is a lot that is expected of being a woman, right? And there is a certain level of care and love that is expected of you, but also for some of us, it's kind of inherent. I think that oftentimes in history,

that special care, that special space, that special patience that can come within femininity is often overlooked as weakness, even though it is that place that we all derive strength from.

Again, we'd look at stories like Henry Box Brown. He is bold, he is daring, he is mind blowing. And also, fun fact for those that are interested, he eventually becomes a magician, a whole thing beyond that. So he is innovative, he's brilliant.

Women typically had the expectation of being confined to house, home, children. Community, potentially, but those roles are often seen as small. But in this particular moment in history, every little action has such a large reaction. If you see someone who is unhoused on the street, that person could be a freedom seeker who's still trying to figure out life, right?

You caring for that person changes the entire course of history for that person's family. But it's not something that's emphasized. And also, I think there is something to be said about the way that we discuss history that in my practice, I really try and challenge, which is I want us to stop emphasizing the glorified heroes.

I'm emphasizing one right now because I love him so much and also indirectly kind of come from his family tree, and there's all kinds of crazy things. Sorry, I just dropped that on my audience. Yes, I do. But I love William Still because he loved Blackness in the mundane. It was the everyday heroes. It was the everyday people trying to escape.

That was his literal story. That was Journal C. That is The Underground Railroad. And we just don't emphasize that enough when we talk about history. Sometimes I love to hear about the Revolutionary War, but at the same time, I'm pondering, well, because of the war, what did it look like for the young woman who is just trying to wash her clothes? How did the war change her clothes? It's less important for some reason.

And sometimes when we only focus on the heroes of history, history feels more like a myth than a reality. The cool thing about William Still is he makes it real. He puts you there to meet those people, to say their names. And also, when you read the book, say their name out loud because there's only so many times their name gets said. And they become a person again.

The women who helped, if he lists their names, they are people, everyday people, who are changing the world in what individually might seem minute, but in such a big way. Especially if you were a woman, it's just one of those things that just gets overlooked. It's always the men that tell Black history and always tell history at large. The joke “his” story, you know?

But there's so much more. And it's the nuances of William Still, the nuances of history that just really set my soul on fire. It's the fact that we have people who are Haitian, Moroccan, indigenous, working together for a common goal. And their names aren't in the textbook, even though the people I've told you about would be a really cool chapter, each and every single one of them. But it gets missed, so sometimes you have to sit back and look at it yourself, and bring them back, you know?

Selena: Thank you, Morgan. And I think what you're doing is in the same vein as William Still. The work that you do is finding the joy in the life in the mundane or not so mundane, as we've seen in a lot of cases. So

many people landed in Philadelphia and we've talked about how we can find them in Journal C, but Katy, can you help us understand further how we can identify some of these ancestors who may have been freedom seekers or assisted others on the path to freedom?

Katy: Yeah, and I should say this is a hard act to follow, Morgan. You're very inspiring. And it's hard now to get kind of into the practicalities of how to do this, but I'm hoping that, as always, in finding your ancestors, you're able to find where they fit into the story yourself.

When it comes to researching ancestors in and after slavery, there are a few options and I'm going to share three with you today. Although as Morgan said earlier, the wall, that is that kind of brick wall stopping point where it can be hard to find other information can be location specific. So not everything that I'm going to say here is going to apply to you or your family. And there are so many other resources that I'm not going to be able to cover here, but I will try to include as many links in the show notes as possible for you, so that you can find your own family.

And we'll start close to home. So although slavery was smaller in scope in Pennsylvania than it was in the South, it did exist here. And as we've talked about, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society based in Philly was active in working to end slavery throughout the United States as early as its founding in 1775. The Abolition Society's original records are held here at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. And the collection is massive.

One of the most important resources for family historians of those records is the manumissions and indentures portion. And that contains documentation of people being freed and of labor contracts they subsequently signed. You might even be able to connect these manumission papers with that 1838 Abolition Society census we talked about in the previous episode, which should be really cool.

Remember that that census contains a question about how and when a person was freed. So, you're finding that information in the census, you might know to then go and look at the Abolition Society papers. Now, that's Pennsylvania. And a lot of our listeners are going to have ancestors that weren't enslaved in Pennsylvania, most of them probably. And as Morgan has said, the wall, meaning that brick wall that causes problems when you're trying to trace your ancestors back, is location specific. And after all, the US South was the site of slavery as it was practiced on the widest scale.

So, if your ancestors were in the South or other parts of the United States at the time, or they just weren't ever free before the Civil War, there are still some ways to possibly track them during and after slavery, right? One key principle is going to be, within slavery, unfortunately, it is important to remember that since Black people were considered property, property records are where you're going to want to look to find them, and that's usually in documents relating to the white people who held them in bondage. Enslaved people could be transferred, they could be gifted or sold, and this was often done by the same legal mechanisms as land or any other kind of major property.

What that means is documents like wills and estate files and deeds could mention enslaved people by name, and what was happening to them, who they were being sold or gifted to, and under what circumstances. Sometimes in those documents, family connections were even mentioned. I've seen more than one will that mentions a woman and her children by name.

It goes without saying that these are painful records to read, but the information in them is crucial. The good news is a lot of these legal documents are online now at places like Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org.

So what about after slavery? Well, after slavery, there were efforts by the newly freed people to track down the relatives they had been unwillingly separated from in previous years. You've got to remember, there was no TV, there was no social media or DNA testing in those days and yeah, there was the postal system, there was mail, but you don't even know who or where to write a letter to. So the best way to get those queries in front of the most eyeballs was in the newspaper. These attempts at reconnection often took the form of posted ads. So I've got an example here.

In 1896, a woman named Alice Brown wrote to the Baptist Vanguard newspaper in Little Rock, Arkansas about relatives she said she hadn't seen in 30 years. She writes, quote, “We belong to one Ed Maddocks of La Grange, Troop County, Georgia. My father's name was Abe Dukes before Maddocks bought him. My mother's name was Gracie, daughter of one Ally Maddocks.”

Alice then goes on to mention by name aunts and uncles, including an uncle last seen at the Battle of Vicksburg and a pair of aunts she knows were sold all the way into Clayborn Parish, Louisiana, and hadn't heard from since. That is so much information and a testament to me to the deep longing people had to reconstruct those community and family networks that they had. And there are a number of projects out there these days working to collect these sorts of ads and make them searchable and accessible to people.

Right here in Pennsylvania, Villanova University has a great website called Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery. That's where I found the newspaper article I just mentioned about Alice Brown. And that database covers the whole US, not just Pennsylvania. So don't let that stop you if you don't have people in Pennsylvania.

But you can also just search the newspapers themselves. If you have a specific area you want to look, go right to the source, right? A good place to start there for free is Chronicling America, which is a database of newspapers hosted by the Library of Congress. If you don't find what you need there, because they don't have every newspaper ever, there are other sites too. Really, each one is going to have slightly different coverage of papers and time periods. You kind of have to go in and look and see which one has what you need. Some are free, some are subscription based. Once again though, you can often access these for free, even the subscription ones at public libraries and archives like HSP.

And even today, that act of family reconstruction continues and there is so much good work going on to make this easier for people. Obviously academic institutions, we mentioned Villanova, get a lot of attention, but there are individuals out there and smaller local orgs like historical societies and other sites doing the work as well.

I've been talking about New Jersey as we have the day. I want to shout out my colleague, Shamele Jordan. She comes to mind. Shamele is working on an accurate history of the historically Black town of Lawnside, New Jersey in Camden County, and making sure credit is being given to the Black founders of that town. She also runs a really great genealogy how-to show on YouTube called “Genealogy Quick Start,” just as a tip. So she's one of those people on the ground doing that research herself, and then sharing those tips

with others. Community studies that we're trying to rebuild these populations and learning about these people regularly involves genealogy.

As always, there's so much more than I have time to share here. Be sure to check the show notes for more genealogy links and resources, but this is something to get you started.

Morgan: So, in my experiences as a currently amateur genealogist working on a certification very soon, find this work to be really important and really incredible. I think it's really essential for anyone who identifies as being Afro descended to really dig back into their ancestry.

It's kind of hard, and I know that many people just due to the nature of this country and due to the nature of history, sometimes are a little bit more hesitant than not to find the names of people. Sometimes you just want to know where we're from in Africa, which is equally as important.

But your ancestors who were here for hundreds of years, they have stories, they have names, they have unique lives. And if you jump straight to Africa, you're skipping over every single person who was here trying to fight so that you have the right to be who you are.

I know it's kind of complex and ancestry and genealogy sometimes seems a little bit inaccessible. But it's so healing if you just take a jump. And your ancestors don't have to be a William Still to heal you, you know? As I'm sure you heard buried in between this episode, we had gently mentioned maybe five different ways that I'm connected to this history by way of ancestry in ways that I didn't expect until I took that jump.

Half of these stories were family lore until I went on Ancestry.com and it was proven to be true. And we're really just scratching the surface of all the incredible Black and indigenous people who made up my being. And I want you all to discover that feeling for yourself. It's really cool to know the name of your great, great grandparent. And even if the wall exists, because the wall exists in my family too, you're still looking at someone who survived and thrived and lived a very full life. And that's something to be proud of. Whether they are a business owner or a sharecropper or a general inside of the Civil War, they are all equally as important.

And at the end of the day, technically, you're just their grandchild getting to meet them for the first time. And I think that's really cool for them, wherever they are. And Even if you don't believe they'll meet you, you get to meet them.

I just want you all to pursue that feeling and don't be afraid of the wall. It's something that either can be pushed past or the people after the wall have more to be discovered.

Selena: Thank you, Katy and Stephanye. And of course, thank you so much, Morgan, for your time and for the knowledge that you shared with us today. We encourage all of our listeners to explore the 1838 Black Metropolis, both on social media and on their website at 1838blackmetropolis.com. A special thank you to Bella, our audio technician, and of course the Library of Congress for bringing this podcast to life.

If you're interested in learning more about what you heard today, please make a research appointment at HSP. You can come and physically hold and read some of these documents, sift through our archives for

yourself. We're open to the public Tuesday through Friday. Make an appointment, submit questions to our librarians, and more at hsp.org. For updates on this podcast as well as other fun HSP news, follow us on social media @historicalpa.

Thank you for tuning in to this episode of Resurrecting Voices: the Philadelphia Black Experience. We hope you'll join us next time as we sit down with Adrienne Whaley, who will take us on a journey through the Great Migration. Until then, I'm Selena Bemak with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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