

# RESURRECTING VOICES

*The Philadelphia Black Experience*

*A Podcast By the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*

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**Episode 4 — Understanding Black Foodways: Catering and Cuisine**  
**Featuring guest speaker - Dr. Danya Pilgrim**  
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## Resources at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

- Albert E. Dutrieuille Catering records, 1873-1975, undated
  - The Dutrieuille family owned and operated a successful catering business in Philadelphia for almost a century. The Dutrieuille catering operation was founded in 1873 by Pierre Albert Dutrieuille. Although Dutrieuille married into the Baptiste family, owners of the internationally known Philadelphia catering firm Augustin-Baptiste, his business remained separate.
- Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton papers, 1913-1983
- Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton photographs, 1920s-1930s
  - Bernice Dutrieuille was the daughter of Albert E. Dutrieuille. Her mother was Florence Baptiste, whose family operated another catering firm.
- Dutrieuille-Baptiste family photographs, 1910-1970
- Philadelphia Dancing Assembly Records
- Robert Bogle Portrait and Poem by Nicholas Biddle
- Mutual Assurance Company Records
- *Two Hundred Years: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1824-2024*, ed. David R. Brigham
- The Philadelphia Colored Directory
  - Directories from 1908, 1910, and 1914 that list the Black businesses and professionals in the city. Contains brief historical notes and statistics on Black Philadelphians and their employment.
- Leon Gardiner Collection of American Negro Historical Society records
  - 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.

- [View digitized records from the Leon Gardiner Collection.](#)
  
- [Lizzie Martin Recipe Book](#)
  
- [Nicholas Biddle Papers](#)
  
- [Biddle Family Papers](#)
  
- [Philadelphia Saving Fund Society annual statements](#)
  
- [Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania records](#)

## Resources at the Library of Congress

- 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.](#)
- Philadelphia Dancing Assemblies, Thomas Willing Balch, 1916
- Nicholas Biddle Papers 1681-1933
- Parkinson's restaurant, Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa., wood engraving print, 1853

## Additional Resources

- [Danya Pilgrim, “Masters of A Craft: Philadelphia’s Public Waiters, 1820-1850,” \*The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography\* 142, no. 3 \(October 2018\)](#)
  
- WHY Y
  - [History of Mercy-Douglass Hospital, WHY Y](#)
    - Special on the history of Philadelphia hospitals founded by the Black community.
  
- National Humanities Center
  - [List of African American Societies in Early Philadelphia](#)
  
- Hagley Museum and Library
  - [Philadelphia Saving Fund Society \(PSFS\)](#)
  
- Temple University
  - [Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection](#)

## Glossary (in order of mention)

**Great Migration:** The movement of roughly 6 million Black Americans from the American South to the North, Midwest, and West from about the 1910s to the 1970s. Refer to episode 3 of *Resurrecting Voices* for additional information.

**Dancing Assembly of Philadelphia:** Established in the 1740s as a social event for Philadelphia's elite.

**Amaranda Price:** An employee and cook for the Mutual Assurance Company.

**Mutual Assurance Company (Green Tree):** Formed in Philadelphia as the Mutual Assurance Company for Insuring Homes from Loss by Fire in 1784, a group created to provide the opportunity for people to insure homes with trees in front of them.

**George Johnson:** A popular and wealthy Black public waiter in 19th century Philadelphia. Served multiple events in the city and was hired by the Pennsylvania Saving Fund Society to serve meetings through the 1820s.

**Robert Bogle:** A prolific Black public waiter-caterer whose success elevated the reputation of public waiters in Philadelphia.

**Nicholas Biddle:** The President of the Second Bank of the United States, shown in his account books to have hired public waiters including George Johnson and Robert Bogle. Attributed as the author of the poem "Ode to Bogle" in 1829.

***The Fudge Family Goes to Washington:*** A novel written by Harry Nimrod in 1820. Includes a character who comments on the trouble she had finding public waiters who could compare to those in Philadelphia, like Robert Bogle and Randol Shepherd.

**Randol Shepherd:** A respected Black Philadelphian public waiter who served and led events in the mid-19th century.

**Ferdinand Dreer (1812-1902):** A Philadelphian jeweler, philanthropist, autograph collector, and former Vice President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Well-connected within and outside Philadelphia. Left his papers and extensive autograph collection to HSP.

**Dutrieuille Family:** A family of West Indian descent who owned and ran a successful Philadelphia catering business from 1873 to 1967.

**Thomas Downing (1791-1866):** A successful Black Philadelphian oyster seller, restaurateur, and abolitionist.

***High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America:*** A Netflix documentary series first released in 2021 that explores African American food from the modern day to its origins in Africa.

**Omar Tate:** A Philadelphia-based chef featured on Netflix's *High on the Hog*, Season 1, Episode 3, "Our Founding Chefs."

**Peter Albert Dutrieuille:** Founded the Dutrieuille family catering company in 1873.

**Augustin family:** A family of caterers who owned part of the highly successful Augustin-Baptiste catering firm in Philadelphia. Interconnected with the Dutrieuille and Baptiste families.

**Baptiste family:** A family of caterers who owned part of the highly successful Augustin-Baptiste catering firm in Philadelphia. Interconnected with the Dutrieuille and Augustin families.

**Cuyjet family:** A catering family closely linked with the Augustins and Baptistes. Joined those families in helping found St. Peter Claver in Philadelphia.

**St. Peter Claver:** The first Black Catholic church in Philadelphia, located at 12th and Lombard Streets. Closed in 2014.

**Peter Augustin:** A Black caterer who enjoyed a successful career in Philadelphia after moving to the city from Saint-Domingue in 1809.

**Mary Frances Augustin:** The wife of Peter Augustin, a successful caterer who took over her husband's business after his death.

**James Augustin:** Son of Peter and Mary Frances Augustine. Helped his mother take over the family business after his father's death.

**M.F. Augustin and Son:** The name for the Augustin catering business after Peter Augustin's death. Run by Mary Frances and James Augustin.

**Mary Antoinette Augustin:** Daughter of Peter and Mary Frances Augustin. Cooked for the family business and outside of it.

**Theodore Augustin:** Youngest son of Peter and Mary Frances Augustin. Married Clara Augustin and formed the Augustin Baptiste Catering Concern, cementing the relationship between the Augustin and Baptiste families.

**Clara Augustin (née Baptiste):** Wife of Theodore Augustin. The couple began the Augustin Baptiste Catering Concern.

**Amelia Baptiste:** Sister of Clara Augustin. Married Peter Albert Dutrieuille, further strengthening the bond between the families.

**Henry Jones (c. 1815-1875):** A successful Philadelphia caterer who established his own business. Born into slavery in Virginia.

**W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963):** A prolific African American sociologist, historian, writer, and activist.

**Margaret Jones:** Wife of Henry Jones who successfully ran his catering business after his death.



**National Negro Business League:** An organization founded in 1900 by Booker T. Washington and other founders to support Black business and finance. Absorbed into the National Business League in 1966.

**Booker T. Washington (1856-1915):** An African American educator, author, reformer, and community leader. A leader of the Tuskegee Institute, a school for Black students, and a founder of the National Negro Business League.

**Pennsylvania Saving Fund Society:** A savings bank founded in Philadelphia in 1816 and operated until 1992.

**Hagley Museum and Library:** An educational nonprofit located in Wilmington, Delaware. Opened in 1803.

**Black censuses:** Compiled by Black census takers in Philadelphia from 1838.

**Parkinson family:** A white family who owned a restaurant in Philadelphia. Hired Philadelphia's prominent Black waiters and caterers to assist with events.

**John Trower (1849-1911):** An African American restaurateur who co-founded Downingtown Industrial and Agricultural School. Known as one of the wealthiest Philadelphians of his time.

**Institute for Colored Youth:** School for African American students, founded by Quakers in Philadelphia in 1837. Eventually became Cheyney University of Pennsylvania.

**Stephen Smith (c. 1795-1873):** An African American businessman, preacher, philanthropist, and abolitionist. Served as the Vice President of the Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored Persons from 1864 to 1873.

**Home for Aged Colored Persons:** An institution founded in 1864 by white quakers and Black elites. Became the Stephen Smith Home for the Aged in 1953.

**Reverend William Abraham Credit (1861-1921):** Pastor of the First African Baptist Church in Philadelphia.

**Terrapin:** A type of turtle native to the East Coast in the United States. Used in dishes like terrapin soup, once considered a regional speciality in Philadelphia.

**Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation:** A living history site in Gradyville, Pennsylvania that focuses on farm life from 1760-1790.

**Lizzie Martin Recipe Book:** A book featuring recipes and first aid advice, including home remedies for illnesses and ailments. Housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

**Chicken croquette (Philadelphia/Augustin croquet):** A seasoned chicken mixture coated in breadcrumbs and deep fried. Variations on the croquette existed, sometimes using different types of meat, but the Philadelphia croquette was always made with chicken.

**Sarah Roarer (1849-1937):** A Pennsylvanian food writer, called the first American dietician.

**Philadelphia Saving Fund Society (PSFS):** Founded in 1816 as the first savings bank in the United States.

***The Garies and their Friends:*** An 1857 novel by Frank Webb, one of the first published African American authors and a Philadelphia native. Features two families, one mixed race, and one white, and their experiences with racism in Georgia and Philadelphia.

**Schuylkill River:** A river that stretches 135 miles from Pottsville, Pennsylvania to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Frances Trollope (1779-1863):** An English author known for her 1832 book *The Domestic Manners of Americans* that recalls her travels to the United States.

**James Prosser:** A Philadelphia oyster seller whose business was passed down through generations of his family.

**Henry Minton (1870-1940):** An African American doctor and pharmacist who helped found Mercy Hospital and served as its superintendent for 24 years. Also helped found Sigma Pi Phi (The Boulé), the first Black Greek-letter fraternity. Born in South Carolina, but lived most of his life in Philadelphia.

**Stephen Cuyjet:** A member of the Cuyjet family of caterers. Worked with James Wormley in Washington, D.C.

**James Wormley (1819-1884):** A free-born Black man who owned and ran Wormley Hotel in Washington, D.C. Chaired a committee to build Wormley School in Washington, D.C. for Black students and was part of a mission to get Congressional funding for Sumner School, the first elementary school for Black students in Washington, D.C.

**American Negro Historical Society:** Founded in 1897 in Philadelphia by to study and preserve materials African American history.

**Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania:** A group formed in 1882 to service children in need.

**Philadelphia Orphan Society:** A private Christian group founded to house children in Philadelphia in 1814. Merged with the Elwyn School in 1965.

## Full Transcript

**Selena Bemak:** Welcome 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 at 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 Dr. Danya Pilgrim, genealogist Katy Bodenhorn-Barnes, and our project advisor, Stephanye Watts. Dr. Danya Pilgrim is an assistant professor of history at Temple University who specializes in African American history during the 19th century. Her research and teaching interests focus on the social and cultural history of the United States and include food, gender, and the everyday, as well as public history and the digital humanities. She is also a contributing author to HSP's anniversary publication, *200 Years*.

Dr. Pilgrim earned her PhD in African American studies and in American studies from Yale University. Her current research project traces the development of Philadelphia's Black catering trade from the early national period to the turn of the 20th century. So welcome Dr. Pilgrim. We are so glad to have you with us today on our podcast.

**Danya Pilgrim:** Thank you, I'm thrilled to be here.

**Selena:** So, on our last episode of *Resurrecting Voices*, we spoke with Adrienne Whaley from the Museum of the American Revolution about the Great Migration and how Black people from the South went north and west and brought their culture with them, which includes largely foodways. So we talked a little bit about food and culture. But before we dive fully into the gastronomy of Black Philadelphia, can we zoom out a bit and have you share with us your entry point and interest in this topic?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** I am a seventh generation Pennsylvanian on one side of my family. And we trace that lineage back to a woman named Jane Chester who walked out of slavery in Baltimore, Maryland, and made her way to York, Pennsylvania. She married a man named George Chester and they moved to Harrisburg. She was a caterer, and he owned an oyster seller.

So, this is actually a very personal history that I study and started my interest in foodways and catering. And then as I learned more being somebody who lives in Philadelphia, and connecting to African American history in the city, the caterers are so much a part of that. And I was just really intrigued and wanted to know more.

**Selena:** Can you tell us a little bit more about your ancestors and what you know about them, this couple?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** So the Chesters were really influential in Harrisburg. George Chester in his oyster seller, he distributed antislavery and abolitionist newspapers. Their children were also influential. T. Morris Chester became a recruiter for the Civil War. He went to Europe to pass the bar because he couldn't at the time in the United States, and came back. So there's quite a bit of research done on him.

One of her daughters is one of the first school teachers in Harrisburg. And we're not sure whether that is in a Sunday school or through a church school or in a more public school in the city. So the business that George and Jane Chester had in the foodways world was able to provide education for their children. Their children were able then to be very socially mobile in the world. David Chester actually moved to Philadelphia and among his other jobs, he also did some small-scale catering after the Civil War.

**Selena:** Does your Philadelphia lineage trace through him since she landed in York and they were in Harrisburg, more of like central, south central Pennsylvania, but your family is from the Philadelphia area now? So do you trace yourself directly through David Chester?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** No, actually, and of course I'm blanking because that is what happens when you have to answer important questions about your family. No, so it was one of her daughters that I am a direct descendant of who was the schoolteacher.

**Katy Barnes:** Don't worry, nobody has their family tree memorized.

**Selena:** Yeah, especially when you go back that many generations, there are a lot of names and they move a lot of places. But what an amazing cultural, familial connection through the years from your personal history to your scholarly work. Like, clearly there is such an attachment there. That's amazing.

And in the 19th and 20th centuries, this was also a pathway, catering, right, for financial stability, and sometimes great wealth. So I'd love to talk about the origins of Black catering in Philadelphia, if we can start there as our entry point for today.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** So when I think about the beginnings of the catering industry, I think back to that early national period when Philadelphia became the capital of the nation. Now, of course, people were doing actions that we think about in terms of catering. There were public cooks, men and women who moved to different households, and cooked for banquets and other special events.

There were men who were waiters, both private in a single family or in a single establishment, and public waiters who moved among different households who required extra help for big events. The Philadelphia City Assemblies, the Dancing Assemblies is one such gathering where they hired Black men to be waiters for that event.

[Frank Johnson's "Lafayette Cotillions, Yorktown" plays, courtesy of the Museum of the American Revolution]

And so there is a much longer history, but it's this moment in the 1790s where Philadelphia is the capitol, where there is so much cultural influence, so much cultural emphasis placed on eating, and hospitality, and entertaining that we look to really see the beginnings of the catering industry.

Now in this moment, Philadelphia has so many African Americans who are connected in foodways. So not just what we will come to know as catering. We have men who are working on the water as oystermen, as stewards for ships. We have people in the streets, hucksters and sidewalk food sellers who are both men and women who are selling prepared foodstuffs like pepper pot soup, they are also hawking oysters and many different types of food.

We also have people in the kitchen that I've mentioned already, the cooks who are working in taverns or inns and who are working for different families and institutions. In fact, an example of this is Amaranda Price, who a little bit after the 1790s, but she works for the Mutual Assurance Company and she cooks for them. And there is a public waiter named George Johnson who is serving the food that she is making for the Mutual Assurance Company.

So when we look at this moment, many scholars look to Robert Bogle as really the man who is starting the catering business. At this moment, he's a public waiter. So he hires his services to go to different institutions. He works for Nicholas Biddle. Nicholas Biddle hires him to be a waiter in his home. He is at the dancing assemblies. He is at all the big major events.

Bogle takes this job and what he starts to do is hire other waiters to work with him. He's the head waiter. He hires these other men to work with him, and they kind of form a cadre as they move around the city hosting and administering these different events.

**Selena:** Robert Bogle, I have been introduced to him before, and I didn't know that he worked for Nicholas Biddle, and that's interesting to me, because I remembered looking into Robert Bogle, seeing if he's in our digital catalog at HSP, and not really finding much, but we have the Biddle family papers. So it might not be in the digital catalog, maybe in the card catalog. He must appear somewhere in the historical record here.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** Yeah, so one of the interesting things about doing the research for the Black caterers is that you are absolutely right. When I go into a card catalog and look up "caterers," I don't find the names. I don't find the history. It is really in going into the records and uncovering how much of Philadelphia society was moved by these men and women where we start to find the record.

So one of the places in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania where I found Robert Bogle, as I said, was in the account books of the dancing assemblies, in the account books of the Mutual Assurance Company.<sup>1</sup> And so what I hope is that the interest and the research starts to uncover the places in the historical record where we can find the caterers and other people of African descent who are part of and who have driven the history of the city.

**Katy:** So would it be fair to say that in your research it's those kinds of business records where you're finding most evidence of these people or have you found success in other kinds of records as well?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** So the business records of the various companies has been a starting point for me. I was also able to find more information once I had names that I got from business records in genealogical records, in

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<sup>1</sup> Correction: Robert Bogle may not have appeared in the account books of the Mutual Assurance Company.

other institutional records, in family papers. Also, the Black caterers of Philadelphia were so renowned that we also have literary evidence of them.

There is a popular story in the early republic called *The Fudge Family Goes to Washington*. And this is a family who is from Philadelphia who goes to Washington D.C., and the daughter is lamenting that in Washington D.C., she cannot find public waiters as great as the ones in Philadelphia. And in the book, it specifically names Bogle and Shepherd.

So Randol Shepherd is one of the other public waiters of this time who is celebrated. He's also celebrated, both Randol Shepherd and Robert Bogle, in Nicholas Biddle's famous poem, "Ode to Bogle."

**Selena:** Yeah, "Ode to Bogle." I have seen that before, and I've seen accompanying the "Ode to Bogle" depictions of what Robert Bogle might have looked like. That said, I don't know who was depicting him, so how accurate that might have been.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** Well, there's a painting to Ferdinand Dreer, which was painted and it's a little miniature and there are two different versions of it. So I'm not sure if one is a sketch and one becomes the watercolor that accompanies the actual pamphlet that is the "Ode to Bogle."

**Selena:** Yeah, I'm looking at it right now and it just says miniature from Ferdinand Dreer. So it doesn't say if he's the artist or if he was the collector. That's great. And then this is moving forward in our timeline too about the Dutrieuille family. Maybe, is there a way we can think about Black catering over time, and change because, we started talking about the 18th century and now we're moving much later toward the second half of the 19th century with the Dutrieuille family. So can you tell us about them?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** From the beginnings of the catering industry in Philadelphia in the early Republic period, we move through the antebellum era which really is the heyday. The early public waiters and public cooks have come together to form this catering industry that is well known up and down the Eastern seaboard. In fact, we have Thomas Downing who's well known for his oysters.

He comes through Philadelphia later, as we move past the Civil War, Charles Smiley, who becomes a great caterer in Chicago, also spends time in Philadelphia. So Philadelphia is really a nexus or a node in which foodways workers are coming to the city and moving through the city.

**Stephanye Watts:** So on episode three of Netflix, *High on the Hog*, I love that Philly got its own little shout out. The viewers were introduced to Omar Tate, who is, I believe, a 2024 finalist for the James Beard Award. He's also a native of Philadelphia, also from uptown. Then the narrator kind of dives into the story of the Dutrieuilles.

So for those who haven't seen the show, can you tell us a bit about the family?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** The Dutrieuilles are part of a Saint-Dominguen or French West Indian group of men and women who come to the city as early as the 1790s. And when we talk about Peter Albert Dutrieuille, who is the founder of the Dutrieuille catering industry in 1873, we're also talking about families like the Augustins, the Baptistes, the Cuyjets, and it's difficult to only talk about the Dutrieuilles, because all of these families become connected over time.

So Peter Albert Dutrieuille marries into the Baptiste family, which is a catering family at this point. He apprentices with his in-laws before he starts and launches his own business. And so he is building his business on the layers of knowledge and skill that have been developed in the catering industry and in these families over the course of the 19th century. This business is extremely successful. His son succeeds him in the business, and the business exists until the 1960s.

**Selena:** So it has a long storied history, the Dutrieuille-Baptiste business. It exists for quite some time. And it's a family business the entire duration?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** Yes, it is. And these family connections are not often talked about when we talk about the catering business. We tend to focus on a single successful Black male entrepreneur. But so often, the entire family is driving the business.

When we think about Peter Augustin, who is one of the most famous Black caterers who comes to the city in 1809 by way of Cuba from Saint-Domingue. He marries Mary Frances Augustin and she is a cook and caterer in her own right. So we're not sure whether they started off working together or if they each had their own separate business, but we don't talk enough about these women, and the family business, because in the Augustins, and I will come back around to the Dutrieuilles. So the Augustin family, Mary Frances has a number of children who survive to adulthood and they all become renowned as cooks. So when her husband dies, James Augustin, her son, helps her with the business, take over the business, which becomes known as M.F. Augustine & Son.

Her daughter, Mary Antoinette is a cook and has cooked outside the family, but also as part of the family business. Her son, her youngest son marries into the Baptiste family, Theodore, and he and Clara really start the Augustine and Baptiste Catering Concern, and it's Clara's sister, Amelia, who marries Peter Albert Dutrieuille. So we can see how this long-standing familial and business acumen is built over time.

**Selena:** That's interesting, they're developing family connections by marrying into one another's families, but then using those to form business alliances as well with these companies. Are there any other significant women in this part of the story that you'd like to highlight?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** We often talk about Henry Jones, who W.E.B. Du Bois points to as a very important caterer. His wife, Margaret, in the records, is also listed as a caterer. And when he passes away, she takes on the business. Mary Rodgers is a woman who is a caterer in the turn of the 20th century. She's also part of the National Negro Business League, which is started by Booker T. Washington and has a branch in Philadelphia. There are many branches across the country, but there is also a branch in Philadelphia.

And she is one of, in fact, she's the only woman member that I could find, even though there are, by the time we get to the 1910s and you go to a city directory and look under the listing for caterer, there are a number of Black women caterers in that listing.

**Selena:** Were people ever identified in those listings as other than caterers, even if that was their profession, were they listed as cooks or chefs, but still a part of that same profession?



**Dr. Pilgrim:** What I find is, through the 19th century—and remember, in the 19th century, they're only looking at heads of household—so mostly, women in records are counted as, you know, they work on their own account. They are keeping house. And it does not list specifically that they are cooks and caterers.

There are several types of records where we're able to actually see that. One is bank records. The Pennsylvania Saving Fund Society records, which are kept at Hagley in Delaware, has a signature book where people who are putting money into their accounts have to write their address and their occupation. Now, many women and men do not do that, but we do find a significant number of records of cooks and caterers, male and female, who do make that notation.

Also in Philadelphia, there are a series of censuses of the African American community. And in those records, we do see women especially, and of course men who list themselves as public waiters, as caterers, as cooks, as people who work for caterers as well.

**Katy:** I have a question here too. I don't know if you'll know this, but at this time period, in this 19th century time period, was this primarily a Black industry or were the Dutrieuilles and all of these families competing with white catering companies that were doing the same thing?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** So the short answer is yes. We know that the public waiters almost always are African American. Waiters, private waiters can be of any race, but pretty much when you see a notation for somebody as a public waiter, it means they are a person of African descent.

So over the antebellum period, African American men and women really do have a monopoly. There is of course the Parkinsons and other white men and women who have restaurants. What we see here are men and women who are catering out of establishments, out of a tavern.

So we can see people at the end of the 18th century into the 19th century who are not Black, who are catering out of taverns, who are catering out of inns. But what we think of as the modern catering industry really is being driven by African Americans. And we see this change after the Civil War. There are a lot more immigrants who become involved in the catering industry.

There are a number of women of both races who also become involved in the catering industry. We also see the influx of Chinese people who are starting food businesses, right? And when we get to the turn of the 20th century, there is a greater interest in these foods from other places, right? That is one of the ways we kind of see the co-opting of Chinese cuisine. We see an expansion in Italian cuisine, beer hall, you know, all the different kinds of foodways that are connected to different ethnicities.

**Selena:** So with these Black caterers, the Dutrieuilles, and Baptistes, and Augustins, these companies, who are the audiences that they're serving? What are the communities? Are they going to churches and serving church functions? Are they providing catering for individual parties? Do you have an idea? Are there records of who they're serving?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** So they're certainly serving—and this is one of the ways that many of the caterers are able to build such a strong following and strong businesses, that they are catering to elite men in many cases. The oyster seller is not a place for women in the 19th century, generally speaking, as patrons.

So those are businessmen, and elite men, I should say that there are a range of oyster sellers. So there are some oyster sellers who are meant to serve kind of the laboring classes, but caterers who want to move up and grow illustrious businesses try to build their eating houses and oyster sellers to serve an elite clientele, businessmen, people in the government. They also have a segment of the business where they are sending out prepared food. So a family could write to a caterer and say, "Please send oyster stew for 10 people to my house on Sunday," right? So we do see these kinds of records.

Now the more hidden records—because people often ask me whether or not the caterers also catered for other Black people. In some ways, that is really hard to parse out, but we have to remember that they are embedded in their communities. So when we see a flyer for a church function at St. Thomas or Mother Bethel or the Cherry Street Baptist Church that says the repast is provided by a caterer, right? Whether or not that becomes a paid affair or these men and women who are part of these institutions, churches, Masonic groups, et cetera, are offering their services free, right? That is harder to figure out, but we do know that they are providing food to African American institutions.

We see it more as we get to the turn of the 20th century, John Trower, who has an amazing and flourishing catering business in Germantown at the end of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century, actually provides food to the Institute of Colored Youth, which becomes Cheyney University. So we have records of Trower going to Cheyney and providing food for certain meetings that they have out there.

**Stephanye:** Speaking of what you were sharing about John Trower, I also find it so interesting how a lot of these caterers were doing a lot of community work because they weren't just like gaining this wealth for themselves. They were really pushing these funds back into the community. So, you know, Trower setting up the bank because obviously Black people were not able to bank at the traditional banks. And if you say giving funds to ICY and things like that. So could you share a little bit more about the community uplift, and activism of these Black caterers?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** So we can trace this activism and community spirit back to the beginning. Men like Robert Bogle, Randol Shepherd were part of the lay boards of churches. They were part of the Masonic groups in the city and the beneficial societies. They were using the capital that they were building and putting it back into the various Black communities in the city. The Augustins, the Baptistes, the Dutrieuilles, the Cuyjets, they remain Catholic and are part of the founding of St. Peter Claver, which is the first African American Catholic church in our city, in Philadelphia.

Once we get past the Civil War, they are also participating and donating money to Stephen Smith's Home for Aged Colored Persons. They are continuing to give money to the founding of Mercy and Douglas Hospital, the Black hospitals that are founded in Philadelphia. Caterers are on the boards for those institutions.

John Trower founds the Downingtown Agricultural and Industrial School, which he wants to be the Tuskegee of the North, right? So he had this eye on underserved youth. Many of the caterers like Trower in particular are connecting with other activists. Trower gets together with Reverend Credit and other caterers and other African American businessmen to start funding ventures for African Americans.

So they have a kind of credit union. They are helping people to finance home ownership during this time period. And so they're really part of this drive for self sufficiency, right? They are not waiting for people to help them. They are helping themselves. They are helping the communities in which they are part of.

**Selena:** Amazing. So we are going to take a quick break, but when we come back, Dr. Pilgrim is going to answer the question we all want to know the answer of, what was on the menu?

[Break]

**Selena:** Welcome back to *Resurrecting Voices*. We are here today with Dr. Danya Pilgrim of Temple University talking about Black Catering in Philadelphia. So, the important question that we all want to know the answer to. What would be the typical spread at an event catered by one of these families?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** Let's think about the Dutrieuilles and a typical spread that they might have catered in the 1930s. There's an alumni dinner in November of 1934 where they have the kind of expected foods that we would think about for a banquet or a kind of alumni dinner. Things like, roast turkey, filet of beef, cranberry sauce, and mashed potatoes. Of course, it's November, right?

[Frank Johnson's "Bird Waltz" plays, courtesy of the Museum of the American Revolution]

They also have these delicious desserts of rum raisin and coffee ice cream. And Philadelphia, of course, has a very particular affinity with ice cream. And they also have pumpkin pie on the menu. So that shows that they have mastery of these kind of traditional dishes that we would see at banquets, a menu that has been perfected by African American caterers throughout the 19th century, right, and into this early 20th century moment.

But this dinner also includes terrapin. And terrapin is a regional specialty which Philadelphians and Black Philadelphia caterers raise the cookery of the terrapin to a high art. Now the terrapin is a species of turtle that lives in fresh waters or marshes. And people turned to the terrapin once the numbers of sea turtles decreased, right, from overfishing. It was more, much more difficult to use the sea turtle as a type of foodstuff.

Fortunately, in terms of the geography of Philadelphia and other cities like Baltimore, they turned to the terrapin. And African American cooks, caterers, restaurateurs raised it to a fine art. It was a dish that was demanded at all different kinds of gatherings.

Terrapin became a regional delicacy. And there are always battles between Philadelphia and Baltimore about which is the better preparation. Ward McAllister, who was a pundit in New York in the early 20th century, declared that Philadelphia wins out. He sides with the Philadelphians. But there were different contests and things where people fought for dominance in terms of the terrapin.

**Selena:** An interesting question that is not necessarily related to your scholarly work, but have you ever tried to recreate something and taste test something that you have found on a menu, or found a recipe of when researching this?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** Yeah, I was really fortunate, when I first started thinking about history as a profession that I might want to go into, one of the things I was able to do was to volunteer at the Colonial Pennsylvania plantation in southeastern Pennsylvania. One of the things I did there was hearth cooking. So also as part of my entree into an interest in colonial and 19th century foodways is this kind of experience of what it is like to use utensils and recreated foodstuffs of the period.

One of the things that I was able to try to recreate, because we know there are no perfect recreations, is the Augustins' chicken croquette recipe. Now, there are at least four versions of the Augustin chicken croquette recipe that have been attributed to the Augustins. One is in the Lizzie Martin manuscript cookbook that's at the Historical Society. There is also one in a kind of family cookbook in Maryland. There is also one in a fundraising cookbook for the Hahnemann Hospital about the Augustin chicken croquette.

And what is so interesting about the chicken croquette, it is this food that becomes used at fundraisers at the end of the 19th century, the turn of the 20th century. Everyone is trying to recreate not just chicken croquettes, but the Philadelphia croquette, which is always a chicken croquette.

So we find recipes for the Philadelphia croquette in Kansas, in Maine, in Massachusetts, everybody wants to know how to make the chicken croquette. So I did my best. I'm sure I did not do justice to it. And when you try to recreate a recipe, you quickly understand there are the small details and the niceties of preparing something that we kind of take for granted, right.

Now, when you have a recipe that is transferred to kind of modern parlance, you have "Turn the temperature to this specific number," or you know, "high heat." "Use one half cup." You know, we have these very specific things. And then you have notes, right, that are like, "Oh, but if you are at high altitude, do this..." or, you know.

But in that time, we don't have those kinds of directions. We have directions that say, "Cook it until it is enough," whatever that means, right? But I will say that the Augustin chicken croquette is delicious, crispy on the outside, creamy in the middle, and I encourage anybody to try to recreate it.

**Selena:** If you have the recipe, I would love to include it in the show notes for our listeners. If not, maybe I can go digging around somewhere in the collection and find where it's at.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** I studied the evolution of chicken croquette recipes from the 1700s to the 20th century. So yes, I have all kinds of Philadelphia and chicken croquette recipes. And I think what is exciting is that we can see kind of this direct connection between the work of the Black cooks and caterers and the fame of Philadelphia foodstuffs.

Sarah Rorer, who is a very famous cookbook author at the end of the 19th and into the 20th century, she has a recipe for the Philadelphia croquette. They're teaching housewives how to make chicken croquettes in cooking schools.

We can see how this comes back to how famous Black families in Philadelphia who are in catering made these articles, the chicken croquettes, the terrapin. And when we think about whether or not there is a particular style, or flavor, or way of making things, we can think about how these men and women were

standing side by side in the kitchen over generations, teaching and passing down techniques, and seasonings, and ways of preparing things that may or may not have actually gotten into cookbooks.

**Stephanye:** It's so funny you were talking about how like just sometimes it's just notes in the recipe. Because there's like this saying that "You just add stuff until the ancestors tell you to stop." You just like throw it in there and then when they say stop, you'll know. And also talking about the chicken croquettes because there's a menu that Historic Germantown uses a lot about John Trower, well, pulls from an event that John Trower did for a wedding.

[Frank Johnson's "Lafayette Cotillions, Yorktown" plays, courtesy of the Museum of the American Revolution]

It's from the *Miners Journal* in Pottsville, 1890, and on that menu is raw oysters, broiled oysters, oyster croquettes, chicken salad, of course the chicken croquettes, lobster salad, lobster cutlets, I'm not sure what a lobster cutlet would be exactly, terrapin, salmon, bone turkey, rass balls, meringues, ice cream, water ice, assorted fruits, coffee, and cake. And I personally love that they had water ice. I thought water ice was a modern thing in Philadelphia, but obviously Rita's been Rita's since the 19th century in Philly, which I love.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** Yeah, I mean, there's so many things that Philadelphia becomes known for. And of course, we can trace that all over the city to all different kinds of people in the city. But there is something about this traditional standard menu for banquets and entertainments that is developed and in many ways perfected by African American cooks and caterers.

When we think about other catering industries, or other people who are catering in the city, they're not often doing it by themselves. Even Parkinson had moments where he hired the Augustins, he hired other Black caterers to provide dishes for a meal that would be known under the banner of Parkinson's, right? So people may not have known that particular dishes were provided by other caterers in the city.

**Selena:** Really cool.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** And all these different oyster recipes on like the PSFS board, the mutual assurance board, always different preparations of oysters. And you think to yourself, how could you eat that with ice cream? And boned turkey is also a specialty of caterers. In the novel, *The Garies and their Friends*, which is written by Frank Webb, an African American who lived in the Philadelphia area for a time, he talks about the glories of the boned turkey. "Turkeys innocent of a bone" is how he puts it.

**Selena:** Where are these caterers sourcing their materials? Are they working with farmers and fishermen, hopefully not getting their oysters from the Schuylkill River, but I fear that that's where they were coming from? Were they growing some of their own crops maybe? How are they sourcing their materials for their catering events?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** That's a great question. Some of the things we know when we look back to the early period, and I was talking about how there is this network of food service workers who are, they're on the water, they're in the kitchens, and so we know in part that in some ways they're sourcing their items the same way any other Philadelphia purveyor would source their items. They're going to kind of the wholesale markets. There are some records of caterers who have farms. So while I don't have a direct documentation that

says, "I went to my farm and I..." right, but it seems reasonable, right? That they would use foods from their farm.

I mean, Philadelphia foodways from the colonial period has been well known as the bread basket, right? It was the breadbasket of the colonies, the markets. When Frances Trollope came here, she was taken there. It was like a tourist attraction because our markets, Philadelphia's markets were superlative.

So there is something about having the best, and most diverse, or very diverse foodstuffs to work with. One of the things that we also know and kind of has come down to us is, you know, people had kind of garden plots in their backyards.

**Selena:** Dr. Pilgrim, can you confirm or deny that those oysters were coming from the Schuylkill River?

**Dr. Pilgrim:** I'm not going to go on record. But I mean, we know that there were battles over the oyster fields in New York, in New Jersey, in Pennsylvania, and the quality of the oyster—there is a poem about James Prosser, who kept an oyster seller on Market Street, that he ran then his son ran, his son's wife ran, and then his grandson also ran an oyster seller. And there's a poem that was written about him. And in it, it lists all the different kinds of oysters and where they're from.

I think it speaks to this mania, especially in the 19th century, for oysters and a kind of expertise where you can tell, I think it exists to this day, right? Where you can eat an oyster and be able to tell by the way it looks, and how it tastes what kind of oyster it is, where it's from, what its provenance is, right?

And to know that the men and women who were involved in oyster cookery had that kind of expertise that they developed to know the best oysters, at what time, where you should go at this time of the year to get oysters or at another time of the year. We know that Thomas Downing in New York actually did his own oystering, because he couldn't trust the purveyors to get the best or to provide him with the best and freshest oysters.

**Stephanye:** So we kind of alluded to it, but I would like to talk a little bit more about how the catering business generated a lot of wealth for the entrepreneurs that were in that industry. Not to John Trower again, but I just love him, y'all. And if you want to stop by his previous building, it's the Crab House now, right at Germantown and Shelton. But he was known as the richest Black man in Philadelphia at one point and it was all because of catering. So I would love to hear you talk a little bit more about how this kind of created an elite class in Philadelphia.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** So one of the amazing things about the catering industry, especially when we think about it in kind of its beginnings and at its heyday, it becomes a vehicle of social mobility for African Americans at a time when it's very difficult for African Americans to get trades and steady occupations.

We've already talked about how the catering industry was able to fund many different parts of the Black community or the Black communities of Philadelphia. When we think about Robert Bogle, who had been enslaved, and so many of the early caterers had been enslaved, there were also free men and women, some of moderate means, but they were able to use catering, and the reputation that Philadelphia had for fantastic catering and foodways to build businesses that provided wealth to them and their families and also to put those funds into the community.

So when Robert Bogle died, he was a wealthy man. Many of these men and women were able to gain wealth because they put their funds into real estate. If we think about the continuum of catering, those on the highest end were able to buy homes, buy places that they opened as restaurants, and they were also part of a Black Philadelphia community that was socially stratified very early.

The wealth that they generated, their children then used to get education, to become doctors, to become lawyers, right? We have the Minton family, and Henry Minton became a doctor. The Minton family, a grandson of the Minton family, Henry Minton, he founds the Boulé, which is a social society in Philadelphia that is national for men, professional men. He is one of the founding doctors of Mercy Hospital. And so we can see the ways they are able to move up onto the high end of the social ladder.

When we think about the Dutrieuilles, Peter Albert Dutrieuille was part of a number of groups, and societies, clubs, organizations, the Ugly Fishing Club, which had an outpost in New York and in New England, these social groups for elite African Americans.

We can see the ways that they were able to marry into families. Stephen Cuyjet went down and worked with James Wormley in Washington, D.C. And so we have a nationally networked, elite African American society of which the Black caterers at the end of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century were very much a part.

**Selena:** This is a great segue into my final question for you, Dr. Pilgrim, which is if you can speak to the legacy and impact of these Black caterers in Philadelphia.

**Dr. Pilgrim:** Their legacy in foodways is immensely important. We are just starting to appreciate the extent to which early African American food workers have been part of the national story, have shaped our American food story.

But their legacy and their effects are also within the communities of Philadelphia, these men and women—and I always want to make sure we mention the women because they often go overlooked and unspoken, they built, they helped to build the Black churches in Philadelphia. They were on the boards. They were volunteers. They were working in these groups. They are part of the beneficial societies, these early beneficial societies in the 19th century.

And we can see the ways that the influence that early Afro Philadelphians had, of which the caterers were such a big part, continued through the 19th century and continue to influence the drive for self-determination, the drive to build economic empowerment, to gain education. All of these are parts of the African American catering story in Philadelphia.

**Katy:** I'd like to wrap up from the genealogical perspective. So the Historical Society of Pennsylvania has many of these sorts of beneficial and social society records, some of which served African Americans exclusively, and others that served Philadelphia citizens of all races. In fact, records like this can be found in a variety of places, and in many cases, they're not yet online. There's a list I'll be placing in the show notes from the National Humanities Center that enumerates all the known Black societies in Philadelphia in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In the meantime, HSP holds records of the American Negro Historical Society, and we have records from other institutions such as the Children's Aid Society and the Orphan Society. Our collections are particularly strong for aid organizations, so if you think your ancestors might have needed some help or even been the helpers themselves, these are great records to check out. And when tracing your ancestors, don't leave out these kinds of resources, even if they might not be as easily accessible online. They're still worth looking at.

**Selena:** Thank you so much Katy, Stephanye, and of course, thank you so much, Dr. Pilgrim, this was wonderful. It was just an incredible conversation from start to finish. And I feel like even with all the research I did going into this, I learned so much from you, Dr. Pilgrim. It was so wonderful to have you on our podcast.

A special thank you to Bella, our audio technician, running behind the scenes, and of course the Library of Congress for bringing this podcast to life. If you are interested in learning more about what you heard today, please make a research appointment at HSP. You can come physically hold and read some of these documents and some of the Dutrieuille family papers are digitized online as well. We will include those resources in our show notes alongside some of the references that Dr. Pilgrim made today.

For updates on this podcast as well as other fun HSP news and tidbits, follow us on social media @historicalpa. And to our listeners, thank you for tuning in to *Resurrecting Voices: the Philadelphia Black Experience*. We hope you join us next time as we sit down with Philly radio legend, Patty Jackson for a discussion on Black music and culture. Until then, I'm Selena Bemak with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



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