

Uncovering Peyton Harris: Entrepreneur, Abolitionist, and Pioneer of Buffalo's Black Community

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3-777) WAR OF 1812.		
NUMBERS	SOLDIER	BOUNTY LAND
<i>S.O. 25287</i>	<i>Harris, Peyton</i>	
	WIDOW	
	SERVICE	
	<i>Pat. Capt H Heath's Co Va Mil.</i>	
	ENLISTED	DISCHARGED
RESIDENCE OF SOLDIER	REMARKS	
RESIDENCE OF WIDOW		
MAIDEN NAME OF WIDOW		
MARRIAGE OF SOLDIER AND WIDOW		
DEATH OF SOLDIER		
DEATH OF WIDOW		
<i>A.B.B. Qm</i>		

Figure 1. War of 1812 Document

That Sarah A. Robinson was kept in said jail four hundred and twenty-one days, for which said Marshal has charged the United States 143 14

That Peyton Harris was kept in said jail three hundred and twenty-one days, for which said Marshall has charged the United States 109 14

And that 5 several persons, the cause of whose commitment is stated in said account to be a petition for freedom, were kept in said jail for one hundred and eleven, one hundred and seventy-two, two hundred and thirty-two, three hundred and seventy-one days, respectively, for which said Marshal has charged the United States 437 38

Figure 2. Peyton Harris Recaptured and jailed for 321 days. *The Liberator*, June 2, 1848. Boston, MA.

William H. Talbert.

William H. Talbert, negro, for 20 years a clerk and messenger in the city clerk's office, died in his home, 118 Northland avenue, Monday. Mr. Talbert was one of Buffalo's prominent negro citizens and a member of one of the oldest families in New York state. His grandfather, Peyton Harris, came to this city in 1827. Mr. Talbert was well known.

Surviving Mr. Talbert are his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Brown Talbert, Sarah Mae Talbert, a daughter, and Yvette Keelan, a granddaughter. Mr. Talbert's body will lay in state at the Michigan Avenue Baptist church Thursday from 11 A. M. until 2 P. M. Burial will be in Forest Lawn cemetery, following services at the church.

Figure 3. Death Announcement of William Talbert, *Buffalo Evening News*, 01-22-30.

***Michigan Street (Colored).*—Between Clinton street and Broadway. — — —, Pastor.**

Trustees—Peyton Harris, Wm. Stourm, John Granby, Daniel Freeman, Mrs. Tanner, Ralph Dickers.

Sexton—Miss Sarah Coyery.

***Olivet Baptist Mission.*—No. 595 Delaware ave.**

Trustees—Thomas Chester, President; R. Z. Mason, Secretary; James O. Robson, Sherman S. Jewett, P. J. Ferris, Josiah Jewett.

Figure 4. At 88 years of age, Mr. Peyton Harris was still serving as a trustee in his local church. 1880 Buffalo City Directory.



Figure 5. Exposed Fireplace at the home of Peyton Harris on Michigan Ave. immediately next to the Michigan Street Baptist Church. Site of future excavation. Photo provided by Doug Perrelli, University at Buffalo.

Introduction

The life of Peyton Harris (ca. 1791–1882) offers a vital lens into the entwined histories of the Erie Canal, African American entrepreneurship, and abolitionist activism in nineteenth-century Buffalo, New York. Born enslaved in Virginia, Harris migrated north and by 1833 settled in Buffalo, where he established himself as a businessman, community leader, and civic figure of national importance. His contributions to Buffalo's growth—through his ownership of canal boats, his role in the development of the Michigan Street Baptist Church, and his participation in the Colored Conventions movement—highlight the resilience and determination of Black Americans who shaped both local and national history.

As a living descendant, this essay aims to preserve and expand Harris's legacy, situating him as a central figure in Buffalo's Black history while also offering scholars a resource for future research. This paper also recognizes gaps in research, timelines, and information about Peyton Harris that continue to motivate me, as a living descendant and family historian, to search for answers. As his descendant, I offer this research paper as both a tribute to his legacy and a resource for future study. As this research has become a family history endeavor, I consider this document a First Edition, to be updated as new information is discovered and pieces of the Peyton puzzle are revealed.

Beginnings and Migration

Peyton Harris was born into slavery approximately 14 miles outside of Richmond in Powhatan County, Virginia on December 25, 1791, working as an enslaved boatman on the James River.¹ As a point of reference, it is noted that Mr. Peyton Harris “...operated boats on the James River and was in the business of hauling coal and other merchandise from point to point with six-horse teams long before the railroads came into operation.”² While historical accounts indicate that Peyton Harris was “held for a time in New Jersey,” no surviving record specifies the reason or circumstances for this period of confinement. Neither manumission papers nor court records have been located to clarify whether Harris was enslaved, indentured, or otherwise bound under New Jersey’s system of gradual emancipation. Because New Jersey maintained a form of legal bondage for African Americans well into the mid-nineteenth century, it is plausible that Harris was still considered enslaved or apprenticed under that framework before securing his freedom and migrating to Buffalo. Until new evidence emerges from county manumission registers or state archives, this portion of his life must be regarded as undocumented yet historically consistent with the transitional status of many African Americans in New Jersey during the early 1800s.³

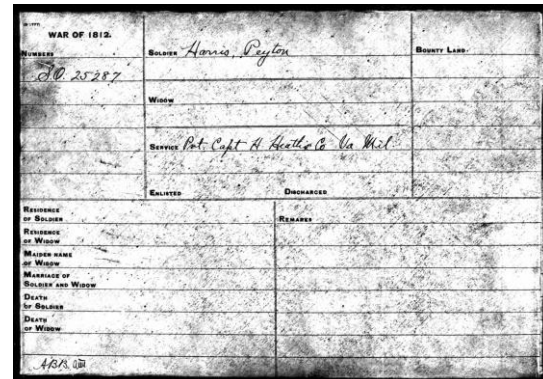


Figure 1. War of 1812 Document

¹ Buffalo City Directories at <http://nyheritage.nynln.net>; Monroe Fordham, Origins Mich. Baptist St. Church, 6, 13, 14. Provided by the Michigan Street Baptist Church National Historic Landmark Significance Draft, December 2022.

² *Buffalo Express*. February 3, 1882.

³ Uncrowned Community Builders, “Biography for Peyton Harris — Buffalo,” <https://www.uncrownedcommunitybuilders.com/person/peyton>; see also *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery* (New Jersey, 1804) and *An Act to Abolish Slavery* (New Jersey, 1846), which legally reclassified enslaved persons as “apprenticed for life,” extending forms of bondage until the mid-nineteenth century.

Harris joined the War of 1812 (See Fig. 1) fighting for the U.S., as many enslaved individuals had done, under the promise from the government that the end of their military service would come with freedom from slavery. At the end of the war Peyton makes note that “not a slave who entered the service was freed,” but rather “on the contrary they were all remanded to Slavery by their masters.”⁴ Instead of returning back to slavery, Peyton escaped, only to be caught sometime later and sent to jail in the Washington D.C. area with other “persons claimed as slaves or

fugitives from service,” where he stayed for 321 days, at a cost to the federal government of \$109.14.⁵ (See Fig. 2) It is important to note that Harris served his time in the War of 1812 on forts between Chesapeake Bay⁶ and Washington D.C. Harris’ time in jail is documented as a result of Alexander Hunter, marshal of the District of Columbia, who petitioned the House of Representatives in 1848 to pay him for the cost of maintaining Harris and others on behalf of the U.S.⁷ The timing, however, does present potential red flags.

The same paper, *The Liberator*, mentions Peyton Harris 3 months before in March as having been appointed as Vice President of the colored citizens of Buffalo meeting. Is the jailer, Hunter, requesting payment for a previous time period of having held Harris? Or is it possible that there is a different Peyton Harris that was a runaway who was recaptured? The latter is very possible considering Peyton Harris, as a name, wasn’t significantly unique. To verify this information, further research must be conducted.

By the early 1830s, Harris had secured his freedom and relocated to Buffalo, New York, a city that was emerging as a bustling hub thanks to its location at the western

Figure 2. Peyton Harris Recaptured and jailed for 321 days. *The Liberator*, June 2, 1848. Boston, MA.

⁴ *New York Daily Tribune*, October 16, 1863.

⁵ *The Liberator*, June 2, 1848. Boston, MA.

⁶ *Buffalo Express*, February 3, 1882.

⁷ *Congressional Serial Set, Issue 513* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1848), 450-51. Provided by the Michigan Street Baptist Church National Historic Landmark Significance Draft, December 2022.

terminus of the Erie Canal.⁸ His arrival in Buffalo around 1833 coincided with the migration of many free and formerly enslaved African Americans to canal towns, where water-based commerce created economic opportunities and facilitated community building.⁹ The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, became not only a commercial lifeline but also a corridor for African American mobility and empowerment.¹⁰ While it seems consistently documented that Mr. Peyton Harris arrived in Buffalo in 1833, there is one article from the Buffalo Evening News, printed Wednesday, January 22, 1930 that states otherwise. In this article, which is to acknowledge the death of William Talbert, husband of civil rights activist Mary Talbert and grandson of Harris, 1827, six years earlier, is noted as the year that Harris first arrived in Buffalo, NY. (See Fig. 3)

Entrepreneurship and the Erie Canal

When Harris arrived in Buffalo, he purchased more than 600 acres of land in Grand Island, NY, in addition to property holdings within the city itself; some in the downtown area and also land on Michigan Street that would later be used to build his home and the Michigan Street Baptist Church.¹¹ Archival records including entries from Buffalo's nineteenth-century business directories, document the various enterprises Harris owned and operated over his lifetime, confirming his prominence among the city's Black entrepreneurs.¹² Following the death of Mrs. Peyton Harris, one article from *The Buffalo Sunday Morning News* reflected on his life in an April 28, 1889 article:

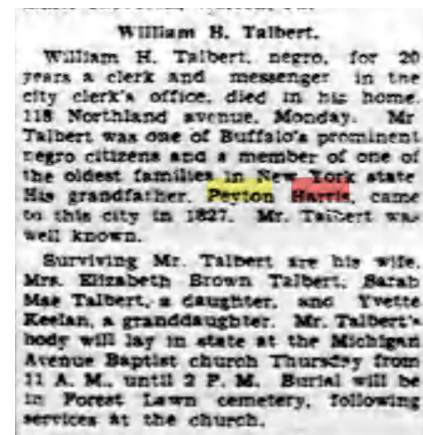


Figure 3. Death Announcement of William Talbert, Buffalo Evening News, 01-22-30.

⁸ Uncrowned Community Builders, "Biography for Peyton Harris — Buffalo," Uncrowned Community Builders Project. <https://www.uncrownedcommunitybuilders.com/person/peyton>.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ New York State Canal Corporation, "More Voices: Peyton Harris," *NYS Canals History Series*.

¹¹ Barbara Seals Nevergold, "Peyton Harris: Buffalo's Oldest Colored Citizen," *Buffalo Criterion*, 2020.

¹² *Buffalo City Directory, 1848–1882* (Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas & Co., various years), Grosvenor Room, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library; see also University at Buffalo Libraries, "Buffalo Business Directory Archives," Special Collections, University at Buffalo.

“Your reference to the death of Peyton Harris brings forcibly to my mind the marked personality of her husband. Peyton Harris, 15 years ago, was one of the most familiar sights on the streets of Buffalo, always carrying a basket on one arm, and a second-hand garment (to be cleaned or repaired) on the other. He had a massive head on a short neck, broad shoulders, short legs, and his head on one side like a magpie looking into a bone. He was an active abolitionist; he had felt the wrongs of slavery. He was a mulatto, claimed kindred with many of the first families of Virginia, and always claimed to be a half-brother of John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. He was fond of an argument, and did not lack shrewdness, ability, or earnestness.”¹³

Harris distinguished himself as one of the few African Americans to own and operate canal boats during the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁴ His business activities tied him directly to the commercial heart of Buffalo, where canal traffic transformed the city into a gateway for goods and migration. There are documents, including Harris’ obituary, and newspaper articles that confirm Harris owned and operated canal boats.¹⁵ Three boats mentioned are Morning Star, Evening Star, and North Star.¹⁶ It is also possible that Harris “owned” and operated boats that were legally in someone else’s name. In any case, there are numerous unrelated documents that support Harris’ ownership of canal boats.

In addition to his canal enterprises, Harris established himself as a dyer and tailor, trades that gave him standing within Buffalo’s commercial community. Local histories note that Harris also acquired property, including land on Michigan Avenue, and was described by contemporaries as ‘comparatively wealthy.’¹⁷ His entrepreneurship reflects how formerly enslaved individuals could leverage the

¹³ *The Buffalo Sunday Morning News*, April 28, 1889, “Biography for Peyton Harris, Buffalo.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ I took a trip to the New York State Archives after discovering there was a Canal Boat Registry that specifically covers the time of Peyton Harris’ time in Buffalo, NY. After days of combing through the archives, I was unable to find any document that directly stated Harris owned canal boats that were registered in New York state.

¹⁶ *Illustrated Buffalo Express*, November 30, 1919. Provided by the Michigan Street Baptist Church National Historic Landmark Significance Draft, December 2022.

¹⁷ Uncrowned Community Builders, “Biography for Peyton Harris — Buffalo.”

canal economy to build independence and community stability despite systemic barriers.¹⁸

Religious Leadership

Beyond business, Harris played a critical role in shaping Buffalo's Black civic and religious life. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Michigan Street Baptist Church, which became one of the most important African American institutions in western New York.¹⁹ Harris provided materials, most likely using wood from trees on his Grand Island properties, and financial support for the construction of the church, serving as a trustee and community leader. The church itself was more than a site of worship; it became a hub for abolitionist activity and a stop on the Underground Railroad.²⁰ In 1880, at age 88, Harris was listed in the Buffalo City Directory as a Trustee of the Michigan Street Baptist Church. (See Fig. 4) Harris served as a leader in the religious community until the end of his days. By anchoring Buffalo's Black community in faith and resistance, Harris helped lay the foundation for generations of civic activism using the church as a central meeting location for strategy and community mobilization—serving as both a spiritual sanctuary and an organizing hub for abolitionist efforts, education initiatives, and social reform movements that would shape Buffalo's Black leadership for decades to come.

¹⁸ New York State Canal Corporation, "More Voices: Peyton Harris," *NYS Canals History Series*, accessed September 12, 2025; and BlackPast, "Michigan Street Baptist Church (Buffalo, New York), 1836–1962," <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/michigan-street-baptist-church-buffalo-new-york-1836-1962/>.

¹⁹ BlackPast, "Michigan Street Baptist Church (Buffalo, New York), 1836–1962," <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/michigan-street-baptist-church-buffalo-new-york-1836-1962/>.

²⁰ University at Buffalo Department of Anthropology, "Michigan Street Baptist Church — Archaeological Survey," <https://www.buffalo.edu/cas/anthropology/research/archaeological-survey/our-work/michigan-street-baptist-church.html>

Political and Civic Engagement and the Colored Conventions

When the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870, a morning edition of the *Buffalo Courier* on April 14th described how there was a grand celebration that took place in

Buffalo, NY.²¹ This celebration was attended by the Mayor, Common Council of Buffalo, citizens and civic societies. The programme included the reading of a proclamation, a song “My country tis of thee,” a band, and Peyton Harris who was the speaker. Peyton was voted as 1st Vice President of the day, and his grandson Robert Talbert (listed as Robt. Talbot) was one of the committees’ organizers.

In addition to his business and church leadership, Peyton Harris also emerged as a central figure in Buffalo’s early civil-rights movement through his challenge to racially segregated schooling. In June 1867, Harris joined a group of Black parents who petitioned the Buffalo School Committee of the Common Council to allow their children to attend nearby public schools rather than the segregated Vine Street (Vine Alley) African School.²² When Superintendent John S. Fosdick ordered the children removed from those neighborhood schools and returned to Vine Street, the parents—Harris among them—filed suit against the Superintendent and the Council’s School Committee.²³ Although the case was dismissed in 1868, the campaign marked one of Buffalo’s earliest legal challenges to educational segregation.²⁴ Harris continued his advocacy, appearing again before the Common Council in 1870 to press for desegregation, and his persistence helped lay the groundwork for the eventual opening of Buffalo’s

Michigan Street (Colored).—Between Clinton street and Broadway. — — —, Pastor.
Trustees—Peyton Harris, Wm. Stourm, John Granby, Daniel Freeman, Mrs. Tanner, Ralph Dickers.
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Olivet Baptist Mission.—No. 595 Delaware ave.
Trustees—Thomas Chester, President; R. Z. Mason, Secretary; James O. Robson, Sherman S. Jewett, P. J. Ferris, Josiah Jewett.

Figure 4. At 88 years of age, Mr. Peyton Harris was still serving as a trustee in his local church. 1880 Buffalo City Directory.

²¹ *Buffalo Courier*, April 14, 1870. Morning Edition.

²² Uncrowned Community Builders, “Biography for Peyton Harris — Buffalo,” *Uncrowned Community Builders Project*. <https://www.uncrownedcommunitybuilders.com/person/peyton>.

²³ Buffalo History chronology, “Parents Petition School Committee to Admit Colored Children,” University at Buffalo, *Buffalo History: School Desegregation Chronology*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; *Proceedings of the Buffalo Common Council*, 1868; John S. Fosdick, *Thirty-First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for the Year Ending 1867* (Buffalo, 1868).

schools to Black students in the 1870s.²⁵ His involvement in this struggle places him not only within local civic reform but within a broader continuum of African American activism that paralleled his work in the Colored Conventions movement.

Harris's leadership extended to the national stage through his participation in the Colored Conventions movement, a series of gatherings of African American leaders (male) who debated strategies for abolition, education, and civil rights. Records show that Harris was selected as an honorary member at the 1864 National Convention of Colored Men in Syracuse, and that he held leadership positions in earlier conventions as well, including serving as a vice president in 1849.²⁶ Of note, there is an article written in the *Buffalo Courier* on the morning of October 20, 1866, regarding a petition Peyton made to the committee to prevent Mrs. Susan B. Anthony from taking the floor to speak at the Colored Convention that year.²⁷ The writer quotes Harris saying :

"I was opposed to the admission of Miss Anthony to these here deliberations, she may be a very good woman, a very talented woman, a very spicy woman, a very eloquent woman, a very jejune woman, a very friendly woman to our cause, but she can't come in here, and I raise my voice against it from this elevated place—[Sensation]—as one of the presiding officers of this meeting."

After deliberations by multiple other speakers, Anthony was not permitted to speak at the convention that year. These roles underscore Harris's prominence not only within Buffalo but also within a national network of Black activists who shaped the course of nineteenth-century African American politics.

On September 30, 1863, Peyton wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune*, which they entitled *Rebel Promises to the Slaves*. The letter reads:

²⁵ Uncrowned Community Builders, "Biography for Peyton Harris — Buffalo"; Barbara Seals Nevergold, "Peyton Harris: Buffalo's Oldest Colored Citizen," *Buffalo Criterion*, 2020.

²⁶ Library of Congress, *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored Men, Syracuse, NY, 1864*, accessed September 12, 2025, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/rbaapc/20100/20100.pdf>; Colored Conventions Project, "Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens, Buffalo, New York, 1843," <https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/items/show/278>

²⁷ *Buffalo Courier*, October 20, 1866. Morning Edition.

“SIR: The following facts will show, I think, that the slaves of the South will put very little confidence in the promises of freedom which their masters may make to them. The facts are fresh in the memory of all colored men, who were old enough at the time to understand them, and the slaves of the South are quite well informed in respect to them. During the war of 1812, I resided in Virginia, about fourteen miles from Richmond. With numerous other colored men I was in the army under Gen. Cox., after Washington was burned by the British, marched to Washington, and was employed in the forts between Washington and Chesapeake bay. We, colored men, were informed that a proclamation had been issued by Gen. Jackson, promising freedom to all slaves who should join the army. At the close of the campaign, Adjutant-Gen. Butler made a speech (I think in Mobile), highly complimenting the colored people for their bravery and good conduct, and stating that he should recommend them to the President of the United States for their loyalty and bravery. His speech was printed in a pamphlet, and distributed generally among the colored people. I had one of them myself. These promises were all violated. I know that in Virginia several negroes received 39 lashes each for merely having the pamphlet in their possession. It is perfectly well understood among the slaves and other colored men South that not a slave who entered the service was freed, but that, on the contrary, they were all remanded to Slavery by their masters. – September, 30, 1863, PEYTON HARRIS”

Peyton was not disillusioned about promises made by the government to enslaved people. He clearly outlines *his* experience and that of others from his home state of Virginia. This document gives us more insight not only as to why he ran away after the war, but also provides information about his life prior to arriving in Buffalo; where he lived, where he worked, where he served, and names of leaders he served under.

Family Legacy and Mary B. Talbert

The influence of Harris’s work extended to the next generations of Buffalo’s Black leadership. His family’s connections to Mary Burnett Talbert, an early twentieth-century suffragist and civil rights leader, demonstrate the intergenerational continuity of civic engagement in Buffalo’s Black community.²⁸ Mary Talbert, who

²⁸ Barbara Seals Nevergold, “Peyton Harris: Buffalo’s Oldest Colored Citizen,” *Buffalo Criterion*, 2020.

was married to Harris' grandson William Talbert, was a member of the Michigan Street Baptist Church and a national figure through her work with the NAACP and international activism, embodied the legacy of civic responsibility and leadership that Harris had helped establish. The link between Harris and Talbert underscores how foundational figures of the nineteenth century laid the groundwork for twentieth-century struggles for equality. Often, as it was in documents related to the Buffalo Public Schools integration lawsuits or community and political gatherings, Harris' grandson Robert Talbert's name can be found. Robert worked alongside Harris and continued his legacy through acts of civic engagement.

Challenges and Racial Barriers

Despite his economic success and civic leadership, Harris was not considered an equal to his white counterparts in matters of the justice system, and faced systemic racism and exclusion throughout his life. An article published in *The Buffalo Evening Courier & Republic* in 1867, recounted the following events:

“Theory vs. Practice —In the civil suit tried before one of our prominent Justices of the Peace yesterday, in which the clients, counsel and all the witnesses were ultra-Radical Republicans, a jury trial was demanded. On the jury being called it appears that one of them was a most respectable colored citizen—a man of more than ordinary intelligence, a property holder, one highly respected by white and colored persons of his acquaintance and who, besides, had served in his native home, at Richmond, Virginia, as a soldier in the war of 1812 and 1814. When the name was drawn from the box and it was known that Peyton Harris, colored, was a juror, the Radical counsel vied with each other to be the first to exercise the preemptory right given by the law, to challenge without a cause. They all privately expressed their horror of the idea of an American citizen of African descent being allowed to sit as a peer of the white Radicals.’ Comment is unnecessary.”²⁹

²⁹ *The Buffalo Evening Courier & Republic*. “Theory vs. Practice,” May 1867

Peyton Harris was summarily dismissed from jury service solely on account of his race.³⁰ The report noted the hypocrisy of the self-described “Radical Republicans” who refused to accept Harris as a peer, underscoring the deeply entrenched racial prejudice that persisted even among reform-minded whites in post-Civil War Buffalo. As a Black businessman in a predominantly white city, Harris’s access to credit, political representation, and legal protections remained constrained, reflecting the broader racial barriers faced by free African Americans in the North during Reconstruction.³¹ Nevertheless, records suggest that Harris advocated for racial equity in Buffalo, including speaking out against segregated schools in the 1870s.³² His story illustrates the paradox faced by African Americans in the North: freedom and opportunity coexisted with entrenched racism and inequality. Harris’s perseverance highlights the resilience of Buffalo’s Black community in forging paths toward justice despite structural barriers.

Death and Legacy

Peyton Harris died on February 2, 1882, at the age of ninety. His obituary in *The Buffalo Morning Express* described him as one of the city’s oldest and most respected Black citizens.³³ Recent archaeological excavations at the Michigan Street Baptist Church site, which have uncovered artifacts and structural remains tied to Harris’s property, further testify to his tangible legacy in the city.³⁴ (See Fig. 5) In 2025, as Buffalo commemorates the bicentennial of the Erie Canal, Harris’s life story reminds us that African Americans were not only



Figure 5. Exposed Fireplace at the home of Peyton Harris on Michigan Ave. immediately next to the Michigan Street Baptist Church. Site of future excavation.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Barbara Seals Nevergold, “Peyton Harris: Buffalo’s Oldest Colored Citizen,” *Buffalo Criterion*, 2020

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Buffalo Morning Express*, “Death of Peyton Harris,” February 3, 1882.

³⁴ WGRZ, “Historic Artifacts Unearthed at Michigan Street Baptist Church,” August 15, 2024, <https://www.wgrz.com/article/news/history/historic-artifacts-unearthed-at-michigan-street-baptist-church/>

witnesses, but active shapers of the city's development and the canal's history.³⁵

Conclusion

The life of Peyton Harris stands as a powerful testament to African American resilience, ingenuity, and leadership in nineteenth-century America. From his beginnings in slavery to his achievements as a businessman, church builder, and political activist, Harris embodied the possibilities of freedom while also confronting the realities of systemic racism. His contributions to Buffalo's growth, the vitality of the Michigan Street Baptist Church, and the Colored Conventions movement place him among the key figures of his time. For scholars and community members alike, Harris's story enriches our understanding of the Erie Canal, Buffalo's history, and the ongoing struggle for justice. As his descendant, I offer this research paper as both a tribute to his legacy and a resource for future study. As this research has become a family history endeavor, I consider this document a *First Edition*, to be updated as new information is discovered and pieces of the Peyton puzzle are revealed.

³⁵ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, "Bicentennial Reflections: African American Contributions to Canal History."

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