



AAHGS-NE Newsletter

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Let us hear from you! AAHGS-NE Newsletter invites members to submit articles. We are interested in receiving stories regarding Black history, genealogy, DNA, and particularly personal family stories, found as a result of historical research and/or DNA. We welcome information about upcoming events, member's comments and any other items helpful to the membership. Read a good book lately that you think other members may find interesting? Have you participated in an event as a speaker? Please let us know. On occasion, we may have themes in honor of a special events that will be announced prior to the following issue. Please be advised, stories may be edited and are printed at the discretion of the newsletter editor and/or committee members. The AAHGS-NE newsletter is published twice yearly. **Deadline for the Fall newsletter is November 1, 2024.** Contact Judith Allen-Shaw at jallenshaw08@gmail.com with questions or submissions.

Note: No article from the AHGS-NE newsletter may be

Letter From the Editor

This past October, I attended my 50th reunion from college. It was filled with nostalgia and a few long-forgotten memories stirred. As the oldest child in my family, I was the first to go off to college. I attended a small Catholic women's college in central New Jersey which became a life-changing experience. When I entered college as an education major. I soon realized that I was more interested in history and changed my major.

I was in college during years of significant societal change; the civil rights movement in particular. During this time, members of the Black Student Union approached the college president and asked for a Black History course. Taking that course changed my life. A door opened and I became witness to amazing people and events I had not known. Such as the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the amazing feats of Bessie Coleman, the bravery of Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. and the Tuskegee Airmen, and so much more.

For my senior thesis, I researched the period known as Reconstruction (1865-1877); a pivotal era in U. S. History after the Civil War. I learned about the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the U. S. Constitution, the Freedmen's Bureau, and Black political participation. While conducting my research, I visited the New York City Public Library and held a 1865 copy of William Llyod Garrison's *Liberator* in my hand. I was connected to history in a meaningful way and I celebrate the shoulders I stand on.

As we enter this next year, I hope we can hold on to our histories and continue to share them. I want to stir that wonder in others that I had back when I was young, and they will carry it forward.

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23andMe Conclusion

23andMe is now owned by the TTAM Research Institute, a nonprofit organization led by its co-founder and former CEO, Anne Wojcicki, following a bankruptcy court-approved acquisition in mid-2025, securing the company and its data for medical research with enhanced privacy.

This deal, valued at \$305 million, beat out a bid from drug maker Regeneron and shifts 23andMe from a public company to a nonprofit entity focused on genomic research.

Purpose: To continue 23andMe's mission while prioritizing customer privacy, data control and medical research.

Details: The sale covers all of 23andMe's assets, including, its genetics service and research arm, after the company faced financial struggles and filed for bankruptcy.

[AI Overview by Gemini]

Freedom, Fortune, and Family: Remembering the Abolitionists Quaker Hannah Pugsley and Black Hannah Pugsley of New Rochelle, New York, Part II By Teresa Vega

Re-Framing the Hannahs: Interracial Kinship, Legal Equality, and Black-Led Continuity

For too long, both Quaker Hannah Pugsley and Black Hannah Pugsley have remained at the margins of abolitionist history. The former has often been remembered as a benevolent figure, yet seldom recognized as an active white abolitionist; the latter, preserved primarily through oral memory, remains largely absent from formal archives. However, recent scholarship—including new studies on Quaker women ministers—

¹Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700–1775* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); Sandra Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780–1930* (London: Routledge, 2007); Michele Lise Tarter and Catie Gill, eds., *New Critical Studies on Early Quaker Women, 1650–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²Richard S. Newman, “A Chosen Generation: Black Founders in Early America,” in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, eds. Patrick Timothy McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: New Press, 2006), 61. Cristina Proenza-Coles, *American Founders: How People of African Descent Established Freedom in the New World* (New York: NewSouth Books,

invites a reassessment of their roles in the early struggle for Black freedom. Scholars such as Rebecca Larson, Michele Lise Tarter, and Sandra Holton have shown that Quaker women routinely preached, organized, and offered spiritual leadership that challenged both religious and societal norms.¹ In this light, Quaker Hannah's support for New Rochelle's early Free Black community and the founding of AME Zion Church suggests a deeper theological and political commitment, consistent with the Quaker tradition of lived equality and moral witness.

This reevaluation aligns with the broader framing of Black and interracial abolitionist efforts found in the works of Richard S. Newman, Cristina Proenza-Coles, and David Hackett Fischer. Newman, in his essay “A Chosen Generation,” describes the Black Founders as the generation of African Americans who “came of age just as the American nation took shape.”² These were the first to organize against slavery, to found independent Black institutions, and to pioneer protest strategies ranging from print culture to aid for fugitives to the formation of national conventions for racial justice. Similarly, Proenza-Coles' *American Founders* and Fischer's *African Founders* document the foundational and enduring contributions of African-descended people in shaping early American civic and political life.³ Together, these works affirm that both Hannahs—Black and Quaker—must be recognized as participants in a multigenerational, interracial abolitionist movement that predated and outlasted the Revolution itself.

Newly examined land records show that Quaker Hannah Pugsley contributed to the founding of the AME Church in New Rochelle vis-à-vis her legal heirs. The term “legacies,” used by Quaker Hannah Pugsley to describe her relationships with several Black New Rochellians, was not metaphorical—it was legally binding. Deeds and indentures from the 1830s and 1840s show that individuals such as Susan Serrington (later Nichols), Mary Guion (later Jackson), and Eliza Guion (later Everson), were explicitly named as legatees in Hannah's will.³ These

2019); David Hackett Fischer, *African Founders: How Enslaved People Expanded American Ideals* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022).

³“Indenture between Joseph Jackson and Mary Jackson (formerly Mary Guion) and Richard Seacord,” October 9, 1838, Westchester County Deeds, recorded October 10, 1838, image 538 of 562, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9WZ-D4PJ?view=fullText>.

“Indenture between George Nichols and Susan Nichols (formerly Susan Serrington) and Richard Seacord,” October 5, 1838, Westchester County Deeds, image 535 of 562, FamilySearch,

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89WZ->

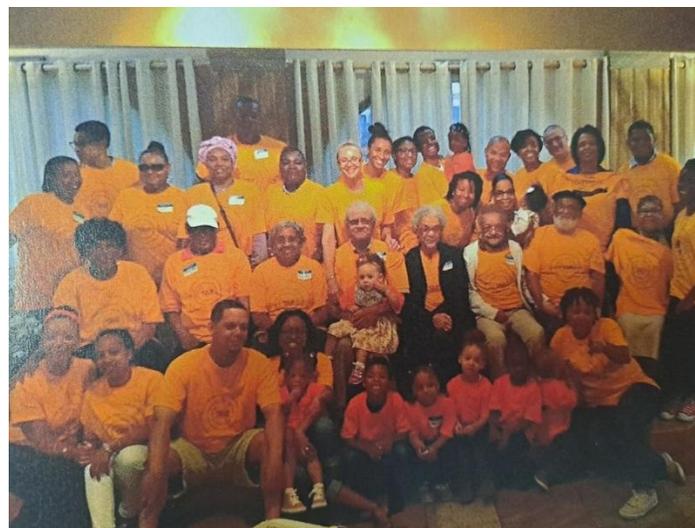
individuals, along with others such as Caty, Lewey and Plato, were granted enforceable rights to cash and property.

A series of indentures from 1838 reveals that these “legacies” transferred their future rights to the estate to Richard Seacord in exchange for monetary compensation—\$850 in the case of Susan Nichols⁴, and similar sums in other cases. The legal phrasing in each indenture affirms that these individuals were not servants or dependents but recognized heirs. In one such document, Mary Jackson (née Guion) and her husband explicitly authorize Seacord to pursue the legacy left to her in Hannah’s will, stating “the estate of the said Hannah Pugsley is to be divided among the legatees named in her will” after the deaths of the three life tenants.⁵

Taken together with trustee deeds from 1841 showing Charles Pugsley, Brister Francis, and Abraham Bonnett legally securing land for the Colored Peoples Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, this body of evidence demonstrates that Hannah Pugsley’s legacies were community leaders, church founders, and legal inheritors.⁶ Her language of legacy was deeply Quaker: rooted in the idea of spiritual equality, social trust, and shared responsibility. Her abolitionism was not performative. It was documented in deeds, grounded in kinship, and legally binding.

This was not merely a gesture of charity; it was a material investment in Black autonomy and spiritual leadership. These deeds suggest that Hannah Pugsley believed not only in spiritual equality, but in legal and civic equality as well. Quaker Hannah Pugsley’s reference to the Black Pugsleys and others as her “legacies” carries meaning beyond legal inheritance. In Quaker practice, as explored in Valerie Brown’s *Deep Speaks to Deep*, the notion of legacy often implies a deep **spiritual commitment to the well-being of others**, one rooted in mutual discernment, accountability, and the belief in “that of God in everyone.”⁷ Within this context, a “legacy” is not simply a

beneficiary, but someone whose life is held in sacred trust. This interpretation suggests that Hannah did not merely provide for the Black Pugsleys out of benevolence, but rather, saw them as spiritual kin—individuals to whom she was bound by conscience and community. Her financial support of their church, and her choice to spend her entire life among them, reflect the **Quaker principle of lived equality**: the idea that no person is superior to another in the eyes of God. Seen through this lens, Hannah’s actions were not only charitable—they were abolitionist in spirit, affirming Black New Rochellians as full citizens, equals, and inheritors of moral and spiritual legacy.



Pictured: Brown Family, descendants of Brister Francis.

Gendered Resistance During the Revolutionary War: Women and Quakerism in New Rochelle

The coordinated attacks on New Rochelle in 1776—during the British and Hessian occupation of Westchester’s Neutral Ground—exact a heavy toll on families with Quaker ties, including the Pugsleys and their extended kin.⁸ According to *Westchester County During the American Revolution* numerous local residents reported destruction or theft of property and valuables during this turbulent period, including John Martine, Miles Oakley,

[D4W6?view=fullText](https://www.familysearch.org/en/labs/D4W6?view=fullText). Note: All referenced land records, indentures, and deeds cited in this article are accessible via the Full Text Search feature on the FamilySearch Labs platform: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/labs/>

⁴“Indenture between George Nichols and Susan Nichols (formerly Susan Serrington) and Richard Seacord,” October 5, 1838, Westchester County Deeds, image 535 of 562, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89WZ-D4W6?view=fullText>.

⁵*Ibid.*; see also “Henry and Eliza Everson Indenture,” 1838, FamilySearch, image 532 of 562, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9WZ->

[D4R3?view=fullText](https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9WZ-F9M6-6?view=fullText).

⁶“Trustees of Colored Peoples Methodist Episcopal Zion Church⁴ of New Rochelle,” March 17, 1841, in Westchester County Deeds, image 167 of 672, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9WZ-F9M6-6?view=fullText>.

⁷Valerie Brown, *Deep Speaks to Deep: Cultivating Spiritual Discernment through the Quaker Clearness Committee*, *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* 23, no. 4 (December 2017): 20–30.

⁸Arthur J. Mekeel, “New York Quakers in the American Revolution,” *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1940), pp. 57-55.

Talman Pugsley, Phebe Oakley, Marmaduke Foster, Stephen Oakley, the widow Elizabeth Pugsley, and Solomon Pugsley.⁹ These names—interwoven through marriage, landholding, and faith—reflect not only a cluster of familial losses, but also the existence of a spiritually cohesive Quaker community that faced profound disruption during the Revolutionary War.

That disruption extended beyond property to spiritual identity. The widow Elizabeth Pugsley, identified as the wife of John Pugsley (brother of Quaker James), appears in Methodist preacher Joseph Pilmoor's journals. Pilmoor recounts her dramatic deathbed conversion to Methodism, describing her as identifying him "With the apparition of her dream, and appealed to him, from her sick bed to preach to her and the waiting company/ He did so; and while "he was offering to all present, free, full salvation" the invalid was converted, and in a few days died "triumphant in the Lord!" Her conversion, occurring at a time when Methodist and Quaker communities often overlapped, reinforces the fluid religious environment in New Rochelle—an environment in which loss, upheaval, and spiritual searching were inextricably linked. The Pugsleys' collective experience during the war years thus highlights not only a network of Quaker kin, but also a community in religious and political transition, grappling with survival, conscience, and changing forms of faith.¹⁰

Visionary Women – Spiritual Authority and Abolitionist Calling

In considering Quaker Hannah Pugsley and her female relatives—such as Elizabeth Pugsley and the Oakley women—it becomes clear that their lives reflect what Phyllis Mack describes as the tradition of "visionary women" in early Quakerism: women who cultivated an interior sense of divine calling and emerged as moral authorities despite rigid gender constraints.¹¹ Elizabeth Pugsley's deathbed conversion to Methodism, as recounted by early preacher Joseph Pilmoor, may be seen as one form of what Mack terms "ecstatic prophecy"—a moment in which women, confronted with mortality, transcend

⁹Henry T. Smith, *Westchester County During the American Revolution* (White Plains, NY: Westchester County Historical Society, 1926), 279. See also: "Pugsley Families of the Hudson Valley," <https://terpconnect.umd.edu/~hdevoe/FamHist/e347.htm>.

¹⁰Thomas Farrington's *Devoe, Genealogy of the DeVeaux Family: Introducing the Numerous Forms of Spelling the Name by Various Branches and Generations in the Past Eleven Hundred Years* (New York: The Author, 1885), p. 122, <https://archive.org/details/genealogyofdevea00devo/page/122/mode/2up>. In this source, Farrington details Frederick Deveau's experiences during the American Revolution,

traditional social boundaries through spiritual transformation.¹²

Hannah Pugsley's own experience—especially her miraculous survival of a near-lynching, preserved in oral tradition—could easily have been interpreted by her and her community as a sign of divine intervention. Within a Quaker theological framework that stressed the direct experience of God's spirit and the moral duty to act on spiritual revelation, such a survival might have been understood as a call to witness.¹³ Hannah's later

decisions—supporting the founding of a Black church, living among those she called her "legacies," and embedding her abolitionist vision into deeds and wills—suggest the development of what Mack identifies as a Quaker "concept of self" rooted not in hierarchical social roles but in spiritual obligation and inner light.

In this context, Hannah may be viewed not merely as a benevolent ally, but as a Quaker woman prophetically driven—part of a broader cohort of women who used visions, spiritual authority, and moral action to challenge slavery and patriarchy alike.¹⁴

Abolitionist Legacies: Black Kinship and Community Stewardship in New Rochelle

The documentary record of New Rochelle's Black abolitionist families—from early 19th-century deeds to mid-20th-century newspaper articles—reveals a powerful, intergenerational network of spiritual leadership, property stewardship, and mutual trust. These families, whose roots trace back to figures such as Brister Francis, Charles Pugsley, and the heirs of Hannah Pugsley, created a model of Black self-determination and economic interdependence long before such concepts were codified in civil rights.

In an 1836 deed, Brister Francis and his wife Hester (Hetty) conveyed twelve acres of land to Jesse Lyon, a white landholder, in a fully recorded transaction that

including his Loyalist allegiance, the confiscation of his property, and his subsequent relocation to Canada. Deveau expresses a profound sense of loss and longing for his former home in New Rochelle, lamenting that he could never return to the place where he had established his life and family.

¹¹Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 6–7.

¹²Smith, *Westchester County During the American Revolution* (White, p. 279).

¹³Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 110–113, pp. 220–223.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 291–295.

included a separate examination of Hetty's consent—a rare acknowledgment of a Black woman's agency in legal contracts at that time.¹⁵ This deed, like others recorded by Charles Pugsley and fellow trustees Brister Francis and Abraham Bonnett, confirms that Black



New Rochellians were not only landowners, but trusted participants in interracial legal and economic self-sufficiency.¹⁶

Pictured: The author is pictured along with the Lyon-Merritt-Green descendants.

The moral and economic credit of these families extended into the 20th century, embodied in figures like Marian E. Fields. A businesswoman, civic leader, writer, and fundraiser, Fields organized initiatives such as the “50th Club” to celebrate and empower Black professionals in banking.¹⁷ In her 1938 editorial “One Woman's Point of View,” she advocated for racial dignity, public accountability, and collective economic uplift.¹⁸ Through fundraising efforts and political organizing, Fields exemplified the tradition of Black female empowerment.

This intergenerational chain—extending from Black Hannah Pugsley and Quaker Hannah Pugsley through ministers, trustees, tradesmen, and civic women like Fields—challenges prevailing narratives of passive Black marginality. It demonstrates that New Rochelle was home to a deliberate and dynamic culture of abolitionist kinship, anchored by religious faith, economic autonomy, and legal self-assertion. These families were not simply recipients of Quaker benevolence—they were guarantors of their neighbors' survival and prosperity. Marian E. Fields, a descendant of New Rochelle's Black abolitionist families, embodied the enduring legacy of Black women's activism through her work in civic leadership, fundraising, and advocacy for economic justice. Deeply influenced by the ethos of Madam C. J. Walker—an early 20th-century

Black entrepreneur who championed female empowerment, economic self-sufficiency, and racial uplift—Fields carried those values into the twentieth century.¹⁹ Through her involvement in civic organizations, including her support for the NAACP throughout Westchester County, she mobilized resources to support Black professionals and institutions.

Final Conclusion: Remembering the Hannahs, Reclaiming the Record

In remembering both Quaker Hannah Pugsley and Black Hannah Pugsley, we reclaim two women whose intertwined legacies have too often been overlooked or flattened into acts of passive benevolence or folklore. What emerges through historical documentation, oral tradition, and legal records is a story of mutual resistance, intergenerational leadership, and spiritual conviction.

Quaker Hannah, grounded in her Quaker faith and shaped by the trauma of Revolutionary War violence—including her near-lynching by Skinners during a pivotal moment during the American Revolution.



Nicondra Boyd-Hopkins, a descendant of the Pugsley in New Rochelle, New York.

Black Hannah Pugsley, preserved in oral memory and historical fragments, emerges as more than a witness—she was a healer, a supporter, and possibly a keeper of memory. As one of the “legacies” named in Hannah's will, and quite possibly the same “old negress” mentioned in Charles Pryer's local history as knowing the location of buried gold coins, Black Hannah represents the community's living archive. Her role in Hannah's recovery, her spiritual companionship, and her transmission of survival stories should be remembered by all.

¹⁵“Westchester, New York, United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89WZ-NDLG?view=fullText>: May 17, 2025), image 323 of 583; New York. County Court (Westchester County) Image Group Number: 007139856, Images 323-324 of 583.

¹⁶“Westchester, New York, United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L9WZ-F9M6-6?view=fullText>: May 17, 2025), image 167 of

672; New York. County Court (Westchester County). Image Group Number: 007140075, Images 168-169 of 672.

¹⁷Marian E. Fields – 50th Club to Honor Negroes Employed in the Banking Industry, 'The Standard-Star (New Rochelle, NY), August 31, 1965, p. 3, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/926400152/>

¹⁸Marian E. Fields – One Woman's Point of View, 'The New York Age (New York, NY), June 25, 38, p. 12, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/40912017/>.

¹⁹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madam_C._J._Walker

Together, the Hannahs reflect not a single moment of heroism, but a sustained vision of freedom: one that passed through family networks, deeds, church trusts, land grants, and civic commitments—from Brister Francis and Charles Pugsley to Marian E. Fields and beyond. To understand the Pugsleys—both Hannahs—as abolitionists is to recognize that abolition was never a solitary or symbolic act. It was communal, sustained, and embedded in relationships that cut across race, class, and geography. This re-framing invites us to reconsider the archive itself—not only what it records, but who it chooses to remember.

Pictured:

2025 Shirley M. Barnes Record Access Award goes to the 10 Million Names Project Press Release

October 31, 2025, Manchester, NH – Danielle Rose, Manager of Volunteers at the 10 Million Names Project, accepted the 2025 Shirley Barnes Records Access Award from Susan O’Connor, President of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council (MGC), at a luncheon held at the 2025 New England Regional Genealogical Conference in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Federal budget tightening has meant less support for humanities and archival projects at the state and local level both now and in the future. In this environment, providing research materials to genealogists is challenging. This year the MGC board decided to recognize a project which excels in leveraging collaboration to create a virtual research center at 10MillionNames.org, hosted and supported by American Ancestors.

The 10 Million Names Project benefits from seed money provided by individuals and organizations in increments from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000. It benefits from collaborators such as ABC News, the Afro American Historical and Genealogical Society, the California Genealogical Society, the Community Foundation for the Virgin Islands, the Daughters of the American Revolution, FamilySearch, Famous Kin, Fordham University Press, the Georgetown Memory Project, Godfrey Memorial Library, HEARTS, the Heritage Library Foundation, Historic Sotterley, Howard University, the International African American Museum, the New Bedford Free Public Library, the New Bedford Historical Society, the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the Newport Historical Society, the Northeast Slavery Records Index, the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, the Prince Project, Reckoning Inc., the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy, the Slave Legacy History Coalition, the Texas Freedom Colonies Project, and the White House Historical Association. Two councils provide advice, the Scholars’ Council and the Genealogists’

Council, each including recognized experts.

The site focuses on researching enslaved individuals and families. Five projects are keystones: plantation records; mariners, migrants, and freedom seekers; military records; Black institutional records; and first-person accounts of enslavement. Projects underway now include work on Black patriots recognized by the daughters of the American Revolution; research on the freed settlers of Port Royal; collections of names of enslaved people from county deeds; and an effort to fully document the 200,000 men who fought in the Civil War in the U.S. Colored Troops.

ABOUT THE AWARD: At its annual meeting in 2019, the Massachusetts Genealogical Council established an award to be given yearly in memory of Shirley M. (Armstrong) Barnes. Shirley was committed to advocating for record preservation and access. Her work brought about the 1983 Massachusetts vital records law which mandated the transfer of vital records to the state archives in five-year intervals. The award recognizes people who emulate Shirley's volunteer spirit and whose dedication to records access has made a significant impact for genealogists.

ABOUT MGC: The Massachusetts Genealogical Council (MGC) was founded in 1980 to focus on preserving records at the Massachusetts state archives and the need for legislation to ensure this. Today MGC is an umbrella organization representing Massachusetts genealogists, historical societies, and individuals concerned about records preservation and free and unfettered access to civil records. We do that by paying attention to government agencies and legislation impacting genealogists and by providing innovative educational opportunities for Massachusetts genealogists.



Pictured: Danielle Rose, Manager of Volunteers at 10 Million Names, accepts the 2025 Shirley M. Barnes Access Award. She is pictured with Susan M. O’Connor, President of Massachusetts Genealogical Council who presented the award. Photo taken by Judith Allen-Shaw