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In the Land of Freedom?: Early Life of Free African Americans in the Rural Wisconsin Settlement  
of Pleasant Ridge, 1848-1865.

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History 489

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## **Abstract**

This research examines the free African American community of Pleasant Ridge in Grant County, Wisconsin from its founding in 1848 to the end of the Civil War in 1865. Through the experiences of the first few families to reside in his area, this study aims to illustrate the ways in which slavery continued to affect lives in the North at this time. These people demonstrate not only that some saw the North as a “land of freedom,” but also that this ideal was not the reality. By describing Pleasant Ridge residents’ limited freedom, one can see that the implications of slavery were not contained by the borders of the South. In fact, slavery and its consequences were impacting lives well beyond its legal constraints. Thus, this work sheds light on both the myth and the reality of the North through the lives of those in Pleasant Ridge.

## Introduction

In 1848, the same year that Wisconsin became the Union's thirtieth state, a newly emancipated Charles Shepard, his wife Caroline, and his three children migrated to this new state in search of a better life. They eventually established a settlement that would come to be known as Pleasant Ridge. Starting with the Shepard family, the settlement grew during the Civil War and attracted more and more formerly enslaved people to the area, both fugitive and emancipated.<sup>1</sup> Many who migrated were forced to leave loved ones behind in the South. Correspondence between one unnamed resident, most likely Charles Shepard, and his brother, Edward Shepard, depict Edward passionately telling of his desire to join his brother in the North. Edward writes, "I have long hoped and wished to have been living in the happy (sic) land of freedom with you and wished to have done so but the responsibilities that rest upon me have thrown it out of my power."<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin must have seemed like an oasis of total agency to those who were enslaved. A place where people of color could live as they pleased and exercise control in their own lives. To Edward, the northern states and territories may have represented the absence of slavery and therefore freedom. Yet, this was not necessarily the case. Of course, legal barriers did exist between the North and the South, outlawing slavery in the former and legalizing it in the latter. But this legislation did not mean that free African Americans in the North, particularly Wisconsin, were equally free from the side-effects of the institution of southern slavery.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James E. Allen, "History of the Negro Pioneer Settlers of Grant County." Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>2</sup> Edward L. Sheppard, Letter, Aug 29 1858. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>3</sup> Julie Winch, *Between Slavery and Freedom: Free People of Color in America From Settlement to the Civil War* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014) 1-15.

Pleasant Ridge, located in Grant County, was surrounded by mainly white American pioneer towns. Research suggests that relations between these two people groups were uniquely positive. One Pleasant Ridge resident, Mildred Greene, stated, “It was a beautiful place to grow up—where blacks and whites were family. We all lived and worked close together and got to know people—so much so that you really loved them...I never paid attention to skin color. People were just people.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, there is also evidence that suggests otherwise. Even though the free African Americans of this area enjoyed a great many more freedoms than they had in the South, their level of freedom was still lesser than that of their white neighbors.<sup>5</sup> Blacks and whites may have been “family” but there were distinctions when it came to the amount of agency that one had in their own life. This was caused by certain implications of slavery—such as the separation of families—that were experienced in the North regardless of the legal barriers. These types of restrictions on freedom created two distinct groups; free African Americans, and free whites. Though both people groups were considered “free,” the limitations on African Americans caused them to have a not-enslaved yet not-completely-free experience.<sup>6</sup> The North was not an isolated region where the ideals and consequences of slavery were absent. The “land of freedom” that Edward Sheppard envisioned was unfortunately not entirely the reality that his brother experienced in Wisconsin.

So, what was the reality? What did Edward’s brother Charles and many other free African Americans in pioneer Wisconsin experience? To what extent did racist ideals, actions,

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<sup>4</sup> Mildred Greene quoted in *Old World Wisconsin African American Exhibit* (Eagle, WI: Old World Wisconsin: The Pleasant Ridge Project).

<sup>5</sup> Zachary Cooper, *Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1994), 3-5.

<sup>6</sup> Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), xiv.

and the institution of slavery itself still affect the African Americans of Pleasant Ridge? An attempt to answer these questions will first require one to define their level of freedom and therefore add to the larger understanding of what life was like for the early residents of this community. Second, it will demonstrate the larger theme that the northern states were not necessarily a haven of freedom and that the border between slave states and free states was not ridged. Ideals, attitudes, and conceptions related to the institution of slavery permeated the free states and affected people living well above the borders of the South. The Pleasant Ridge community and the lives of its residents illustrate these themes and shed light on the reality of the antebellum North.

### **Historiography**

This research aligns with the work of other historians investigating free African American life. For instance, Ira Berlin in his book *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* examines the freedom that African Americans experienced in the southern states.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Julie Winch focuses on the same general topic in her book *Between Slavery and Freedom: Free People of Color in America from Settlement to the Civil War*. Sarah Cornell's work entitled "Citizens of Nowhere: Fugitive Slaves and Free African Americans in Mexico" also focuses on both fugitive slaves and free African Americans who either escaped or migrated to Mexico in search of freedom.<sup>8</sup> These three historians along with several others who have written on this topic unanimously agree that the freedom African Americans experienced prior to the Civil War was inherently different from the freedom "that white people thought

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Sarah E. Cornell, "Citizens of Nowhere: Fugitive Slaves and Free African Americans in Mexico, 1833-1859," *Journal of American History* 100, no. 2 (September 2013): 351.

appropriate for themselves.”<sup>9</sup> As stated, free people of color were not slaves, yet they were far from being on equal footing with their white counterparts. Instead they balanced precariously somewhere in between. This is the foundation for most of the scholarship on pre-war free African Americans, however each author looks at this ambiguous type of freedom from a different angle.

Much of the scholarship on free African Americans engages in the common practice of gauging their level of freedom. As mentioned, the existing work on free African Americans generally agrees that this experience of freedom was more than that of a slave yet lacking when compared to the freedom of white Americans. Berlin refers to this limbo as the “free Negro caste.”<sup>10</sup> He argues that out of the unwillingness of the white majority to recognize free African Americans as equals grew a plethora of regulations, limitations, and institutions that created an uncertain and “in-between” freedom. It is this unique uncertainty that historians feel the need to pin down. In order to prove whatever angle they attempt to take on the subject, they must work to first describe this type of freedom.<sup>11</sup>

To accomplish this, most authors follow a type of formula. First, they limit their study to a particular area. For example, Berlin examines the South and Cornell examines the border between the southern states and Mexico. Because free African American freedom was uncertain, it varied from place to place. Thus, it is necessary to examine the specific type of freedom experienced by free people of color within a limited geography.<sup>12</sup> Historians then

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<sup>9</sup> Winch, xv.

<sup>10</sup> Berlin, xvi.

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

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, xv and Cornell, 352.

examine the everyday lives of these free African Americans and attempt to answer questions about what they could do, who they could have relations with, who they could engage with, what jobs they could hold, etc. Answering these questions helps to illuminate the specific limitations and restrictions experienced in that area. From this, the level of freedom that these people experienced can be generally quantified.

In some cases, defining the freedom experienced by free people of color is the author's entire purpose. For example, Winch sets out to better define this "in-between" in an attempt to fill a void she feels exists in current scholarship.<sup>13</sup> However, many times historians use their study in describing African American freedom to illustrate or prove an additional related argument or a position. For example, by examining free African American life in the South, Berlin argues that social relations between Whites and people of color were diverse. He challenges conceptions about a monolithic slave south and adds another layer to popular thoughts about the nature of social order in the South.<sup>14</sup> Cornell on the other hand attempts to explain the "nature of freedom fugitive slaves imagined, found, and constructed in Mexico", how those experiences influenced international connections, and how they affected ideas about slavery.<sup>15</sup> She argues that the movement of African Americans into Mexico caused "international events."<sup>16</sup> These events shaped policy and relations between The United States and Mexico as well as influenced ideologies about slavery and racism. Other historians have focused on African American activism, their struggles through the ambiguous nature of their

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<sup>13</sup> Winch, xv.

<sup>14</sup> Berlin, xvi.

<sup>15</sup> Cornell, 351.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 353.

freedom, and how this activism changed and influenced their experiences. Though all these scholarly works study the same issue of uncertain freedom, they all look at the subject from a different angle, present their study with a new spin, or propose different arguments related to their research.

This particular study, in keeping with the existing scholarship, will mostly follow the same “formula.” The area encompassed in this research will be relatively small, consisting of Pleasant Ridge and the immediate surrounding white communities. Through the examination of several sources, the limitations and impacts of slavery that existed will be explained. From this, the level or type of freedom that the free African Americans of Pleasant Ridge experience will be more clearly defined. Accomplishing this will contribute to an area of sparse scholarship within the study of free African Americans. Very few studies exist on the life of free African American peoples in pioneer Wisconsin. Thus, like Winch, I hope to explain what freedom meant for this Wisconsin community and explore the free African American experiences in an area not previously touched on.

This research will also fit in with works such as Berlin’s by demonstrating a larger theme. Just as Berlin disproved the misconception of homogeneous race relations in the South, this study will work to disprove similar misconceptions about the North.<sup>17</sup> The idea of an all-accepting “land of freedom” was simply not the reality. This scholarship will also address certain misunderstandings about the supposed clear and distinct barriers between slave states and free states.<sup>18</sup> The free African American experiences in Pleasant Ridge perfectly

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<sup>17</sup> Berlin, xvi.

<sup>18</sup> Winch, xv.

demonstrate how the institution of slavery was not confined by social borders and even had uncertain legal borders. It affected and permeated all of America and was deeply infused in people's conceptions of race even in the North.

No one can know exactly what Edward Shepard was thinking when he wrote to his brother about the "hapy (sic) land of freedom."<sup>19</sup> No one can know what he believed life would be like when and if he reached the North. But just the presence of this phrase shows that these types of ideals about the North existed. Yet, despite this perception, the institution of slavery continued to influence and affect the lives of freed African Americans in the North and specifically in Pleasant Ridge, though in a different manner than when they resided in or were enslaved in the South.

### **Background: Slavery and Freedom in Early Wisconsin**

As the nineteenth century progressed, the entire country began to look to the West for new and prosperous opportunities. Wisconsin, Grant County in particular, was an attractive area to newcomers because of the cheap, nutrient-rich land and the potentially profitable lead deposits. Many White southern pioneers settled this region, and with them came their slaves.<sup>20</sup> In the 1830 census, when what is now Wisconsin was part of the Michigan Territory, there were a recorded twenty-two male slaves and ten female slaves in the region.<sup>21</sup> By the 1840 census, the area then called the "Wisconsin Territory" was down to eleven enslaved individuals in the entire region.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Edward L. Shepard.

<sup>20</sup> Allen.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Territory of Michigan," 1832.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Wisconsin," 1841.

Grant County was home to ten out of these eleven enslaved individuals. This can most likely be explained by the high number of transplanted southern settlers in the area. Though the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery in this territory, some of these southern pioneers brought their slaves with them and continued the practice of slavery in the North. This type of situation was most famously recognized in the Dred Scott case of 1857, where an African American man found himself still legally enslaved within a legally free state.<sup>23</sup> The similar circumstances of those in Grant County who were listed as “slaves” in 1840 demonstrate the uncertainty regarding the legality of slavery in the North. The legal limits of this institution were clearly not definitive, thus the practical borders between slave and free states were more fluid than their legal borders. The ideal of a land free of slavery and all its consequences was not the reality for some who inhabited the area in which Pleasant Ridge would later be established.

The 1840s census also shows that the population of free African Americans had grown to almost 200 people with their numbers continuing to climb even before the establishment of Pleasant Ridge.<sup>24</sup> These free people of color contributed greatly to Wisconsin’s progress and growth. For example, a former slave named Jackson founded the Town of Freedom in Outagamie County.<sup>25</sup> African American trappers established the community that is now Marinette and Moses Stanton established a settlement originally called Stantonville which is today the city of Chilton. These are just a few examples of the influence that free African

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<sup>23</sup> Shawn Godwin, “Pleasant Ridge: A Rural African-American Community in Grant Count Wisconsin” (a research report prepared for Old World Wisconsin, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 2000), 12.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1841.

<sup>25</sup> Cooper, 3.

Americans had in the development of Wisconsin. They were clearly able to successfully establish themselves in this territory and just as more whites came to the Northwest Territories in hopes of this prosperity, so too did free people of color.<sup>26</sup>

### **Founding of the Settlement**

As the population of free African Americans continued to grow, they established several of their own pioneer settlements throughout Wisconsin and, as was the case with many of these communities, Pleasant Ridge began with a core family.<sup>27</sup> After leaving Haymarket, Virginia with their former master's nephew William Horner and his family in 1848, the Shepards made their way to Wisconsin to find a new start in the new state. The Horners had received a gift of about 2,972 acres of Wisconsin land from William's parents. This land and the potentially successful lead-mining opportunities were most likely what lured these white pioneers to the area. Horner undoubtedly needed labor to assist in the settling of this land, thus the former slaves of his aunt Sarah Edmond were offered the opportunity to accompany his family to Wisconsin. These former slaves were Charles and Isaac Shepard and their families, who must have viewed this migration as a chance to start a new life outside the context of slavery.<sup>28</sup> A short history of the Shepard family, most likely written by member of the family or a later resident of Pleasant Ridge, suggests that there may have been other motivators that pushed these families, both white and African American, into the North. According to this source, there seemed to be a "growing southern tension in regard to slavery" that caused some southern

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 3-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>28</sup> Godwin, 13.

planters to move north.<sup>29</sup> Another short history of African American settlers in Grant County, again most likely written by a later resident of the community, also suggests that “strif between the north and south was being agitated more and more (sic)” and therefore prompted the emmigration of many who opposed the predominant southern sentiments.<sup>30</sup> Though their motivations cannot be known for certain, it is probable that a combination of these factors – the land, the lead, the new opportunities, and an escape from growing tensions— drew white planters and free African Americans such as the Horners and the Shepards to Wisconsin.

The Horners and Shepards ultimately settled in Beetown Township in Grant County, the westernmost county to border Illinois.<sup>31</sup> The African American members of the party consisted of Charles and Caroline Shepard, their children Harriet, John, and Mary, Charles’ brother Isaac Shepard, and Sarah Brown whom Isaac would later marry.<sup>32</sup> Unable to purchase land straight away due to lack of funds, the Shepards continued working under the Horner household as sharecroppers and general laborers until eventually purchasing land from William Horner for a dollar-fifty per acre.<sup>33</sup> Charles bought roughly eighty acres in section twelve while his brother bought nearly one hundred and twenty acres in the same section.<sup>34</sup> Their plots were positioned “atop a high ground” overlooking the rocky forested terrain and “rolling hills” of Beetown.<sup>35</sup> It

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<sup>29</sup> “The Shepard Family History.” Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>30</sup> Allen.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid* and Cooper, 21.

<sup>32</sup> “The Shepard Family History.”

<sup>33</sup> Cooper, 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> Godwin, 14. Warner & Foote, *Beetown Township, Flora Fountain, Muscalunge, Map, 1877*, From Historic Map Works, Rare Historic Maps Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Cooper, 21.

was said to have “offered a pleasant view to all” therefore they fittingly named the settlement Pleasant Ridge.<sup>36</sup>

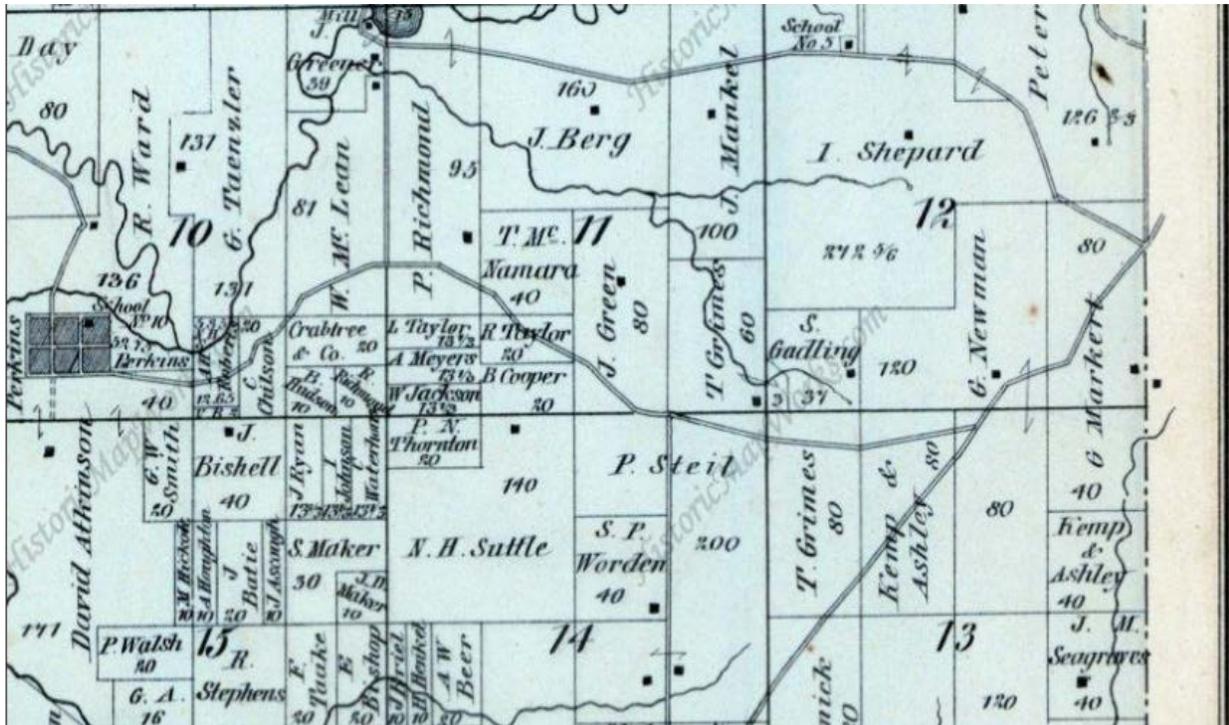


Figure 1. Map of Beetown in Grant County, Wisconsin. This map shows the Shepard land in section twelve as well as the land of the Grimes and the Greene families.<sup>37</sup>

They immediately began establishing themselves by settling the land and building homes for both of their growing families. The written history of the Shepard family states that, “To the Charles Shepard family seven more children were born 10 in all.”<sup>38</sup> Their fourth child, Isaac, named after Charles’ brother, was officially credited as being the first African American baby to be born in the county. Isaac and Sarah also had several children in addition to two who were born in Virginia. These two households were thus “the first of several [African American] families...who bought land and settled in Pleasant Ridge before the end of the War.”<sup>39</sup>

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

<sup>37</sup> Warner & Foote, *Beetown Township, Flora Fountain, Muscalunge*, Map, 1877, From Historic Map Works, Rare Historic Maps Collection.

<sup>38</sup> “The Shepard Family History.”

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Shawn Godwin, author of *Pleasant Ridge: A Rural African-American Community in Grant County Wisconsin*, describes the Shepards as “coming as close as any African-American person of their time could, to recreating themselves as free people, as farmers, [and] as families...”<sup>40</sup> In general, people of color in Wisconsin experienced a particularly high level of freedom compared to that of other western and northern territories. The Shepard families had a considerable amount of new agency in their own lives, especially after purchasing and owning land—an opportunity not allotted to African Americans in many northern states.<sup>41</sup> Yet even this family with all their new freedoms and opportunities could not entirely escape the long arm of slavery and its implications.

### **Those Left Behind**

When Charles and Isaac came to Wisconsin with their families they left their mother and several siblings who were still enslaved behind in Virginia. When the Shepard family’s owner, Sarah Edmond, died in 1828, her will stated that all of her slaves were to be freed over a period of time and that the children of any enslaved person whom she owned would be freed when they reached an age of maturity. This caused some members of the family, such as Charles and Isaac, to be freed much sooner than others.<sup>42</sup> In April of 1853, Elizabeth Williams, sister to Charles and Isaac Shepard, contacted her brothers in Wisconsin explaining the pending freedom of their relatives. She was still living in slavery in Virginia when she wrote, “Mother was in Warrenton Christmas and the children will all be free at the expiration of this year. Emily is living with the same family that she was when you left. Ned, and Henry are living together

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<sup>40</sup> Godwin, xvii

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

with Faggins. Arche, and Bell are here living with me. Lucy also remains with me. They all expect to get their papers next December.”<sup>43</sup> According to this account, it took nearly twenty-five years after the death of their owner for most of the Shepard’s extended family to finally be freed.<sup>44</sup> This was a common occurrence among African American families. Some family members may have bought their freedom or been emancipated while others were still enslaved. Some may have even escaped slavery and journeyed far away to northern territories while others remained in the South.<sup>45</sup> This type of separation was bound to affect the families in Pleasant Ridge.

As evidenced by Elizabeth’s letter, the Shepards were able to stay in contact with their extended family over the long distances. The Charles Shepard Papers, a collection of correspondence between members of Pleasant Ridge and their relatives or friends in Virginia and Missouri, contain many letters written by or to a member of the Shepard family. These exchanges are filled with phrases that demonstrate the stress of being separated and the longing for freedom. For example, Elizabeth Williams stated, “You cannot suppose, dear Brother [referring to Charles or Isaac Shepard], how much I have needed your presence.”<sup>46</sup> In other letters written to Caroline Shepard from her aunt Caroline Mason, her aunt frequently ended the letters with statements such as, “We know not at what moment the messenger of death may come so if I should not see you again in this world, try and meet me in the next,”

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<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Williams, Letter, Apr 5 1853. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>44</sup> Godwin, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Winch, 86-87

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Williams, Apr 5 1853.

and “may God’s blessing be with you all...If we should not meet again in this world.”<sup>47</sup> These accounts demonstrate the heartbreaking distress that this separation caused for those living in Wisconsin and for those who were still enslaved in Virginia.

More evidence of the stress of separation can be found within these writings, however the emotions in these particular statements go a bit deeper. When she referred to her brother’s life in Pleasant Ridge, Elizabeth Williams wrote, “I ought not to envy your happiness.”<sup>48</sup> When Caroline Mason wrote of her situation in Virginia she tells her niece, “Do not feel sorry.”<sup>49</sup> These statements suggest that the physical distance was not the only cause of emotional distress for this family. The distance between their levels of opportunity and freedom must have added to the pain of separation. As the women writing these letters convey, there must have been pity on the side of the Shepards in Pleasant Ridge who were experiencing so much more agency in their lives. There also appears to have been “envy” on the side of their relatives who were excluded from this freedom.

In another letter written in October of 1853, Elizabeth Williams gives Charles and Isaac an “account of the family” since they had been away. In this account, Elizabeth gives word that their “sister Lucy is now sold from Rogers she is living with Mr. John Fairfax in Middleberg I think now she has a tolerably good home though I have not seen her since she has changed.”<sup>50</sup> Though evidence does not exist to offer Charles’ or Isaac’s reaction upon learning that their

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<sup>47</sup> Caroline Mason, Letter, Sep 21 1850. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI. and Caroline Mason, Letter, Aug 7 1857. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Williams, Apr 5 1853.

<sup>49</sup> Caroline Mason, Sep 21 1850.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Williams, Letter, Oct 8 1853. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

sister had been sold, one can imagine that this news must have upset them. Hearing that a sibling had been taken away from what little security a family in slavery could provide and then moved from place to place against their will had to have been mentally taxing on the Shepards. This is just another example of how the separation of this family network almost certainly caused distress in the lives of the free African Americans in Pleasant Ridge.

The distress caused by physical distance and by the fact that loved ones were still experiencing slavery demonstrates how the consequences of slavery were felt past the borders of the South. Charles, Isaac, and Caroline Shepard may have left Virginia and the atmosphere of slavery but they could not entirely escape the emotional toll that slavery continued to exert on their lives. This obviously was an experience unique to African American families and one that set their experience of freedom apart from their white neighbors. White families were not separated due to one family member being sold away. White children were not forced to leave their aging parents behind in chattel because a will had not yet allotted their freedom. In this way, whites clearly experienced greater freedom; the type of freedom that is taken for granted and noticed only by those who do not possess it. Whites of all classes and backgrounds were equally privileged in this regard, free to overlook many of the more personal consequences of slavery. Whereas free African Americans like Charles, Isaac, and Caroline Shepard were reminded of these consequences every day in the absence of their loved ones, in the news of their still enslaved relatives, and in the separation of their families. The freedom experience of African Americans in the North was therefore limited due to the consequences of slavery that seeped through the socially permeable legal borders and into the idealized "land of freedom."

## The Price of Freedom

As Elizabeth Williams stated in her correspondence with Charles and Isaac Shepard, much of the extended family received their “freedom paper” somewhere between the years of 1853 and 1854. This appears to have been very joyous news for those living in Pleasant Ridge who undoubtedly worried for their family’s well-being while still in slavery. Now that their mother and many of their brothers, sisters, and their families were free, the Shepards in Pleasant Ridge encouraged them to move north. In the words of Lorinda Marten, sister of Charles and Isaac, Charles was apparently “anxious for us [the recently freed family members in Virginia] to come to Wisconsin.”<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, the process turned out to be far more difficult than the Shepards originally realized.

When the Charles and Isaac Shepard families migrated West, they did so as support laborers in the company and under the protection of their former owner’s nephew William Horner. It is unclear whether Horner covered all of the Shepards' travel expenses but at the very least, travelling with a white family was much easier and safer for an African American family at that time than traveling alone.<sup>52</sup> When the Shepards' extended family was freed they were not given such an opportunity, thus making the journey much more challenging. This is evidenced by letters written to Charles Shepard from his brother and sister Edward and Sara Shepard. In these letters they mentioned the need of some financial assistance if they were going to be able to migrate west. Edward wrote in 1858, “I have plenty but I would like to have something from some of you to assist my mother to come out with you and my sisters that wish

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<sup>51</sup> Lorinda Marten, Letter, Nov 24 1855. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>52</sup> Godwin, 12-14.

to come out there (sic).”<sup>53</sup> In the same letter he stated, “I do not wish you to disfranchise yourself of anything that you may want but anything you can spare will some assistance (sic).”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Sara Shepard when writing to Charles in 1861 told her brother to, “stop bestowing so much charity on other folks and try to help me some.”<sup>55</sup> Earlier in 1853 Elizabeth Williams wrote to Charles asking for assistance stating that she, “cannot come unless they [Elizabeth and her mother, also mother to Charles and Isaac] pay a considerable sum, fifty dollars I believe.”<sup>56</sup> These correspondences reveal that though both groups wished to reunite in the North, the lack of funds needed to make such a trip kept them apart.

Clearly, the Shepards in Pleasant Ridge were being called upon by their relatives in Virginia to provide financial support for their journey to Wisconsin. Unfortunately, it appears that these requests for aid were not addressed. Shawn Godwin proposes the theory that perhaps these requests went unanswered because the Shepard brothers felt that their relatives should have taken more responsibility for themselves and sought out opportunities to travel with whites as they themselves had. However this idea that the brothers held such uncaring and indifferent opinions seems improbable given loving, caring, and affectionate tone of many of the letters. A more plausible possibility is that the Shepards had little time and little money to spare for aid to their relatives in Virginia. At this point, Charles, Isaac, and their families had been living in Wisconsin for quite some time and they were likely well established in the area, but this did not mean that they had a surplus of resources at their disposal. They both had

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<sup>53</sup> Edward L. Shepard.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Sara Shepard, Letter, Apr 14 1861. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Williams, Apr 5 1853.

growing families and farms to take care of as well as several other odd job obligations.<sup>57</sup> The reality is more likely that the brothers wanted to help as evidenced by Lorinda Marten's testimony that they were "anxious" for their families to reunite in Wisconsin. However, they were incapable of doing so.

Though both factions of the family were free at this time, the implications of slavery continued to have an emotional impact. The Shepards in Pleasant Ridge no doubt felt distress that their relatives were finally free yet still felt trapped in the South. Especially since the area of Virginia in which these relatives lived was becoming continuously more oppressive in the methods by which they "controlled" their free African American population.<sup>58</sup> Not being able to assist in getting their loved ones out of this situation must have weighed heavily on the Shepards. There was also the matter of their relatives' reactions to the Shepards inability to assist. For example, Elizabeth Williams wrote to her brothers, "I have felt almost as if I was forgotten."<sup>59</sup> Thus not only did the Shepards feel added stress that they could not deliver in their extended family's time of need but also that they had alienated them in doing so. This type of emotional turmoil was clearly a byproduct of the institution of slavery. It was slavery that created these separations and thus produced a multitude of other lasting consequences. The Shepards in Pleasant Ridge knew very well the reality of these consequences. Though they were exercising many freedoms, the distress that this institution caused continued to taint their experience.

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

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Williams, Oct 8 1853.

## Confusions with Freedom

During the 1850s, the nephew of the Shepard family's former owner, William Horner, made several additional trips back and forth between Beetown, Wisconsin and Virginia. It appears that during at least one of these trips, he attempted to transport other free African Americans from Virginia to Pleasant Ridge. It is quite possible that some of these people of color were recently freed relatives of the Shepards. However in 1854, an incident occurred during one of these trips. Apparently, William Horner was traveling with five free African Americans, one woman and her four children, through Pittsburgh when suspicion mounted that these were enslaved individuals traveling with their owner. Tensions surrounding the issue of slavery were reaching the boiling point and the citizens of Pittsburgh quickly became enraged. According to the Pittsburgh Gazette, a crowd formed and the emancipation of these supposed enslaved individuals was demanded. William Horner insisted that they were free and were simply accompanying him to Wisconsin, however these explanations were ignored by the crowd.<sup>60</sup> The African American woman in his company also attempted to explain their situation, but "despite her entreaties to be allowed to accompany the man [William Horner]... they were removed to a place of safety."<sup>61</sup> After attempting several times to reunite with the woman and her children, William Horner apparently left for Wisconsin without them. Later he sent her and her family their "freedom papers" so that they could be documented as free people of color and perhaps make their own way to Pleasant Ridge. It is unknown what became of them.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Godwin, 15.

<sup>61</sup> "Rescue of Alleged Slaved in Alleghany City," *Pittsburgh Gazette*, September 5, 1854.

<sup>62</sup> Godwin, 17.

This event demonstrates the strange uncertainty and hostility that surrounded the issue of slavery in the North. It was within the context of this complex social upheaval that the citizens of Pittsburgh, both white and African American, reacted passionately based on their perception of the situation rather than attempting to find out the truth. Though these people surely believed that they were doing the right and just thing by separating this woman and her children from their perceived owner, they were in fact doing them more harm than good. If these people of color were in fact relatives of the Shepards, this misunderstanding also likely ruined their chances of reuniting with their family. This incident paints a very different picture of the North. The atmosphere in Pennsylvania, a free state, does not align with the idealistic “land of freedom” that many people perceived the North to be. Though this woman and her children were free and in a free state, for all practical purposes they still had very little control over their own lives in this situation. The decision to be separated from William Horner was not their own. The decision to stay in Pittsburgh was not their own. The tensions and hostility surrounding slavery, no matter how well-intentioned, were clearly very real in the North and infringed on free African American's lives.

### **Growth of the Community**

The Shepard families were not the only African Americans living in Grant County before the Civil War, however their settlements were all somewhat isolated. This is evidenced by a letter Caroline Shepard sent to her aunt in Virginia stating that she had had contact with as few as two other people of color since settling in the area.<sup>63</sup> It was not until the beginning of the war in 1861 that Pleasant Ridge began to grow into a community of both emancipated and

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

fugitive slave families.<sup>64</sup> The settlement “proved to be a nucleus to attract colored people from the south,” stated a Lancaster publication simply called *The Herald* in 1863.<sup>65</sup> At one point, Pleasant Ridge was home to over fifty African American residents.<sup>66</sup> Other sources claim that the number may have nearly reached one hundred members.<sup>67</sup> As *The Herald* stated, “There may be 100 to 150 blacks of all shades in the county.”<sup>68</sup>

The first people of color to arrive in this area after the Shepards were Nancy Grimes along with her children and her grandchildren in 1862.<sup>69</sup> After leaving Missouri and traveling with their owner William Ross, the party first settled in Potosi, Wisconsin. Shawn Godwin states that Ross’s motives for moving himself and his slaves north were likely rooted in the outbreak of the Civil War. Though there is no definite record of his intentions, it seems possible that he sensed the Civil War would go badly for the Confederacy, thus making the future bleak for those like himself who depended on slave labor.<sup>70</sup> The opportunities of a new life in the North may have beckoned him to Wisconsin. Upon arrival in Potosi, he freed Nancy Grimes and her family apparently for “philanthropic” reasons. According to *The Herald*, “He brought them to free Wisconsin to find them homes, and where each could be the owner of himself and a home.”<sup>71</sup> He did so by purchasing about one hundred and sixty acres of land near Beetown neighboring the Shepard family farm. Ross then sold this plot to Nancy Grimes for ten dollars and stipulated that the land should be willed to her children after her death. The very low price

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> “First Negro Colonies in Grant County,” *The Herald*, February 10, 1863.

<sup>66</sup> *Old World Wisconsin African American Exhibit*.

<sup>67</sup> Allen.

<sup>68</sup> “First Negro Colonies.”

<sup>69</sup> Godwin, 25.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>71</sup> “First Negro Colonies.”

of this land coupled with its location suggests that Ross may have indeed hoped to insure his former slaves were able to build a new life in Pleasant Ridge. The support from having another free African American farm family so close almost certainly assisted with the Grimes' establishment in this area. With the addition of Nancy Grimes and her family, Pleasant Ridge began to function as a small community.<sup>72</sup>

As the war continued, many slaves in the South were taking matters into their own hands and escaping the custody of their former owners. As Lillie Greene Richmond, a resident of Pleasant Ridge, stated in an interview for the Grant County Herald in 1947, "Freedom was sort of in the air. Black folks were sort of getting restless."<sup>73</sup> John Greene, Lillie's father, and his family were one such group of fugitive slaves. Before coming to Pleasant Ridge, John, his wife Lillie, and their five children had attempted to escape slavery numerous times without success.<sup>74</sup> A written history of Pleasant Ridge explains that their situation in Missouri was "very humane" but they had "grown restless of being held as slaves."<sup>75</sup> Fortunately, their owner had allowed for the family to stay together while enslaved.

Many times, slave families would be split up. For example, the father of an enslaved family might be sold to one plantation owner whereas the children may even be given away to a different one. As John and Lillie's son Thomas stated "I saw too many families broken up on the auction block. A strong man or a good wench would bring \$1,000 each, while owners would

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<sup>72</sup> Godwin, 26.

<sup>73</sup> Lillie Richmond, interviewed by Mrs. David Crichton, "Ex-Slave Tells of Flight to Grant Co. in 1860s," *The Grant County Herald*, September 28, 1947.

<sup>74</sup> Cooper, 22.

<sup>75</sup> Allen.

often give away a mammy's children to get rid of them."<sup>76</sup> Though the Greens had not been separated in slavery, the possibility must have been a constant nagging fear for the family. Therefore, despite their "humane" situation, John persisted and finally succeeded in getting himself, his wife, and all of their children to freedom in 1862.

From previous attempts, the Greene family learned that they needed money in order to get to safety quickly enough without getting caught. They saved every little bit that they could until they had about fifty dollars. One night, under the guise of having loads of apples to sell, John Greene and his family left their slave quarters in St. Charles County, Missouri for St. Louis.<sup>77</sup> Lillie Greene Richmond stated in her interview with the Grant County Herald that after walking many miles, John began to look for a man he knew who owned a team of horses and a wagon. According to Lillie, after promising to return the team and the wagon the man just smiled and said, "John, if you took a dozen teams and wagons, it wouldn't pay you for what you justly have coming to you."<sup>78</sup> Still, being the trustworthy man that he was, John would later make sure that the team and wagon were returned to the owner.<sup>79</sup>

With their burden of travel lightened and their speed significantly increased they ran a much lower risk of being caught. With some additional help from the Underground Railroad, the Greens made it to St. Louis. However, this did not mean that the journey was free of obstacles. They were in constant danger of being apprehended. One time in particular, the family sat in a cornfield for hours hiding from party who may have been following them. Once

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<sup>76</sup> Thomas Greene, interviewed by Dave Stevens, "Only One Survivor of Negro Colony," *The Telegraph Herald*, June 1, 1958.

<sup>77</sup> Herbert L. Egeness, "A History of the Negro Community of Pleasant Ridge, Wisconsin" (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, 1968) 15-16.

<sup>78</sup> Lillie Richmond, "Ex-Slave Tells of Flight."

<sup>79</sup> Cooper, 24.

in St. Louis, the Greenes took a train to the North and arrived in Illinois sometime the next day. Their trunk with their clothes had been stolen yet they did have one trunk left that they carried as they continued their journey northward on foot. The family made it to Bloomington, Wisconsin where they spent their first few months and then later moved to Pleasant Ridge.<sup>80</sup> Upon their arrival, the Shepards offered assistance and support as they had for the Grimes'. As a Mrs. Lewis, former Pleasant Ridge resident, recalled in an interview with *The Telegraph Herald* in 1958, "Almost every new arrival needed some kind of helping out."<sup>81</sup> The community provided shelter for a short time, food, and clothing to the Greenes and others who made their way to Pleasant Ridge.<sup>82</sup> Like the Shepard families, the Greenes were laborers and sharecroppers until they were able to save enough to buy their own land in 1868.<sup>83</sup> Their plot can be seen in section eleven to the left of the Grimes' land in figure one.<sup>84</sup> As with the incorporation of the Grimes family in 1862, the addition of John Greene and his family to the African American population of the area enhanced Pleasant Ridge as a community.

### **Stealing Their Own Bodies**

The Greenes saw their train to Illinois as a representation of their passage into the North and the many ways this journey brought them freedom. For all the people of color in Pleasant Ridge, the North offered countless more opportunities than they had experienced in the South. They were able to own and farm their own land, worship in their own way, raise their children how they saw fit and educate themselves in this community. However, their pasts in bondage

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Mrs. Lewis, interviewed by Dave Stevens, "Only One Survivor of Negro Colony," *The Telegraph Herald*, June 1, 1958.

<sup>82</sup> Mrs. Lewis, "Only One Survivor."

<sup>83</sup> Godwin 30-31.

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still managed to have a hold on them and the institution's consequences still impacted their freedom.

In 1850, slaveholders who had been bargaining for years for a stricter federal policy regarding runaway slaves finally got their wish in the form of the Fugitive Slave Act. Under this new policy, law enforcement officials of both free and slave states were obligated to capture and arrest anyone suspected of being a fugitive slave. Also under this law, any citizen who assisted a runaway or even refrained from reporting a runaway was susceptible to a substantial fine or jail time. After capture, it was mandatory that the fugitive slave be sent back to his or her former master to be enslaved again.<sup>85</sup>

Though Wisconsin passed policies that were intended to make the Fugitive Slave Law more difficult to enforce, those who fled slavery, such as the Greenes, could never feel entirely secure in their freedom. Enslaved people of color were considered to be property, therefore escaping slavery meant that John Greene and his family were essentially stealing their own bodies. Because the Greenes' home state of Missouri had not seceded and still belonged to the Union, slavery continued in this state under the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. So, by law they were still considered fugitives. The Greenes' former owner would legally have the right to reclaim them as stolen property.<sup>86</sup> This act also impacted those African Americans who had been freed lawfully and given emancipation papers. In some free states there was a risk that even a free African American with documentation could be kidnapped and forced back into slavery.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the consequences of slavery and the policy protecting it not only affected

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<sup>85</sup> Winch, 86-87.

<sup>86</sup> Godwin, 29.

<sup>87</sup> Winch, 122.

fugitive slaves but also those who were legally emancipated. This reality was bound to have an effect on their everyday lives.

Shawn Goodwin suggests that the Greenes' insecurity about their freedom is evidenced by their "freedom papers." According to this documentation, the Greene family listed their former owner as a "James Brooks" of Philips County, Arkansas.<sup>88</sup> Arkansas had seceded from the union and thus under the Emancipation Proclamation, the Greene family was free. However, there is a substantial amount of other evidence including personal letters that strongly suggest John Greene and his family were actually owned by a Daniel and Fanny Griffith in St. Charles, Missouri.<sup>89</sup> The document's inaccuracy may have been intentional, as a way to avoid being found out as runaways and to hinder anyone from returning them to slavery in Missouri.<sup>90</sup> If this was the case, it shows how even in the so called "land of freedom" that freedom was ambiguous and unclear at best. In this particular scenario, the Greenes were so uncertain in their freedom that they felt the need to hide and lie about their past. These worries essentially cheapened their freedom compared to whites who did not have to live with such concerns. Arguably, a person cannot be fully free if their freedom is in a state of ambiguity. Thus, the North could not be called a "land of freedom" if even in Wisconsin, the people of

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<sup>88</sup> Documentation of Freedom for John Greene, *Pleasant Ridge Negro Community Documents*, Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>89</sup> Fanny Griffith, Letter, Jan 21 1864. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

<sup>90</sup> Godwin, 29

Pleasant Ridge were upset by the implications of slavery and the possibility of re-enslavement. The legal borders of the South obviously did not contain this institution and its consequences.

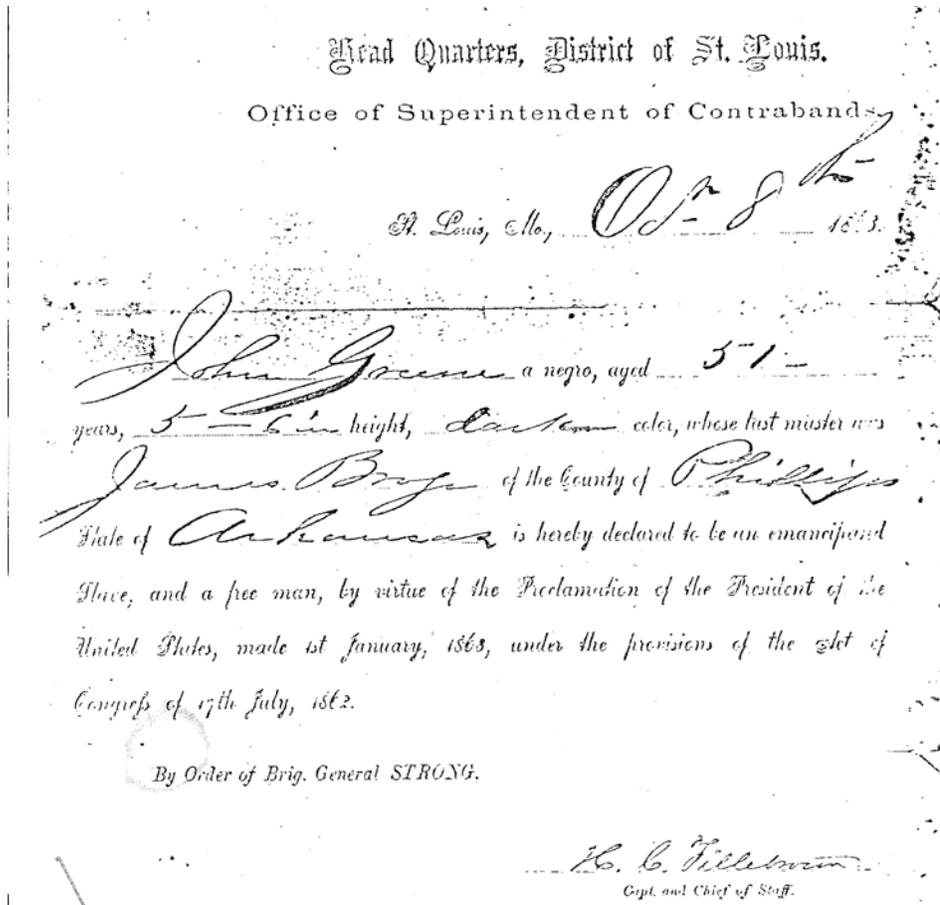


Figure 2. Documentation of Freedom for John Greene depicting his former owner as "James Brookes"<sup>91</sup>

## Civil War

The outbreak of the Civil War signified a turning point for Pleasant Ridge as it brought more free African Americans to the area. Families began to grow and a community formed. But though the war facilitated this progress it also simultaneously interrupted it. In 1863 Charles Shepard made the decision to join the Union Army. His son John Shepard, who was about sixteen years old at the time, also served. A history of the Shepard family states that Charles

<sup>91</sup> Documentation of Freedom for John Greene.

was a part of the 50<sup>th</sup> US Regular Infantry whereas John was enlisted in the 42<sup>nd</sup> US Regular Infantry.<sup>92</sup> Very soon after arriving in Grant County Thomas Greene, John Greene's son, as well as Thomas Grimes, son to Nancy Grimes, also joined the Union army. Thus there was not a family in Pleasant Ridge who did not have a loved one fighting in the war.<sup>93</sup>

This war had far more terrible effects on the founding family than on the others. Charles was killed in the battle of Vicksburg under General Ulysses S. Grant in 1863 and John died of disease not long after.<sup>94</sup> The loss of both her husband and her oldest son must have devastated Caroline Sheppard. She was left to run the family farm and raise the rest of her children alone. Though their loved ones returned at the end of the war, the Greenes and the Grimes families were also certainly affected by the temporary absence of their sons.<sup>95</sup> Though it may seem obvious, the War Between the States was likely the greatest representation of how the institution of slavery affected the entire country, Black and white, enslaved and free alike. The implications and ideals that involved slavery were not restricted to the South. The way that the Civil War affected the families in Pleasant Ridge demonstrates how this institution continued to impact their experiences.

## **Conclusion**

Misconceptions about the barriers between slave and free states still persist today. James W. Loewen, author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, argues that Americans today have a skewed view of the antebellum

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<sup>92</sup> "The Shepard Family History"

<sup>93</sup> Godwin, 32-33.

<sup>94</sup> "The Shepard Family History"

<sup>95</sup> Godwin, 32-33.

North. He states that the impacts of slavery in the North are either ignored or significantly downplayed in history textbooks today. As a result, many Americans believe in the idea of an all-accepting “land of freedom” that was completely immune to the institution of slavery and its affects.<sup>96</sup> This is not unlike the view of the North that Edward Shepard depicted in 1858 when writing to his brother. The pre-Civil War North was thought to be a “hapy (sic) land of freedom.”<sup>97</sup>

True, the free African Americans of Pleasant Ridge experienced a great many more freedoms than they had in the south. They could own land, earn a living, become educated, raise their children as they pleased, and build a community of their own. However, the lives of these early Pleasant Ridge residents demonstrate that there is a significant difference between viewing the North as a land with more freedoms versus a “land of freedom.” The ideal that Edward Shepard described was unfortunately not reality. The institution of slavery created consequences for the entire country. The separation, the uncertainty, the emotional turmoil, and finally the war that occurred as a result of this institution insidiously seeped past its legal borders into the North, as illustrated by the lives of those in Pleasant Ridge. Many of these consequences affected African American freedom and caused them to be limited in a way that their white neighbors were not. Yes, the free African Americans of Pleasant Ridge experienced freedom, but too many limitations from the implications of slavery were present to truly call this place a “land of freedom.”

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<sup>96</sup> James W Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Text Books Got Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 2008) 135.

<sup>97</sup> Edward L. Shepard.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Allen, James E. "History of the Negro Pioneer Settlers of Grant County." Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- This document is a short history of the beginnings of the Pleasant Ridge settlement. Written by a Reverend James E. Allen, the date and the purpose of this source is unknown. Many names and family backgrounds of the founders of this community are provided here.

Documentation of Freedom for John Greene. *Pleasant Ridge Negro Community Documents*. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- The Office of the Superintendent of Contraband issued freedom to John Greene in St. Louis in 1863. This is the official document. It states that John Greene's former master was a resident of Arkansas. Theories that support the argument of this paper can be formulated through examining this information and how it deviates from other sources related to the Greene family.

"First Negro Colonies in Grant County." *The Herald*. February 10, 1863.

- The author is unknown for this article, however given the era in which this source was written and the tone of the article, the author is most certainly white. Thus, it provides a different perspective and demonstrates the reactions of whites surrounding Pleasant Ridge.

Greene, Mildred. Quoted in *Old World Wisconsin African American Exhibit*. Eagle, WI: Old World Wisconsin: The Pleasant Ridge Project.

- This document is a pamphlet that gives some brief information about the Pleasant Ridge exhibit in Old World Wisconsin. Mildred Greene is quoted in this source however the interviewer and the origin for this quote are unknown. Mildred Greene's testimony gives one perspective of what life was like in the community.

Greene, Thomas. Interviewed by Dave Stevens. "Only One Survivor of Negro Colony." *The Telegraph Herald*. June 1, 1958.

- In this newspaper article, the Greene family's experience travelling north is told through the eyes of Thomas Greene. Thomas' firsthand experience sheds light what motivated them to escape slavery and move to Wisconsin.

Griffith, Fanny. Letter. Jan 21 1864. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- This is a letter written by the Greene family's former owner. From the letter, it seems as if their relationship was positive. This is evidence that it was the Griffiths and not a man named James Brooks as John Greene's freedom papers would suggest.

Lewis, Mrs. Interviewed by Dave Stevens. "Only One Survivor of Negro Colony." *The Telegraph Herald*. June 1, 1958.

- This newspaper article focus mostly on the Greene family, however the testimony of a Mrs. Lewis was particularly helpful in demonstrating how the families helped each other out in times of need. Her account shows the beginning of the community aspect of Pleasant Ridge.

Marten, Lorinda. Letter. Nov 24 1855. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- The account given by Lorinda Marten in her letter to Charles Shepard illustrates the way in which communication between the two facets of the family revolved around reuniting, especially after much of the family in Virginia was freed around 1853. She relays that the Shepards in Pleasant Ridge were anxious to reunite, thus providing a piece to the puzzle of their emotions and perspectives.

Mason, Caroline. Letter. Sep 21 1850. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- Caroline Mason's letter shows the emotion and the turmoil that came from family separations. This is crucial to this paper's argument in that this emotional impact was a by-product of slavery.

Mason, Caroline. Letter. Aug 7 1857. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- Caroline Mason's letter shows the emotion and the turmoil that came from family separations. This is crucial to this paper's argument in that this emotional impact was a by-product of slavery. Though the previous source written by Caroline demonstrates the same point, the seven year difference in time between correspondence and the repeated theme shows that this was an ongoing and serious issue.

"Rescue of Alleged Slaved in Alleghany City." *Pittsburgh Gazette*. September 5, 1854.

- This source was found in Shawn Godwin's book *Pleasant Ridge: A Rural African-American Community in Grant Count Wisconsin*. This source provides another perspective and demonstrates how the issue of slavery was very much relevant in the North.

Richmond, Lillie. Interviewed by Mrs. David Crichton. "Ex-Slave Tells of Flight to Grant Co. in 1860s." *The Grant County Herald*. September 28, 1947.

- Though Lillie Richmond was a small child at the time, she was able to give this firsthand account of her and her family's escape to the North in 1863. Her description humanizes the experience and adds color to a story that is crucial to proving the thesis.

Sheppard, Edward L. Letter. Aug 29 1858. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- This letter was instrumental in showing that the "land of freedom" ideal about the North existed in this time. His description of what he imagined the North to be perfectly sets the stage for the experiences of Pleasant Ridge residents to debunk this ideal. Essentially, this source provided the problem that this paper addresses.

Shepard, Sara. Letter. Apr 14 1861. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- This letter demonstrates how the extended family of the Shepards, such as Sara, were hoping to receive financial help in order to migrate to Wisconsin. This assists in proving first that there was added stress on the Shepards and second that this added stress had an impact on African Americans in the North, thus connecting back to the overall thesis.

"The Shepard Family History." Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- The author is unknown but given the tone of the source, the author may have been a resident of the Pleasant Ridge Settlement or a Shepard family member. Many names and family backgrounds of the founders of this community are provided here. The focus is mainly that of the Shepard family and how they came to be in Wisconsin.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Territory of Michigan," 1832.

- The slave count for the northern areas of the United States shows that slavery was still practiced in this so called "land of freedom." Thus, this information can be connected back to the thesis to illustrate the fluid borders of slavery.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Wisconsin," 1841.

- The slave count for the northern areas of the United States shows that slavery was still practiced in this so called "land of freedom." The later date demonstrates how this was continuing over time. Thus, this information can be connected back to the thesis by illustrating the fluid borders of slavery.

Warner & Foote. *Beetown Township, Flora Fountain, Muscalunge*. Map. 1877. From Historic Map Works, Rare Historic Maps Collection.

- This map shows the plot of land occupied by the Shepard, the Greene, and the Grimes families. The close proximity demonstrates the way in which African Americans

congregated to form the beginnings of this community. The map also provides context for the general layout of the community.

Williams, Elizabeth. Letter. Apr 5 1853. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- This letter conveys the pending freedom of the relatives left behind in Virginia. The emotion attached to the imminent expectation of freedom is clear in the source. Therefore, it is effective in supporting this papers assertions.

Williams, Elizabeth. Letter. Oct 8 1853. Charles Shepard Papers. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin Platteville, Platteville, WI.

- Elizabeth Williams wrote this letter to give her brothers in Pleasant Ridge an un date on the family. She describes the situation of one of their sisters and tells of her being sold away from the family. Thus, this source illustrates and important implication of slavery.

### **Secondary Sources**

Berlin, Ira. *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1974.

- Berlin's work will be useful for showing the experiences of free African Americans in the southern regions of the United States. He also describes the regulated type of freedom these people experienced and how these regulations were the foundation for race relations after the Civil War.

Cooper, Zachary. *Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1994.

- Coopers work is a short study on the Pleasant Ridge settlement and its residents. This study proved very helpful for contextual information and assisted in setting the foundation for this project's research.

Cornell, Sarah E. "Citizens of Nowhere: Fugitive Slaves and Free African Americans in Mexico, 1833-1859." *Journal of American History* 100, no. 2 (September 2013): 351-374.

- This article describes free African American experiences in Mexico and the border regions. Cornell's study will help add to the picture of free African American life in general. The more that is understood about the limitations of free African American life, the better one can understand how Pleasant Ridge fits into that picture.

Egeness, Herbert L. "A History of the Negro Community of Pleasant Ridge, Wisconsin." Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, 1968.

- This dissertation was a general look at the development and the decline of the Pleasant Ridge community. The source provided information that filled the holes in the history of these African Americans that the primary sources could not.

Godwin, Shawn. "Pleasant Ridge: A Rural African-American Community in Grant County Wisconsin." (a research report prepared for Old World Wisconsin, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 2000).

- Godwin's study of Pleasant Ridge is extensive and very detailed. This work was helpful for creating context and offering information that could not be accumulated elsewhere. Godwin also provided some primary source material that proved crucial to demonstrating my overall thesis.

Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Text Books Got Wrong*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2008.

- James Loewen's book is focused on disproving the myths that have been perpetuated throughout time. He argues that this vision of the North as a land untouched by the effects of slavery still stands today. This observation offers an interesting closing point for my topic and provides this study relevancy in today's world.

Winch, Julie. *Between Slavery and Freedom: Free People of Color in America From Settlement to the Civil War*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014.

- Winch's work supplies a broad look at the restricted freedom of African Americans. With a wide time span and geographical scope, one can see how the limitations of African American freedom evolved and how they differed from place to place. This source was helpful for understanding how the freedom experienced by the settlers of Pleasant Ridge fits into the general picture of free African American life.