

# **BENNINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



## **NEWSLETTER**

**FEBRUARY 2022 ISSUE**

**Bennington  
museum**

## President's Message 2022

2021 was a busy year for the Bennington Historical Society. We have had a great series of programs including Calvin Coolidge, Snowflake Bentley, and several presenters both local and from other Historical Societies. It will be a challenge to match this in 2022. In 2022 the Society plans to continue these programs, bringing in local historical societies to tell their stories and other historians and authors to present topics of interest.

Summer activities will include walking tours of the area and perhaps a field trip to a local historic site. The Society participated in the "Voices from the Grave" dramatization and was an integral part of the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Breckenridge Standoff. Our monthly newsletter continues to provide insightful articles of interest by our knowledgeable members.

We have assembled a dedicated group of volunteers to manage the Museum Library, now renamed the Regional History Center, and to respond to the many inquiries which we receive while also welcoming visitors to the room. The Society will continue to reach out to the community and other organizations to further our mission statement calling us to share information with the community. A pretty enthusiastic plan for 2022 – how do you fit in?

If you are interested in helping, contact us or stop by our headquarters in the Regional History Room to take a look around and have a chat with us about local history. It is a good place to hang out!

*~Bob Tegart, President of the Bennington Historical Society*

## The Capture of Remember Baker

2:00pm, Sunday, February 20

Ada Paresky Education Center

Presented by Don Miller and Bob Tegart

*Free and open to the public thanks to your donations in support of BHS.*

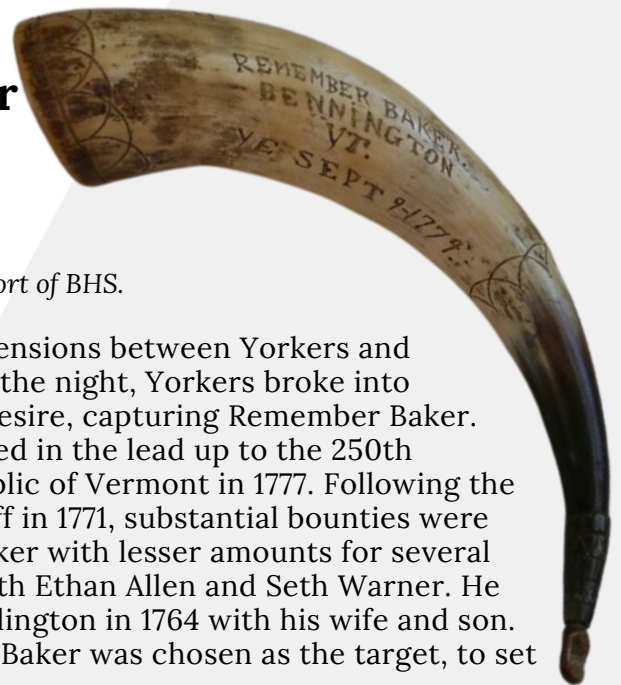
Two hundred and fifty years ago, in March of 1772, tensions between Yorkers and the Green Mountain Boys escalated. In the middle of the night, Yorkers broke into Remember Baker's home, attacked him and his wife Desire, capturing Remember Baker.

The Baker incident is the next event being recognized in the lead up to the 250th anniversary of the founding of the independent Republic of Vermont in 1777. Following the Ejectment Trials in 1770 and the Breckenridge Standoff in 1771, substantial bounties were placed on the heads of Ethan Allen and Remember Baker with lesser amounts for several other Green Mountain Boys. Baker was a cousin of both Ethan Allen and Seth Warner. He was one of the early settlers in the area, moving to Arlington in 1764 with his wife and son. He built Arlington's first gristmill. Captain Remember Baker was chosen as the target, to set an example.

Desire Baker was injured in the attack, but managed to escape to warn the neighbors, who then alerted the Green Mountain Boys in Bennington. The pursuit was on. The boys caught up to Justice John Munro near Troy, rescuing Baker. Baker was still in his night shirt and his thumb had been severed in the action.

The discussion will include the back story of this remarkable patriot and his role in the establishment of the Republic of Vermont. The Anti-Rent Wars in nearby New York, the French and Indian Wars, and the Puritan migration from Boston to Bennington each contributed to making Baker the feisty character that he was. And in turn, the capture of Remember Baker was a milestone on Vermont's journey to becoming a Republic in 1777.

Remember Baker lost his thumb in 1772 and his head in 1775. "Come and absorb the story", Miller suggests.



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## **BENNINGTON'S "OTHER" MONUMENTS: WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON MEMORIAL**

**BY BILL MORGAN**

One of Bennington's often overlooked monuments stands on the village green to the south of Old First Church. The memorial is dedicated to the abolitionist and newspaper editor, William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879). For six months, from October 1828 until March 1829, a very young Garrison lived and worked in Bennington as the editor and printer of a newspaper called *The Journal of the Times*. In that short period of time it had a circulation of about six hundred and was published from an office that once stood near the southwest corner of West Road and W. Main, not far from today's monument.

After his work in Bennington was completed, William Lloyd Garrison went on to become a central figure in America's abolitionist movement. Most historians agree that it was the fear of abolition that eventually pushed the South into war in 1861, but Howard Coffin, our own Vermont Civil War historian, suggests that the very roots of the Civil War can be traced to Garrison's arrival in Bennington in 1828. It was here that he started to make a name for himself as an outspoken newspaperman and orator.

Three men from Bennington's chapter of the National Republican Party; Noadiah Swift, Daniel Breckenridge, and Joseph Starin, were sent to Boston to find an editor to establish a newspaper with several objectives in mind. Their immediate goal was to defeat Andrew Jackson in his bid for the presidency in 1828. They wanted a local newspaper that would back President John Quincy Adams who was running for re-election. The only Bennington newspaper at the time, the *Vermont Gazette*, was supporting Jackson. Election day was Nov. 7, 1828, so once he was hired Garrison didn't have much time to produce results. Although Adams won handily in Bennington, Jackson won the national election to become our seventh president. The backers of the newspaper were also active in the temperance movement and wanted a newspaper that would support that position as well. Their third point was the most important of all -- they wanted a newspaper which would advocate for the end of slavery in America.

Due to the efforts of people like Garrison, the abolitionist movement grew in popularity and by 1846 it was estimated that nearly 80% of Vermonters opposed slavery. Garrison fulfilled his six-month contract in Bennington, but after Jackson took office in March 1829, Garrison left Bennington for Baltimore where Benjamin Lundy had asked him to edit another abolitionist periodical called *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* for a year. From there he moved to Boston and founded the *Liberator* in early 1831. Then newspaper became the most

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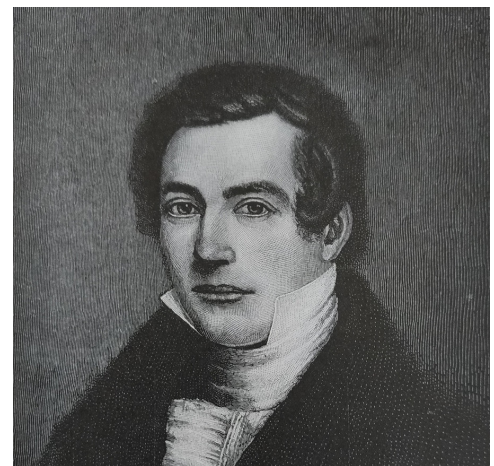
influential abolitionist publication of the antebellum era and made Garrison a leading spokesperson for the movement. By the time he returned to Bennington on a lecture tour in 1844 he was the President of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Early sources say the printing shop was on the grounds of the old Brush/Swift home next to the village school playground. It faced West Road just north of the house which is now on the corner at 69 Monument Avenue.

Originally the 2-room, one and a quarter story building he occupied had been the law office of Charles Wright. While Garrison was in Bennington he befriended James Ballard, the Principal of the "Bennington English and Classical Seminary for Young Gentlemen and Ladies" and gave one of his earliest speeches in favor of abolition in the school's brick academy building that still stands at 30 Monument Avenue. While in town he lived nearby in a boarding house owned by Erwin Safford.

The memorial bears a bronze relief of an early Franklin Printing Press, much like the one that Garrison would have used in his printing shop. The six foot tall monument weighs six tons and was dedicated on June 20, 1907. It replaced an earlier wooden memorial which had marked the site of the newspaper's office since 1886 but by 1907 it had deteriorated. The new monument displays the bronze tablet on an undressed Barre granite boulder.

The stone was ordered from T. Bertoli in Montpelier at a cost of \$140. The bas relief of the printing press was designed by Olin Levi Warner, a sculptor who lived in Vermont for a while and was a descendant of Col. Seth Warner. Emerson Estabrook was placed in charge of the installation after the bronze was cast in Boston by T.F. McGann and Sons for the sum of \$215.

It was all paid for by donations from local townspeople and wealthy summer visitors. Elijah Dewey, Henry Clay Day, and John V.D.S. Merrill headed the finance committee and even Andrew Carnegie is reported to have contributed. The inscription on the monument was approved by Wendell P. Garrison, the son of William Lloyd. It reads "Fifty feet west of this spot William Lloyd Garrison edited The Journal of the Times October 3, 1828-March 27, 1829. Hither came Benjamin Lundy December 6, 1828 to enlist him in the cause of the slave. Garrison departed hence to lift up in Baltimore the banner of immediate emancipation." Many people have visited the monument over the years including Eugene V. Debs, the candidate of the Socialist Party for president in 1912. After giving a campaign speech in Morgan Park in front of a crowd of a thousand people, Debs stopped at the monument to lay flowers and pay his respects to this great champion of freedom.



William Lloyd Garrison  
Based on a portrait by William Swain  
Newburyport, 1825





# BENNINGTON'S GREEK REVIVAL COLUMNS

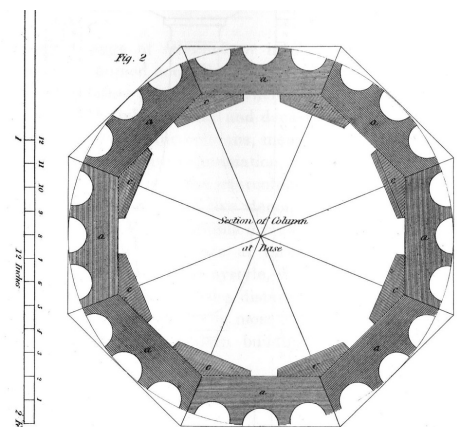
BY JANE RADOCCHIA

In 1830, the columns on the house pictured here were modern, up to date! Their proportions and moldings, modeled after the columns in ancient Greece, were considered more graceful than those from ancient Rome.

Bennington knew about them during the 1830s. Hiram Waters, a carpenter whose workshop was on Monument Avenue, owned and used the 'pattern books' (illustrated construction manuals) of Asher Benjamin, including *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter*, published in 1830. In that book Benjamin wrote, "The Roman orders ... do not produce that beautiful light and shade, so happily effected by the Grecian mouldings." He explained how to build them, but Bennington didn't. None of our houses with Doric Columns is on the Hinsdill 1835 map of Bennington. Why? The Panic of 1837 (a depression) lasted into the 1840's. Sheep farmers lost their livelihood, factories closed and went bankrupt, and very few houses were built.

By 1846, Bennington began to build again. Now builders followed the pattern book's engravings and instructions for creating the new columns. The columns were (and are) hollow; built as barrels are. Barrel staves fit into a base and had a band around the outside. Column staves were shaped and glued to each other on their edges, with blocking added on the inside. The drawing from the pattern book shows what the columns look like if cut in half. Benjamin wrote, "... the staves are to be got out by accurate plan and great exactness, as they must be, or your work will be bad..." Our columns are accurate and exact.

Doric Columns were The Style, and they were impressive. Bennington's tall, stately columns were what people saw. They still are: the houses they grace, their porches and pediments, are not quite afterthoughts, but secondary. These are COLUMNS.



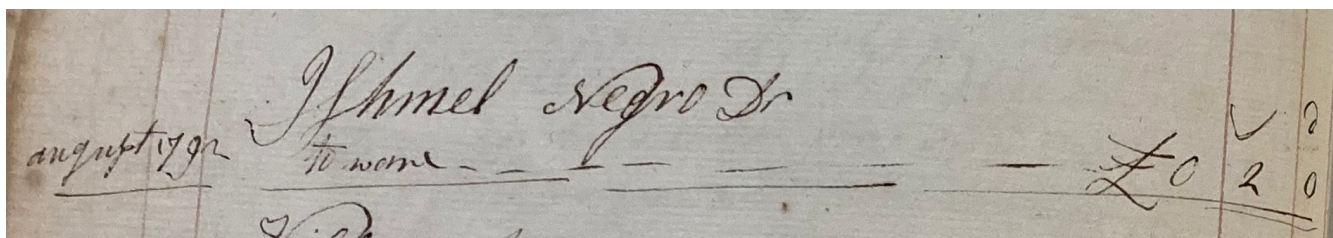
Asher Benjamin, *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter*, (1830), Dover Publications, Inc., NY, reprint 1988 of edition published by L. Coffin, Boston, 1844. First quote: preface, page iii; second quote: p. 52; image: Plate XXIV

## THE LIFE OF ISHMAEL TITUS

BY CALLIE RASPUZZI, COLLECTIONS MANAGER

In August of 1792 John Norton recorded a purchase in his account book of 2 shillings worth of "ware" by a man he identified as "Ishmel Negro." There were two Black men listed in Norton's account book (the other "Robert Negro" is tentatively identified as Robert Westerfield, who appears on the 1790 Federal Census in Bennington). "Ishmel Negro" was certainly Ishmeal Titus, who lived in Bennington and Pownal before moving to Williamstown, Massachusetts around 1817. Norton's close neighbor Hiram Harwood recorded him about half a dozen times in his diary.

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Ishmael Titus entry in Captain John Norton Ledger, August, 1792  
Bennington Museum Collection, Gift of Mr. John Spargo

The population of early Vermont was predominantly white, but there had been Black people in the state among some of the earliest settlers. Many were enslaved and had no choice. Some came after having gained their freedom. The first census, conducted in 1790, included 20 people in Bennington who were identified as Black.

Ishmael Titus was born in North Carolina in 1746, near the Virginia border where he was enslaved by Harry Bluford. During the French and Indian War Bluford was employed by the British commissary to haul goods, and in 1755 Titus witnessed the disastrous defeat of General Edward Braddock. Young Ishmael rode an additional horse needed to pull a heavily loaded wagon and in his old age still remembered the striking red coats worn by the British soldiers which seemed to him to be stained with blood. When he was about thirteen years old, he was sold to John and Richard Marr. Some years later he was sold again to Lawrence Ross. Ross was drafted in the spring of 1779, and he sent his slave to serve as his substitute.

In exchange for serving one year, Titus was to be given his freedom. He was in the North Carolina militia in the company of Captain John Beverly under Colonel Elijah Isaacs in General Greene's regiment. Under their command he was not involved in any major battles, but a few skirmishes with Tories and Indians. Col. Isaacs was assigned to a raid south of Camden, and Titus's regiment arrived just as the Americans were retreating after Gates lost the Battle of Camden.

After the expiration of the year, he reenlisted in the company of Captain John Cleveland, the son of Colonel Benjamin Cleveland with whom he was at the Battle of Kings Mountain October 7, 1780, where American militia effectively crushed Loyalist forces. A year later their Wilkes County militia was at Guilford Courthouse where Titus again served in a company commanded by Captain John Beverly. The British won the battle, but at a high cost.

After being discharged, Titus had one last adventure. As he was traveling over the Allegheny Mountains, he was captured by Captain Bill Riddle, a Tory who was collecting prisoners for reward from the British. Among the other prisoners was Colonel Benjamin Cleveland. Titus was sent by his captors to round up their horses. While looking, he came across Col. Cleveland's relatives with a company of about thirty, whom he led back to the Tory camp to rescue the Colonel. The Tories were captured, and Titus later recalled seeing their bodies hanging by the Rowen County Courthouse.

After he was discharged, Titus moved north to New York and lived in New Rochelle, Ballston, and Troy before coming to Vermont. He moved around a great deal in the late 1700s and early 1800s, looking for opportunities, which seem to have eluded him. In 1810 he was in Wilmington and complained to Hiram Harwood that much of it was "a hard country to live in." In 1817 he was living in Pownal, and on July 22 Harwood recorded an amusing visit-- "In the evening Ishmael Titus a man of color from Pownal appeared with a bull in lieu of horse to carry his baggage which consisted of such things as people had charitably bestowed on him. Mr. Parsons and his brother Seth were here and carried on a high joke with him respecting his bull."

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In 1820 the census still recorded him living in Pownal, but by 1830 he was settled in Williamstown. He continued to struggle for financial success. On March 22, 1832 he again visited Hiram Harwood to ask a favor. He was nearly blind and trying to remove a mortgage from his home. He had a petition with him and was collecting donations and signatures. Hiram noted that he had already collected a number of respectable names and gave him 25 cents.

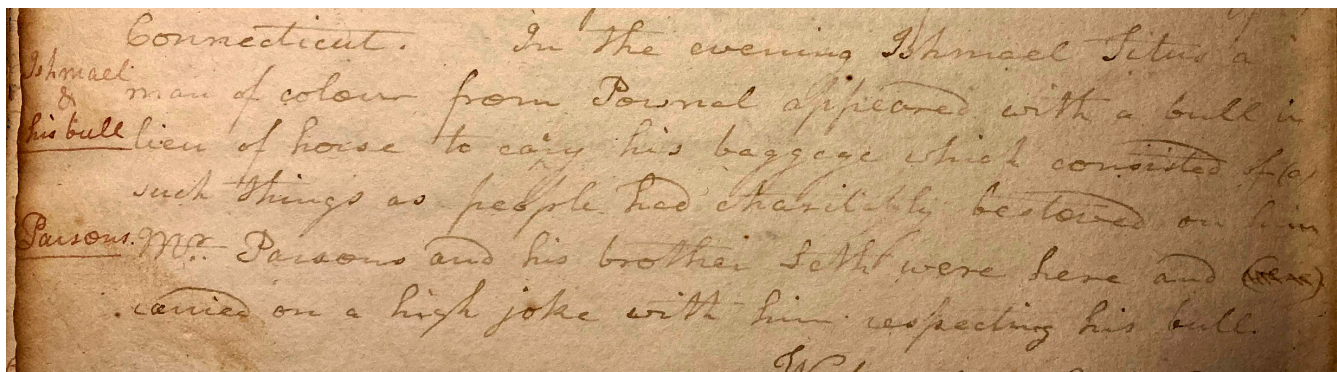
The 1832 Pension Act must have sounded like a godsend to Titus and his family. The act provided every surviving soldier who served at least two years in the continental army, state militias, and other units with a pension of full pay for life. Titus applied for a pension in October 1832 and added additional information in August 1833. The North Carolina Secretary of State William Hill was unable (or possibly unwilling) to verify his service noting that Titus did not appear on muster rolls for the North Carolina troops in Federal service, nor did the officers he mentioned. Hill did verify that there was a militia colonel named Cleveland, who was at King's Mountain and vaguely recollected an officer named Isaacs, but no recollection of Captain Beverley at all.

Titus's difficulties with the pension office were not unusual. Authorities were primed to look for fraud, and surviving veterans were all elderly with fading memories. Very few veterans had enlistment or discharge papers to prove their service. Militia records in particular were kept informally to begin with and were often nonexistent by the 1830s. When Titus told Hiram Harwood about his failed attempt, he blamed his having been enslaved at the time of the Revolution. Harwood also recorded that he had suffered much in gaining his freedom and, curiously, that he was "Strongly against Abolition." Most American Abolitionists believed in immediately sending all freed Black people back to Africa, and perhaps it was that idea that Titus objected to. Unfortunately, we do not have his own words.

Ishmael Titus continued to live in the White Oaks neighborhood of Williamstown, a hilly area near the Vermont border, with his wife Lucy whom he had married in 1812 and what appear to be children and/or grandchildren. There were a number of other Black families in White Oaks, as well as poor white farmers and laborers.

Ishmael Titus died in Williamstown January 27, 1855, at the impressive age of 110. His death was recorded in the Springfield Republican newspaper, which noted that he was the last survivor of Braddock's defeat in the French and Indian War. The story was picked up by other papers as far away as Louisiana and Ohio and included in William C. Knell's "Colored Patriots of the American Revolution," which ironically recorded his French and Indian War experience, but not his part in the American Revolution. Knell's account also emphasized that "His story has always been consistent, and no one in that place has ever doubted its correctness." Titus's story was consistent over the years, but there were certainly people who doubted him. Aside from the Pension office, Hiram Harwood himself cast doubts on the Black man's age when he recorded it in his diary. Titus sometimes claimed that he had earned his freedom through his service (the story in his pension application), and other times claimed he had run away (as recorded by Hiram Harwood and mentioned in his obituary). It is possible that both are true, and that although promised his freedom, Ross reneged, forcing Titus to run north. It is also possible that the white people recording Titus's story did not understand or appreciate the difference.

In 2012 researchers in North Carolina rediscovered Ishmael Titus' story. A painting was created using descendants as models and a bronze marker describing his service was installed in Charlotte May 20, 2015. Currently, there is a group trying to have his pension reinstated and distributed to descendants.



Hiram Harwood diary entry for July 22, 1817  
Bennington Museum Collection, Purchased for the Museum by Mr. James C. Colgate

**BENNINGTON MUSEUM WILL RE-OPEN IN APRIL  
THURSDAY- MONDAY, 10AM-4PM**

**THE REGIONAL HISTORY ROOM IS ACCESSIBLE FREE OF CHARGE ON  
MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS, 1PM-4PM**

by appointment while the Museum is closed January through March  
[library@benningtonmuseum.org](mailto:library@benningtonmuseum.org)

**THE BENNINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETS ON THE FIRST MONDAY OF  
EVERY MONTH FROM 4PM - 5:15PM AT BENNINGTON MUSEUM.**

All BHS donors will receive a copy of the newsletter and other BHS announcements via email, and are invited to attend these monthly meetings.

Make a gift to the BHS today to help keep our programming and newsletters free and frequent this coming year!

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Please write "BHS" in the note section

**Bennington Historical Society**

A volunteer-operated program of Bennington Museum

**Officers:** Bob Tegart, President; Don Miller, Past-President; Charles Dewey, Secretary

**Committee Members:** Ted Bird, Anne Bugbee, Joe Hall, Scott Maguire, Jackie Marro, Bill Morgan, Beverly Petrelis

**Newsletter Editor:** Ray Rodrigues

[benningtonmuseum.org](http://benningtonmuseum.org)



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