THREADTALES

The layered stories a Black Indian family tree

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Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to pursue this project without the support of the Qatar America Institute for Culture. Thank you for selecting me as a recipient of the 2021 IMPART Artists Grant and allowing me to display and discuss the project as part of the 2022 IMPART Summit.

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And finally, I thank my father, grandmother, and aunt for sharing their knowledge with me. My interest in our ancestry was sparked decades ago by the stories you offered me, and I am proud to have created a project that builds upon our family history. I could not have put together so many pieces of this cross-generational puzzle without the stories you shared over the years and the ones specifically retold for this project. You all are living history.

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

"Despite its inherent complexities, learning about one's blended heritage can result in personal reflection and the desire to share the rich and compelling stories."[1]

Project Overview

Threadtales is a research project devoted to exploring my African American and American Indian ancestry. The project is informed by the narratives of the Central West African, African American, and Chickahominy communities, specifically stories experienced between the 17th and mid-20th centuries. The research draws from various historical, anthropological, and genealogical sources to develop an interdisciplinary creative project that embraces these stories. Folktales, myths, and lived experiences – both good and bad – are at the heart of the project. The research is represented through 102 images that take the form of story cubes, a tapestry, and nine narrative videos.

Scope of the Research

The scope of this project's research is based on the ancestral knowledge my family has shared with me throughout my life. I compared this information to publicly available government records to get a better idea of who these ancestors were, what they did for a living, where they lived, and so on. I also received context on my African roots from a direct-to-consumer DNA test. While the DNA test offered more information than just that of my African ancestors, I chose not to use it as a crucial resource due to its various limitations, especially when it comes to identifying Native American ethnicity. [2] As Ancestry points out, it is possible to have Native American ancestors but not have the "Indigenous Americas" region show up in one's ethnicity estimate because there is a difference between lineage and DNA.[3] The DNA testing process is also continuously evolving; between the test I got done in 2019 and its most recent 2022 update, the regions and percentages of my ethnicity have shifted due to techniques becoming more refined.

Further, even if direct-to-consumer DNA testing provided "perfect" ethnicity information, the science of genealogical percentages is not evenly split when it comes to inheriting DNA from ancestors:

"While we inherited 50% of our DNA from our parents, we don't get 25% of our DNA from each of our grandparents. There's a range that we could receive. Each set of grandparents will add up to 50 percent, but you might have 22% from a grandfather and 28% from a grandmother on one side...The range of inheritance for your grandparents is about 20 to 30 percent...As we go down even further back in time, we see that that range extends quite a bit... an inheritance between 3% and 7% could represent your 3rd, 4th, 5th, or 6th great-grandparents." [4]

Thus, as a casual researcher, it would have been very challenging to determine the ethnicity of most of the people in my family tree based on my DNA results. Instead, I found it more reliable to base the research on the stories and paper trails these ancestors left behind.

To prevent the project from becoming overcomplicated, I decided to focus on the families of my paternal grandparents, them being the Braxtons, the Campbells, the Adkinses, and the Harrises.

Terminology

There are many different ways to refer to the various ethnicities, tribes, races, cultures, and kingdoms mentioned in this text. When discussing my ancestors of Central West African descent who resided on the continent, I will refer to them by their specific ethnic identities (ex. Angolan) or as West Africans. When discussing ancestors of the African diaspora who arrived in the United States, I will refer to them interchangeably as African American or Black American. The use of the term "Black" can refer to either of these communities and the context in which the term is used will denote which community is being discussed.

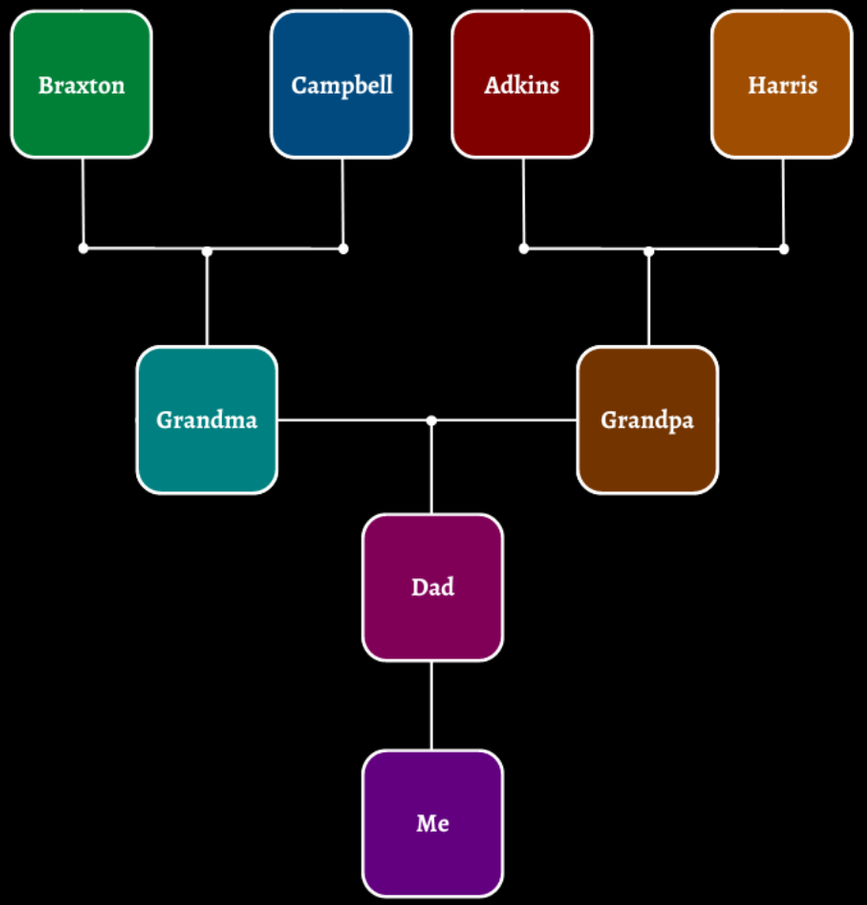
When referring to the indigenous communities of the United States, I will refer to them as Indigenous Americans, American Indians, Indians, Natives, or Native Americans. I recognize that some of these terms have complex histories regarding accuracy and proper acknowledgment of ethnic identity, but as of today they are

considered acceptable and I use them not as linguistic weapons, but in the name of clarity. [5][6][7] When discussing my Chickahominy ancestors specifically, I think it is important to first explain how Native American ethnicities on the east coast of North America are labelled.

The Algonquians are a group of indigenous people named for their spoken language; before European contact, their territory extended along the North American Atlantic coast from the Carolinas, to Canada, and into some western regions. A subgroup of the Algonquians are the Virginia Algonquians, also referred to as the Powhatans, the Powhatan Confederacy, or the Powhatan Empire. The Empire was comprised of multiple tribes; politically, the Chickahominy were an independent tribe, but ethnically they fall under the Powhatan umbrella because they spoke the same language, shared the same region, and shared a similar lifestyle.

In simplified terms: Algonquin --> Powhatan --> Chickahominy

There are two branches of the modern Chickahominy tribe: The Chickahominy, residing in Charles City, and the Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division (CIED), residing in New Kent. For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to refer to the modern CIED as the Eastern Chickahominy, the modern Chickahominy as the Western Chickahominy, and the original unified tribe as the Chickahominy.



Stitched Heritage

Threadtales began as a revisitation of my 2018 undergraduate senior thesis *Stitched Heritage*, a collection of mixed media oil paintings that depict creation tales from West African and Algonquian legend. The limited research process acknowledged the challenges of trying to piece together Black and Indian cultural narratives due to America's harmful treatment of both ethnic groups. The paintings themselves embrace the uncomfortable fact that I could only speculate whether generations of unnamed ancestors told these stories within their communities. This feeling of trying to piece together missing histories is represented through the use of asymmetrical patchwork and loose thread.

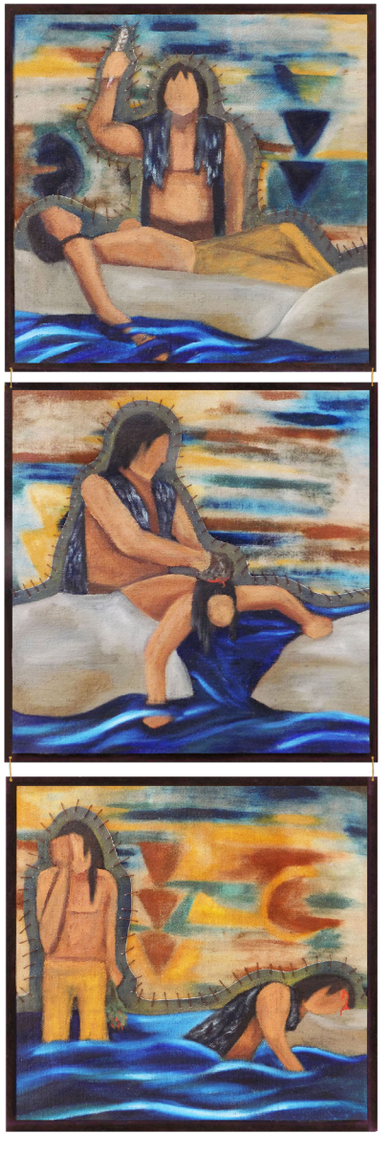
When I decided to revisit the collection for *Threadtales*, I desired to explore more narratives beyond creation myths and to dig deeper into Indian and African American histories. I challenged myself to use similar materials like paint, unprimed canvas, and thread to tell the stories I uncovered. Similarly, I wanted the new project to have an analogous visual language that relied on loose stitching, gold threads, and squares to communicate its themes.

Identity vignettes

Pemba Abandons His Egg

Pemba Plants the Tainted Seeds

The Birth of Glooskap and Malsum



The Trials of Glooskap and Malsum

(detail)

RESEARCH DIFFICIULTIES

Introduction

An unexpected amount of research difficulties emerged from both internal and external sources as I worked through *Threadtales*. There were moments while reading an academic text when I would suddenly be reminded of a blaringly racist norm from my childhood. Other times I realized that the experts I had been relying on were providing good information while also propagating the societal issues my project aimed to address. These moments in the research process led me to feeling shocked, frustrated, disappointed, and angry, but ultimately led to a lot of reflection: Reflection on the content I had been exposed to, reflection on my expectations of research materials, and reflection on myself as I worked to unlearn the harmful beliefs I had unknowingly internalized. I decided that to jump right into the research findings without acknowledging the experience of sifting through these roadblocks would be to remove an entire chunk of *Threadtales*' development. And so, this section is devoted to the major issues and reflections I had while researching the stories of my ancestry.

Fig. 1
A voting sticker from my home county attached to my 2008 sketchbook

The Questionable Norms of My Childhood

Before we transitioned to "cops and robbers," we played "cowboys and Indians" on the playground.

Before we sat "crisscross applesauce," we sat "Indian style" in school.

The Native American Barbie would have been so cool in my collection!

I wonder what happened to my itty-bitty cowboys and Indians aiming weapons at each other.

Pocahontas II was so satisfying. I think I would have picked John Rolfe too, but — what do you mean that's not what happened?

Red and yellow, black and white. They are precious in His sight... [1]

"You have the most unusual names here. Chickahominy. Quiyo... Quiyoughcohannock. Pocahontas." [2]

The kids in *Pinocchio* got their cigars from animatronic Indians? [3]

Splash Mountain is based on *Song of the South?*

"If I never knew you...If I never felt this love...I would have no inkling of...How precious life can beeee." [4] John Smith is so romantic.

Sally Hemings was Thomas Jefferson's true but forbidden love. They fell in love in Paris and [5] — what do you mean he was 46 and she was 15? What do you mean she was his daughter's aunt? What do you mean he never gave her the freedom he promised? [6][7][8][9]

My middle school bookfair haul included a book about drawing warriors and heroes. I learned that Apache were hostile tribes of nomads with warlike dispositions. "...these native North American Indians raided European and Indian settlements alike for revenge and supplies. They would stealthily approach their enemy and attack under the cover of darkness, dressed in animal skins and armed with spears and bows with arrows dipped in a lethal poison obtained from snakes. These hunter-gatherers were deadly, and moved swiftly in pursuit of their prey, be it animal or human. Physical strength and resilience were commonly accepted characteristic as they stubbornly fought the colonization of their land by the European settlers." [10]

From the recesses of my mind emerge the tunes of my home video childhood:

Savages! Savages! [11]

What makes the red man red? [12]

We'll kill ourselves an injun, or maybe two or three. [13]

The logo for my county.

The logo for my high school.

The logo for more sports teams than I expected.

The logo for that brand of butter we rarely buy.

The logo for the cornmeal in my parents' cupboard.

Ben and Jemima and Rastus were laid to rest.

Why not these Indians too?

Fig. 2
A page from a 2010 art book depicting the lifestyle of Apache tribes

Fig. 3
1994 Native American Barbie doll

Fig. 4
1996 Native American Barbie doll

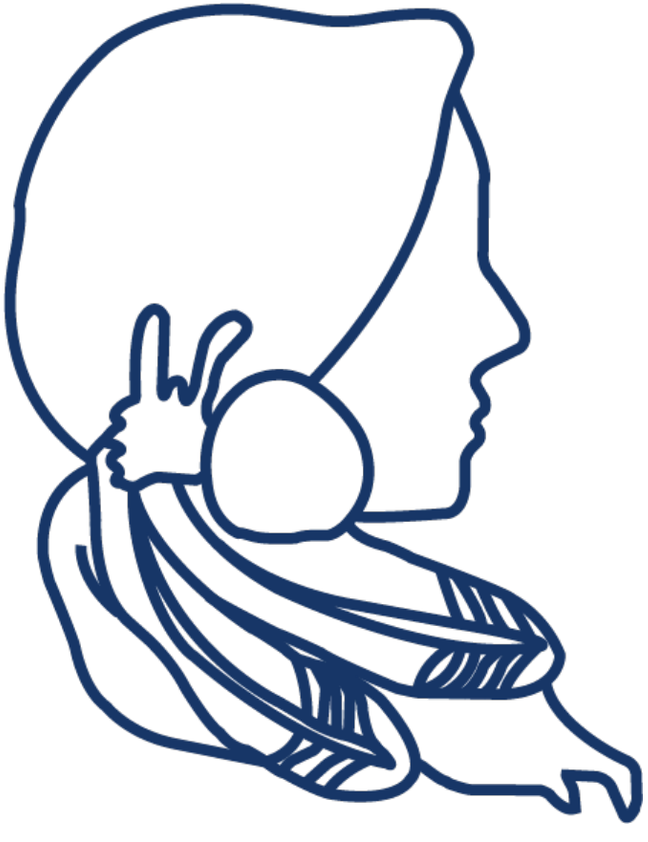


Fig. 5
The symbol used by my school county as of 2022

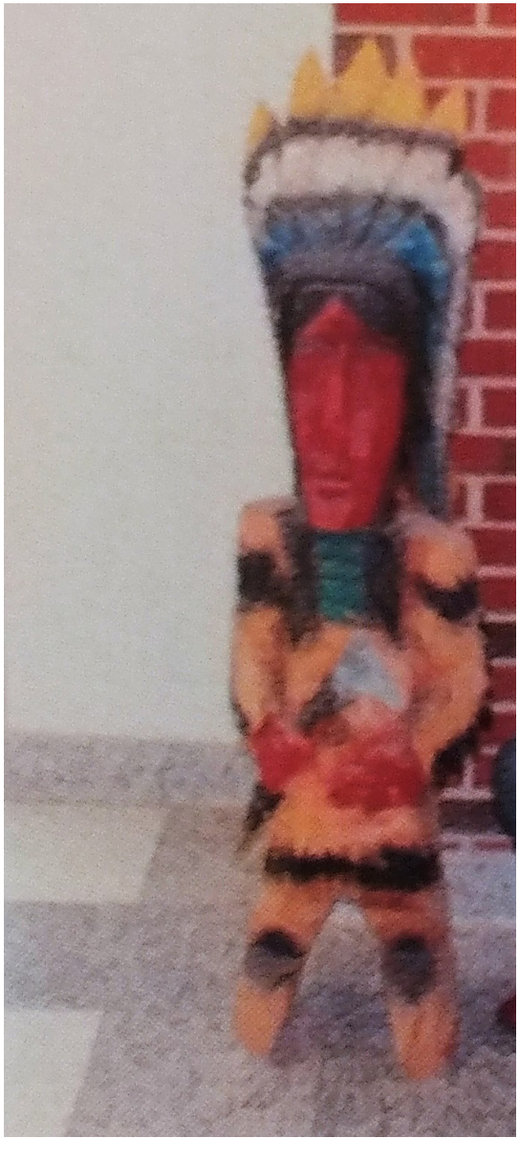


Fig. 6
The sculpture students posed beside in my 2015 high school yearbook

Fig. 7
One of the logos representing the Henrico Warriors, my high school's mascot, as of 2019

Fig. 8
2016 Land O' Lakes butter box (this branding was retired in 2020)

Fig 9.
2022 Indian Head cornmeal package

As explained in my third-grade workbook, “We also celebrate holidays in our classroom to remember people and events of long ago. In October, *Columbus Day* is celebrated to remember Christopher Columbus. He is credited with discovering the ‘New World’ or America...in November is *Thanksgiving Day*. It is celebrated to remember the sharing of the harvest with the American Indians (First Americans).” [14]

The ‘Nina,’ the Pinta, and the Santa Maria.

Construction paper matchcoats and war bonnets for our Thanksgiving classroom cupcake party.

I dressed up as an Indian for Halloween.

Fig. 10
My Halloween costume when I was about eight years old

"Indians, at least in the Minnesota suburb that I grew up in, meant Western movies, buckskin, a vanishing culture, a dying race, maybe a public television special on Sunday afternoon." [15]

Things I Learned in School

There are only four tribes relevant enough for a multiple-choice test: Sioux, Powhatan, Pueblo, Iroquois.

Conquistadors are just colonists in shiny suits. Colonists are just settlers looking for gold, glory, and God.

The Indians weren't mentioned.

Christopher Columbus discovered America, Juan Ponce de León wanted the fountain of youth, Jacques Cartier's goal was to claim American settlements for France and, thankfully, "Jacques Cartier did just that!" [16]

The Indians weren't mentioned.

The Sons of Liberty dressed up as Indians to raid boats during the Boston Tea Party. In addition to disguising their identities to avoid punishment, their garb was a way for the colonists to declare that they were no longer British citizens and instead proud Americans. [17][18]

The Indians weren't mentioned.

Crispus Attucks was the first American casualty of the Revolution.

His Indianness wasn't mentioned.

His Blackness wasn't mentioned.

The fact he may have been an escaped slave wasn't mentioned. [19][20]

"*Thomas Jefferson* was born in Virginia a long time ago. He was a leader who helped develop our country. He wrote a document called the *Declaration of Independence*. The Declaration of Independence stated that people living in the colonies in America would no longer follow the rules and laws of England. They wanted to begin a new country. They would call this new country the *United States of America*...We do know that *Thomas Jefferson* was also recognized as a hard worker and was chosen to become President of the United States. He was the third Presidency of the United States. He also continued to work very hard to see that the basic principles of government (like, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) were followed. [21]

These principles didn't apply to Indians or Blacks, but that wasn't mentioned.

The American Civil War was not about slavery, it was about states' rights.

The Reconstruction Era was about rebuilding railroads and farmhouses.

Jim Crow and the Ku Klux Klan were problems of the 1950s and ended by the 1960s.

Racial segregation was about keeping each race separated; it wasn't about protecting whiteness.

Mildred Loving was a Black Civil Rights icon. She was Indian too? No one ever mentioned that. Wait, how come she's not Black anymore? [22] [23]

Native American art wasn't discussed in the chapter about art in America.

My third semester of undergrad devoted 90 minutes to the art of Africa and the Black diaspora; it was taught by the Black grad student, and they barely got halfway through the slide show.

Selected Experiences from a Predominantly White Gifted Program

Remember that oral presentation I had to do? Remember the only woman of color on the list of choices was Pocahontas? Remember how I put together a lazy Native American costume that met the school dress code? Remember how I couldn't remember all the words to my memorized paragraph? Remember how I improvised something about the sails of the English ships being mistaken for clouds?

I think I stole that line from Disney's *Pocahontas.*

Remember that time I was taken away from my science quiz to do some government test? Remember how the last question asked what race I was, but they only had four options? Remember how the South Asian student didn't know what to put because her ethnicity wasn't on the list? Remember how I ignored the answer bubbles and wrote in my own answer? *"African American and Chickahominy Native American, you need more options!"*

I wonder what score I got on that test.

Remember in the last minutes of history class when the teacher randomly asked us to pin our ancestors' birthplace on the world map? Remember how uncomfortable it was to take a guess when everyone else seemed to have the answer? Remember how I wrote "Cherokee in Chesterfield" because I couldn't remember the words "Chickahominy in Charles City"? Remember how that popular Black kid laughed at the note? Remember how I put my Black ancestors all the way in Kenya because I hoped that maybe it was true? That maybe my ancestors were more than undereducated Black slaves stolen from the west coast of Africa? That maybe I was different from the homogeneity of other African Americans?

We didn't do anything with the information we pinned on the board.

Expert Sources: Expectations vs. Reality

17th century sources

Expectation: This is the period when Indians first encountered Europeans and when enslaved folk arrived in the United States. The sources may be scant, but at least they will be rich with good information.

Reality: Since Virginia Algonquians recorded information via oral tradition, the written documentation of their lives came from European colonizers. Most of these authors weren't interested in documenting many details about Powhatan culture because their goal was trade, not anthropology. While the documentation about the many wars fought between the Powhatans and English are well documented, when discussing other aspects of Powhatan life, many authors projected their biases onto their interpretation of the tribes and others exaggerated their experiences with the Natives.[24][25] Sources about the growing Black population were primarily restricted to legislations detailing the gradual loss of freedoms. I didn't find any contemporary sources that described what life was like for Blacks beyond their relationship to forced labor.

18th century sources:

Expectation: Natives, Blacks, and Europeans have been intermingling for over a hundred years. I will have a much easier time finding sources written from varied perspectives.

Reality: Most evidence about the Powhatan communities was documentation of land loss, language loss, conversion to Christianity, and access to education. Some of these stories seemed to be oral histories that were preserved and placed in a modern timeline; other information came from government records. The most holistic written narrative I found was the Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, considered by many to be the most important American book written before 1800. [26] Among other topics, Jefferson documented Virginia Indians, explaining that the Chickahominy were essentially extinct. He explained that they blended with other tribes, one of those tribes being the Mattaponi, who Jefferson described as consisting of "three or four men only" and having "more Negro than Indian blood in them." [27] Jefferson's statements about Virginia Indians and African Americans didn't stop there, but to summarize, his declarations were inaccurate and racially motivated, making his text unusable as a primary source. Regarding Blacks, in addition to finding more laws limiting their freedoms in the U.S., I found the works of Venture Smith and Olaudah Equiano, stories that gave detailed context on their memories of Africa and their experiences in enslavement.

19th century sources

Expectation: These communities have been intermingling for centuries; the documentation of their experiences, both good and bad, are bound to be readily available.

Reality. The information about Powhatan activity during this century was comparable to the few 18th century resources I found. By this point in my research process, I learned that I am not the only casual historian to come across the issue of finding limited sources pertaining to 300 years of Virginia Indian history. "By the 18th and 19th centuries, Chickahominy history was no longer being written by anyone – not even the colonizers. Instead, the story was told in skimpy census records, sketching land patents, and disappointing intratribal and intertribal legal skirmishes." [28] This, combined with drastically diminished numbers and land displacement, created a situation where there simply isn't a substantial paper trail to follow, let alone one created by people in the community. When it comes to documentation on the Black experience during this time, I was able to find the biographies of Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, and Armstrong Archer, along with many more laws restricting the rights of African Americans.

Dr. Frank G. Speck:

Expectation: Speck was an anthropologist integral to helping organize and preserve what remained of the Virginia Algonquian tribes in the early 20th century. His advocacy and academic motives to document their way of life will provide me with trustworthy information, even if it was written by someone outside the Indian community.

Reality: Academics can have good intentions while also leaning into racist ideologies.

It is undeniable that Speck was an advocate for Virginia Indians. He was regularly with the communities he studied, learning their languages, eating with them, and sleeping in their contemporary villages. His desire to document Virginia Indian existence infuriated high ranking lobbyists and government officials that sought to erase their identities; they even tried to ban his books from the state of Virginia. [29]

With Indigenous People's history of relocation, cultural assimilation, and economic marginalization, many of their communities lost the traditions that existed prior to European contact. As a result, Speck's anthropological work was about salvaging what was left. On one hand, it's because of Speck's research that I was able to garner information about the Chickahominy and even see what my cousins looked like in the early 20th century. On the other hand, his salvage anthropology is that it was notably anti-Black.

Helping tribes reorganize themselves in the 20th century involved deciding who was and was not Indian. He, and other advocates of the time, agreed that redefining Indian identity hinged on the absence of African American ancestry. [30] Though Speck acknowledged that contemporary Virginia Indian identity and culture was a mix of Indian, Black, and European influence, he still supported racial segregation within the tribes, viewing the enforcement of racial segregation [read: Black admixture] as advantageous. [31][32]

Dr. Helen Rountree:

Expectation: Helen Rountree is a historian who has been studying the history of Virginia Algonquians since at least the 1960s. She acknowledges that many of the resources she has had to rely on were written by European colonizers with anti-Indian biases and agendas, and she admits that no matter how much she attempts to distance her findings from a Eurocentric worldview, she will never be about to "get it right" until someone invents a time machine. [33][34] She has spent time engaging directly with tribal communities and there is evidence of her updating her own research with more detailed information as the years go by. [35][36][37] As a seasoned academic who acknowledges the Eurocentric bias of history, her work will be a trustworthy resource from someone outside of the Indian community.

Reality: An academic can be aware of scholarly racial bias while also (un)intentionally propagating it in their own professional endeavors.

Helen's work was the most detailed source I found that discussed Virginia Indian lifestyle, environment, and politics from the 17th-19th centuries. However, there were cases where her statements contradicted themselves in a singular text, especially regarding racial politics, making her work difficult to navigate. Additionally, some of her research methods have been called into question, with claims that she has emphasized and overexaggerated White-Indian relations while dismissing Black-Indian relations. [38] She also supports the claim that Virginia Indians of the 18th century despised African Americans due to physical appearance and cultural differences, [39] referring to claims made by an 18th century racist [40] and apparently ignoring the evidence that Blacks and Indians overlapped in culture, appearance, and position on the colonial social hierarchy.

Rountree's commentary on Black-Indian relations go so far as to say that "fathers often loved their slave children and freed them rather than selling them away" when arguing that an Indian slaveowner could not have been the father of the enslaved Afro-Indigenous

children he sold. [41] While serving on the committee to determine whether the darker-skinned Nottoway Indians were eligible for state recognition, Rountree denied Nottoway claims of Indian identity based on a "lack of evidence" created by the racist legislation and social environment of the 20th century, a toxic environment that others on the committee acknowledged. [42]

Chickahominy Indians-Eastern Division: A Brief Ethnohistory by Elaine Adkins and Ray Adkins (2007)

Expectation: Finally, a book written not only by people in the Virginia Indian community, but specifically by members of the Chickahominy!

Reality: Something written from an Indian perspective may not be able to fully escape the scars white supremacy gave them over 400 years.

This book, written by my distant cousins, was full of useful information about tribal histories and great-grandparents I had never heard of. However, upon comparing the information presented in the book with other research about Black and Virginia Indian relations, I realized that the authors had glossed over certain issues, framed negative situations with questionable phrasing, and omitted some information altogether.

Some omitted information was "inconsequential," like not mentioning that an important couple connected to the founding of the tribe were first cousins with a twelve-year age gap; this kind of information would have given more context about these people and the community, but omitting the information didn't necessarily harm the narrative. Other information, however, did begin to feel harmful, like the authors applause for Speck's assistance in helping reorganize the Eastern Chickahominy without acknowledging the anti-Blackness of the salvage campaign. They also wrote that Plecker's War on Indians "legitimized racism in employment and education," and while Plecker's wickedness did have negative effects on the Indian community, the statement implies that racism in employment and education didn't exist until the Plecker era (1912-1946). It comes across as though this particular branch of racism was irrelevant until it began to affect the Virginia Indian community, specifically when Plecker began to reclassify them as Black.

Similarly, the authors describe the 1960s as "troubled," a time when "rebellion against established institutions was rampant." While this isn't necessarily an inaccurate description of a very dynamic era of American history, the choice of words feels whitewashed, especially as it was written in the context of celebrating a chief who was considered a good leader because he didn't "get stirred up about anything that wasn't a life-and-death matter." The statement feels off-putting because, in addition to the thousands of lives lost due to war, the continuing Civil Rights Movement led to at least 115 deaths and countless more injuries, most victims being African American. [43][44] This section of the book continues to say that "leaders are sometimes only judged to be effective if they are able to bring about significant change in their organizations. However, what is often needed during times of extreme turmoil in society is the ability to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure from without. [The chief] did not overreact or push back against the chaotic events of the 1960s and advanced no major initiative that might unsettle tribal members during a time when their children's behavior and what was happening in the world was unsettling enough." While perhaps unintentional, the way this statement is written and the context in which it is discussed suggests that the "status quo" to which they are referring was the institution of white supremacy and violence, and that the chief's decision to maintain it was a good act of leadership done in the name of limiting tribal member's interactions with unpleasantries.

There was also the story of Billy Stewart, whose refusal to serve with a Black battalion was framed as a empowering act of protest, one that paid off when he was allowed to serve with the white battalion under the classification of "nationality unknown." This experience is written as a success for Stewart when really it is a complex example of

multiple racist ideologies at play, all of them the result of overarching white supremacy. I also wondered about the way the authors described their community's access to education in the past. They explain that "since whites and blacks were not permitted to attend the same schools under Virginia law, and the Boulevard Indian School was not built until 1910, it is likely that [the child] received his education from his mother." The statement doesn't acknowledge that Indians were allowed to attend Black schools and frames the child's homeschooling not as a decision, but as being the only option.

The book also establishes that the small New Kent community in the early 20th century was comprised of Indians, Blacks, and whites who "did not socialize but treated one another with respect." People were "friendly" with one another and there were no antagonistic feelings that "sometimes exists between the races now." While the latter statement was quoted from a specific community member, the book acknowledges that other people in the community agreed, and I am left to assume that the authors agreed with this sentiment too. The authors didn't explain how a community comprised of races that have complex intertwining histories regarding land, freedom, and power managed to maintain a rapport; this results in the statement coming across as the viewpoint of someone wearing rose-colored glasses. This uncomfortable interpretation is furthered by the idea that hostile feelings between Indians, Blacks, and whites is a development that emerged in the 2000s.

That said, after establishing that there were African Americans present in the community's history, the authors abruptly cease to mention them after the early 20th century. However, they do continue to point out relations between Indians and whites, noting specific intermarriages and explaining that they dropped the name *Indian* from their church in 1978 as white membership began to grow. This description of the church is framed with the testimony of a community member who remembered deacons refusing entry to outsiders because they were not welcome in "an Indian church." I can only assume that these refused churchgoers were Black because the church had a white membership prior to this, and yet, the authors don't give a name to these unwelcome worshipers.

And as a researcher – especially a Black researcher descended from the Chickahominy – situations like this led me to wondering *what happened?* What happened to the Black people in this "friendly" community? Why weren't relations with Black folk included alongside the documentation of relations with white folk? Is it because Blacks no longer intermingled with the Eastern Chickahominy after a time? If so, why? *What happened and why wasn't it talked about?*

The book includes a statement from "an outsider," someone who is presumably not in the Eastern Chickahominy community. This person expressed that the tribe is full of good people whose racist behavior is a result of the trauma they experienced at the hands of white supremacy. The person says that the tribe will always be polite to African Americans, "but if they are asked to accept an African American individual into their family, it then becomes a matter of their tribal identity—the identity they fought so hard to maintain and finally felt safe expressing to others." This reality of the tribe's experiences breaks my heart, especially because many of the evils that led them to this mentality are within living memory. But the pain they endured does not give them the right to uphold racist attitudes, especially when the book acknowledges that tribal members' desire to maintain racial purity is rooted in racist modes of thinking that were projected onto the Indian community by the non-Indian community. But if the authors understand the relationship between white supremacy and their community's history of racist behavior, then why does this book feel like it maintains an undercurrent of antiblackness?

Census Records Are Not Unbiased

Labeling people of color in the United States has been obscure since the beginning; "colored" didn't always mean Black, "mulatto" didn't always mean a mix of Black and white, and there is even discourse surrounding the term "negars" as it pertains to who exactly was on the ship that brought the first enslaved people to Jamestown. [45] Adding to this was the fact that census enumerators were responsible for determining an individual's race. Though enumerators were instructed to ask households about their racial identification, their personal interpretations of race based on appearance influenced how households of color were documented. [46][47][48]

When the federal census began in 1790, people of color were categorized either as "slaves" or "other free persons of color." [49] Enslaved people were not listed by name until 1850 when the government began taking slave censuses to supplement the federal census. On these slave censuses, enslaved people would be listed with only their age, gender, and designation of "Black" or "Mulatto" beneath their owner's name. That means between 1790 and 1850, a minimum of 3.2 million enslaved people – roughly 16% of the population – were not listed by name. [50][51][52] It wasn't until 1870 that Black Americans consistently had their names documented on the federal census.

"Indian" didn't exist as a racial category on the U.S. census until 1860. Prior to this, Native Americans were classified as Negro, Mulatto, or Free Persons of Color, labels that were also used to describe African Americans. This same pattern was followed on other records like marriage, birth, and death certificates. [53]

However, even once "Indian" became an option on federal documents, the Native American population in Virginia continued having extraordinary difficulties representing themselves due to the tyranny of Walter Plecker. Plecker was a white supremacist, eugenics supporter, ally of the Anglo Saxon Club of America, correspondent of Adolf Hitler, and head of Virginia's Bureau of Vital Statistics from 1912-1946. Plecker believed that Virginia Indians had disappeared centuries ago due to Black-Indian intermarriage and cohabitation. To him, anyone claiming to be Native American was actually a Black person hoping to exploit an Indian claim in order to marry a white person. Plecker led a "pencil genocide" against Virginia Indians, making it illegal to identify newborns as "Indian" on their birth certificates and manually changing preexisting records, crossing out the word "Indian" to replace with "Colored." Plecker also circulated a hit list of surnames associated with Virginia Indian families that he accused of trying to pass for Indian or white; some of my family names were on that list. [54][55][56][57]

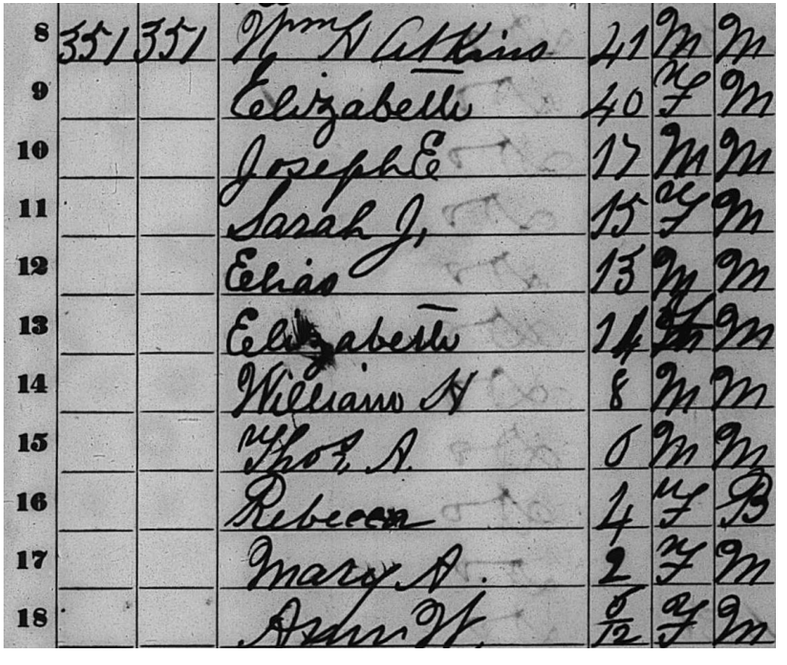


Fig. 11

1860 census record of William Henry Adkins I (b. 1818), my 4th great-granduncle. Here his entire family is listed as Mulatto except his daughter Rebecca, who is listed as Black. When Rebecca died in 1924, she was listed as Indian. [58]

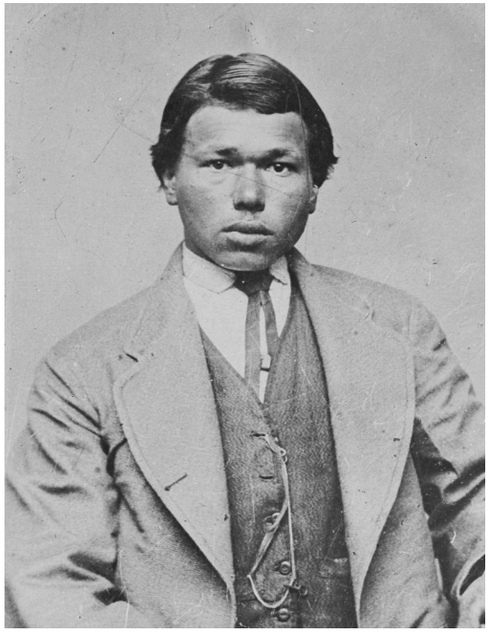


Fig. 12

William Henry Adkins II, first chief of the modern Chickahominy and first cousins 5x removed (b. 1850)

1860 census: Mulatto [59]

1880 census: Mulatto [60]

1900 census: Black [61]

1910 census: Indian [62]

1920 census: Indian [63]

1921 death certificate: Indian [64]

Fig. 13

Edward Pemberton "Pem" Bradby, first Chief of the Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division and second cousin 4x removed (b. 1882)

1910 census: Indian [65]

1930 census: Negro [66]

1940 census: Indian [67]

1958 death certificate: Indian [68]

Fig. 14

Allen Adkins First cousin of Chief William Henry Adkins II and third great-grandfather (b. 1859)

1860 census: Mulatto [69]

1870 census: Mulatto [70]

1900 census: Black [71]

1910 census: Indian [72]

1930 census: Indian [73]

1944 death certificate: Colored [74]

"I was a red man one time, but the white men came. I was a black man, too, but the white men came. They drove me out of the forest. They took me away from the jungles. I lost my trees. I lost my silver moons. Now they've caged me in the circus of civilization. Now I herd with the many — Caged in the circus of civilization." [75]

Missing and Scattered information

One hometown has many names.
Mooresville, Coddle Creek, Catawba Springs, Fallstown, Iredell
Lincoln County, Mountain Creek
Davidson, Deweese
Mecklenburg

Cities, courthouses, churches, prisons burn.
Jamestown. Richmond. Charles City. Hanover. Iredell.

Names change with every document.
Shoderick, Shod, Shad
Robert goes by Oates, Oats, Otis

Dialects change sounds, illiteracy changes words.
Manerva, Minerva, Manervy, Menervy, Monervy, Nerva, Minnie
Redfern, Redfer, Redfair, Readfer, Redfir, Redferan, Redfield, Harper?!

Mistakes are made in crowded checkboxes.
Oats is the head of household's ~~daughter~~ son
Oats is ~~female~~ male

Faded illegible classical cursive.
Ioek Campbell
Isaaic Campbell
Is that you, John Adkins?

The specific becomes the lazy generic.
"Native American folktale?" "Famous African story?"
What region? What country? What tribe? What people?

Interests drive scholars elsewhere. [76][77][78]
Indians live in my neighborhood too
I'm sorry we weren't the sixth Civilized Tribe

Information becomes lost to time. [79]
The information today was lost 70 years ago
The information 70 years ago was lost centuries ago

"The literature of us wiped and creamed against an outcrop of colonizing rocks. Out acorn, our buckskin, our dreaming, crushed. No. corrected. Under the weight of change, we became husks of ourselves." [80]

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

A Brief 300 Year History of the Chickahominy

The Powhatan Empire of the 17th century was composed of about 30 tribes with a population of up to 34,000 stretching over 8,000 acres (about one-fifth the size of modern Virginia). The Chickahominy were not officially a part of the Powhatan Empire; sometimes they were allies and sometimes they were in conflict. It is possible that while allied the Chickahominy served as the Powhatan Empire's "muscle," in that they may have been the warriors that confronted hostiles first, giving the Empire's warriors time to mobilize. The Chickahominy were considered a significant military strength with a warrior force of up to 300 people. Instead of having a single chief like other tribes in the Empire, the Chickahominy were led by a council of eight. Despite the political differences, the Chickahominy were culturally similar to the larger Powhatan community. [1][2][3][4][5]

Most Powhatan Indians lived in permanent villages built on cleared land surrounded by wooden enclosers. Families lived in spacious longhouses made of bent saplings that were then latched together. The houses' framework was covered with mats or bark and the interiors were lit by torches and a central fire pit, which burned all night, the smoke escaping through a hole in the ceiling. Families of status sometimes displayed taxidermy above their doors, comparable to a European coat of arms. This style of housing was affordable to build and easy to move when needed. [6]

The Chickahominy had at least sixteen villages erected between the James and Pamunkey Rivers, housing a population of up to 1,000. The homes they established along the Chickahominy River were in a naturally defensible zone surrounded by thickets and difficult for canoes to navigate. The canoes of the Powhatan people were cut from a single log, and while most had the capacity for 10-30 people, the largest canoes were four feet deep with the capacity to carry up to forty people. The name "Chickahominy" translates to "hominy people," hominy being a type of course pounded corn. [7][8][9]

Most jobs in a tribal community were done by the women; they crafted items, planted crops, cut hair, erected houses, gathered firewood, reared children, and cooked. Their caretaking allowed the men to hunt, fish, and defend the village whenever the need arose. Men were expert archers and could shoot accurately from 40 yards away (the length of two bowling lanes combined). There is no indication that women's work was viewed as subordinate to the men's; their work was simply different work. [10]

Powhatan gardens likely looked messy by western European standards because instead of spacing out each seed in a grid-like pattern, Powhatan crops were often planted alongside each other. A good example of this is the way beans, squash, and corn were planted: The cornstalks offered a structure for the bean vines to climb on, the beans pumped nitrogen into the soil to fertilize the corn and squash, and the squash's broad leaves protected the beans from predatory animals. The Powhatan's sustained themselves on a variety of hunted animals, cultivated crops, and foraged foods. They would eat deer, fowl, fish, shellfish, nuts, berries, tree fruits, wild potatoes, wild onions, wild greens, wild rice, grass seeds, sunflower seeds, squash, beans, and corn. Corn was the most important crop; it was grown in four varieties that would be harvested at different seasons of the year. Corn that had not ripened by the end of a harvest was dried out and stored for winter. With these ingredients, the women would roast seafood and shellfish, barbeque meat, dry meat and fish, bake bread, make a variety of stews, and collect milk and oil from nuts. [11][12][13][14]

The Powhatans also made tools like knives chisels, shields, tweezers, hoes, needles, arrowheads, and hatchets from shells, quartz, flint, sharpened reeds, turkey spurs, sharp bird bills, beaver teeth, turtle shells, tree bark, and animal bone. From gourds they made dishes, spoons, funnels, tobacco boxes, cups, and containers for oil and water. Other crafts included creating pottery, baskets, tobacco pipes, bead embroidery, and textiles. Tribespeople wore mantles, aprons, pearls, beads, shells, copper, feathers, deerskin shoes, fringed

clothing, headdresses, and women often wore wreaths made of dyed fur. The wealthier the individual, the more bedecked in clothing and accessories they would be; their mantles may be embroidered with shell beads or feathers woven into a netted base, leaving only the shiny side visible. Generally speaking, the men wore more elaborate ornaments than women. [15][16]

Men typically wore their hair plucked very short on one side. One reason for this may have been practicality, as it made certain that hair would not be in the way of pulling back a bowstring. It is also possible that the hair and its styling was symbolic, representing creative potential and an indication that men were both male and female by nature. Both genders pierced their ears, women often having three holes in each ear. [17] Face paint, body paint, and tattoos were also shared by both genders, though women tended to have more tattoos than the men. Tattoos would be colored with pigment and depicted designs of flowers, fruits, and animals. The pigment used for tattoos and body paint could be black, white, yellow, or red, the latter being the most commonly used. The oily paint was believed to keep the winter cold and summer heat at bay, as well as serving as a defense against mosquitoes, lice, and fleas. [18][19]

Powhatan spirituality and medicine overlapped, and tribal priests held the most medical knowledge. Treatments for various illnesses included using herbs, roots, cupping, and sweathouses. The Powhatans washed every morning whatever the weather, an act that conditioned them and their children against the cold. They also washed their hands before eating, drying them on fresh green leaves or feathers that were later dried out and reused. Tribespeople held frequent community rituals for events like harvests or preparing for war. Many different types of dances were performed: some had fast footwork, others were slow and choreographed, and some were separated by gender; many of these styles of dance are still practiced today by the community. [20][21][22]

By the beginning of the 20th century, Powhatan numbers had dropped drastically due to war, disease, and colonial land expansion. Tribes became impoverished and scattered, often placed on reservations, or forced into inferior lands that were ecologically different than the lands they have been inhabiting for centuries prior. The Chickahominy went through multiple periods of being relocated to different reservations and by the late 19th century, the community was documented as existing primarily in two neighborhoods: The larger community in Charles City and the smaller community in New Kent. The Chickahominy tribe split around 1920 at the behest of the New Kent community. Different reasons for the split have been expressed, including the New Kent community finding it difficult to travel 20 miles through unpaved road to Charles City for church and tribal meetings. It is also possible that the separation happened due to disagreements over religious practice and land use, conflicted desires to establish a reservation, or dissatisfaction with a change in leadership after the first Chief passed. However, both communities remain intertwined as they still share the same ancestry. [23][24][25][26]

A Brief 300 History of Blacks in the U.S.

On August 20, 1619, a ship carrying about thirty enslaved Africans arrived in the port of modern-day Hampton, Virginia. These slaves were originally part of the 350 Africans kidnapped by the Portuguese and put on a ship headed for New Spain (modern day Mexico). 150 of these slaves died by the time the ship approached their final destination. It was then that two English-Dutch ships attacked, stealing about sixty of the enslaved Africans on board. Both ships eventually docked in Hampton in 1619. The slaves they sold were exchanged for food and supplies; almost half of them were later brought to the Borough of Charles City. The first census of the Virginia colony, taken in March 1620, recorded thirty-two Africans, seventeen of them female and fifteen of them male. By 1700, the British North American colonies had about 6,000 enslaved Blacks, about 8% of the population. By the time of the American revolution, enslaved Blacks comprised approximately 20% of the population. [27][28][29][30]

The enslaved people originally brought to Virginia were likely from the Kingdom of Ndongo in modern day Angola. While they may have been sold as indentured servants, their relationship to forced labor often rode the line between enslavement and indentured servitude as Virginia slave and race laws developed throughout the remainder of the century. Thus, while some of the Africans brought to Virginia eventually received their "freedom dues" – a parcel of land given to a servant who had reached the end of their service – many did not work under the negotiated labor contracts of white indentured servants. Further still, the Africans who arrived in Virginia were captured by slave traders who forcibly brought them to European colonies; the context of their arrival and the way the law defined them over the following decades is indubitably linked to enslavement. [31][32][33][34]

Blacks in the 17th century who were born free or gained their freedom had rights comparable to the European colonists, able to own property and participate in voting. However, with each decade came more laws limiting the freedoms of African Americans and an understanding that Black identity and slave status were synonymous. This was due in part to plantation owners' growing reliance on slaves to cultivate labor intensive crops like tobacco, rice, and cotton. There were also many enslaved carpenters, bricklayers, metalsmiths, wheelwrights, tanners, tailors, butchers, coopers, boatmen, cooks, waiters, drivers, housemaids, spinners, weavers, sawyers, quarrymen, and railroad layers. Slave owners worked the entire enslaved community, regardless of age or physical impairment. Slaves working in the fields had up to sixteen-hour workdays six days a week. Children as young as seven were put to work in the field, and children as young as three were put to work weeding fields, carrying drinking water, collecting trash, gathering firewood, caring for farm animals, and helping in the kitchen. [35][36]

Given the many responsibilities enslaved people were given, it was common for slaveowners to rent their slaves out for services or permit slaves with certain skills to live away from the owner's estate. These people typically lived alone or with their immediate family, achieving another form of pseudo-freedom. However, many of them still had overseers to supervising them; these overseers could be white, free people of color, or enslaved themselves. The slaves living in these places away from their owner's estate were still classified on documents as enslaved, the name of their slaveowner listed as owning them "in absentee." [37]

As a result of the American economy's reliance on slave labor, the opportunity for enslaved people to buy or "earn" their freedom became less common. With the increase in slave labor came an increase in slave rebellions, which fueled white people's fears of Blacks undermining the established power structure. These feelings of paranoia contributed to the tightening of laws that limited the freedoms of African Americans. It wasn't until 1808 that the United States banned the importation of slaves, but by then there were nearly 1.2 million enslaved Blacks laboring in the country. As a result, the

domestic slave trade became more crucial, leading to an increase in "slave breeding." There were also instances of enslaved people from abroad being smuggled into the country, one estimate placing the number at 50,000. By 1860, the 4 million enslaved Blacks in the United States were valued at 4 billion dollars, more than gold and silver ($230 million), circulated currency ($435 million), and southern farmland ($1.9 billion). [38][39][40][41]

By 1900 – thirty-five years after emancipation – there were about 8.8 million African Americans living in the United States. These people were descendants of the 400,000 Africans that were brought to British North America over ten generations. In total, 12.7 million of Africa's strongest, healthiest, youngest citizens were forced across the Atlantic over a period of 350 years to sustain the European colonies of "The New World." [42][43][44]

Colonizers, Blacks, Indians, and Enslavement

Prior to European contact, enslavement existed in both African and Native American communities, but it functioned differently than the colonial European approach to slavery, which eventually became based on race and tied to land ownership.

In pre-colonial United States Indian communities, slaves were typically captured during war, though their treatment shared more in common with that of a servant than a slave. They often had the opportunity to grow out of their bondage and their status of "slave" did not carry on to their children. These captives were not viewed as objects and were of little economic significance in Indian society. By the 19th century, some Native American tribes in the west – dubbed by colonists as the "Five Civilized Tribes" – held enslaved Blacks in their communities. These tribes, in an effort to survive by assimilating into European American society, created racial codes similar to that of their white slave owning counterparts. However, generally speaking, the enslaved Blacks of Indian communities were still treated as people, not possessions. They could get married, eat at the same table as Indians, and earn their freedom more easily than Blacks in service of whites. Some Black testimonies even express that they would have preferred having Native Americans as their masters than the white slave owners of the South. [45][46][47][48][49]

There were also instances of African Americans owning Black slaves, one of the most notable being Anthony Johnson. Originally named Antonio, he arrived in Virginia between 1619 and 1622 after being captured by the Portuguese. Upon the end of his indentured servitude, Johnson was granted a plot of land and imported at least five African laborers. The importation of these laborers allowed Johnson to expand his land under the rule of "headright," which granted the purchaser 50-100 acres of land per each laborer they imported. In 1654, Johnson was involved in a case regarding his laborer John Casor, who claimed that Johnson had kept him as a servant seven years longer than had been agreed while Johnson insisted that Casor was his servant for life.

Casor essentially decided to leave Johnson's service and in response Johnson took the issue to court. The Virginia legislature ruled in Johnson's favor and declared that Casor was his servant for life, or in other words, his slave. [50][51][52]

Throughout the 254 years of enslavement in the United States, the ratio of free African Americans to the overall Black population never exceeded roughly 14%. The highest ratio of emancipated Blacks was in the year 1830, where out of a total Black population of 2.3 million, approximately 320,000 were free.[53] Of these free Blacks, a few hundred owned slaves, most of them residing in Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, and Louisiana. About 1% of them owned between 20 and 84 slaves, while the majority owned between 1 and 9. Many of these slaves were the family of their Black slave owner; it was the most common reason why free Blacks would purchase slaves, as it allowed their relatives to acquire a kind of pseudo-freedom. Other Black slave owners, especially those with large numbers, purchased slaves for the same reasons as their white counterparts: To gain economic advantage through the use of unpaid labor. Many of them also had a desire to elevate their status and gain respect within the dominant power system slave owning had created. However, by 1860 – one year before the start of the Civil War – the number of free African American slave owners had significantly decreased, nearly disappearing in the upper south entirely. [54][55][56][57][58][59]

While some African Americans had adapted to the colonialist European system of institutionalized slavery, their West African predecessors had a very different approach. Various forms of slavery were practiced in West African society, though it became most prevalent during the economic boom of the transatlantic slave trade. Prior to this, most slaves in West African communities were caught as prisoners of war or offered as tribute for leaders. These enslaved people often maintained legal rights comparable to those of the free people in their community. [60][61][62][63][64][65][66][67]

When Europeans began acquiring enslaved Africans in the 15th century, they initiated the process of gradually replacing the Indian labor their colonies had been relying on. [68][69] In the United States, some enslaved Indians – usually captured through war, traded for guns, or kidnapped – were sent as far away as the Caribbean, North Africa, and Spain. [70][71][72] By the 19th century, Richmond, Virginia had the largest slave trade in the upper south. The state and its inhabitants had a long history of Indian slave trading prior to this, and by the time enslaved Blacks labor became cheaper than Indian labor, Richmond had established auction houses, slave breeding farms, boarding houses for slave traders, and slave jails, which stored slaves awaiting sale, "fancy" slaves to be sold as sex objects, and "disobedient" slaves in need of punishment. The most famous slave jail in Richmond was nicknamed "the Devil's half acre." [73][74][75][76][77][78][79][80]

"If it is possible to understand the American paradox, the marriage of slavery and freedom, Virginia is surely the place to begin." [81]

A Non-Exhaustive Yet Terribly Exhausting History of Racist Legislature

I intended to create a timeline that listed nearly 400 years of racist legislature in the United States, but as I began compiling it, I realized that there were just too many laws to list. Shifting gears, I decided to focus on the discriminatory laws of Virginia, only to learn that the number of laws limiting the freedom of Blacks and Indians was still far too much to reasonably include in this text. Next, I thought that perhaps I could pick out a few highlights, write short paragraphs on the most obscene or notorious or highly effective laws from the state, but I couldn't commit to it. With all I had learned, I was exhausted; I didn't want to write paragraph after paragraph about the laws that made the lives of my ancestors more difficult. To add, how could I skip over so many racist policies that I now knew existed? Laws that affected actual people for the entirety of their lives? Laws that contributed to the state and the country's understanding of how to legally manipulate concepts of race and bondage? [82][83]

The simple answer is that I couldn't.

The complex answer is that I refused to.

If I can learn about these aspects of my state and country's history, so can anyone else. This is why instead of a detailed timeline, or bullet points, or paragraphs with all the information detailed, I have offered some of the personal thoughts I had while engaging with the material, complete with ample citations.

Laws that permitted and defined slavery [84][85][86][87][88][89][90][91][92][93][94]

1643, 1660, 1668, 1669, 1670, 1672, 1676, 1682, 1691, 1705...

Can't go twenty years without an update

Freed slaves must leave Virginia within 6 months

Did you escape or did you unlawfully absent yourself?

It's just too much to count.

Laws that cemented slave status as hereditary [95][96]

Before 1662, fathers were required to acknowledge their children

Before 1662, fathers were required to care for their children

Now, men in power become exempt

Because to that which is born follows the womb

Laws that gave whites more power over slaves [97][98][99][100][101]

1669 Act Concerning Runaways

Compensation for the finders, whippings for the runaway

1705 Virginia Slave Codes

An attempt to prevent another unified rebellion

1793 Fugitive Slave Act

Signed into law by President George Washington

1850 Fugitive Slave Act

The Bloodhound Bill

Laws that tried to limit uprisings and thoughts of freedom [102][103][104]

It's illegal to learn how to read

It's illegal to learn how to write

It's illegal to get together

It's illegal to defend yourself against a white assailant

Laws that turned people into fractions [105][106][107]

State representation is skewed

Slave owners get more political power

The Constitutional Convention of 1787

One-fourth or more of negro blood shall be deemed Colored

One-fourth or more Indian blood shall be deemed an Indian

The basis for the blood quantum is born in Virginia

Laws that denied Indians their land [108][109][110][111][112]

6.5 million acres of "surplus" land created by just one act

99% of homeland gone in 400 years

Just assimilate, why don't you?

Just terminate, why don't you?

Laws devoted to Jim Crow [113][114][115][116]

Separate but equal

Back of the bus

Pencil genocide

Massive resistance

100 years of laws, 100 years of lives

It's still too many to count.

A Brief History of the Relationship Between Blacks and Indians

When southern American Indians first encountered Blacks in the early 17th century, they regarded them only as outsiders, comparable to their early view of the Europeans. In the decades that followed, they traded and intermarried with both Blacks and whites until stricter slavery and race laws were established. One result of these laws is that Indians and Blacks, thrown together in adjacent castes and sometimes working alongside each other as slaves, often formed close bonds. While there were times when African Americans unified against Virginia Indians, like in the case of Bacon's Rebellion, the commonalities between Indians and Blacks often outweighed their differences. It was common for Blacks escaping enslavement or otherwise on the run to seek haven with nearby tribes, like in the case of Nat Turner, an enslaved African American known for his 1831 slave rebellion. After the conflict, Turner hid with the Nottoway tribe; his children remained with the Nottoway community after his death, and it is likely that his American Indian wife was of Nottoway descent. [117] [118]

Fearing collusion, colonists worked to separate the growing bond of Blacks and Indians by employing Indians as slave catchers, frightening Blacks with stories of Indian savagery, and enacting racist policies that further separated the two groups. By the latter half of the 19th century, Black and Indian relations had become increasingly antagonistic under Jim Crow. The racist legislature and cultural expectations of the era encouraged Indians to assimilate into white American society by abandoning their identities and simultaneously created discriminatory rules for defining Indian identity. The early 20th century saw the first federal use of blood quantum law, a system used to define Native American status based on fractions of Indian ancestry. In order to legally maintain their legal status as Indian, Native Americans had to meet a required quota of "Indian blood," typically needing a minimum of one quarter (by having a "full blooded" Indian grandparent). This system, still employed by many American Indian tribes, is inherently exclusionary and has been criticized for over one hundred years. [119] [120] [121][122][123]

Tensions between Blacks and Indians worsened with Virginia's 1924 Racial Integrity Act which, among other things, forcibly recategorized Indians as "Colored" (Read: Black) on legal documents. The years that followed brought salvage anthropologists who, in their desire to organize tribal membership by redefining Indian identity, often removed Black-Indians from tribal rosters while keeping Indians with white ancestry. When it came to defining who was and was not Black, the rules of race could be summarized as hypodescent for Blacks and hyperdescent for Indians. Hypodescent means racially classifying a person based on the race of their "inferior" parent within an established caste system; in the case of African Americans, it has been described as "the one drop rule." Hyperdescent it the opposite, as it bases the identity of a person on the race of their "superior" parent. Within the system of white supremacy, African Americans had been considered inferior to Native Americans since at least the 18th century. Thus, racial purity as it was defined by whites and later adopted by Virginia Indians, meant the absence of Blackness. [124][125][126][127]

As a result of the many ways white America had worked to define Indian identity, many communities felt that associating with Blacks was a liability. If an Indian community was in any way "proven" to be Black, they could lose claims to tribal land, tribal governance, and the right to claim Indian identity in general. Rather than challenge the color line, most Indian communities tried to position themselves on the most beneficial side of it, which meant distancing themselves from Blackness as much as possible. The effects of this can still be seen in the procedures Native American tribes go through when they petition to be locally or federally recognized. They are required to submit sometimes thousands of documents listing the tribal histories and genealogies of tribal members. It is not uncommon for tribes to not have all the "proof" required because it simply doesn't exist due to the America's manipulative treatment of the indigenous population. Other times the "proof" is a racist documentation of their existence, as in the case of Plecker's Hit List being used as evidence of Native American identity. Many of these are exemplified in the experience of the Nottoway tribe as they petitioned for state recognition, which was granted in 2010. [128][129][130][131][132][133]

To have state or federal recognition is to gain access to abundant government support. Recognized tribes receive millions of dollars' worth of support in education, infrastructure, economics, and much more. It also gives tribes a better chance at regaining their thousands of sacred artifacts and skeletal remains from museums both in the United States and abroad. The political and financial gains alone have encouraged many Indian communities to tighten their membership rosters, hoping to increase their chances of recognition by meeting the archaic and inherently discriminatory policies of recognition requirements. [134][135][136][137][138][139]

Many Virginia Indian tribes began employing anti-Black segregation rules by the start of the 20th century, using racist procedures like the comb test and the paper bag test. Worshippers who were perceived as having Black ancestry were discriminated against when it came to entering the building, sitting in the audience, and becoming church members; these discriminatory behaviors were practiced as recently as 2004. When it came to education, many Virginia tribes felt frustrated that the only public schools available were reserved for White and "Colored" children, leaving what was seen as "no room" for the Indian community. Though Native Americans could attend the Colored schools, they often refused to for a variety of complex reasons rooted in their relationship to white supremacy. [140][141][142][143][144]

As a result, many Virginia Indian tribes built schoolhouses in their community, hiring their own white or Indian teachers. In the first half of the 20th century, the Indian school of the Eastern Chickahominy was small, serving only a few students each season. The school of the Western Chickahominy, in contrast, had a class of seventy-four in 1948; students were taught by one teacher and an assistant, and desks built for two often housed three students. The Western Chickahominy school was authorized to teach only up to the 7th grade, while the Eastern Chickahominy school stopped at 8th grade. Unless parents agreed to send their children to the Colored school – or if a teacher had personal desire to teach students beyond what was required – Chickahominy students' education ended prior to high school. [145][146]

Other times, tribal members sent their children to finish their education out of state, one of the most desirable schools being Bacone College in Oklahoma. Since many Virginia Indians communities were low-income, paying for tuition abroad was financially challenging; "parents had to sacrifice and students had to work on campus during every spare moment thy had. There was little time to socialize and scarcely enough time to sleep." [147] Even students who attended Bacone on a scholarship often had to find employment on campus, sometimes working labor intensive hours in between class periods. One Eastern Chickahominy student expressed that they were unhappy, exhausted, and homesick during their time at Bacone. They continue, explaining that one year there was not enough money to bring them back to Virginia for Christmas; students who didn't go home for holidays had to stay in the orphanage near campus. [148]

When school segregation was ruled unconstitutional in 1954, Virginia Indians were gradually integrated into the public school system. However, they continued to face educational challenges as white teachers had low expectations of them and white students often harassed them. Despite sharing these adverse experiences with their Black peers, many tribal communities discouraged their Indian students from intermingling with them. This desire to prevent their children from forming friendships with African Americans in the community was just one way that anti-Black tribal norms and policies manifested. Sometimes tribes serviced by a Black doctor openly hoped that they would be replaced by a white physician; other times tribes had official policies discouraging intermarriage with Blacks that weren't amended until the 1980s. In the case of the Western Chickahominy, they drafted their own racial integrity bill that outlined a required blood quantum of at least one-quarter and rendered marriages with Blacks null and void. [149][150][151] Many Virginia Indians who married African Americans were ostracized from their community, "dropped from the genealogies, and some lines are 'forgotten.'" [152]

Both Communities Are Still Healing

When researching why there was tension between the African American and Chickahominy communities, I came across the story of a place in Charles City referred to as "the central ridge," an area the Chickahominy lost to the English in 1646. By the 1820s, the area was inhabited by a Quaker community, some of whom became known as the "Hickory Quakers" after intermixing with the Native American community. The Quaker community migrated away by the end of the 19th century, overlapping with the moving in of African Americans prior to the Civil War. When the Chickahominy community returned to the ridge in 1850, they viewed the African American presence as encroachment on land that was historically theirs. This led to a feeling of solidarity amongst the Chickahominy, motivating them to reorganize the tribe and form strict segregation policies by the early 20th century. Slightly different versions of this story exist, told from the perspective of Blacks, whites, and the Chickahominy, each retelling including or excluding seemingly important details. If the version of the story I managed to cobble together is more truth than fiction, it means that feelings of resentment toward the Black community was the inciting incident that created the modern Chickahominy tribes. [153][154][155]

The thing is, many of the people living on the ridge during the decades of "encroachment" had surnames common in the Chickahominy community, including the African Americans in the neighborhood. This didn't come as a surprise because the racial makeup of Charles City has been a mix of Indian, Black, and European since the 17th century; it's even acknowledged in the county's slogan. Despite this reality, the Chickahominy worked to distance themselves from the African American community, ostracizing Blacks and denying ancestral ties, often directly effecting those whose Black-Indian ancestors were instrumental in early days of modern tribal governance. In response to the exclusion, some of these African American descendants contest the validity of the Chickahominy's Indian identity,

arguing that the Chickahominy didn't define themselves as Indian before 1898, and that the only reason this Indian claim emerged is due to a desire to separate from the Black community. They argue that the Chickahominy instead have Black ancestry, and that this ancestry denies them any claim to Indian identity. It is an example of the African American community acknowledging the reality that Blacks existed in Chickahominy lineages, while also supporting the ideologies behind the one drop rule, using the concept of Blackness as a weapon to deny Indian identity. [156][157][158][159]

Reflecting on all of this, it becomes clear that regardless of whose "side" you are on, the source of the issue is the same: African Americans and the Chickahominy have centuries of history together and every hurtful action and accusation was fueled by racist ideologies established by white colonists. Both communities have long histories of generational trauma rooted in white supremacy and many of their stories echo that. [160][161][162]

Stories of Black-Indians being harassed by council members at the Chickahominy Pow Wow. [163][164]

Stories of Black-Indians being told the tribal dance circle wasn't meant for them in Oklahoma City. [165]

Stories of Black-Indians receiving hateful comments both before and after being crowned Miss Navajo. [166][167][168]

It's all rooted in the same shared suffering.

There have been a number of large-scale efforts to heal and educate the African American and Native American communities, especially in the past 30 years. The symposium series *Red & Black: The Legacy of Native and African Peoples in Charles City County in 1994.* [169][170] The yearly festival Coming Together hosted in Charles City from 1999 to at least 2008. [171][172] The National Conference *Eating Out of the Same Pot* in 2000. [173][174] The panel presentation *Finding Common Ground* in 2018. [175]

These events are important communal steps in the right direction, though the subject matter often creates tense environments where emotions run high. Tones become accusatory and defensive; arguments regarding who is a "real Indian" arise; debates ensue about who wins the vote for most oppressed. Often the African American community wants to confront tribal antiblackness while the Indian community wants to downplay their relationship to it. Sometimes events like these barely receive support from the community at all because coming face to face with historical pain is not something many communities want to do. [176][177] The reality is indeed that "it will take more than a symposium and an annual festival to repair the damage done in the name of racial purity." [178]

"Generalizations about relationships between American Indians and African Americans are difficult to make. Time, place, and circumstance shaped specific interactions, but European imperialism and colonization set the overall parameters."[179]

THE PEOPLE THAT OWNED MY PEOPLE

Introduction

While the stories of the people who owned my people are perhaps the least interesting part about my ancestor's legacies, they are a part of it nonetheless. To skip over the distinct environment in which so many of my forebearers lived through would be neglectful. So, this chapter will briefly outline the specific relationships between my family tree and enslavement.

Braxton

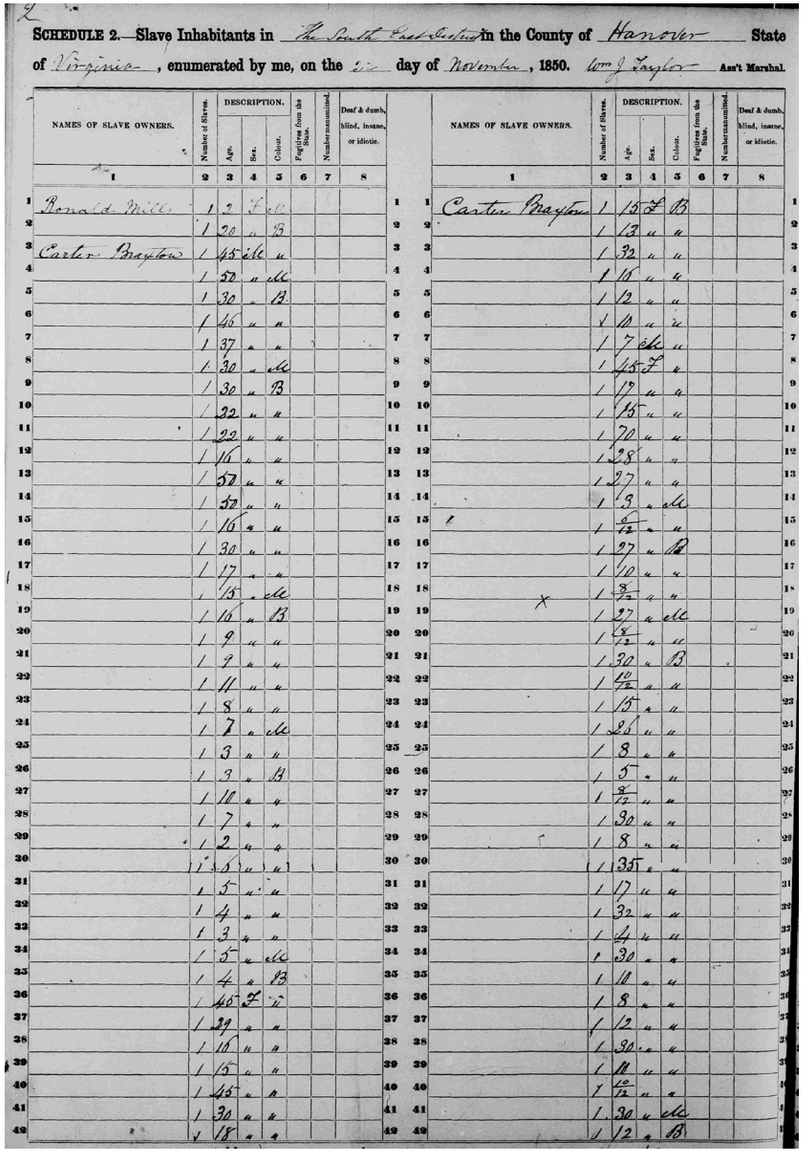
A man named Carter Braxton was born in King and Queen County, Virginia in 1736. Considered a founding father of the United States, he was a member of the Continental Congress in 1776 and signer of the Declaration of Independence. He served as a sheriff, justice of the peace, member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, commissioner of the Pamunkey Indian lands, member of the Virginia Governor's Council for 8 non-consecutive years and held many other prominent state positions until his death. [1][2][3]

Both of Braxton's grandfathers were wealthy landowners in Virginia; his maternal grandfather was Robert "King" Carter, one of the wealthiest men in the thirteen colonies. Like his grandfathers, Braxton acquired large amounts of land and slaves on multiple plantations that primarily cultivated tobacco. After the American Revolution, Braxton owned at least 12,000 acres of land and 165 slaves, even after selling off some of his properties to cover various debts. Before his death in 1797, Braxton sold or gifted all but 42 of his slaves. [4][5][6]

In 1830, one slave living a few miles away from King and Queen County was listed as being owned by an absentee Carter Braxton. [7] This Carter Braxton was likely Charles Carter Braxton, the grandson of the original Carter Braxton. In 1850, Charles Carter Braxton lived in Hanover and owned 94 slaves: 17 Mulattos and 77 Blacks. The youngest enslaved person was a six-month-old girl and the oldest was a 70-year-old woman. [8] Eight of his slaves died the same year he did in 1855; their names were Osborn (age 18), Selea (age 0), Frederick (age 10 months), Suckey (age 54), Allice (age 50), and three unnamed newborns (age 8 days old). Osborn died of "consumption" (tuberculosis), Selea and Frederick died of "teething," Allice died of dropsy, the three newborns died of "fits," and Suckey's cause of death is not listed. [9]

Interestingly, there is an African American named Sukey Braxton (age 36-55) listed as owning one slave in Madison Ward (an area of Richmond) and having a household of two in 1830. It is likely that the slave Sukey owned was a family member and that Sukey herself was the same one documented in the 1855 death record. There are also records of a Suckey Braxton in Hanover who had children with a "Colored" Carter Braxton who died in 1887 in his 70s; he is listed as unmarried, and his parents are listed as Unknown. [10][11][12]

Carter Braxton – the original 18th century slave owner – had a county named after him, a cargo ship named after him, a monument erected in Hollywood Cemetery, and many of his properties are included in the National Register of Historic Places. It is speculated that Carter Braxton is the Founding Father with the most descendants, as he had nearly twenty children live to adulthood that later had children of their own. However, after the Civil War most Virginians with the name Carter Braxton have been African American, presumably descendants of the hundreds of slaves that passed through the Braxtons' plantations or Carter Braxton himself. [13]



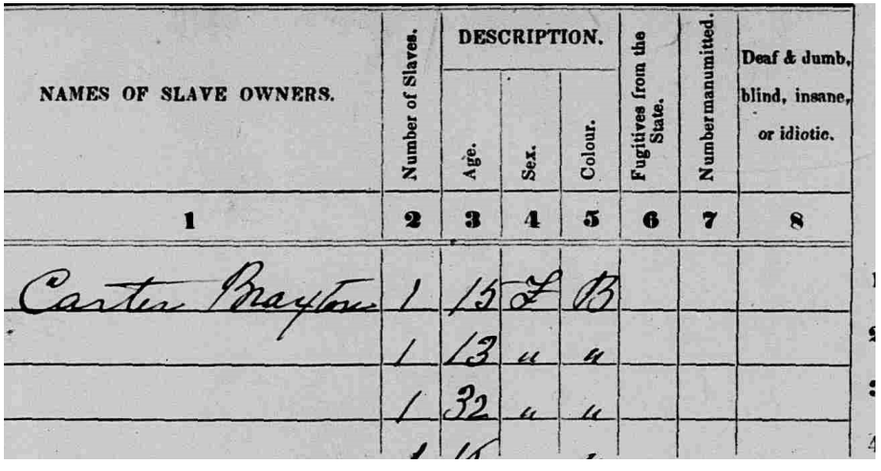
SCHEDULE 2.—Slave Inhabitants in The South East Section in the County of Hanover State of Virginia, enumerated by me, on the 1st day of November, 1850. Wm J Taylor Ass't Marshal.

NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION. Age.	Sex.	Colour.	Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ronald Mill	1	9	F	Ill			
	1	20	"	B			
Carter Braxton	1	45	Fe	"			
	1	50	"	Mc			
	1	30	"	B			
	1	46	"	"			
	1	37	"	"			
	1	30	"	Mc			
	1	30	"	B			
	1	22	"	"			
	1	22	"	"			
	1	16	"	"			
	1	50	"	"			
	1	50	"	"			
	1	16	"	"			
	1	30	"	"			
	1	17	"	"			
	1	15	"	Mc			
	1	16	"	B			
	1	9	"	"			
	1	9	"	"			
	1	11	"	"			
	1	8	"	"			
	1	7	"	Mc			
	1	3	"	"			
	1	3	"	B			
	1	10	"	"			
	1	7	"	"			
	1	2	"	"			
	1	5	"	"			
	1	5	"	"			
	1	4	"	"			
	1	3	"	"			
	1	5	"	Mc			
	1	4	"	B			
	1	46	F	"			
	1	29	"	"			
	1	18	"	"			
	1	15	"	"			
	1	45	"	"			
	1	30	"	"			
	1	18	"	"			

NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION. Age.	Sex.	Colour.	Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Carter Braxton	1	15	F	B			
	1	13	"	"			
	1	32	"	"			
	1	16	"	"			
	1	12	"	"			
	1	10	"	"			
	1	7	Mc	"			
	1	45	F	"			
	1	17	"	"			
	1	15	"	"			
	1	70	"	"			
	1	28	"	"			
	1	27	"	"			
	1	3	"	Mc			
	1	6/12	"	"			
	1	27	"	B			
	1	10	"	"			
	1	8/12	"	"			
	1	27	"	Mc			
	1	8/12	"	"			
	1	30	"	B			
	1	40/12	"	"			
	1	15	"	"			
	1	25	"	"			
	1	8	"	"			
	1	5	"	"			
	1	8/12	"	"			
	1	30	"	"			
	1	8	"	"			
	1	35	"	"			
	1	17	"	"			
	1	32	"	"			
	1	4	"	"			
	1	30	"	"			
	1	10	"	"			
	1	8	"	"			
	1	12	"	"			
	1	30	"	"			
	1	10	"	"			
	1	40/12	"	"			
	1	30	"	Mc			
	1	12	"	B			

Fig. 15

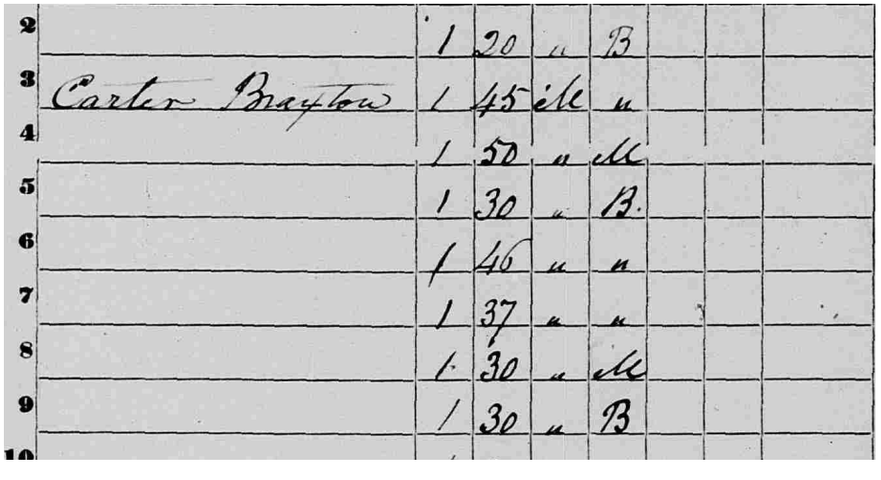
The 1850 Hanover County Slave Schedule that includes Carter Braxton



NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION. Age.	Sex.	Colour.	Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Carter Braxton	1	15	F	B			
	1	13	"	"			
	1	32	"	"			
	1	16					

Fig. 16

The 1850 Hanover County Slave Schedule that includes Carter Braxton (detail)



2		1	20	"	B		
3	Carter Braxton	1	45	Fe	"		
4		1	50	"	Mc		
5		1	30	"	B.		
6		1	46	"	"		
7		1	37	"	"		
8		1	30	"	Mc		
9		1	30	"	B		
10							

Fig. 17

The 1850 Hanover County Slave Schedule that includes Carter Braxton (detail)

Campbell

Perciphull Campbell Sr. was born in Culpeper County, Virginia in 1767 to Scotch-Irish immigrants. When Campbell was less than 10 years old, his family moved to present-day Iredell County, North Carolina, where his father purchased 300 acres of land. Upon his father's death, the land was essentially split in half; the southern half of the land was left to Perciphull's mother, then later passed on to him. Perciphull acted as a justice of the peace and helped formed the town of Williamsburgh, which existed until 1971. Over the decades, Perciphull continued expanding his land, buying roughly 1,400 more acres of land by 1836. On this land, he established living quarters, a smokehouse, mills, a cemetery, and a plantation that grew wheat, rye, oats, and corn. Today, what remains of his property are considered national historic landmarks. [14][15]

Though Perciphull himself did not own any slaves prior to 1800, there is documentation of a man named Collin Campbell owning three slaves in 1790. In 1798, Collin sold an enslaved girl named Cuiel to John Campbell. Perciphull gradually accumulated many slaves; he owned one slave in 1800, four slaves in 1810, one slave in 1820, eighteen slaves in 1830, nineteen slaves in 1840, twenty-four slaves in 1844, and twenty-one slaves in 1850. The oldest enslaved people he owned in 1850 was a 55-year-old Mulatto woman and a 55-year-old Black man; the youngest was a 1-year-old Black boy. By this time, his estate was valued at $5,000 (approximately $191,000 today). [16][17][[18][19][20][21][22][23]

In 1850, Perciphull's sons also owned slaves: Perciphull Jr. owned ten slaves aged ten to forty-five and John R. owned one slave. Perciphull's grandsons are also listed as owning slaves in 1850: One person was owned by Williamson, three people were owned by Leolin, and nine people were owned by Milton. Perciphull's son-in-law, Bartlett Morgan, owned two slaves in 1850 as well. In 1853, sixteen of Perciphull's slaves, most of them children, were hired out for a fee ranging between $10 and $115 (roughly $390 to $4,450 today); many of them were hired out to other people in the Campbell family. When Perciphull died in 1853, he owned at least 35 enslaved people; some of them were sold to locals, but most were purchased by others in the Campbell family. [24][25][26] The following exchanges are listed with their original prices:

Lanson/Lawson ($662), Jincy ($302), and a boy named Stephen ($10) were sold to Wms R. Campbell (possibly Williamson)

Lucky/Sukey ($340) and a boy named Jack ($355) were sold to Bartlett Morgan

Silas ($604) and a girl named Sally ($27) were sold to John R. Campbell

Martha ($525) and Sarah were sold to John P. Parks

Charley ($608) was sold to Joseph James

Enis ($312) sold to Noah Cline

The rest of Perciphull's slaves were inherited by his living children:

Big Issac, Susannah, Marian, and Canah went to Perciphull Jr.

James, Peter, Silvey, and Andrew went to Theophilus M.

Bryant, Frany, Burton, and Rachel went to William R.

Nelson, Betty, Lee and Marandy went to John R.

Miry and Little Isaac went to Frances (Campbell) Dobbins

Huldy, Jane, Eli, Catherine, Emily and Sarah went to Sarah (Campbell) Morgan

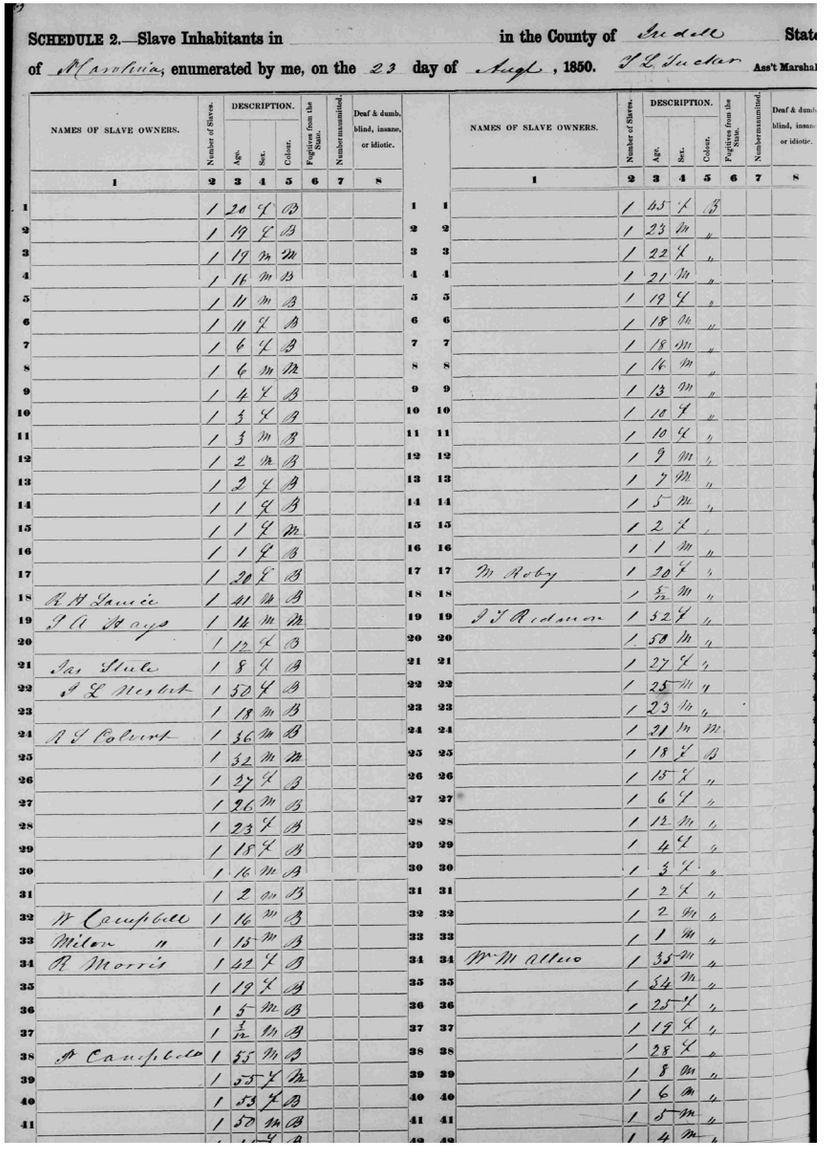
In the 1860 Iredell Slave Schedules, there were at least ten Campbells listed as owning Black and Mulatto slaves, many of them confirmed descendants of Perciphull. Perciphull Jr. owned ten slaves, John R. owned three, Milton owned 11, Leolin owned three, and Williamson owned 6. After the Civil War, many emancipated Blacks stayed in the

Iredell area and continued to be servants for various branches of the Campbell family. [27][28]

Of the enslaved people owned by the Campbell family, I am curious as to whether Big Isaac or Little Isaac are my direct ancestors. These names stuck out to me because my 4th great-grandfather Martin Campbell (born 1837) named one of his sons Isaac, and generational repetition of names was very common among the recently emancipated Black community as it was a way to maintain family connections.

I also found record of an Andie Campbell listed as my 5th great grandfather. This man was the father of Robena Campbell, who married into the Pheiffer family. One of Robena's daughters married into the Holman family; this Holman daughter married the grandson of Martin. In this case, Andie is my 5th great grandfather not because he is Martin's ancestor, but because he is an ancestor of a woman who later married into the Campbell family.

However, there are many records listing enslaved Blacks named Andrew, Andy, Andie, etc. who were bought and sold by people with the surname Campbell in Iredell, making it difficult to tell "who's who" when attempting to connect them to my family tree. Making this more challenging is that the Iredell Campbells documented in the immediate decades following the Civil War are identified as white, Black, or with no race at all, descendants of both the slaveowners and the enslaved. [29][30]



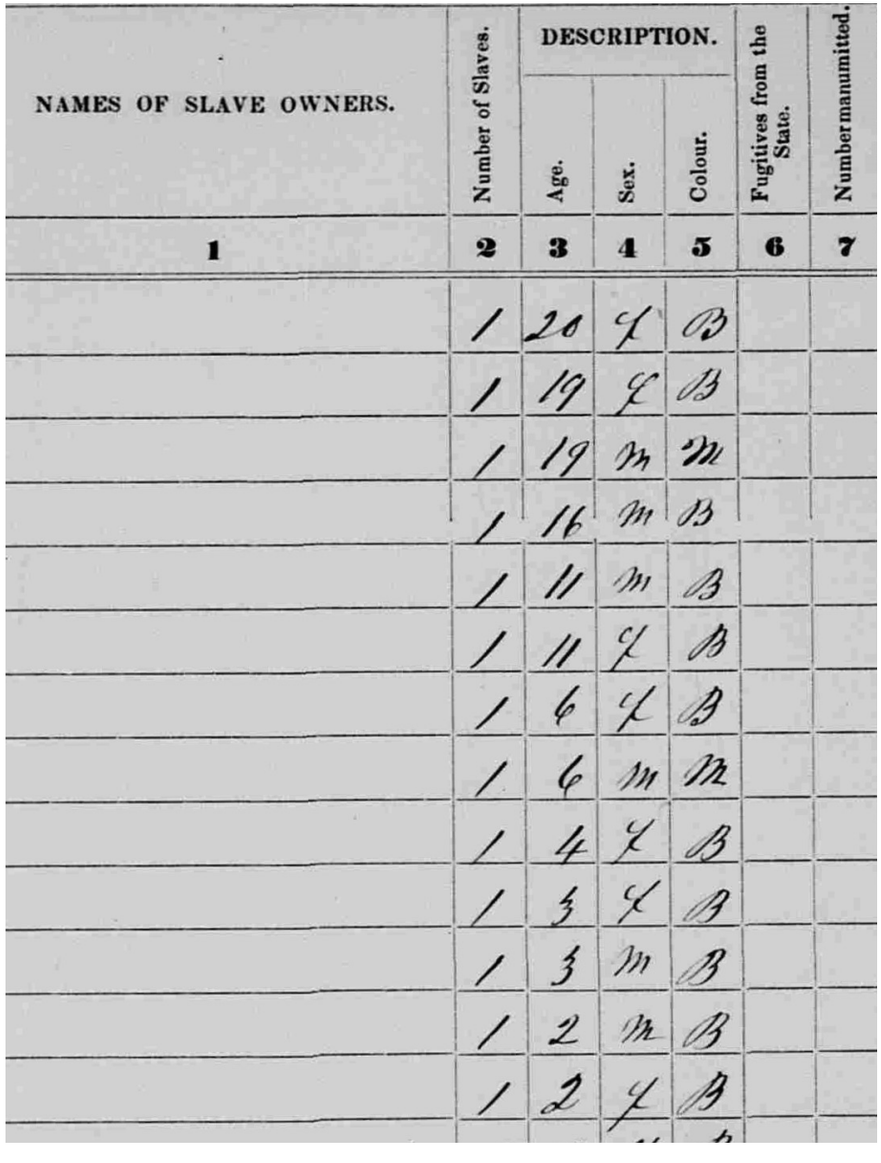
SCHEDULE 2.—Slave Inhabitants in _____ in the County of Iredell State of Massachusetts, enumerated by me, on the 23 day of August, 1850. J. L. Sharpe Ass't Marshal

	NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION. Age.	Sex.	Colour.	Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1		1	20	F	B			
2		1	19	F	B			
3		1	17	M	M			
4		1	14	M	B			
5		1	11	M	B			
6		1	11	F	B			
7		1	6	F	B			
8		1	6	M	M			
9		1	4	F	B			
10		1	3	F	B			
11		1	3	M	B			
12		1	2	M	B			
13		1	2	F	B			
14		1	1	F	B			
15		1	1	F	M			
16		1	1	F	B			
17		1	20	F	B			
18	R. H. Lewis	1	41	M	B			
19	J. A. Hays	1	14	M	M			
20		1	12	F	B			
21	Jas. Hicks	1	8	F	B			
22	J. L. Nesbit	1	50	F	B			
23		1	18	M	B			
24	A. J. Colvert	1	36	M	B			
25		1	32	M	M			
26		1	27	F	B			
27		1	26	M	B			
28		1	23	F	B			
29		1	18	F	B			
30		1	16	M	B			
31		1	2	M	B			
32	W. Campbell	1	16	M	B			
33	Milon "	1	13	M	B			
34	R. Morris	1	42	F	B			
35		1	19	F	B			
36		1	5	M	B			
37		1	3/12	M	B			
38	P. Campbell	1	55	M	B			
39		1	55	F	M			
40		1	55	F	B			
41		1	50	M	B			

	NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION. Age.	Sex.	Colour.	Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1		1	45	F	B			
2		1	25	M	"			
3		1	22	F	"			
4		1	21	M	"			
5		1	19	F	"			
6		1	18	M	"			
7		1	18	M	"			
8		1	16	M	"			
9		1	13	M	"			
10		1	10	F	"			
11		1	10	F	"			
12		1	9	M	"			
13		1	7	M	"			
14		1	5	M	"			
15		1	2	F	"			
16		1	1	M	"			
17	M. Hoby	1	30	F	"			
18		1	5/12	M	"			
19	J. J. Redmon	1	32	F	"			
20		1	50	M	"			
21		1	27	F	"			
22		1	25	M	"			
23		1	23	M	"			
24		1	21	M	M			
25		1	18	F	B			
26		1	15	F	"			
27		1	6	F	"			
28		1	13	M	"			
29		1	4	F	"			
30		1	3	F	"			
31		1	2	F	"			
32		1	2	M	"			
33		1	1	M	"			
34	W. M. Allen	1	35	M	"			
35		1	54	M	"			
36		1	25	F	"			
37		1	19	F	"			
38		1	28	F	"			
39		1	8	M	"			
40		1	6	M	"			
41		1	5	M	"			
42		1	4	M	"			

Fig. 18

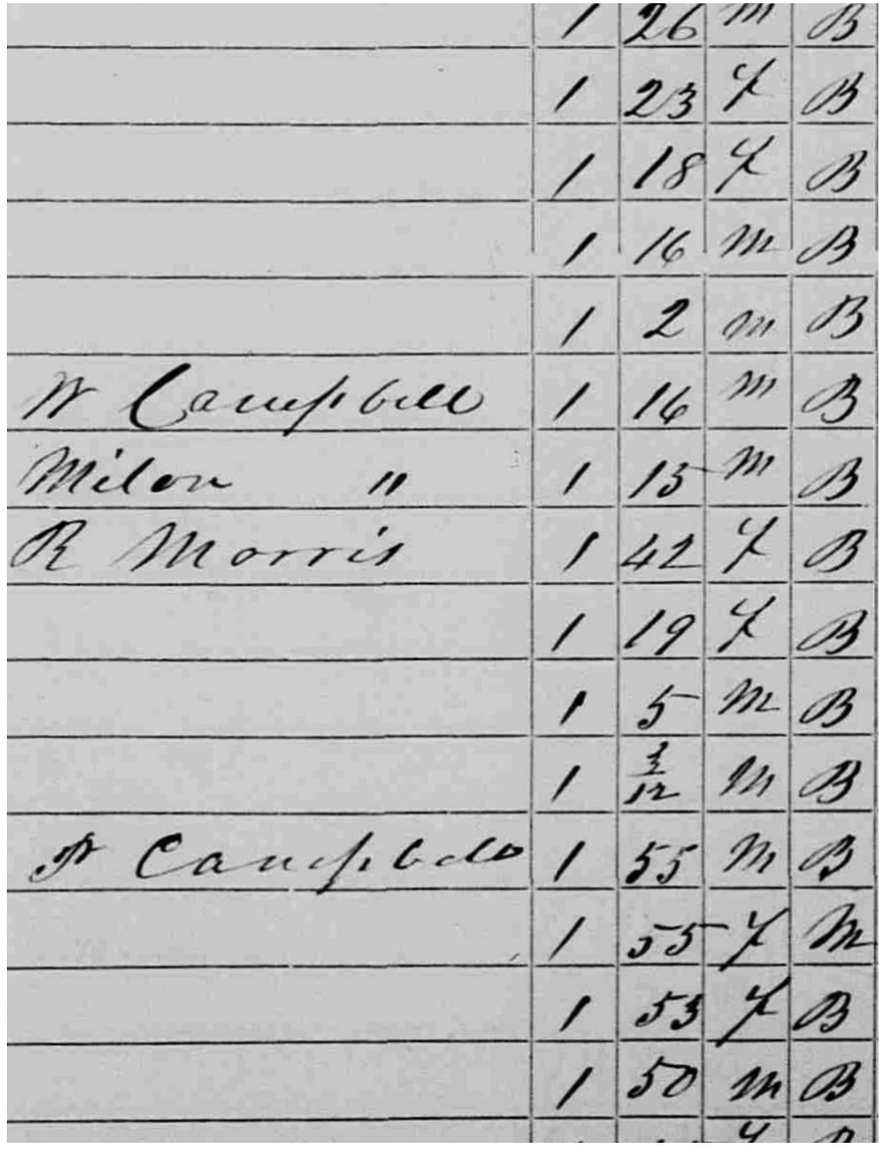
The 1850 Iredell Slave Schedule including W. Campbell and P. Campbell



NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION.			Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.
		Age.	Sex.	Colour.		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	1	20	f	B		
	1	19	f	B		
	1	19	m	M		
	1	16	m	B		
	1	11	m	B		
	1	11	f	B		
	1	6	f	B		
	1	6	m	M		
	1	4	f	B		
	1	3	f	B		
	1	3	m	B		
	1	2	m	B		
	1	2	f	B		

Fig. 19

The 1850 Iredell Slave Schedule including listing some of the enslaved people owned by P. Campbell (detail)



	1	26	m	B
	1	23	f	B
	1	18	f	B
	1	16	m	B
	1	2	m	B
W Campbell	1	16	m	B
Milon "	1	13	m	B
R Morris	1	42	f	B
	1	19	f	B
	1	5	m	B
	1	1/12	m	B
P Campbell	1	55	m	B
	1	55	f	M
	1	53	f	B
	1	50	m	B

Fig. 20

The 1850 Iredell Slave Schedule including listing some of the enslaved people owned by W. Campbell and P. Campbell (detail)

Adkins

The earliest documentation I found was of a 16th century Adkins family that lived in England then moved to Virginia in the mid-17th century. It is possible that they are the originators of the Adkins line, but the first 200 years of their family history is hazy. The earliest record of an Adkins in Charles City specifically was a woman named Mary Adkins, born in 1704. By 1820 there were at least fifteen other Adkinses born in the town. While I can't confirm what race these many Adkinses were documented as, the Adkins family considered the progenitors of the Chickahominy Adkins line were born between 1811 and 1834 and listed as Mulatto, Colored, or Indian on government records. [31][32]

I couldn't find any evidence of an Adkins being enslaved or owning slaves in Charles City or New Kent. In fact, I found evidence of the opposite, as some of the Adkins brothers and their children purchased adjoining land throughout the 19th century, something only free people with monetary savings could do. William Henry Adkins I, one of the brothers, is listed as owning $200 worth of real estate in 1860 (equal to about $7,200 today). [33][34][35] However, there are Adkinses listed as owning slaves in Sussex, Virginia in 1797. There is also a man named Thomas Adkins listed as owning 71 enslaved people in 1830 Jefferson Ward in Richmond. [36][37]

Also, due to the endogamy of the Colored community in Charles City at the time, it is very likely that an Adkins predecessor was enslaved or owned slaves under one of the many recycled surnames in Charles City. [38] This may be the case of Elizabeth "Bettie" Binns (b. 1876), my 3rd great-grandmother who married into the Adkins family. Listed as Mulatto and Indian on various government documents throughout her life, she shares a surname with a historical family in Charles City that owned slaves as early as the 18th century. [39][40][41][42] There is documentation of this family freeing enslaved people, but there is also speculation that some of them impregnated their enslaved women. [43][44] This, among other reasons, may be the reason why as early as the 19th century there were Binnses in Charles City listed as Colored, Mulatto, Indian, and white. It is possible that Bettie's ancestors were enslaved by the Binnses or that she is descended from the slave owning Binnses themselves. It is also possible that both are simultaneously true.

However, while Bettie's paternal (Binns) side may have been enslaved, her mother's side was not enslaved as early as 1850. Bettie's maternal grandmother Matilda Banks (b. 1814) is listed on the 1850 census as a Black woman head of household with three children, then later as a married Mulatto woman with five children 1860. Her husband – Bettie's maternal grandfather – is listed as a farmer with real estate worth $400 (roughly $14,360 today), implying that one side of Bettie's family had been free at least fifteen years prior to federal emancipation. [45][46]

Harris

I found just as much documentation of enslaved Harrises as I found of free Harrises in Richmond, both before and after the Civil War. It is possible that they were free people of color, Black slaveowners, or slaves themselves who adopted the Harris name after emancipation. As a result, it's been difficult to confirm anything about their history beyond the fact that the Harrises in my family tree were consistently documented as Black as early as 1870 with Martha Harris (b. 1845). [47] [48]

However, my 3rd great-grandmother Sallie Paschall, whose daughter married into the Harris family, shares a surname with a 15th century French-English family that migrated to Virginia in the 17th century. I can't confirm if these Paschalls owned slaves, but I did learn that they are the ancestors of the wealthy Braxton family. [49]

The Heartache Knowledge Brought Me

I was surprised to learn how interconnected the white slaveowners of Virginia and the Carolinas were. The Braxtons, the Carters, the Byrds, the Harrisons, the Jeffersons, the Randolphs, the Lees, the Washingtons, the Masons, the Hills, the Lightfoots, and possibly even the Lumpkins intermarried throughout the centuries of enslavement. The branches got so widespread and tangled that it became too much to summarize.

"The Great Families of Virginia."

"The Adam and Eve of Virginia."

They are presidents. Founders. Descendants of 9th century French and English royalty.

Lords, ladies, princesses, kings.

They are generals who fought to keep millions of people enslaved, just in their lifetime.

They are politicians who wrestled for the right to uphold segregation.

They are pioneers of the Indian slave trade.

They are people with journals detailing their daily cruelty toward enslaved people.

They are people who sought and received permission to dismember runaway slaves.

They are people commemorated with statues, biographies, battleships, cities, counties, schools, historical homes, family cemeteries.

They are evidence of money and power and land and status and privilege connected and reinforced generationally.

The process of investigating this created a kind of uncanny chasm in my mind as I tried to fathom what it meant for the enslaved people who served them. This is just one interconnected family in one corner of the country, and yet there were many instances where just *one person* owned hundreds of slaves in their lifetime. Combined, that means these families owned thousands of people in an incomprehensibly short amount of time, and it's because of these people that they were able to "succeed;" the foundation of their success is violently intertwined with the forced labor of thousands of people. And these people aren't just statistics, they aren't just cherrypicked, sanitized examples of hardship printed in a high school textbook. They are human beings. They are my kin.

The hours I spent trying to piece together the stories of the men and women who treated my kin as objects spurred sick feelings in me that I didn't anticipate. A slow, subtle sinking feeling upon realizing that *he* married *her,* that *she* is *his* granddaughter, that the interconnected path of slaveowners never stopped.

Knots in my stomach, tenseness in my chest, anxiety that reactivated my insomnia.

Realizing that the only record of some of my Black and Indian ancestors having ever existed is forever tied to the men and women that saw them as property.

Reading through records of enslaved people that don't even get listed by name, instead documented only with quick checkmarks and dashes.

Male. Female. Black. Mulatto.

Age 10. Age 62. Age 6/12.

Sifting through the death records of enslaved people – dead at 8 days, dead at 90 years old – remembered only by their cause of death, the name of their owner, and "S" for slave.

Seeing enslaved people referred to as "gifts" to granddaughters and grooms.

Seeing enslaved people listed only with their current price at a local auction house.

“Boy 4 feet high...$1300”

“Extra Girls...$1450”

“Extra Men...$1600”

“Appraisement”

“Estate transference”

A life exchanged for four gallons of rum and a piece of calico.

Realizing that the address of auction houses, slave jails, plantations is right down the road.

That’s where I used to catch the bus.

That’s the route I took to work.

That’s right beside the train station.

Googling the name of a plantation and having the first photograph be of a bride’s wedding party.

Learning that I can book a tour of a slaveowner’s property that doesn’t acknowledge the presence of slaves.

Did they lay these bricks?

Did they polish that vase?

Did they watch in horror from the fields?

Did they succumb to violence in the bedroom?

Reading stories of escaped slaves who would rather kill their children than see them returned to bondage.

Wondering if a historical record of a man with my last name is going to be my grandfather or their slaveowner, only to realize both could be true.

Scrolling through the clues on my family tree, praying not to find the name of a male slaveowner, praying that my distant grandmother never had to face that cruelty, then feeling relieved when I don’t see his name.

Okay, we’re safe, I said out loud to no one.

Who was I talking to? Who was talking through me?

I unconsciously hold my breath in anticipation of seeing the name Sarah. Was she here on this list? This one particular death record? Did I find her? *No. She’s not here.*

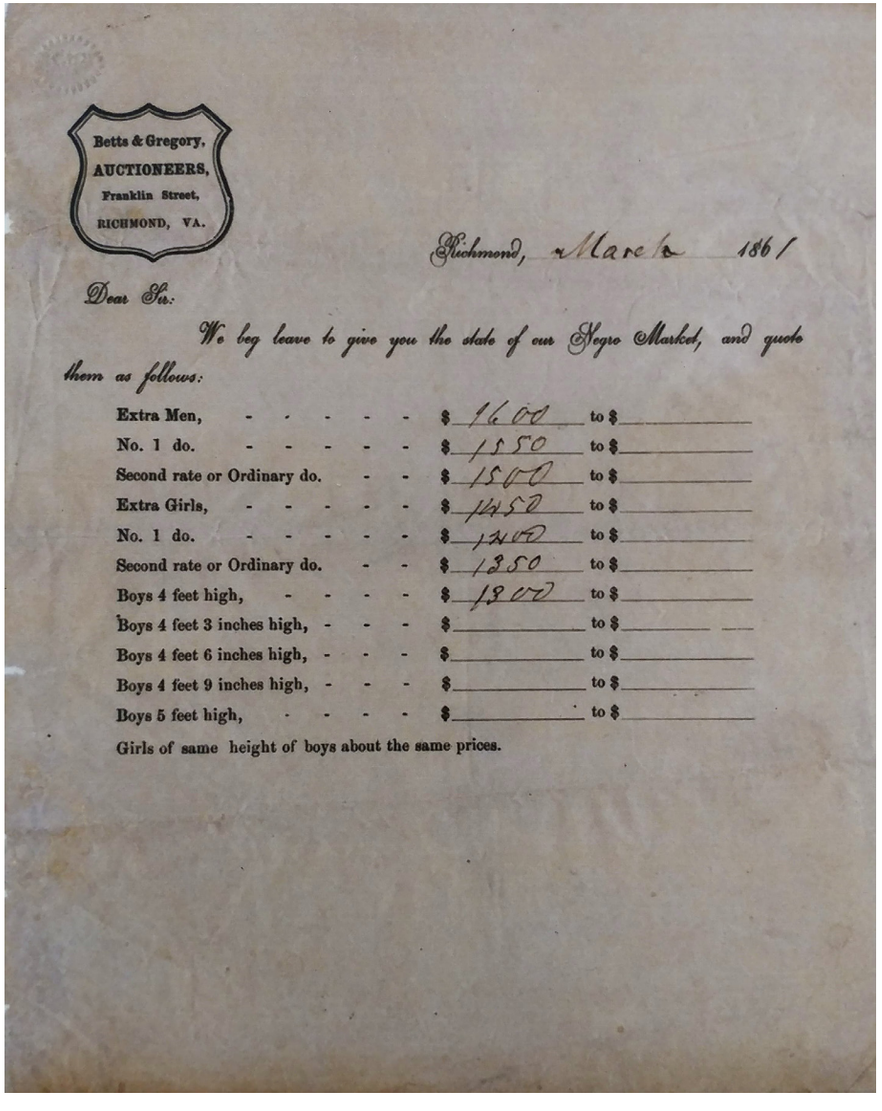
I want to cry.

I am so happy not to see her name on a thoughtless list of others who died in bondage.

I am so hurt not to find her in any records while she lived.

Where are you? Where can I find you? I barely know who you are.

Then to realize that in trying to piece all this together, hundreds of years removed, with the kind of life my ancestors may have only dreamed of...if I feel this much heartache following a paper trail...How did they feel experiencing it?



Betts & Gregory,
AUCTIONEERS,
Franklin Street,
RICHMOND, VA.

Richmond, March 1861

Dear Sir:

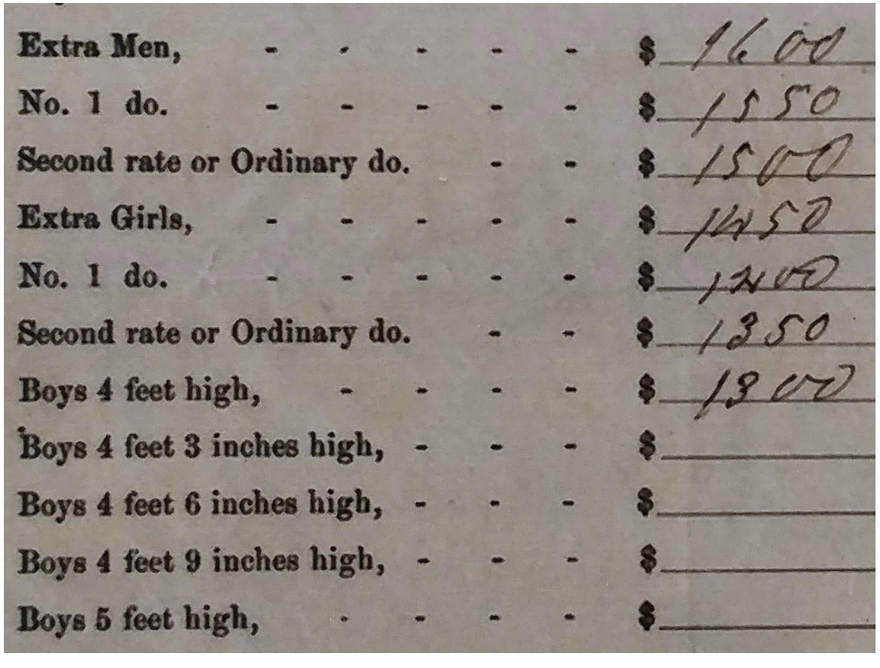
We beg leave to give you the state of our Negro Market, and quote them as follows:

Extra Men,	$ 1600	to $
No. 1 do.	$ 1550	to $
Second rate or Ordinary do.	$ 1500	to $
Extra Girls,	$ 1450	to $
No. 1 do.	$ 1400	to $
Second rate or Ordinary do.	$ 1350	to $
Boys 4 feet high,	$ 1300	to $
Boys 4 feet 3 inches high,	$	to $
Boys 4 feet 6 inches high,	$	to $
Boys 4 feet 9 inches high,	$	to $
Boys 5 feet high,	$	to $

Girls of same height of boys about the same prices.

Fig. 21

1861 advertisement listing enslaved people for sale at Betts & Gregory Auction House in Richmond, Virgnia



Extra Men,	$ 1600
No. 1 do.	$ 1550
Second rate or Ordinary do.	$ 1500
Extra Girls,	$ 1450
No. 1 do.	$ 1400
Second rate or Ordinary do.	$ 1350
Boys 4 feet high,	$ 1300
Boys 4 feet 3 inches high,	$
Boys 4 feet 6 inches high,	$
Boys 4 feet 9 inches high,	$
Boys 5 feet high,	$

Fig. 22

1861 advertisement listing enslaved people for sale at Betts & Gregory Auction House in Richmond, Virgnia (detail)

"What does it mean to be worthy of someone's scar stories...when they unveil the entire labyrinth of their life's terror in your lap...do you give it back...with cluck of teeth and sigh...

...when you see it...bruise or welt, blister or cut...have the courtesy to halt the world from spinning...stop...touch them somewhere...anywhere...and say, oh, my god." [50]

FAMILY STORIES

Introduction

The long story short is that I am descended from West Africans, Virginia Algonquins, and Western Europeans primarily from Great Britain. Curious and nervous about the European connection, I explored the family tree of one of my ancestors as far back as it would go. I eventually came to a clear-cut European connection via the Triplett and Lacy families who, like many prominent white families in early American history, were descended from European nobility. I began to see ornate family crests, people born in historic castles, titles like Lord and Duchess, and then I found myself looking at the profile of Philip III, Duke of Burgundy, known to history as "Philip the Good." Philip was known to have had many children with his mistresses and apparently one of those women was my ancestor. I take this information with an exceptional grain of salt because there isn't any concrete evidence to support the claim that this French duke is my grandfather. But nonetheless, it was fun to keep clicking through Philip's line and stumble upon historical figures like Eleanor of Aquitaine and the warrior queen Boudicca.

But here's the thing: I don't really care.

Or more accurately, I care a lot more about the lives of my ancestors of color who don't have centuries of biographies devoted to them, the people whose stories I stitched together in hopes of seeing them clearly. So, while it is cool to think that I may secretly be next in line to a dissolved 13th century European throne, it doesn't make me feel proud in the way being descended from folks who survived centuries of uniquely American adversities does. This is why I decided to devote a chapter to some of their stories, tales of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins who experienced things both horrible and incredible.

I won't be sharing every single detail of their lives because for every funny story of a second story door with no stairs, there is a painful story of PTSD; a story of war scars, alcoholism, homicides, drug use. Though the "ups and downs" of my ancestors' experiences contributed to the trajectory of their lives and defined their characters, I am not here to profit off their pain. So, if there ever seems to be a "piece missing" in these stories, know that I am not trying to gloss over the "unsavory" parts of their lives; instead, I am doing what I can to respect their memory.

Not every sorrow needs to be retold and relived.

That said, many of my ancestors' stories still include situations that may hurt to read. Throughout this phase of my research process, deciphering the various causes of death was difficult; I felt sad learning of people who died of heart conditions, cancers, fevers, childbirth, "fits," "lunacy," or sometimes just "old age." There were also instances of possible assault, repeated widowing, and an unfortunate number of children who died within the first few years of their life. The documentation of the children who passed hit me the hardest; these babies were the siblings and children of my grandparents who often went unnamed and died of things like whooping cough, malaria, "worms," or unknown causes. While many of these issues were common for everyone during these times, the bitter reality is that they disproportionately affected communities of color. Acknowledging the foundation of that discrimination then and the continuation of it today was – *is* – overwhelming.

With all that said, I have chosen ten stories that detail the lives of my family, two family origin stories, one story of a shared memory, one story that discusses an elephant in the room, and a final story reflecting on the tales of these communities.

John Adkins Sr. (5th great-grandfather)

John was born in 1788 or 1789 in Charles City. He married Mary Elizabeth Bradby (b. 1792), presumably in their late teens or early twenties, then had their first child when John was about twenty-three and Mary was nineteen. In total they had twelve children, nine boys and three girls; most, if not all, lived well into adulthood. Their children Elias (Eli), William, and Daniel were the Adkins brothers who bought adjoining land with their own children in 19th century Charles City.

In 1850, John Sr. was listed on the census as a 62-year-old farmer and his son John Jr., age 18, is listed as a laborer. In 1856, John Sr. is specifically listed as a free person of color working as a shoemaker. Their household, as of 1850, also included a 12-year-old boy possibly named Robert Bradby. Neither John nor Mary Elizabeth knew how to read or write.

I couldn't find much information about Mary Elizabeth other than she was the sixth of nine children. I am unsure how many of them lived to adulthood, but of all the siblings Mary was one of only two girls. Interestingly, there are at least two Mary Elizabeth Bradby's who married Adkins men in Charles City, but they are at least a generation apart if not more.

Mary died in 1854 and John Sr. in 1856. John died of "diarrhea" along with three others between August and September of that year. Three other people in the community died of dysentery, which may have been the root cause of John Sr.'s deaths as well.

[1][2]

Allen Adkins (3rd great-grandfather)

Allen Adkins was the grandson of John Sr. and Mary Elizabeth. He was born 18 March 1859 in Charles City to John Jr. and Mary Jones. Allen was the fourth of seven children, though he may have had more siblings; I found birth records of three more children that may have belonged to Mary and John Jr. Out of them all, only six survived into adulthood.

Allen's mother died when he was four years old. At age eleven, in the 1870 census, most of Allen's family is listed as being unable to read or write; the exceptions are his two younger siblings David (age nine) and Robinette (age seven). In 1880, at age twenty-one, Allen may have worked as a shingle maker. By 1900, he worked as a farmer who owned his own farm and knew how to read and write.

Allen married a few times throughout his life. Presumably in his early twenties, he married Willieann Bradby, sometimes spelled Wilana. Willieann was born either 1858 or 1863, possibly the third of ten children. However, she died in 1882 at either twenty-four or nineteen years old. She is not listed in Allen's 1880 census, so I assume their marriage lasted only two years at most.

Five years after Willieann's death, Allen married Mary B. Jackson on February 24, 1887. He was twenty-seven and Mary was seventeen. In December of that year, Mary B. and Allen had their first child Zorobabel (who later served on the first Eastern Chickahominy tribal council). Two years later, in 1889, they had their second child, a daughter named Clementine. However, Mary B. died on 10 October of that year and Clementine herself only lived to be nine months old, passing on 28 June 1890. Given the timeline, I wonder if Mary died shortly after childbirth and if Clementine sustained complications from it as well. It is also possible that Clementine died due to an unrelated issue; while her cause of death is not listed, there were two other infants who died between June and July of 1890 that also don't have a cause of death listed.

In 1896, Allen married for the last time. He wed Elizabeth "Bettie" Binns; he was thirty-seven and she was twenty-four years old. On 27 November that same year, Bettie gave birth to their first child, Alexander Sr. By 1910, Bettie is documented as having given birth to nine children with only six living. One of the children who passed may have been Virginia L. (b. 1898). I wasn't able to find records of other children Bettie may have lost prior to 1910.

Bettie and Allen continued to lose children at very young ages. In 1916, Bettie may have given birth to twin girls who did not survive beyond the year. On 24 February 1917, Bettie gave birth to twin boys George Edward and Joseph Russel, but they both died days apart in July of that same year. George Edward, who died first, has his death listed as "bowel complaint" with a note that he did not see a doctor. Joseph Russel, who died three days later, had cholera cited as his cause of death; it is likely that this is what killed George as well. Then, in September of that same year, Allen and Bettie lost their six-year-old daughter Carrie Clara to "chills."

Bettie may have given birth to up to seventeen children throughout her life; most of them, if not all, were fathered by Allen. Combined with Allen's children from his previous marriage, Allen could have fathered nearly twenty children in his lifetime. Among all these children, I can only confirm that nine lived into adulthood.

Allen and his brother Henry officially joined the Chickahominy tribe when it reorganized in the early 20th century, though their other four siblings declined. Throughout his life, Allen continued to work as a self-employed farmer in Charles City and for a brief time in New Kent; he owned his farm in Charles City, but the property in New Kent was rented. In the early 20th century, some people in the Charles City Chickahominy community would commute to New Kent, arriving in a Model T Ford on Sunday evenings, working for five and a half days, then driving back to Charles City. This group included "Allan Adkins, John Jones, Oliver Stewart, and John Jefferson;" I wonder if the Allan on this list is my grandfather Allen. [3]

Bettie herself was from New Kent and did not learn how to read or write until sometime between 1910 and 1920. She died in 1921 at the age of forty-nine, though I could not find a cause of death. By 1930, a seventy-two-year-old Allen was living in Charles City with his youngest living son Aubrey (age 16). Still documented as a farmer, it is possible Allen may have no longer owned the farm and instead just owned the home he lived in. Aubrey may not have attended school, but he did know how to read and write. Interestingly, the census lists Allen as not knowing how to read or write, a contrast to what had been established in past fifty years of census records.

Allen died in 1944 at the age of eighty-five of what is sometimes referred to as a "weak heart."

[4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11]

Fig. 23

Allen Adkins in about 1930

Fig. 24

William Henry Adkins II in 1905

William Henry Adkins II (first cousin 5x removed)

William Henry Adkins II was also a grandson of John Sr. and Mary Elizabeth. His parents were William Henry Adkins I and Elizabeth Ann Bradby/Jones (there are different accounts of her family name). His father was one of the Adkins brothers who purchased adjoining land in Charles City in the 19th century, the one who owned $200 worth of real estate in 1860.

William was born on Dec 9, 1850, seemingly the fifth of ten children (though not all of them survived to adulthood). His father died when he was seventeen, though his mother lived to see the birth of some of his children as she did not pass until William was thirty-five. He married Virginia S. Bradby, known as "Ginny," in either 1873 or 1874; he was about twenty-four years old, and she was about twenty.

Their 1910 census states that they had been married for thirty-six years, implying that they married in 1874, but one record suggests that they may have married in October 1873. Their first child was born July 1874, and assuming the baby wasn't premature, they married either immediately before Ginny became pregnant, while Ginny was pregnant, or within a few months after the birth.

William and Ginny had eleven children – five sons and six daughters – though not all lived into adulthood. Their son John E. died in 1881 of "cholera infantum," aged one year and five months. Their daughter Nancy V. died in 1883 of an unknown cause at either four months or 21 days old. In the 1910 census, Ginny listed that only eight of her eleven children were living, meaning that the couple lost another child that I couldn't find a death record for. My best guess is that they lost a daughter named Annie C. (b. 1876) or Josephine (b. 1877), as there is very scarce information on them after their births and early census records.

In 1880 and 1910, William and his family are listed as literate; he works as a farmer who owns his own farm and Ginny 's occupation is "keeping house." Considered intelligent and a good cook, Ginny also baked loaves of fresh white bread that were sold in the local store. In 1920, at sixty-nine years old, William is documented as a carpenter in addition to a farmer. He had served as the first chief of the modern Chickahominy tribe from 1901-1918, having been informally elected along with other tribal officers in their effort to reorganize the tribe. After experiencing a stroke, William died in June 1921 at the age of seventy.

[12][13][14]

Spotswell Adkins (4th great-granduncle)

Spotswell was another grandchild of John Sr. and Mary Elizabeth. His mother was Mary A. Bradby and his father was Elias Adkins, one of the brothers who purchased adjoining land in Charles City in the 19th century. Spotswell was the sixth of nine children, though I can only confirm that four of them – including Spotswell – survived to adulthood.

At twenty, Spotswell's father died; at twenty-three, his mother died. Two years later, he married Mary Elizabeth Charity when he was twenty-five and she was eighteen. Mary Elizabeth, more often referred to as Mary Eliza, was the daughter of Walter Charity and Elizabeth Bradby, and the eighth of nine siblings.

Spotswell and Mary Eliza may have married while she was pregnant with a daughter Lerna F., who was born 16 February 1873. If not, then Spotswell and Mary Eliza married later that year after the baby was born. The couple had a child nearly every year until 1905, though not all of them lived to adulthood. In 1900, Eliza is documented as having given birth to fourteen children with nine of them living. By 1910, two more of her children had died. Between census records, birth records, and death certificates, I counted sixteen children that Eliza may have given birth to or possibly adopted. Seven of them lived to adulthood, four died as children, and the remaining five have undetermined fates. The children that passed in 1883 include Henry (age 3) on November 2, Mary S. (age 6) on November 4, and Christopher (age 8) on 8 November; they all died from measles. In 1890, Spotswell and Mary Eliza also lost an unnamed 37-day-old son to an unlisted cause of death.

Henry, Mary S., and Christopher died about a month and a half after a William Henry's daughter Nancy V.

The unnamed son died only six days before Allen's daughter Clementine in 1890.

Spotswell worked most of his life as a self-employed farmer or laborer while Mary Eliza's occupation was "keeping house." By the 1900s he owned his own farm in Charles City, though prior to this – in September 1872 – he filed a claim for reimbursement of property lost during the Civil War. James E. Adkins, his brother, and William Henry Adkins II, his cousin, served as witnesses to his claim.

In 1880, neither Spotswell nor Eliza could read or write, but by 1900 they could. However, the 1920 census from Charles City lists information that I think is completely inaccurate as it states that neither of them was literate, that both were unemployed, that they had a twelve year age difference, and that they were born in New York.

Throughout his life, Spotswell was identified as Mulatto, Colored, Black, Indian, Pamunkey Indian, and Chickahominy Indian, joining the tribe upon its reorganization. Spotswood's daughter Ida Mae married Burl Charity, a Black man, her mother's cousin, and a man twenty-four years her senior (he was forty-two and Ida was eighteen when they married). Spotswell was apparently unsupportive of his daughter's marriage to an African American and refused to give Ida and her children assistance after Burl died ten years into their marriage. Ida later married Levi Bradby, who identified as Indian, and had two sons with him, possibly twins. When Levi left her, Spotswell continued to deny Ida support. By this time, Ida was in her early thirties and had at least six (out of eight) living children. As a result of this, Ida relocated to Richmond and lived the remainder of her life amongst the African American community.

Spotswell's other children also married people who were not a part of the tribe; most, if not all, married men and women who were identified as Black, Negro, Colored, and sometimes Mulatto. The majority of them moved out of Charles City and were not buried in the tribal cemetery. Spotswell's wife Mary Eliza, who was identified as Mulatto, was also buried outside the tribal cemetery despite her husband and possibly her young children being buried there; I assume that Mary Eliza died after Spotswell. Spotswell died in 1922 at age

seventy-four years from kidney failure caused by some kind of cardiac failure. Family members speculate that Mary Eliza may have been turned out of the tribe once Spotswell, the "real" Indian, was dead. From what I could glean of death records, Spotswell is the only one of his immediate family members identified as Indian on his death certificate.

[15][16][17][18][19][20][21][22][23][24][25]

The Bradby Story

The Bradby lineage of eastern Virginia primarily exists in the Chickahominy and Pamunkey communities. There are a few different stories detailing how the surname entered the Indian community, though the one most widely disseminated refers to an Englishman named Bradby who came to the Virginia colony in 1720 in search of religious freedom. He raised a family in Virginia and had a son named James. As an adult, James decided that he no longer wanted to live with the colonists due to conflict in religious beliefs and chose to make his home amongst the Chickahominy. He later married a woman in the community.

The catch is, this story is at minimum a retelling of a retelling of a retelling. It was also documented in the context of a church pamphlet, creating a story that leans heavily into religious themes and language. Elements of the story are also at odds with what others in the Chickahominy community recount as the Bradby origin story.

With all this in mind, I decided to research the Bradby lineage as far back as I could find and compare it to people on my family tree. I found a surprising amount of evidence that helped me make educative guesses on family connections as far back as the 17th century. Though not much of it aligned with the Bradby tale I had been presented with, it was all still very interesting.

Let's start at the very, very beginning.

Jane Gibson the Elder – my 9th great-grandmother – was an Indian/Mulatto woman born around 1640, presumably in Virginia. It is possible that she and her family were among the Weyanoke Indians who were brought to English towns by Indian trader Benjamin Harrison II between the 1660s and 1680s. It would explain Jane's residence at the Shirley Plantation, a plantation in Charles City owned by John Carter (son of Robert "King" Carter). John had recently married Elizabeth Hill, thus inheriting Shirley Plantation from the Hill family. On the plantation, Jane the Elder was of free status and

worked as a physician. Jane had at least two children: George and Jane Gibson the Younger. Jane the Younger (born about 1665) also worked at the Shirley Plantation as a physician and a midwife. She eventually married a man named Morris Evans and together they had at least five children. One of these children was Elizabeth Evans (born around 1710).

Elizabeth Evans married a man named Richard Bradby. Richard Bradby was the son of Joseph and Elizabeth Bradbury, who may have come from England. By 1738, he lived in Charles City with his wife Elizabeth and a woman named Mary Evans, possibly Elizabeth's sister. Benjamin Harrison IV – ancestor of both President Harrisons, husband of Ann Carter (daughter of King Carter), and owner of Berkley Plantation in Charles City – informed the court that Richard, Elizabeth, and Mary were not "bringing up their children in an honest way of living as well as in ye fear of God." Apparently, Elizabeth's father Morris owed a debt to the Harrison family and Benjamin Harrison IV was responsible for collecting the debt, so to speak. As a result, the court ordered the three parents to explain why their children were not "bound out;" the term "bound out" referred to the practice of sending children to work as apprentices for other employers.

The main mansions of the Berkley Plantation and Shirley Plantation were about five miles apart, roughly one hour away from each other by stagecoach. The entirety of their property extended far beyond the mansions, though, making them wealthy neighbors with families interconnected by marriage. I bring this up because despite Jane the Elder being a free woman whose status should have been passed down to her descendants, some of her grandchildren were illegally held in slavery for generations. Some were enslaved by the wealthy Lightfoot family, whom they originally served as indentured servants only to become illegally enslaved when the patriarch died. They were then sold to different slave owners, possibly serving on the Shirley and Berkley plantations. Note that the Lightfoots were known for enslaving the local Indian population and by the 19th century there were many people of color in Charles City documented with the Lightfoot surname, implying that they were slaves who adopted it after the Civil War and/or that they were descended from the white slave owning Lightfoot family.

The illegally enslaved descendants filed freedom suits in the late 18th century and early 19th century, though I am unsure of the outcome. Most of the information about Jane's life and that of her descendants come from testimonies shared during these trials. Another thing to note is that two of Richard and Elizabeth's grandchildren were documented as living on the Pamunkey reservation during this time. By 1818, they had married Pamunkey women but the leaders of the reservation complained, referring to them as two "free colored" Bradby men. Having that Jane the Elder was identified as Indian, it is interesting that her great-grandchildren would not have been referred to as Indian as well. Given what we know about racial identification and policy of the era, I wonder if these great-grandchildren had Black admixture or if they were labeled "colored" simply because they were from outside the Pamunkey community.

These "colored" Bradbies are likely the grandchildren of Richard and Elizabeth, though I did not find record of them and can't confirm who their parents were. The only children I suspect belonged to Richard and Elizabeth are James Bradby (born around 1746) and Edward Bradby (born 1748), but Richard and Elizabeth likely had more that are unaccounted more. James may have been the inspiration for the original Bradby tale, making him about forty-seven years old and a native Virginian with Indian lineage as opposed to an immigrated Englishman.

James' brother Edward – full name Edward Henry Bell – was my 6th great-grandfather. He married Susanna Adkins and eventually had a daughter in 1792. That daughter was Mary Elizabeth Bradby, the one who married John Adkins Sr. and became the progenitor of many families in the Chickahominy community, including mine.

[26][27][28][29][30][31]

The Cumbo Story

Do you remember Allen Adkins? His parents were John Jr. (b. 24 February 1832) and Mary Jones (b. 1833). Mary's mother was Elizabeth "Betsy" Cumbo. That name – *Cumbo* – stuck out to me; it sounded so distinctly West African amongst surname after surname of Western European origin. I decided to see what I could find on the name, thinking it would be a quick search, that maybe I would learn a cool fun fact and carry on with whatever I was doing before. Instead, I found an incredible history that stretched back centuries.

It began with Emanuel Cumbo Sr. (born around 1600) and Joan (born around 1610), the woman who would later become the mother of his child. Both were from the Kingdom of Ndongo and arrived in Virginia between 1619 and 1628. They were enslaved by neighbors Richard Kemp and William Davis in Archer's Hope Creek, a town roughly one hour away from Jamestown by stagecoach. Emmanuel and Joan were acquired by the rule of headright, the system that granted purchasers acres of land per each laborer they imported. Importing Emanuel, among others, allowed Kemp to secure 840 acres of land; importing Joan and others allowed Davis to secure 1,200 acres. Whereas the headright system had been implemented in 1618 to help the colony grow, it quickly became misused by colonists to acquire "free" land and exploit laborers.

By 1640, Emanuel Sr. was in the service of William Pierce, a politician, plantation owner, previous father-in-law of John Rolfe, leader of attacks against the Powhatans during war, witness of a treaty signed with the Chickahominy, one of three men sent to meet the ship that brought the first Africans to the colony, and one of the earliest white slaveowners in Virginia. Emanuel attempted to escape bondage in July 1640 with six white servants, but they were caught sailing downriver. I don't know what happened to the servants who were caught, but Emanuel was whipped, branded, then returned to bondage where he remained until the end of his life.

Prior to his escape attempt, Emanuel Sr. and Joan had a son – Emanuel Jr. – born around 1634. The couple petitioned the Virginia legislature for Emanuel Jr.'s freedom, which was granted under the form of a twenty-one-year indentured servant contract that began when he was ten. By 1665, he was in service of Thomas Bushrod, Kemp's brother, and William Smith; they were the last people he would work for as an indentured servant. In 1667, two years after the end of Emanuel Jr.'s contract, he acquired fifty acres of land from Kemp and Davis. The land was originally meant to be claimed by his parents in 1638 and 1639, but they never claimed it, presumably because their position as laborers evolved into lifetime bondage, not contracted indentured servitude.

Interestingly, the declaration of Emanuel Jr.'s status as an indentured servant describes him as Mulatto despite both his parents being of described as Negro on earlier documents. It is possible that it may all be based in the contemporary relationship between birthplace, skin tone, and the English language; a situation of "all Africans are Negro" regardless of skin tone while simultaneously defining people of color with fairer complexions as Mulatto. Emanuel Jr. may have inherited a fairer skin tone from one or both of his parents; they themselves may have been of mixed Portuguese ancestry.

Emanuel Jr. married a woman with the surname Goins (also spelled Geaween). She is assumed to be the daughter of John Goins and Margaret Cornish, Africans from Ndongo who were also forcibly brought to Virginia. John worked for a man named William Evans and eventually earned his freedom; he may have been an indentured servant. John may have also been the son of Dago Gonwelão, an Angolan king who apparently died in present-day Bayern, Germany. Dago could have been of mixed Portuguese and Angolan ancestry; his parents were presumably Gomez Conwelao and Nsaku Lau.

Margaret was presumably the daughter of a woman who was born in Angola then died in Louisiana, likely enslaved. Margaret was either a servant or a slave who worked for Robert Sheppard, a neighbor of

William Evans. With her partner John she had Mihil/Michael (born around 1635), possibly a son named Philip (born around 1650), and presumably a daughter. In 1641 John petitioned the Virginia legislature for the freedom and custody of Mihil due to Margaret's ongoing "sex scandal." At the time, Margaret was either pregnant with or had recently given birth to a child fathered by Robert Swett, another (white) neighbor of Robert Sheppard who served in the Virginia House of Burgesses. In 1640, Robert and Margaret had been convicted of "fornication;" Swett was sentenced "public penance", and Margaret was whipped at the whipping post. Robert went on to father at least two more sons with Margaret around 1642 and 1645. He may have also fathered a daughter named Jane who was put up for adoption.

Margaret attained freedom in her later years and remained on property owned by Sheppard while her sons Mihil and Philip labored as indentured servants for various local families. Mihil served until 1657 and by 1668 he owned thirty or forty acres of land. Philip had his indenture illegally extended and wasn't freed until 1675; by 1704 he owned fifty acres of land. I am unsure about the life and status of the daughter Margaret and John had and wonder why they are identified as her parents. Looking at the estimated dates for all of Margaret's children, it appears that they were fathered by both John and Robert over the course of fifteen years, making it possible that this unnamed Goins daughter could have actually been fathered by Swett. She may have even been the Jane that was given up for adoption.

Whatever the situation, Emanuel Cumbo Jr. married a woman with the surname Goins and together they had a son, Richard Cumbo. Richard was born around 1667 and lived in James City County, New Kent County, then finally Charles City, owning land in the latter two. He married Ann Driggers, a descendant of Emmanuel Driggers (also known as Manuell Rodriges), another Angolan who was brought to the United States. He served as a slave or indentured servant for Francis Pott, eventually gaining freedom for himself and some of his children.

Richard and Ann had at least eight children together. Of these children, I assume one of them is my grandparent, likely a grandfather born around 1700. This grandparent had a child, likely a son born around 1725, and that son had another son born around 1750. The ancestor born around 1750 could be a man named Turner Cumbo, who lived in New Kent. This grandparent – be it Turner Cumbo or someone else – had a son named Anderson Cumbo, born 1773. Anderson married Mary "Polly" Powell, who is descended from a long line of well documented African Americans and white Englanders, notably the Powells, Taylors, Laceys, and Tripletts. Anderson and Polly were the parents of at least nine children born between 1803 and 1827. The eldest of these siblings was Elizabeth "Betsy" Cumbo.

There are many Cumbos descended from the original couple stolen from Angola, most of them with roots in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee. Some were enslaved, some earned their freedom, and some were born free. Some were of mixed European or Native American ancestry. Some fought in the Revolutionary War, some were Robin Hood-like bandits, and others are rare examples of Black women prospering in a period built to limit their success. These people are my aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Reading their stories, even if I can't put all the pieces together, was an incredible experience. The reality that I am descended from these people is nothing less than amazing.

[32][33][34][35][36][37][38][39][40][41][42][43][44][45][46][47][48][49][50][51][52][53][54][55]

Content warning

The next story discusses the possibility of predatory behavior towards children

Marie Pryor (3rd great-grandmother)

Marie Pryor was born in Hanover, Virginia to Anderson Pryor and Charlotte Louis. Anderson worked as a farmer most of his life and neither he nor Charlotte could read or write. Anderson was born between 1854 and 1859, though Charlotte's birth dates vary drastically listed as 1852, 1862, and 1868 on different documents. The age of Charlotte is important because it gives context to the nature of her and Anderson's relationship, as they were apparently married in 1881. At the time of marriage, Anderson was in his mid-to-late twenties and Charlotte could have been roughly twenty-nine, nineteen, or thirteen. I desperately want to believe that Charlotte was not a child bride – especially because if she was, it may suggest the start or continuation of a pattern of predatory behavior – but I simply can't confirm anything based on the information I have available.

In 1900, Charlotte is listed as having given birth to two children and that they were both still alive. The elder of these children was Blanche, who was likely born in 1884. The younger child was Marie, most likely born in December 1888, though one record suggests she was born in February 1889, only a two-month difference. The child born in February 1889 had her name transcribed as "Maxine," but looking at the original document, it is possible the name actually reads "Marie" written in quick cursive. However, the understanding of Marie's birth date became complicated and possibly insidious when I found the transcription of her marriage record.

I was unable to view the original document, but the transcription of Marie's 1904 marriage record states that she and her husband were born in 1885 and 1882 respectively, making her nineteen years old and him twenty-two years old. However, the 1910 census lists Marie as twenty-one, her husband as twenty-six, and confirms that they had been married six years. I think that this census record lists their correct ages because it reflects previous documentation. If Marie was twenty-one in 1910, it means she was born around 1888/89, and if her husband was twenty-six, it means he was born around 1884/85.

So then why is Marie's marriage record the only document suggesting she was up to four years older than her actual age?

I think that either the transcription of Marie's age is wrong or that the original document intentionally reflected Marie as older than she really was. I think that Marie was actually fourteen or fifteen years old when she was married to a man in his early twenties. This guess is also supported the testimonies from my family, who claimed that Marie was a young teenager when she got married. It is also possible that her husband was born in 1874, making him in his early thirties when he married a teenaged Marie. However, there is only one document that lists this as his age and it may not be accurate, as it also suggests Marie was born in 1894.

Complicating the nature of the situation more is that fact that Marie gave birth to a daughter – also named Marie – in November or December of 1904. Since Marie and her husband were married in March 1904, it is possible that she was already pregnant or that she became pregnant shortly after. Interestingly, this child was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and was a little under five months old when she died. Her cause of death was marasmus, a severe form of malnutrition likely caused by her mother's inability to produce enough breast milk due to food scarcity. Apparently, Marie and her husband moved all the way from Hanover to Philadelphia within just a few months of their wedding, then returned to Hanover sometime after the death of their daughter.

Marie's husband was a man named George Braxton, the son of Sarah Braxton (b. 1860) and George Causby. His mother Sarah is listed as having given birth to nine children, but by 1910 only seven were living. She is also listed as a widow, which leads to many questions pertaining to her relationship with George and the fact at least three of their children were given her maiden name.

I was told by family that Marie and George had seventeen children and I was able to find evidence of at least fourteen in government records. Of these fourteen, there was another daughter, Eliza, who died in infancy, living only for a day after being born five months premature in 1919. Another son named James stopped appearing on records after 1906, around the age of four. Looking at the timeline, Marie had all her children roughly between the ages of fifteen and forty; she gave birth to her last child only a month before her daughter gave birth to her first child.

Marie's early entry into motherhood may have affected her access to education. While she is listed as knowing how to read and write in 1900 (when she was about eleven years old), in 1910 neither she nor her husband George are documented as literate. By 1910, Marie was the mother of six living children and George was a laborer at a sawmill. By 1920, however, Marie is once again listed as literate, though George, now a farmer, still did not know how to read or write.

Marie lost her father in 1921, her mother and husband in 1927, and her sister in 1935. By 1940, Marie had moved from Hanover to Richmond with at least four of her children and was living with her sister-in-law Susie. Not long after, Marie moved in with some of her other children and grandchildren. Not much more is known about Marie during this period in her life, save that she had her own bedroom in Richmond and used to sit by the window. She became known as "Big Grandma" and passed away in either 1953 or 1955.

[56][57][58][59][60][61][62][63][64]

Fig. 25

Marie Pryor in the 1940s

Sarah Braxton (2nd great-grandmother)

Sarah was born in 1909, the sixth child born to Marie Pryor and George Braxton. Her father died when she was seventeen, though her mother lived to see the birth of all three of Sarah's children.

Her children were fathered by a man named Charles Henry Rustin, who was two years her senior, married, and the father of his wife's children as well. Sarah had one daughter and two sons between the ages of nineteen and twenty-two. Throughout her life she lived in Hanover and Richmond, and though a census states she knew how to read and write, one of her grandchildren assured that she didn't. She may have attended some school, but I can't confirm how far her education went.

Sarah was described as a "very proud and wise" woman who demanded respect and loved her grandchildren. She invited her daughter and grandchildren to live with her after their parents separated. Stories describe her as caring, protective, and not afraid of a fight if need be. She was often seen in her rocking chair and enjoyed drinking tea with Carnation milk, a habit that her daughter and granddaughter adopted. She also had a great sense of style and was very religious, enjoying church and gospel music.

My grandmother told me a story about how she and her brother used to bring their wagons to their uncle's lumberyard and pick up farm birds during the holidays. Sarah would receive poultry like chickens, turkeys, and ducks to kill, feather, then cook fresh. Sarah cooked everything from scratch and didn't measure the ingredients. She relied on a wood burning cook stove and an ice box, which was like a cupboard kept cool with a block of ice delivered by horse and buggy. In the winter, she would put food outside to keep it cold.

Sarah was described as a fantastic cook. Fried chicken, baked chicken, smothered pork chops, greens, chocolate cake, sweet potato pie, rice putting, and Jell-O were some of the dishes Sarah made that stuck in her grandchildren's memories. I was told that her daughter – my great-grandmother – made delicious potato salad and I wonder if she learned it from Sarah.

From what I've been told, Sarah and her daughter were the primary reason that the people who shared memories of her were well taken care of as children. They always had clothes for school, gifts for Christmas, cakes for birthdays, and never really realized they were poor. Sarah was described as the glue that held the family together.

[65][66][67][68][69]

Fig. 26

Sarah Braxton in the 1950s

Fig. 27

Martin Evans Campbell Jr. in the 1920s or 1930s

Martin Evans Campbell Jr. (4th great-grandfather)

There are three men named Martin Evans Campbell in my family tree. To keep them all organized during the research process, I gave them nicknames. This man was dubbed "Christmas Martin" in honor of his birthday: 25 December 1837.

One document lists his parents as a woman named Mary and a man named Evan Campbell. Given that Martin is a junior, I assume that Evan's full name was also Martin Evans Campbell. Martin – "Christmas Martin" – was born into slavery in Iredell, North Carolina. He escaped bondage sometime before the end of the Civil War; the story is that he simply "refused to be a slave." At some point during his escape plan, Martin was kicked in the eye by a donkey and lost vision in his left eye. He also apparently married someone when he was twenty-one, around 1858, but I couldn't find records that offered more detail.

Record of Martin disappears from paper trails and family narrative until 1872 when he married Ellen Phifer in Iredell. The only evidence of Ellen's life is the marriage record, and I assume she died within a few years of the marriage. Six years later, in 1878, Martin married Martha Henderson while she was pregnant with presumably their first child; he was forty and she was thirty-two. As of 1870, Martha had a two-year-old daughter and worked as a servant for William and Ann McNeely in Iredell. Martha's mother was named Gilly and her father is listed as Mashack Abed-Nego Archy. I couldn't find any information on Martha's parents beyond their names, and I wonder if her father's name is of West African origin; the spelling reminds me of an attempt to sound out a foreign name using English conventions. Interestingly, there is one record that lists Martha as "Martha Archa," presumably inheriting the surname of her father.

Martha was married once before being married to Martin, though this person is unnamed and presumably died before 1878. Throughout her life, Martha gave birth to nine children, but as of 1900 only seven were alive and by 1910 only six were alive. The children who passed may have been fathered by Martin, her first husband, or another partner; one of these children may have been her two-year-old daughter, but it is equally as possible that her daughter lived into adulthood and resided in a different household. Of Martha's six surviving children, I could confirm the identities of six boys who lived well into adulthood.

Neither Martin nor Martha knew how to read or write in 1900, though their two children Dock and Robert Oates did. Martha died in April 1917 at the age of seventy-one, and in December of that year Martin married a woman named Margaret Manerva (Howard) Redfern. On their marriage record, Martin's birth year is listed as 1852, which would have made him 65, closer to his wife's estimated age. However, there is more evidence to suggest Martin was actually a few months away from turning 80.

Manerva, as she was called, had been married to a farmer named Shod Redfern. Shod's family had migrated from North Carolina to South Carolina, where his father worked as a blacksmith, was literate, and in 1870 had a combined estate worth $700 (about $15,900 today). This same year, Shod married Epsey Crodeton in North Carolina, but later married Manerva in 1875. By 1880, Shod was officially living in North Carolina, though he died sometime before 1900. By 1910, Manerva is listed as having given birth to fourteen children, though only nine were living. Of these nine, I can confirm that six lived into adulthood. One of Manerva's children, Janie, had married Martin's son Robert Oates in February 1917. This meant that when Martin married Manerva, he married the mother of his daughter-in-law.

Martin and Manerva did not have children together and she passed either in 1924. By 1930, Martin was living with his son Robert Oates and his family. By 1940, Martin was living with his son Dock, who worked as a cook in a private hospital in Iredell. The census lists Martin's age as 96, but he was most likely 103. Martin died four years later, in September 1944, almost 107 years old.

[70][71][72}[73][74][75][76]

Martin Evans Campbell Sr. (2nd great-grandfather)

Named after his grandfather and sometimes referred to as Martin Jr., I nicknamed this grandfather of mine "Bowtie Martin" in honor of how dapper he looks in every photo I've seen of him, especially a portrait done of him at age twenty. Martin also had his own nickname – "Pepper" – given to him after he gained a reputation for being "peppery" in arguments during his youth.

He was the son of Robert Oates, a farmer who did "odd jobs," and Janie Redfern, a "washer woman." Martin had at least two brothers – Charlie and James – and one half-sister named Grace. Grace was the daughter Bertha Redfern, Janie's younger sister, and Robert Oates. Bertha and Oates (as he was called) supposedly married, but I couldn't find record of the union and the timeline doesn't leave much room for the marriage to have existed. Oates married Janie around 1901 when he was seventeen and she was sixteen. Between 1903 and 1908, they had three sons: Charlie, Martin, and James. In 1912, Bertha gave birth to his daughter Grace while he was still married to Janie. Oates also may have fathered a pair of twins with Bertha in 1913 but they lived less than 24 hours; one of these twins was likely the same child listed in a death certificate that identifies his death as a stillbirth.

There is evidence to suggest that the parentage of Oates and Bertha's children was meant to be kept hidden. The record of the twins lists Bertha as the mother but leaves the name of the father blank. The same can be said in the death certificate of Bertha's stillborn son, though Oates is listed as the informant. There is also the case Oates' 1930 census, which lists a seventeen-year-old Grace as "Grace Phifer," the married name of her mother Bertha (who married Joseph Phifer in 1914). Grace is also listed as Oates' granddaughter, which would have been impossible as his children were only between the ages of four and nine at the time of her birth. Bertha died suddenly in 1928 when Grace was fifteen, but later in life she and Oates were definitively identified as Grace's parents. This means Grace was simultaneously Martin's half-sister and his cousin.

Martin, his brothers, and his father knew how to read and write as early as 1920, though his mother Janie did not. When Martin finished grade school, which probably stopped around 7th grade, he continued his education at the Negro Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, now known as North Carolina A&T, a historically Black university. Founded in 1891, it was North Carolina's first university for people of color, though by the time of Martin's attendance the university had banned the admission of women (a ban that lasted 1901 to 1928).

I am unsure what kind of education Martin received in that he could have received a standard high school education, a university education, or a mix of both. The 1921-22 school bulletin lists professors who taught subjects including biology, carpentry, photography, military science, shoemaking, chemistry, and physics. Some of the classes for degree-seeking students included botany, statistics, bacteriology, poultry and dairying, foreign languages, mechanical drawing, and sociology. In a 1961 interview, Martin said his expenses were $16 per week. If he was referring to the cost in 1961 dollars, it would be $160 per week today; if he was referring to the original 1920s cost, it would cost about $240 per week today. Martin earned some of his income in school by doing clothes alternations for fellow students.

When he returned from school, Martin and his brothers worked together at the Campbell Brothers Cleaning Company, the first cleaning business in the area to make use of the new Hoffman press. In 1930, Martin was living with his father, mother, brother (James), grandfather ("Christmas Martin"), and wife whom he had married a few months early. Martin married Alma Rebecca Holman when he was twenty-five and she was seventeen. Alma received a high school education at Mary Potter Academy, an boarding school for African Americans founded in 1889. Alma was likely pregnant when she married Martin because seven months later, they had their first child. The following year, in 1930, Alma graduated from school.

The whole family lived in a house worth $1,500 (about $26,770 today) and Martin worked as a utility presser at a “pressing club” around the onset of the Great Depression. It was around this time that he relocated to Richmond and got a job at a clothing store where he worked for three weeks before quitting. He next moved to New York, got a job, and again worked for three weeks before resigning. Afterwards then went back to Iredell for three months, then moved back to Richmond where he settled down. He picked up his previous job at the clothing store where he pressed sleeves and jackets for tailored suits. He became a supervisor in 1948, a position he kept until at least 1964; he was one of the only Black supervisors for the company, if not the only one. Coincidentally, my Adkins great-grandmother and Harris great-grandfather worked under him. Martin eventually retired and passed away in 1993 at the age of 89.

[77][78][79][80][81][82][83][84][85]

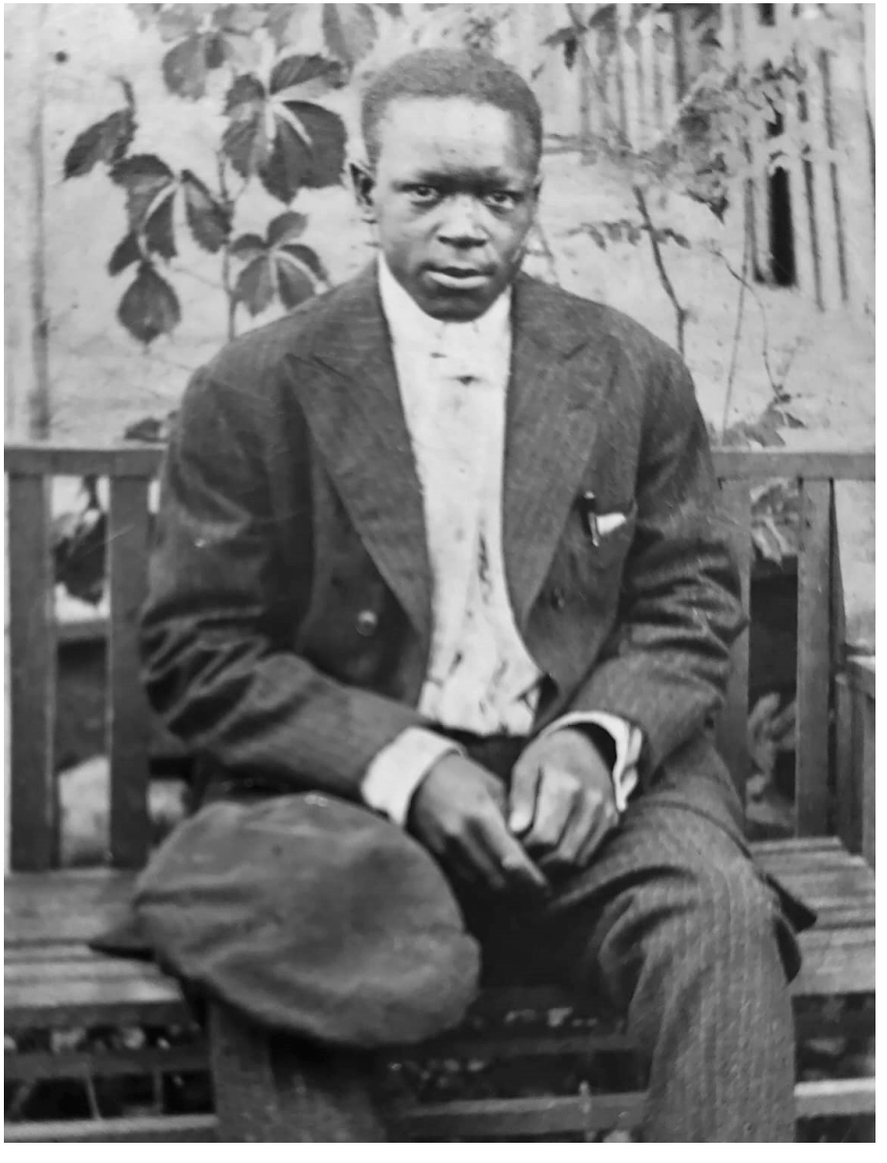


Fig. 28

Martin Evans Campbell Sr. at age 15 in 1919 or 1920

The Story of the Martin Paintings

I couldn't have been more than nine years old when my grandmother brought these paintings home. She sat them at the base of the staircase and I looked at them, feeling more confused than curious. *Who are these men? Why is his eye grey? Why is the frame so weird? Why do they look so weird?*

I was told that that they were paintings of my great-grandfather's father and my great-grandfather's father's grandfather.

Okay...

The only thing that really stuck with me after that moment was a belief that the man in the bowtie looked boring and the man with the beard looked scary. Fifteen years later, I learned that as a child my grandmother thought the bearded man looked scary too. Though instead of leaning against the base of the staircase, the painting hung at the top of the stairs in her grandmother's house. When the lights turned off, our grandfather stayed looking at her with his glass eye.

I also learned that the paintings weren't actually paintings; they were photographs. Created sometime in the mid-1920s, these images are likely photo-crayotypes, photographs that were hand-colored using crayons, pencils, watercolors, or oil paint applied with brushes, fingers, cotton swabs, or air brushes. The goal of photo-crayotypes was to heighten realism or add artistic effect.

The moment I connected my research of these men to the fact that I was looking at photographs of them, even stylized ones, was mind blowing. Because these men, over one hundred years removed from me, had quietly walked into my childhood living room one evening and had a seat.

Fig. 29

Martin Evans Campbell Jr. in the 1920s or 1930s

Fig. 30

Photographs of Martin Evans Campbell Sr. in about 1924

James Eddie Harris Sr. (3rd great-grandfather)

James was born in 1870 to parents named Martha and William; Harris could have been Martha's maiden name or their family name. By July 1870, an infant James lived alone with the twenty-five-year-old Martha in Jefferson Ward in Richmond where her job was "keeping house." I couldn't find any record of Martha before or after this period, and the only record of William his name listed on James' marriage record.

In 1895, James married Lillie Ann Farrer. Their ages are listed anywhere between one and ten years apart on various documents, but most suggest James was in his mid-twenties and Lillie was in her early twenties when they got married. On Lillie's birth record, her mother Mary lists her and her twin sister (also named Mary) as "illegitimate." Their father is not named on any visible documents except Lillie's marriage record, which lists him as Andrew Farrer. Lillie's twin sister ceases to appear on documents after her birth.

Lillie and James got married when she was about five months pregnant with their first child (assuming the baby wasn't born prematurely). The couple had six children between 1895 and 1910, five boys and one girl. However, in 1912 their second youngest son – Clarence Bernard – died at the age of seven from "acute parenchymatous nephritis," essentially kidney failure that likely followed an infection triggered by the bacterial family that causes strep throat.

James' family lived in Jackson Ward and Madison Ward in Richmond between 1900 and 1940. By 1940, Lillie and James lived with their youngest son Earnest in the household of their second-eldest son Lynwood Sr. James works as a truck driver, and in the decades prior he had worked as a laborer, a railroad brakeman, a teamster (a motortruck driver who typically transports animals), and eventually became a deacon. Both he and Lillie knew how to read and write as early as 1900.

Lillie died in 1948 from complications partially caused by her anemia. I am unsure when James died, but a few some resources suggest it was between 1950 and 1965.

[86][87][88]

Lynwood Burnell Harris Sr. (2nd great-grandfather)

Born in 1898, Lynwood was the second of six children born to James Eddie Harris Sr. and Lillie Ann Farrer. In 1920, Lynwood worked as a hotel porter, someone who does various jobs around the hotel like welcoming guests, carrying luggage, and arranging taxis. In 1927, Lynwood married Rosa Belle Plummer five days before her 23rd birthday and while she was about eight months pregnant with their first child. Rosa has been married once before to a man named Junius Mosley when she was twenty and he was forty-one. They were married for only six months before Junius died suddenly from "effects of injection of sulpharsphenamdine drug," a drug derived from vegetables that is used to treat some cancers.

Rosa was the daughter of John Plummer and Sallie Paschall who were likely married around 1890 in North Carolina, where the family was from. By 1910, the couple lived in Marshall Ward in Richmond with their eight children (seven girls and one boy) and John worked at a fertilizer mill. The family was listed as Mulatto and everyone knew how to read and write save for the youngest children. By 1920, John worked at a lumber mill and the family was renting a house in Jefferson Ward.

Rosa and Lynwood had two sons five years apart. By 1940, Lynwood worked as a barber, presumably at his establishment Lyn's Barber Shop. He also owned Rosalyn's Beauty Salon, where Rosa worked as a beautician. A month of wages for Lynwood was about $600 (about $12,700) and for Rosa it was $500 (about $10,600 today). By 1947, Lynwood also owned and operated the Harris Corner Hotel, one of two hotels in Richmond that catered to people of color. His youngest son, who is listed as a hotel worker in 1961, likely worked at Harris Corner. Lynwood operated the hotel for twenty-five years before retiring and it was listed in *The Negro Motorist Green Book* from 1947 to 1967.

Lynwood died in 1979 at the age of eighty. This came a year after the death of his son Lynwood Jr., two years after the death of his wife Rosa, and eighteen years after the death of his youngest son.

[89][90][91][92][93][94]

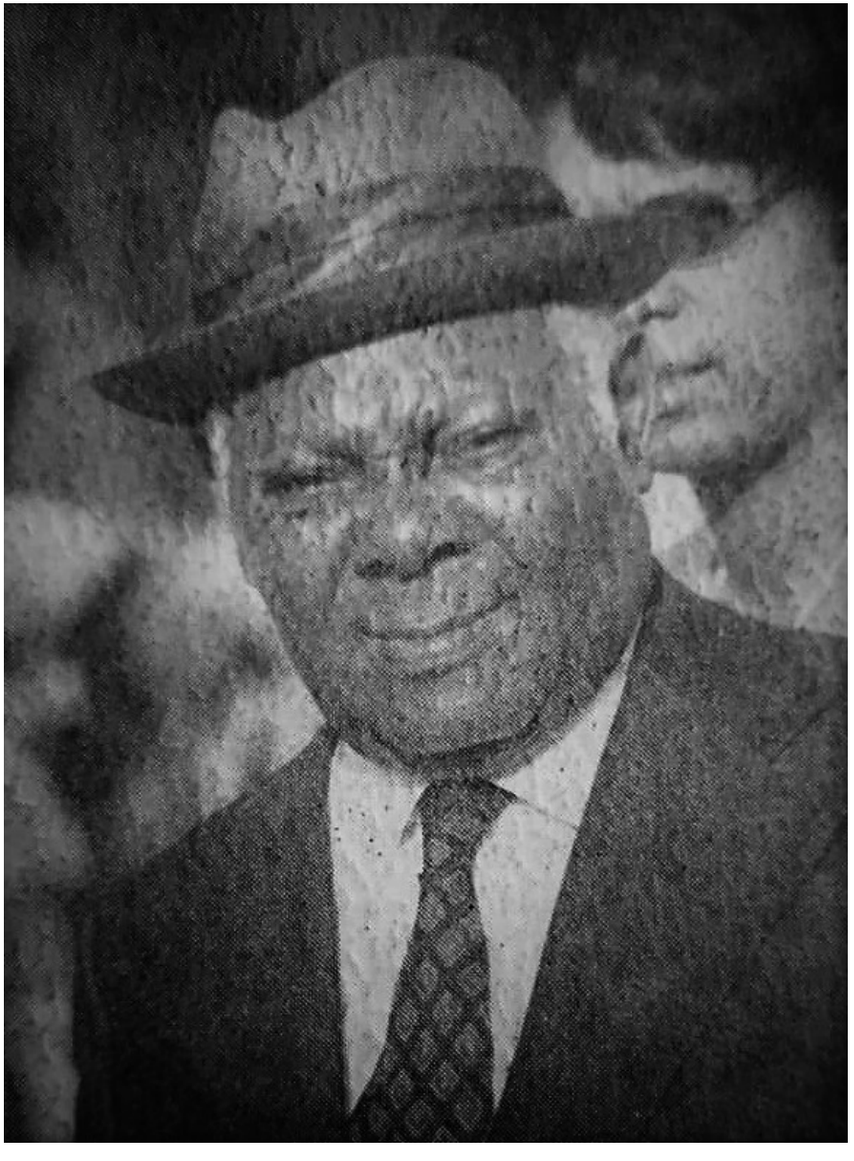


Fig. 31

Lynwood Burnell Harris Sr. in about the 1950s

"There is a high probability that if you are from Charles City, we're probably related."[95]

Cousins Marrying Cousins

As I dove deeper into my family tree, I began to notice a few overlapping branches, especially on my Adkins side. I knew that the Chickahominy communities of Charles City and New Kent were endogamous, but my understanding of the term was a little different than what I was seeing in my tree. I understood endogamy as the practice of people choosing to marry others of the same religion or ethnic background, or as something that naturally happened in communities due to segregation or simply because a community was small. Multiple sources explained that endogamy was common amongst Virginia Indians into the early 20th century, and when discussing the Chickahominy specifically, it was noted that sometimes a pair of brothers would marry a pair of sisters. While sibling pairings may not be as common today, the practice didn't seem too odd coming from a small, rural community of color at the turn of the century. [96][97][98]

There came a point, however, when elements of my family tree began to confuse me. How could he and his wife both be my second cousin? How is her maiden name the same as her married name? How did this person show up in my tree twice?

Assuming I had incorrectly input the information, I went back to review the discrepancies only to realize that they weren't discrepancies at all.

The story of the power-couple who founded the Eastern Chickahominy? They are both my first cousins 5x removed because *they* were first cousins with a twelve-year age difference.

The second chief of the Western Chickahominy, my second cousin 4x removed? His parents were first cousins because *their* grandparents were John Adkins Sr. and Mary Elizabeth Bradby.

My third great-grandfather Allen Adkins? His first cousin married the daughter of their other first cousin. From that union came a son who married Allen's daughter.

This union also produced *another* son that married one of Allen's daughters. This daughter essentially started a family with her third cousin; one of their children was my great-grandmother.

The most unexpected thing I learned was that an Adkins woman married into the Braxton side of my family. A son of Marie Pryor married a great-great granddaughter of John Adkins Sr. and Mary Elizabeth Bradby. In short, her son is my uncle, and his wife is my cousin.

There is also the case of the Campbells who overlap every so often with the Pheiffer, Holman, and Redfern families. "Christmas Martin" married Ellen Pheiffer, though they seemingly didn't have any kids together. His son Oates had children with two Redfern sisters; one of those children was "Bowtie Martin." "Bowtie Martin" married Alma Holman, whose mother was Flossie Belle Pheiffer. Flossie's parents were William Gilmore Pheiffer and Robena Campbell. Robena's father was Andie Campbell.

Following this line, the Campbells come from the Holmans, the Holmans come from the Pheiffers, and the Pheiffers come from the Campbells. A rough estimate suggests that "Christmas Martin" and Andie Campbell are in the same generation. They could have been brothers, cousins, or not related by blood at all; both Andie and Martin could have been strangers who adopted the Campbell surname after emancipation because they may have both had ties to the Campbell plantation.

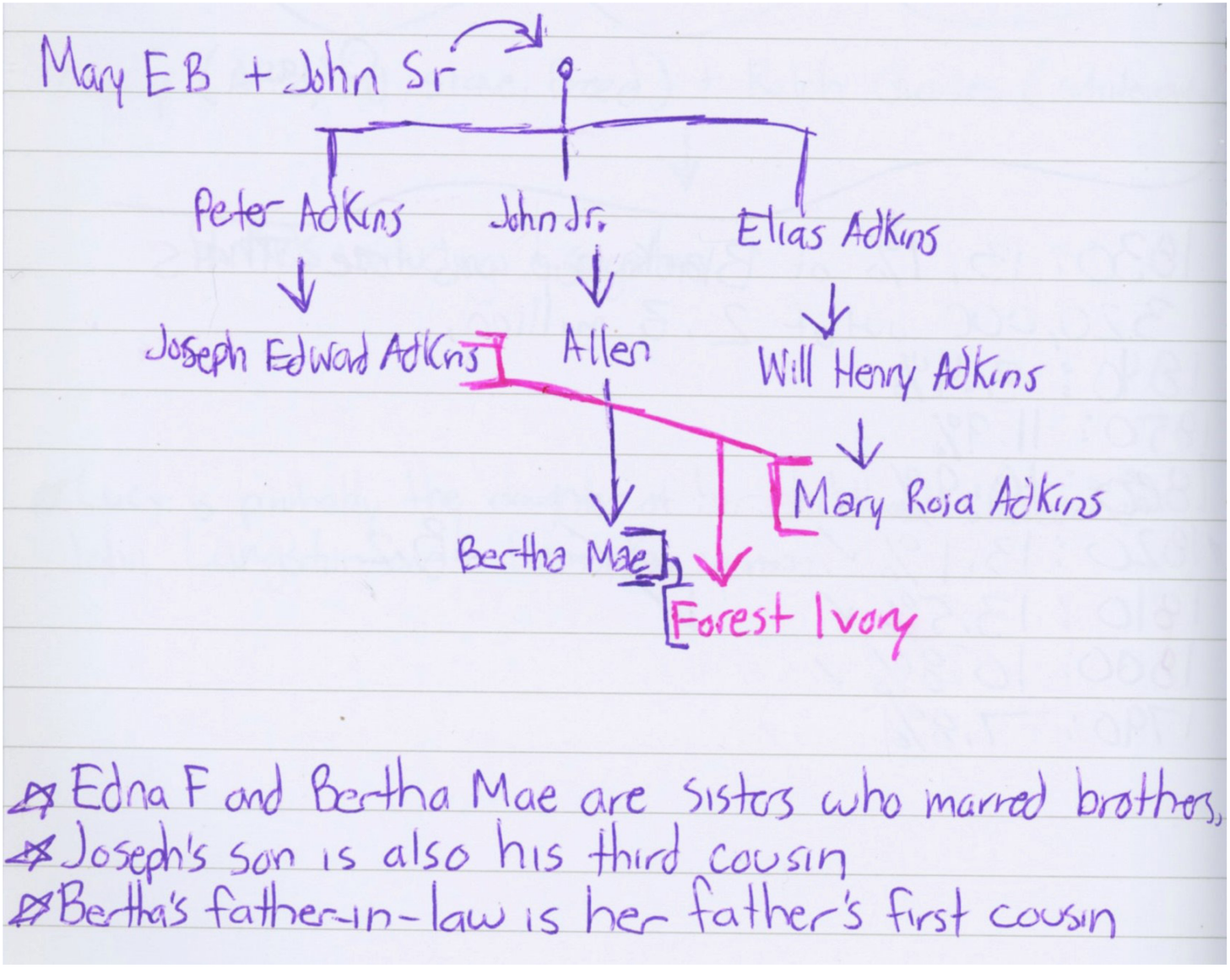


Fig. 32

My notes as I tried to figure out the overlaps in my family tree

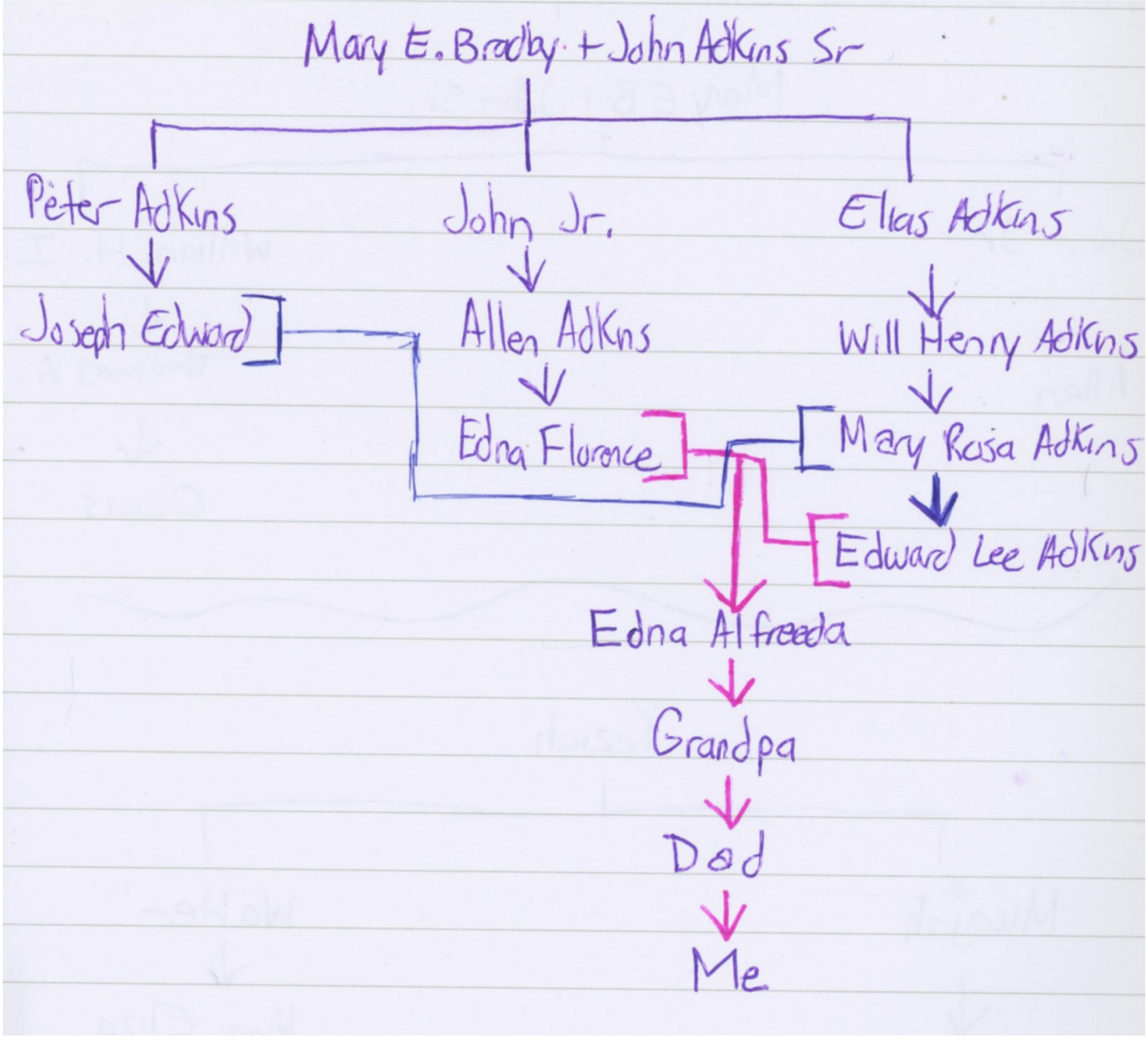


Fig. 33

My notes determining my great-grandmother's lineage

"...fabricating fiction is the best antidote to repressive regimes that aim to shut down talk and impose silence. The complicated distortions of fiction are paradoxically a way of getting at straight-up doses of reality." [99]

The Tales of a Community

The idea for this project was originally focused on the folktales of my West African, African American, and Virginia Indian ancestors, but as I learned these stories of myth and magic, I was introduced to the circumstances that created them. Research into folktales gradually transitioned into research about American history, racist legislature, enslavement, colorism, and segregation. I began to understand just how intertwined these fictional stories were with the lived experiences of the communities that created them. These were stories they used to entertain each other, pass the time, teach lessons, get inspired, and cope with reality. Then I realized that I, hundreds of years removed, was engaging with these stories in a similar way. Reading these works of fiction sandwiched between histories of genocide and death and violence are what kept me afloat throughout this research process. The stories of witches and tricksters and magic words restored my energies so that I could continue learning hard truths about what my communities endured.

Finding these stories was challenging, not only due to historical issues of erasure, but also because many of the traditional stories from these communities existed as oral tradition. As a result, some of the earliest written versions of these tales don't come from the communities themselves; instead, they were often documented and disseminated by white men and big corporations that both preserved and corrupted the stories through whitewashing. These authors misrepresented the cultures in ways that were both subtly and overtly damaging, often disregarding the values of these communities and removing the "rough" elements that taught lessons to people living under the thumb of oppression. [100][101]

Understandably, the experience of watching an oppressor misrepresent both their fictional stories and their real-life experiences led many of these communities to keep the stories to themselves.

"I don't trust you enough to tell my stories to you because I fear how they will be used, but if I do not tell my stories to someone or write them myself, they will be lost forever – not only to the world, but to my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren." [102]

And yet, many of these stories – fiction and nonfiction alike – survived as they were meant to. They survived despite colonization, chattel slavery, loss of language, segregation, respectability politics, and *so much more*. The survival of these stories is a testament to the perseverance of the Black and Indian communities, representing the many layers of their triumphs and struggles.

VISUAL OUTCOMES

Introduction

I wanted to capture my ancestors' interwoven stories of fact and fiction through a visual language that allowed the audience to experience the stories as well. Creating an interactive project became the goal, but I had to figure out how to develop something that was informed by my ancestors' stories, informed by the original *Stitched Heritage* collection, and not limited by a singular means of presentation.

A painting isn't interactive enough.

A sculpture may become too abstract.

A film may become too fixed.

A book has a beginning and an end.

These stories are diverse, these stories are infinite.

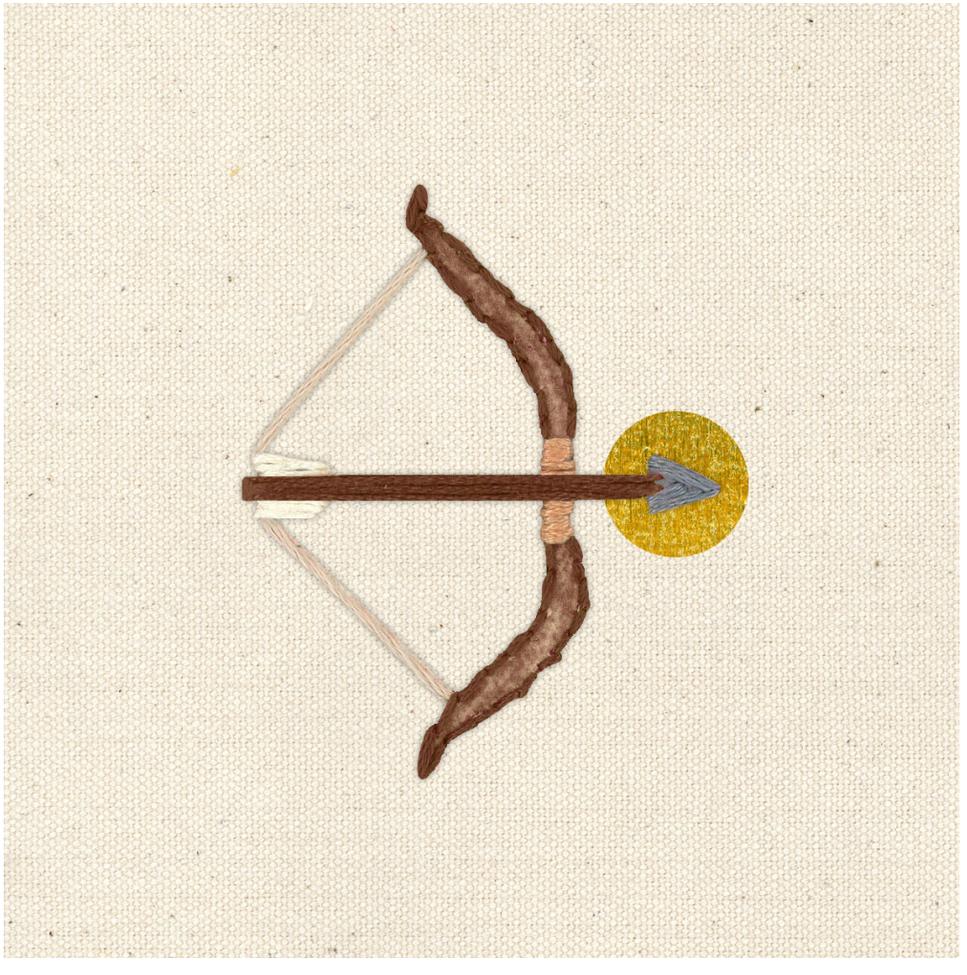
How does anyone capture infinity in art?

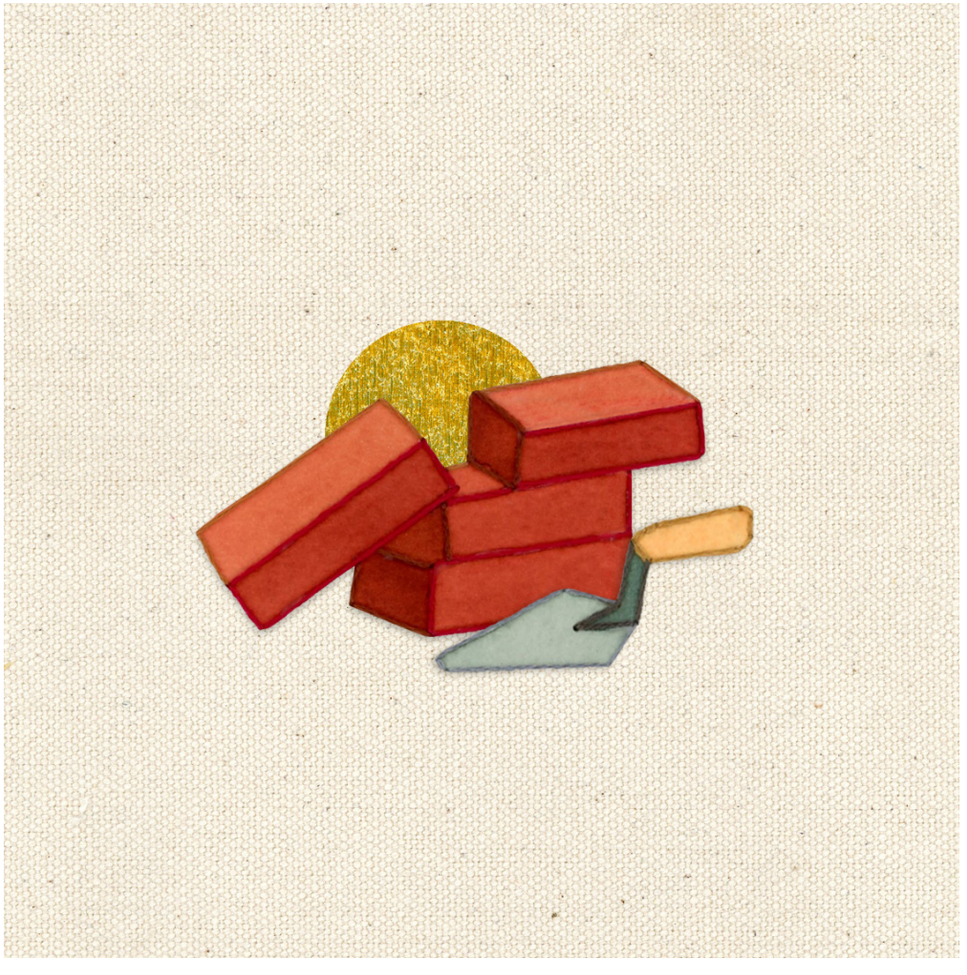
I needed to create pieces with enough structure to tie them to their original stories and enough flexibility to allow the stories to be told in various ways. The result was 102 mixed media collages that depict objects, animals, and environments from the narratives I explored. In each image is a textured gold circle representing the sacredness and continuous survival of these stories. The images are portrayed through story cubes, short videos, and a tapestry that embrace different levels of accessibility and interactivity.

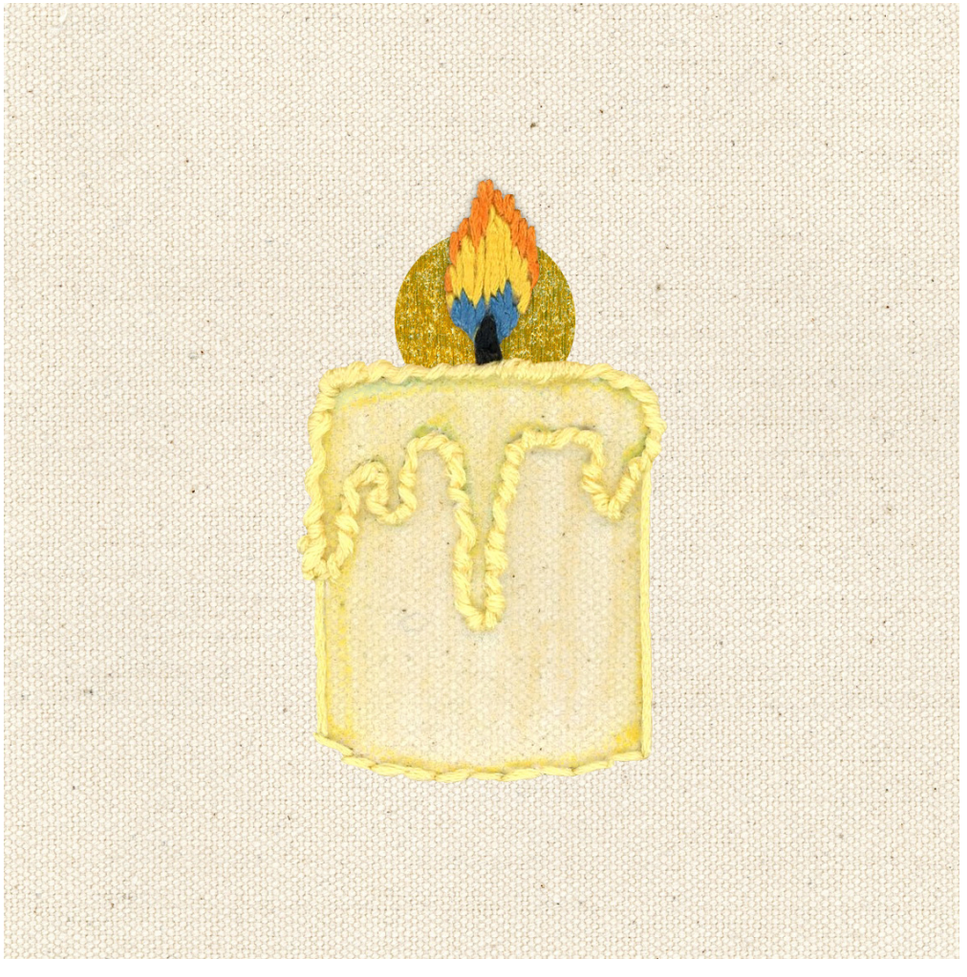
First was the creation of sixteen embroidered story cubes made from oak wood and wrapped in canvas. Each face is about 4x4 inches, and the cubes are meant to be used by an entertainer performing stories for an audience. The wood is weighty and the canvas stubborn, embodying the concept of permanence. Next came another set of sixteen cubes, these slightly smaller and made from printed canvas leather stuffed with cotton. The details of these cubes are warped and asymmetrical, symbolically repaired over centuries and meant to be played with, worn down through interactive group storytelling. Both sets of cubes are bound together with four different types of gold toned threads.

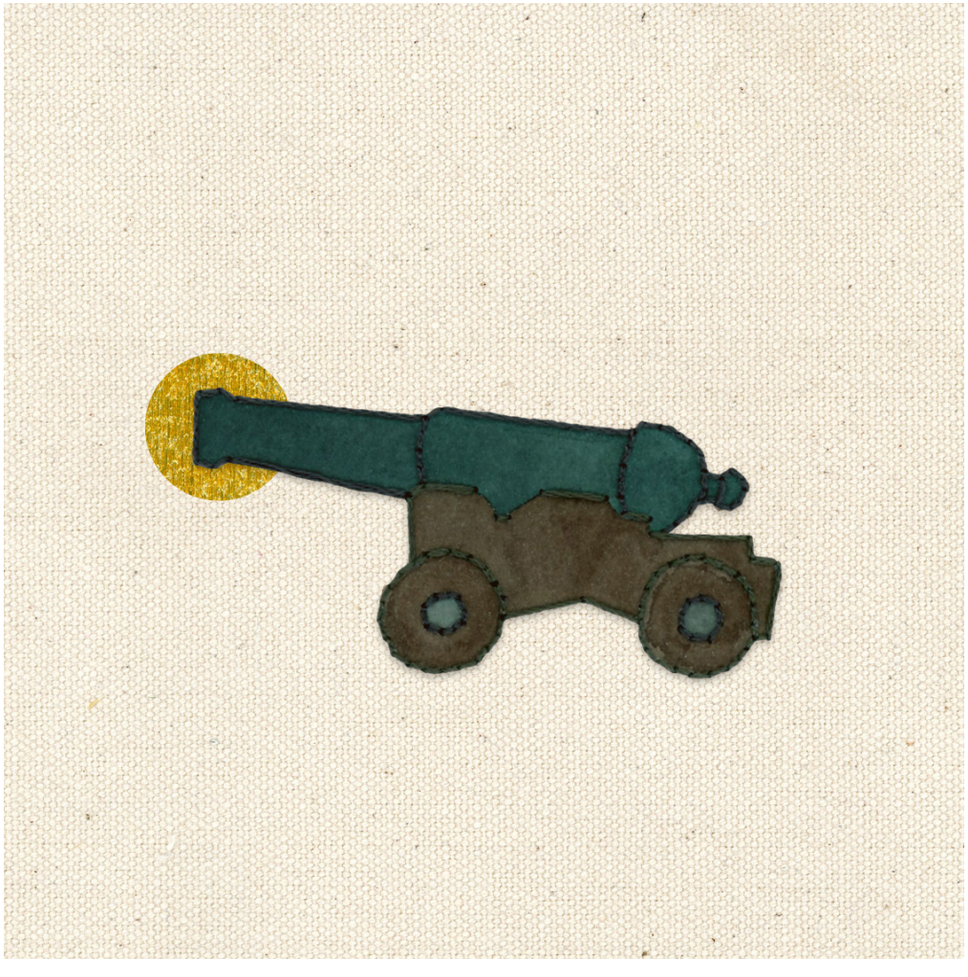
The videos share nine fictional and real-life stories from the Black and Virginia Indian communities as adapted from the texts used in my research. These videos, narrated by me and family members, are a nod to the oral tradition of these communities' narratives and feature the collages and story cubes. The cotton tapestry, approximately 7.3 ft x 8.7 ft, depicts 96 of the images in a grid, allowing them all to be viewed at once. The tapestry – and the story cubes – depict only 96 of the 102 images because they were created prior to my decision to add six more images to the collection. I was inspired to create these last few images after reading the poetry book *Who's Afraid of Black Indians?* by Shonda Buchanan. Reading her poems after months of being immersed in the stories of my own Black and Indian ancestors gave me a feeling of...*Solidarity. Visibility. Comfort.* I used these feelings to put the finishing touches on a year-long project that recontextualized everything I knew about the experiences of my ancestors.

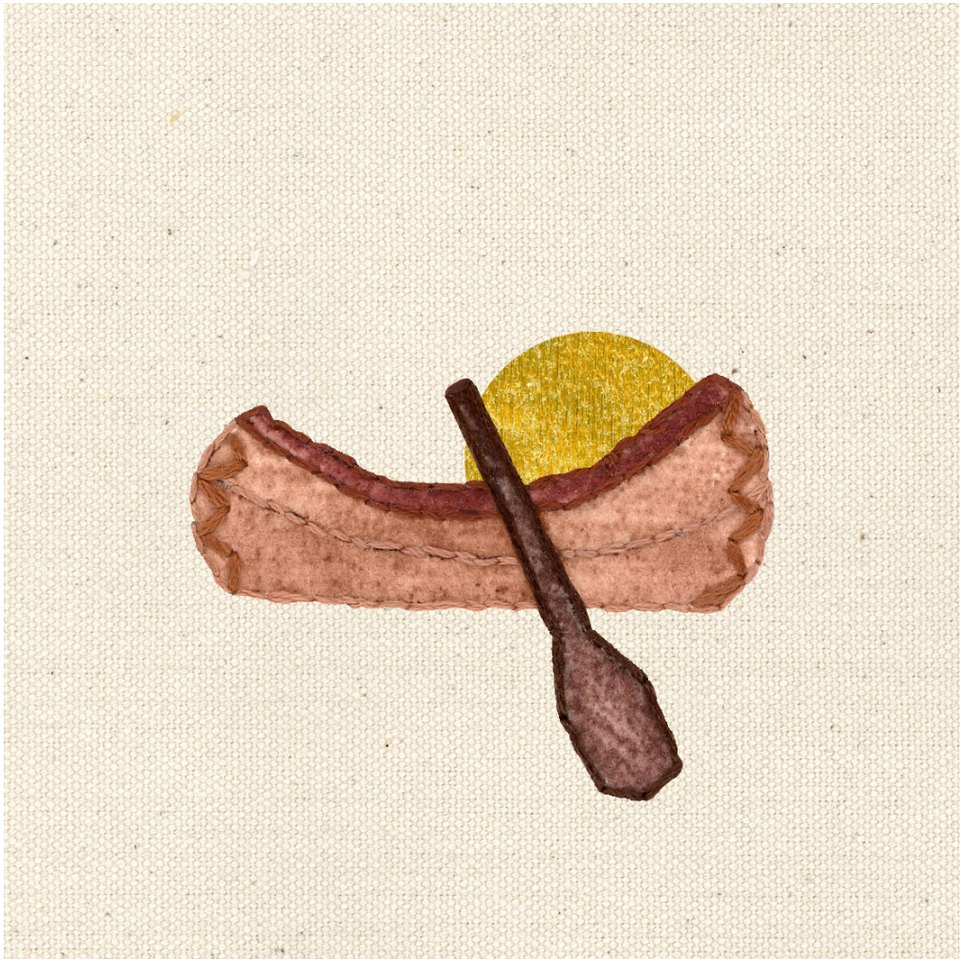
102 Collages

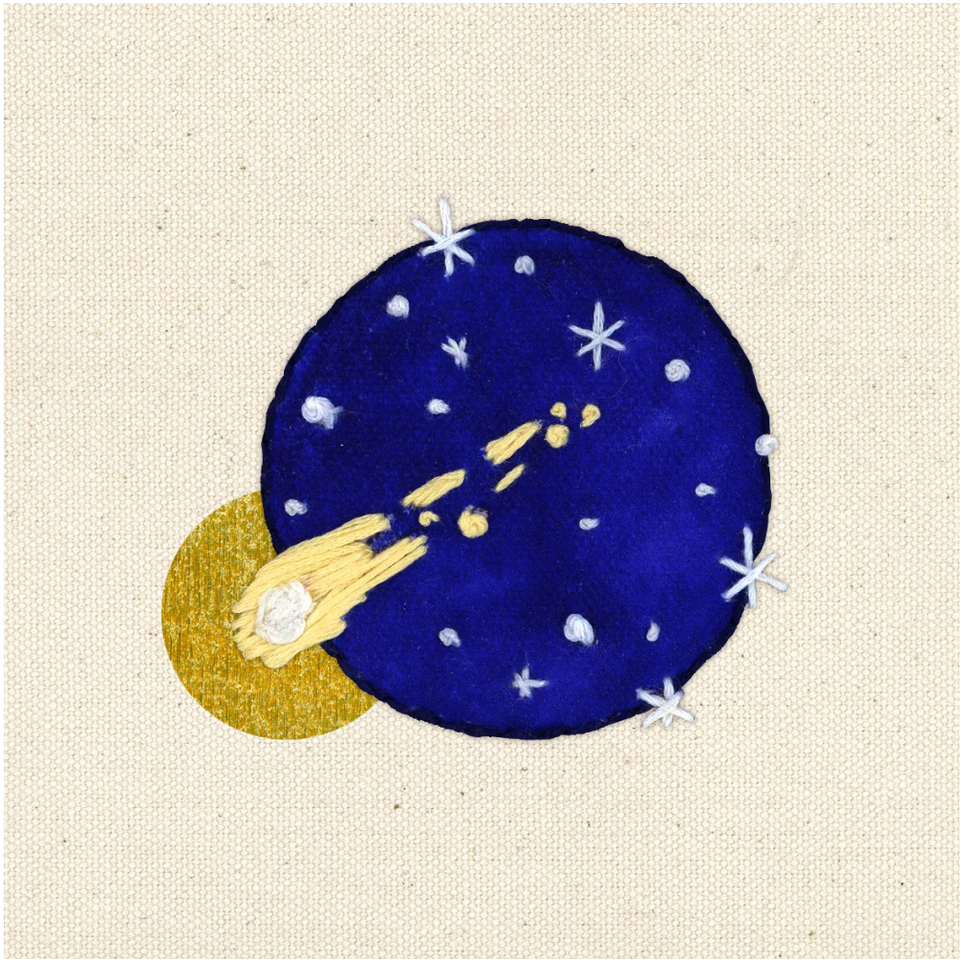


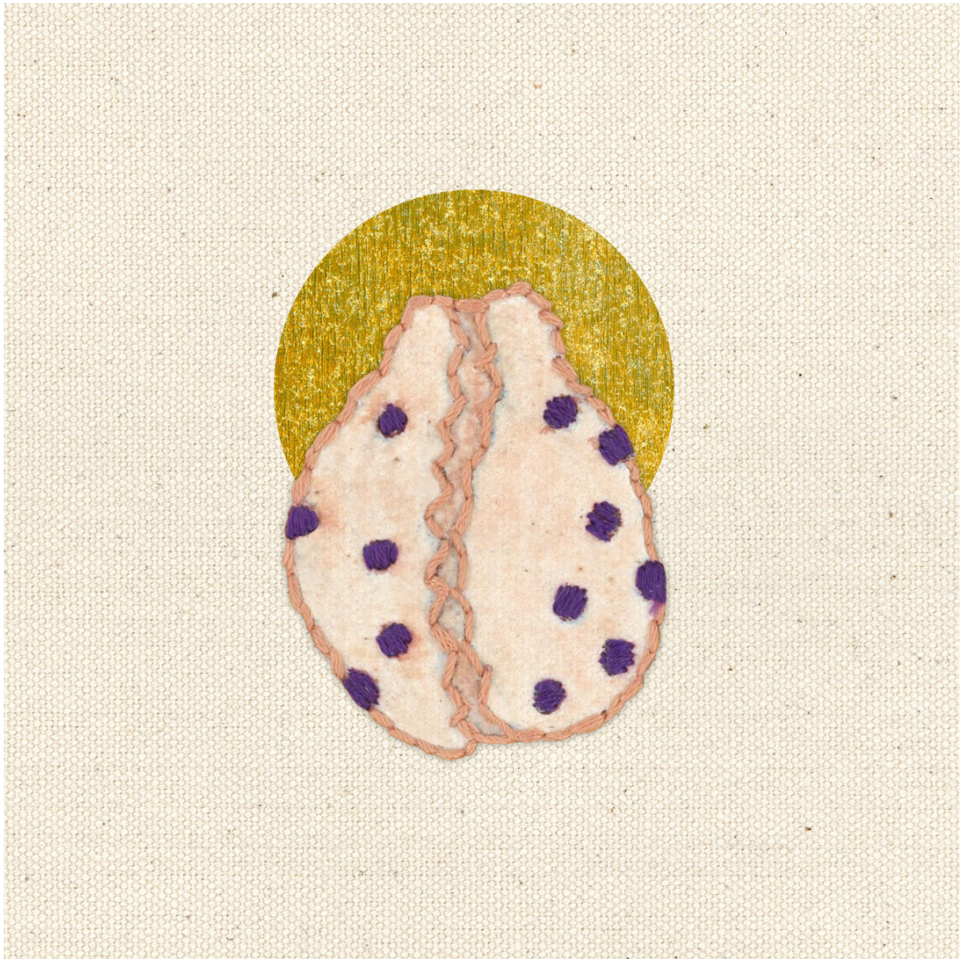


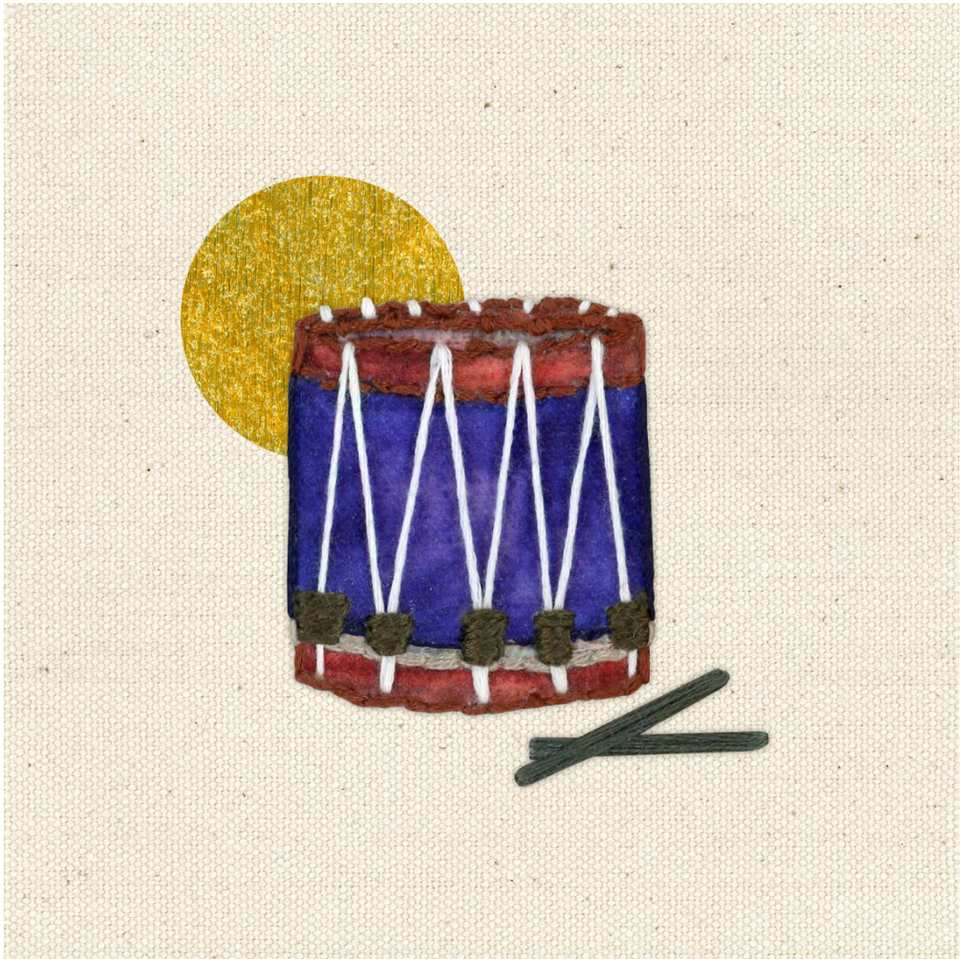


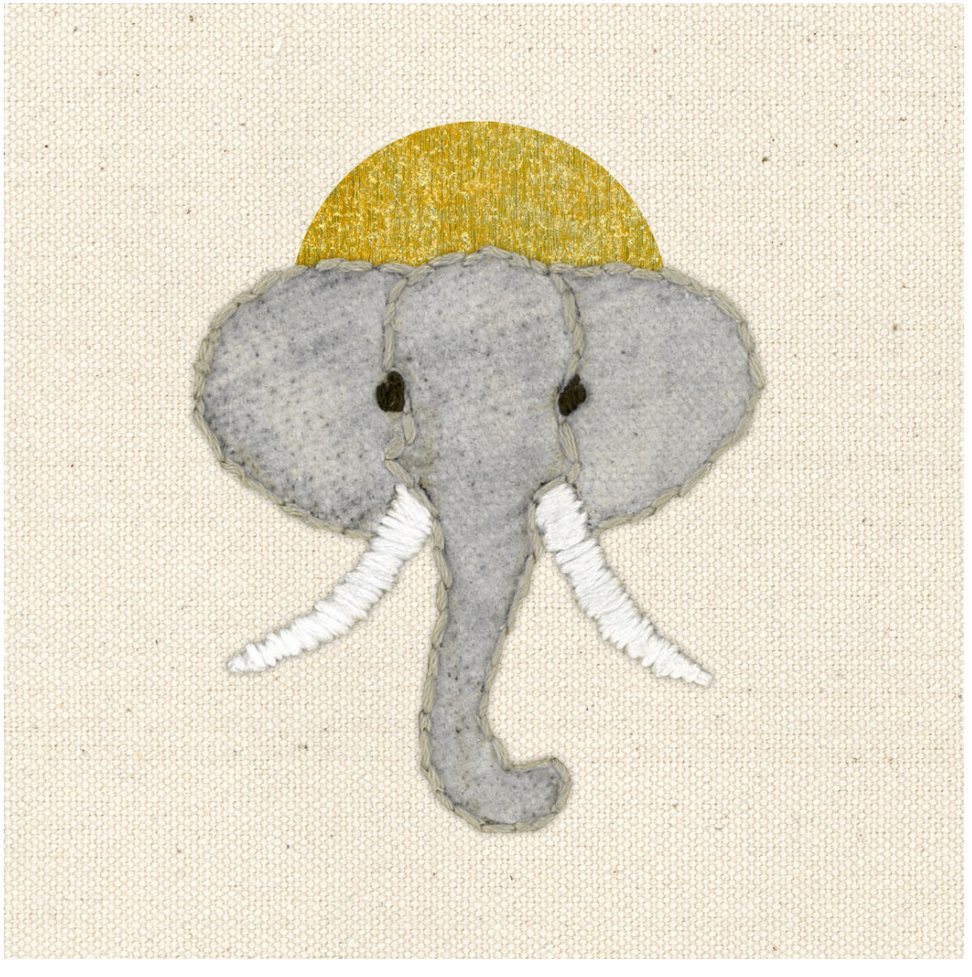


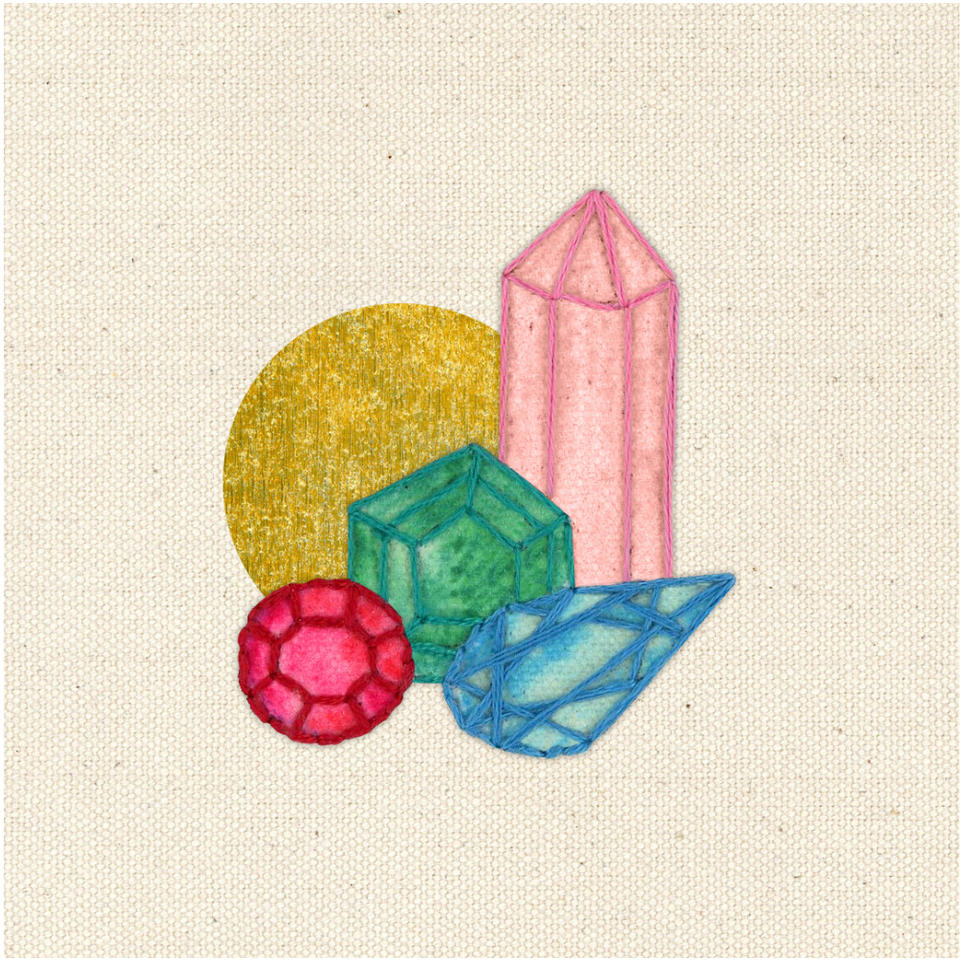


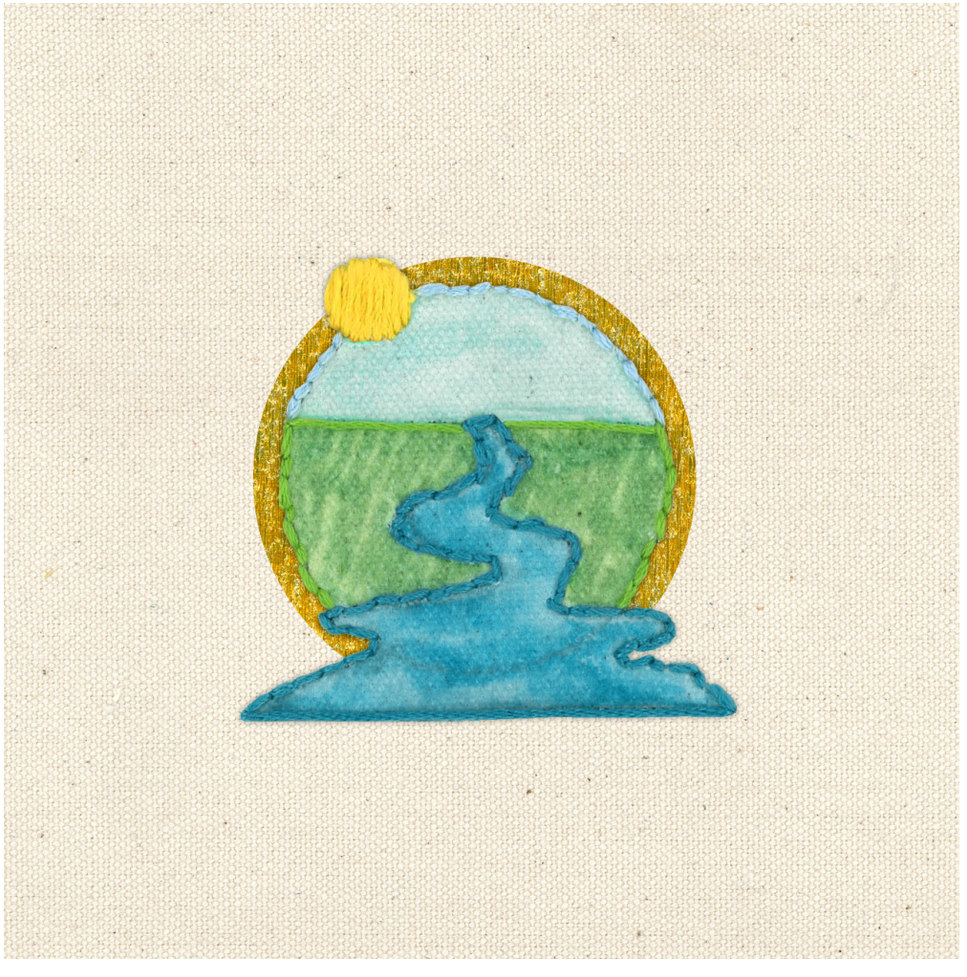


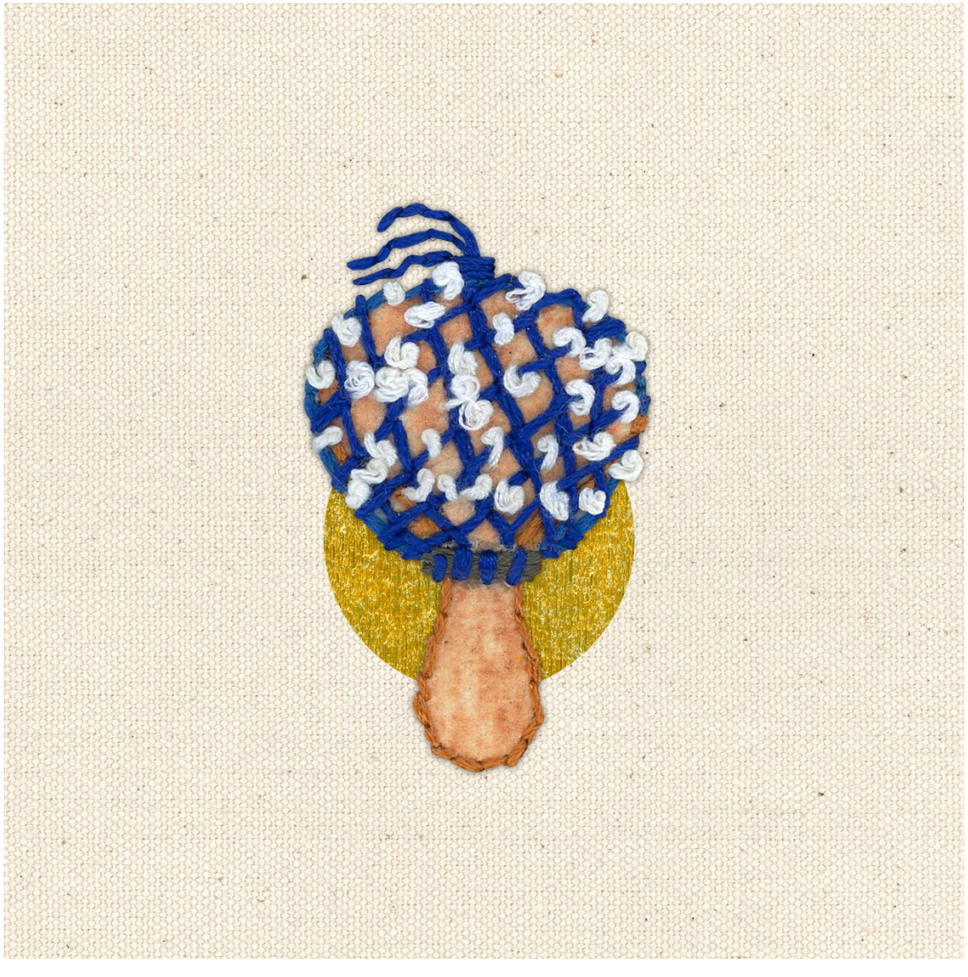


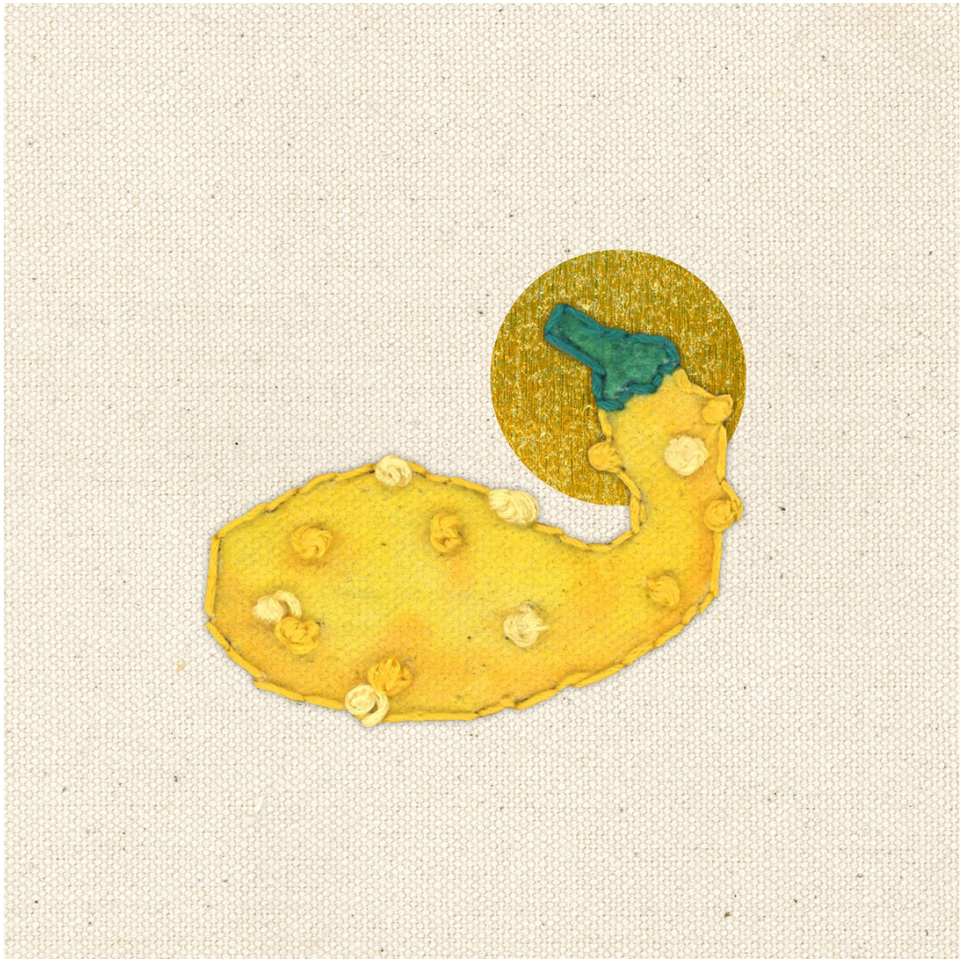


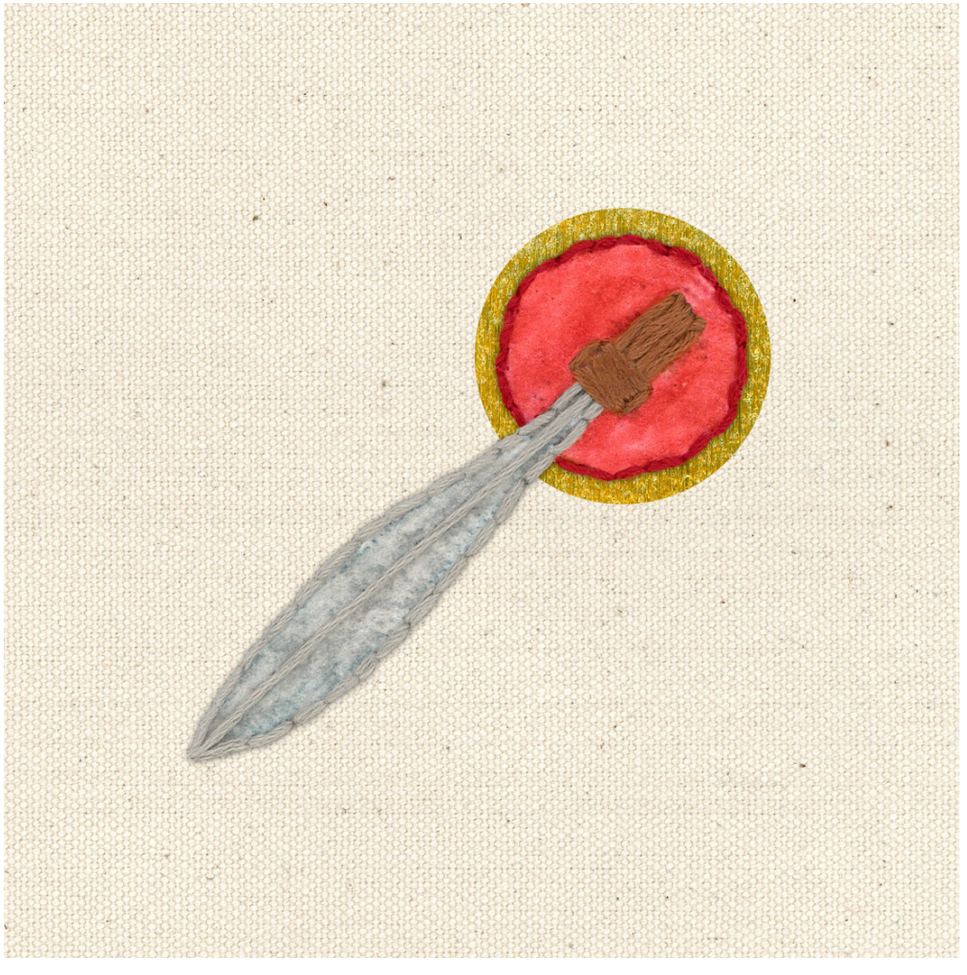


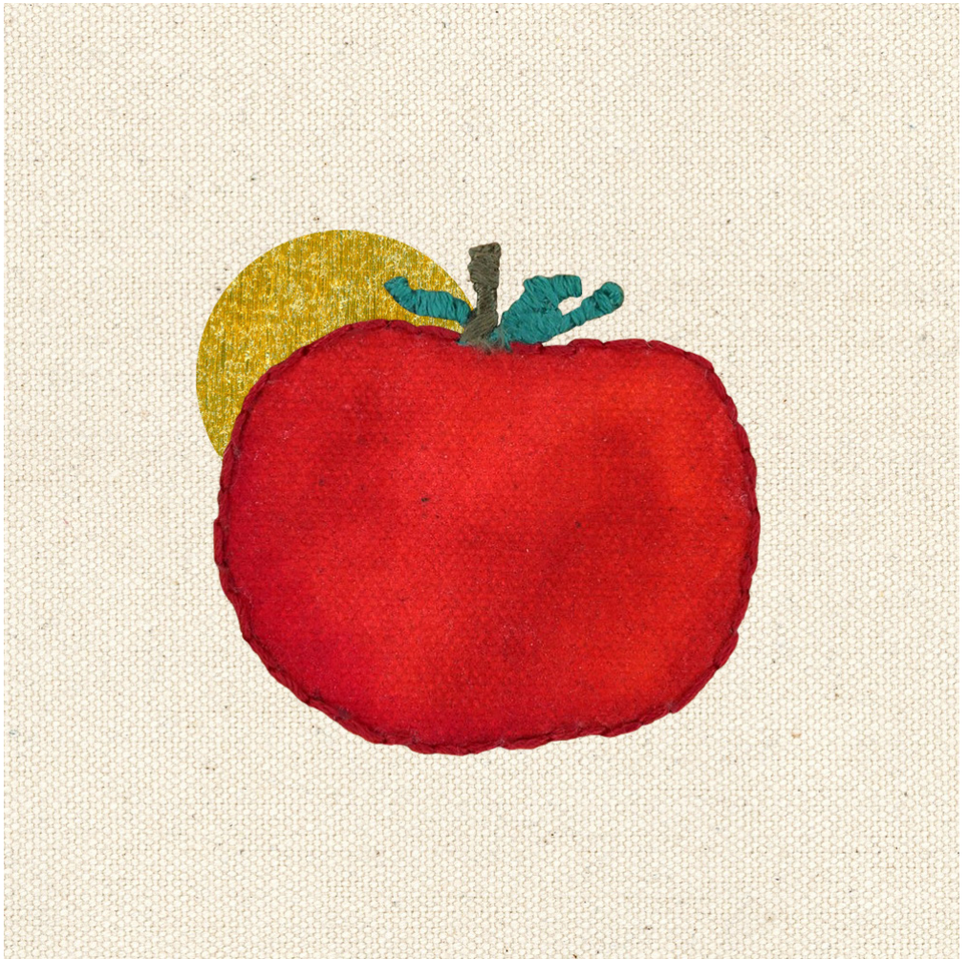












Videos

Anansi and the Ear of Corn

Anansi the Spider asked God for an ear of corn, promising that he would repay the gift with 100 slaves. God, always amused by the boastful and resourceful Anansi, gave him the ear of corn.

Anansi set out with the corn and came to a village to rest. He told the chief of the village that he had a sacred ear of corn from God and needed a place to sleep and a safe place to store the corn. The chief treated Anansi as an honored guest and gave him a thatched-roof house to sleep in, showing him a place in the roof where he could hide the corn. Then, while the villagers slept, Anansi took the corn and fed it to the chickens.

The next morning, Anansi woke the village with his cries. "What happened to the sacred corn?! Who stole it?! Certainly, God will bring great punishment on this village!" Anansi made such a fuss that the villagers begged him to take a whole bushel of corn as a demonstration of their apologies. Anansi accepted and continued his journey with the bushel of corn until it became too heavy to carry. It was then that he met a man on the road who had a chicken. Anansi offered to trade his bushel of corn for the chicken.

When Anansi arrived at the next village, he told the villagers that he had a sacred chicken. He asked for a place to stay and a safe place to keep the chicken. He was again treated as an honored guest. The village held a great feast in his honor and showed him a house with a safe place for the chicken. Then during the night, Anansi butchered the chicken. He smeared its blood and feathers on the door of the chief's house. In the morning, he woke everyone with his cries, "The sacred chicken has been killed! Surely God will destroy this village for allowing this to happen!"

The frightened villagers begged Anansi to take ten of their finest sheep as a token of their apology. Anansi accepted and continued his journey. He herded the sheep down the road until he came to a group of men carrying a corpse. He asked the men carrying the body who the dead man was. The men explained that a traveler had died in their village, and that they were bringing the body home for a proper burial. Anansi offered to exchange his sheep for the corpse, then set out down the road.

At the next village, Anansi told the people that the corpse was a son of God who was sleeping. He told them to be very quiet so as to not to wake the son of God. The people in this village held a great feast and treated Anansi as royalty. When morning came, Anansi told the villagers that he was having a hard time waking the son of God from sleep. He asked if the villagers could help. The villagers started by beating drums, but the visitor remained asleep. Then they banged pots and pans, but he still slept. Then the villagers pounded on the visitor's chest, and he still did not stir.

Then, Anansi cried out, "You have killed him! You have killed a son of God! Certainly, God will destroy this whole village, if not the entire world!" The terrified villagers told Anansi that he could pick 100 of their finest young men as slaves if only he would ask to God to save them. Anansi agreed and continued his journey. He then returned to God, having turned one ear of corn into one hundred slaves. [1]

Run time: 3:35

Narrated by: Nia Alexander Campbell

The Chickahominy Lifestyle of the 17th Century

...in the winter the Indians would move into temporary camps to hunt deer by driving them into the river and shooting them from canoes...deer might be caught in a spring snare or stalked with bow and arrow by an individual hunter disguised in deerskin. At suitable seasons, turkeys, waterfowl, and other birds were hunted and trapped. In the spring, back once more in the permanent village, the women went to planting in the fields adjacent to and extending beyond their houses. New fields had to be prepared the year before by the men, who first charred then cleared the vegetation. Afterwards, the women could move in with their digging sticks to plant crops like corn (in four varieties), beans, peas, pumpkins, gourds, sunflowers, and tobacco. In addition to the plant and animal foods already mentioned, permissions, berries, grapes, acorns, tuckahoe, groundnuts, and shellfish were gathered. [2]

Run time: 1:08

Narrated by: Nia Alexander Campbell

Homework from the Boulevard Indian School, 1910-1923 School Period

As one might expect from a report card used largely for rural schools in the early 20th century, a section of it is devoted to "Industrial Work." Inside home work was identified as sweeping, dusting, sewing, ironing, washing dishes, bread making and cake baking...Outside home work was considered care of stock, care of poultry, milking, providing fuel, general farm work, special farm work, and manual training. [3]

Run time: 0:40

Narrated by: Kaden Campbell

Powhatan Creation Story

The Powhatans worshipped a number of spirits including Okee, Ahone, a sun god, and a female god. Ahone was known as the Great Hare. One day, Ahone created people and animals but he wasn't sure what to do with his creations, so he put them into a large bag. He decided to make a place for his creations to live, so he made the forests, rivers, and lakes. He then created deer to live in the forests. The other gods weren't happy with what Ahone had made, so they went into the forests and killed the deer. Ahone was saddened when he found the dead deer and he scattered their skins throughout the forest. From the skins sprung many more deer. Ahone then let the people he'd created out of the bag and spread them around the forest to live together with the deer. [4][5]

Run time: 0:49

Narrated by: Kendall Campbell

Talks Too Much

A man was walking along when he found a skull. The man said to the skull, "Ol' Head, how come you here?" The skull said, "Mouth brought me here, and mouth gon' bring you here too." The man decided to go back to town and tell everyone about the talking skull. A great crowd of people gathered and the man led them down to where he found the skull. They asked the skull to say something, but the skull didn't speak. Angry, the townsfolk beat the man. The Skull then said to the man, "Didn't I tell you mouth was gon' bring you here?" [6]

Run time: 0:38

Narrated by: Nia Alexander Campbell

The Cat-Witch

There was once a House Girl who worked for a family of slaveowners. The Master of the house kept sheep and when he sheared them, he would put the wool upstairs. The Master's wife said, "Every day my wool gets smaller and smaller, somebody's taking my wool!" She accused the House Girl of stealing the wool, because she knew the House Girl often went upstairs to clean. As punishment, the Master tore up her back with a terrible whipping. When the House Girl would go upstairs to clean, she often saw a cat laying on the pile of wool. She figured that the cat laying there had packed the wool, making it look smaller. So, the House Girl decided to cut off the cat's head the next time she saw it. Sure enough, the House Girl saw the cat again and managed to catch it by its front foot. The House Girl hacked the foot off with a butcher knife and the cat went running down the stairs and out the house.

Then, the cat's foot that the House Girl was holding turned into a human hand. The hand had a gold ring on one finger with someone's initials on it. The House Girl could not read or write, so she took the hand and its ring to the Master's wife. There was an outcry and news soon began to spread around the neighborhood. Everyone around the town was looking for anyone who had lost their hand.

Meanwhile, in another house in the neighborhood, there lived a wealthy white woman slave owner who had recently married a young man. There came a morning when the woman wouldn't get up to cook her husband breakfast. The husband, having heard the talk around town, took a look at the severed hand with the gold ring and found that the ring bore his wife's initials. He went to his wife in bed and found that she had only one hand. That's when he knew she was the cat-witch and declared that he no longer wanted her.

The reason the cat-witch wanted the wool was to use in her witchcraft. Able to travel like the wind, she would slip out after her husband was asleep, go through keyholes, shapeshift into animals, steal things, then bring them back to use in her witchcraft. As was the custom of killing old witches, the town fastened her to an iron stake. They poured tar around her then set her on fire. [7]

Run time: 2:25

Narrated by: Nia Alexander Campbell

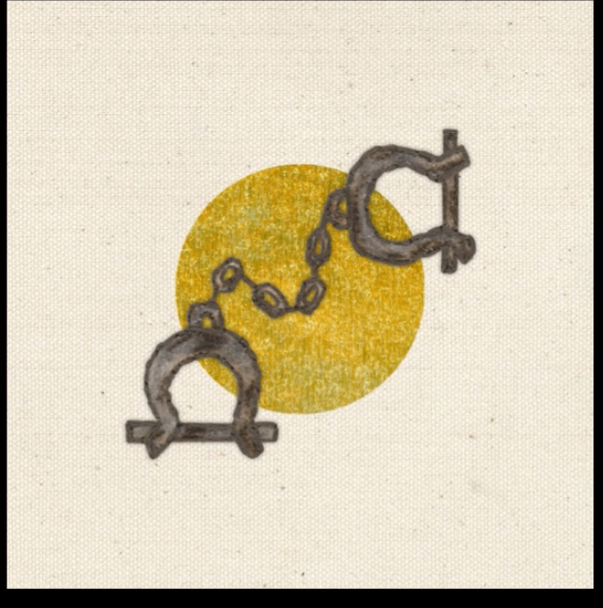
The Great Migration

After the Civil War and Reconstruction era, life for many emancipated Blacks in the south continued to be a challenge. Landless and in need of income, many of them had few options but to go into sharecropping, a system in which a landowner rents out plots of land to laborers and sells them supplies on credit in exchange for a portion of the crops produced. Often, Black sharecroppers worked the land of former slave owners. Typically, this arrangement was only marginally better than slavery, as landowners were known to charge high interest rates and underpay sharecroppers.

Racial inequality in the South also persisted through racist policies like the Black Codes and Jim Crow, and organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. By the 1910s, Blacks began migrating away from the South to find better opportunities in industrialized urban areas in the North, Midwest and West. In 1916, a factory wage in the urban North was typically three times more than what Black people could expect to make working the land in the rural South. Between 1910 and 1920, the Black population of New York City grew by 66%, Chicago by 148%, Philadelphia by 500%, and Detroit by 611%. By 1970, 6 million Black Americans from the rural south had migrated [8][9][10]

Run time: 1:14

Narrated by: Kendall Campbell



The Proud Princess

There once lived a wealthy family with a beautiful daughter named Afiong. All the young men in the country wanted to marry her, but she refused them. She desired to marry a rich prince from a faraway kingdom, a prince who was the best-looking in the entire world, strong and perfect in every way, one who was capable of loving her properly. Afiong's parents were much grieved at their daughter's stubbornness.

One day, there was commotion within the village. A very fine man had been seen in the market, one who was more handsome than any of the men in the country. Afiong rushed to the market and fell in love with the handsome man immediately.

She introduced the man to her parents, and he asked them if he could marry Afiong. At first, the parents refused, as they did not want their daughter to marry a stranger. But eventually, they agreed. He lived with Afiong for two days in her parents' house, and then said he wished to take her back to his country, which was far away. Afiong readily agreed, though her parents tried to persuade her not to go. However, being very headstrong, Afiong made up her mind to go and she and her husband started their journey to his homeland.

After walking for several days, Afiong and her husband crossed the border between the human world and the spirit world. The moment they set foot in the spirit world, strange things began to happen. First a man came to her husband and demanded his fine legs. Then, a man insisted on having his strong arms. Another man requested her husband's torso, and then another asked for his head.

After a few minutes Afiong's husband was left with nothing but a skull.

It was revealed that the skull, who lived in the spirit world, had heard of the beautiful princess and decided that he wanted her for himself. So, he borrowed all the best body parts from his friends in the spirit world until he was a perfectly beautiful man.

Afiong was terrified to see the ugly skull she had married. She wanted to return home, but the skull would not allow it. When they arrived at the skull's house they found his mother, who was a very old woman incapable of doing any work. Afiong tried her best to help the old woman, cooking her food, bringing water, and collecting firewood. The old woman was very grateful for these attentions and soon became quite fond of Afiong.

One day, the old woman told Afiong that she was very sorry for her, as all the people in the spirit world were cannibals – and once they discovered that there was a human in their land – they would come and eat Afiong. The skull's mother decided to hide Afiong and promised to send her back to her village as soon as possible if Afiong vowed to listen to her parents in the future. Afiong agreed and the old woman sent for the Spider, who was a very clever hairdresser. She told the spider to dress Afiong's hair in the latest fashion. The old woman next offered Afiong fine gifts to thank her for her kindness.

The old woman then made a juju and called for the winds to take Afiong home. At first, a violent tornado came with thunder and lighting and rain. But the old woman sent the storm away, as it was unsuitable. The next wind to come was a gentle breeze. The old woman told the breeze to carry Afiong to her parents' house, and after saying goodbye, the breeze deposited Afiong outside of her home.

When the parents saw their daughter, they were very glad. It had been many months and they had considered their daughter lost. The father spread soft animal skins on the ground so that Afiong's feet would not be soiled as she walked to the house. Then, her father called all the young girls who belonged to Afiong's company to come and dance. Everyone feasted and danced for eight days and nights. The king then passed a law that parents should never allow their daughters to marry strangers who come from a far country.

Eventually, a prince from a neighboring village who knew Afiong's father asked Afiong for her hand in marriage. Afiong agreed and lived with him for many years and had many children. [11][12][13]

Run time: 4:17

Narrated by: Nia Alexander Campbell

Why Hawks Kill Chickens

The was once a very fine young hen who lived with her parents. One day, a hawk was hovering around and, with his keen eyes, saw the beautiful hen picking up corn near her parents' house. The hawk quickly dived down and perched himself on the fence next to the hen. He greeted the young hen with an enticing whistle and offered to marry her. The hen agreed and the hawk went to speak to the hen's parents. He paid her parents a dowry that consisted mostly of corn. The next day, the hawk took the young hen to his home.

Shortly after, a young rooster who lived near the hen's parents' house learned that she had moved to the home of the hawk. The rooster, who had been in love with the hen for many months, was determined to make the hen come back to her home country.

The next morning at dawn, the rooster flapped his wings and crowed in his best voice to the young hen. When the hen hard the rooster's sweet voice, she could not resist his invitation. She went out to him, and they walked off together to her parent's house, the rooster proudly strutting and crowing.

The hawk, who had been hovering high in the sky, saw what had happened and was very angry. He made up his mind that he would get justice from the king. The hawk told the whole story to the king and asked for immediate redress. The king sent for the parents of the hen and told them they must repay the hawk the dowry they had received from him. But the hen's parents said that they were so poor that they could not possibly afford to pay the hawk back. So, the king told the hawk that he could kill and eat any of the rooster's children whenever and wherever he found them as payment for the dowry. And if the rooster made any complaint, the king would not listen to him.

From that time until now, whenever a hawk sees a chicken he swoops down and carries it as partial payment of the dowry. [14][15]

Run time: 2:07

Narrated by: Alma Gates

Tapestry

Future Avenues

While my goal was to create imagery that reflected the stories of the communities I come from, the reality is that these images can be used to tell any story. Stories of revolutions, imaginary worlds, memories from childhood. Once these images are in your hands, the power of story belongs to you.

This flexibility does not devalue the project as it takes nothing away from it. Instead, it opens the possibility of connecting various communities and individuals through interactive storytelling. My goal is to one day share the story cubes; I want all 102 images – all seventeen cubes – accessible and of fine quality, able to be used by anyone to tell the story they want to tell. This project was always meant to escape privileged spaces like galleries and lecture halls, and I think this is one way to accomplish that.

CONCLUSIONS

"One set of expectations urge black and Indian mixed-bloods to accept that they are black and stop 'pretending' to be Indian. This scenario requires individuals to forget that they have Indian relatives and remember that it is skin color that determines who they are."[1]

The Emotional Journey of a ~~Pretendian~~ Black Indian

There are many things to be said about how absurd the blood quantum is when it comes to defining Native American identity. What struck me the most, as it pertained to the Chickahominy, was that the Western Chickahominy determine membership based on the blood quantum, while the Eastern Chickahominy determine membership based on lineal descent. Whereas the blood quantum requires a certain percentage of "Indian blood," lineal descent allows membership based on ancestors that may be further back in one's family tree. But the thing is, these two communities share the same ancestry. So, I wondered how these membership rules would apply to me.

Even though my grandfather had enough blood to join the tribe, the most recent tribal member in my line is Allen Adkins, who joined when the tribe first reorganized itself...

By the rules of the Western Chickahominy, I don't have enough Indian blood to become a member...

By the rules of the Eastern Chickahominy, I do...

But Allen didn't go with the Eastern Chickahominy when they split, he stayed with the Western tribe...

I guess there's no place for me on either community's roster...

This one train of thought perfectly captured for me how arbitrary these membership rules were. While I understand the complicated roots of trying to maintain Indian identity in an oppressive Eurocentric society, the fact that my official legal claim of Indian identity boils down to a decision my great-great-great-grandfather made in 1920 is silly. It highlights the fact that tribal membership is not a good measure of determining who is and is not Indian.

And so, I laughed.

I found the situation amusing because of how arbitrary it was, a stark change in attitude compared to how I felt when I began this project. Though I didn't realize it at the time, I had hoped that going through this research process would provide me with real "proof" of my Indian identity. Then, to my elation, I found it; the evidence was everywhere and for the first time I felt validated. But gradually, as I learned more about the historical experiences of the Chickahominy and the way people with Black ancestry were treated, my emotions shifted.

Wait, we didn't get our land back until this year?

I felt shocked.

Wait, this is how we treated this Black woman?

I felt ashamed.

Wait, this is how we've been treating Black Indians for decades?

I felt...angry.

How could my people be so cruel? How could they deny the existence of their cousins, uncles, nieces, children? How could they deny my existence? How could they create me and hate me at the same time?

Rereading the brochure from my first Chickahominy pow wow and remembering the desires of my eighth-grade self, longings that seemed so obviously futile in retrospect.

I would have never been crowned Miss Chickahominy.

That cute Rappahannock boy would have never looked my way.

"...desire to build a better future for the next seven generations...pass along our traditions and culture to future generations..." [2]

They aren't talking about me; I don't have the right blood.

I am not their future; I am the embodiment of racial betrayal.

It took a while for these feelings of resentment to settle, and when

they did, I felt a different kind of hurt. The losses my Indian ancestors suffered, the decisions they felt forced to make, the way these choices and circumstances echoed through generations, the way it had divided more than it had brought together...my anger was replaced with a kind of melancholy understanding. Though acts of antiblackness cannot be excused, I came to understand that this behavior, as it pertained to Virginia Indians, was born from trying to survive the oppression of white supremacy.

So, after learning, grieving, crying, laughing, hammering, sanding, sewing, and printing, I felt...*calmer*. Suddenly, it didn't matter that I didn't have enough of the "right" blood. It didn't matter that my requests for interviews with community members got rejected. It didn't matter that my skin was the color of chocolate instead of caramel. I didn't need to gaslight my existence, I didn't need to adhere to definitions of race rooted in white supremacy, I didn't need to explain myself for others, I didn't need to seek validation from elsewhere. I was allowed to claim my heritage and feel every emotion that came with learning about it.

And once I embraced this new reality for myself, I began to find comfort in all the stories that proved to me I wasn't alone. It hit me hardest with this quote:

"...thus, while navigating the racial expectations of others – particularly from pers invested in the maintenance of 'real Indianness' and 'real blackness' – within the contexts of everyday interpersonal interactions, a black and Indian individual with a real identity as one-eighth Cherokee, for example, may assert an ideal identity as three-quarter Cherokee when around Native Americans or Caucasians who do not like black people or believe 'real' Indians have high blood quanta." [3]

I felt unmasked.

You mean I wasn't the only one trying to explain my heritage to white peers in sixth grade? I wasn't the only one who upped my Indian heritage from one-sixteenth to one quarter in conversation? I wasn't the only one who researched an Indian language and embroidered Indian motifs in an attempt to connect with a community that felt painfully close but terribly far?

It wasn't just me who went to school with students you knew were your cousins, but who looked "more Indian" than you did? Their caramel skin, soft brown hair, loose curls... they could represent the tribe in a way I couldn't. I wasn't the only one who felt that way? The only one who felt like their Blackness canceled out their Indianness? The only one who felt like they didn't have the right to claim their indigenous heritage?

I wasn't the only one who felt like an outsider?

An imposter?

To read these reflections now, my brain says, *of course you aren't the only one!* But before this research process, I was feeling the weight of complex, intertwining problems that I couldn't even identify. Though a part of me knew there had to be a community of Black-Indians out there, the more doubtful, isolated part of me believed that my experiences would barely overlap with theirs. However, I was humbly proven wrong and gradually began to feel connected to a community I had only just learned existed. From then, I began to feel a sense of pride.

My ancestors – Black and Indian – went through trauma after trauma and yet they proved perennial. I am in awe of what they achieved despite an uphill battle that has lasted hundreds of years. Bear in mind that I am only the second generation to be born on the far end of Jim Crow. To put that in even more perspective, my father was born only six years after the Civil Rights Act; my grandmother was born just six years after the death of "Christmas Martin," who had been born into enslavement.

I am not the living proof of betrayal; I am the living proof of survival.

I come from people who survived months across the middle passage. I come from people who knew “America” long before anyone else arrived. I come from people who found freedom by force or after nearly 250 years of endurance. I come from people who waited 400 years to get their land back. I come from educators, businessfolk, mothers, midwives, farmers, and landowners who made a way out of no way. To forgo this heritage by adhering to racist ideologies would be an affront to their life experiences. Claiming my identity as Black and Indian is a source of pride, an act of protest, and a comfort. I honor my forebearers by remembering their stories. I honor them by refusing to erase them.

"The deliberate manipulation of history paralyzes our communities by suggesting that African ancestry cancels Indian claims to a collective right to inherent sovereignty. We may be 'hybrid' in composition, but we are enduringly rooted in indigeneity. By claiming our names, we can bite back." [4]

Fig. 34

This photo was taken on my 18th birthday. Behind me is my mother's practice mural of my great-grandmother

Fig. 35

My great-great grandmother Alma Rebecca Holman was in a gardening club. This is her in her garden in the late 1950s or early 1960s

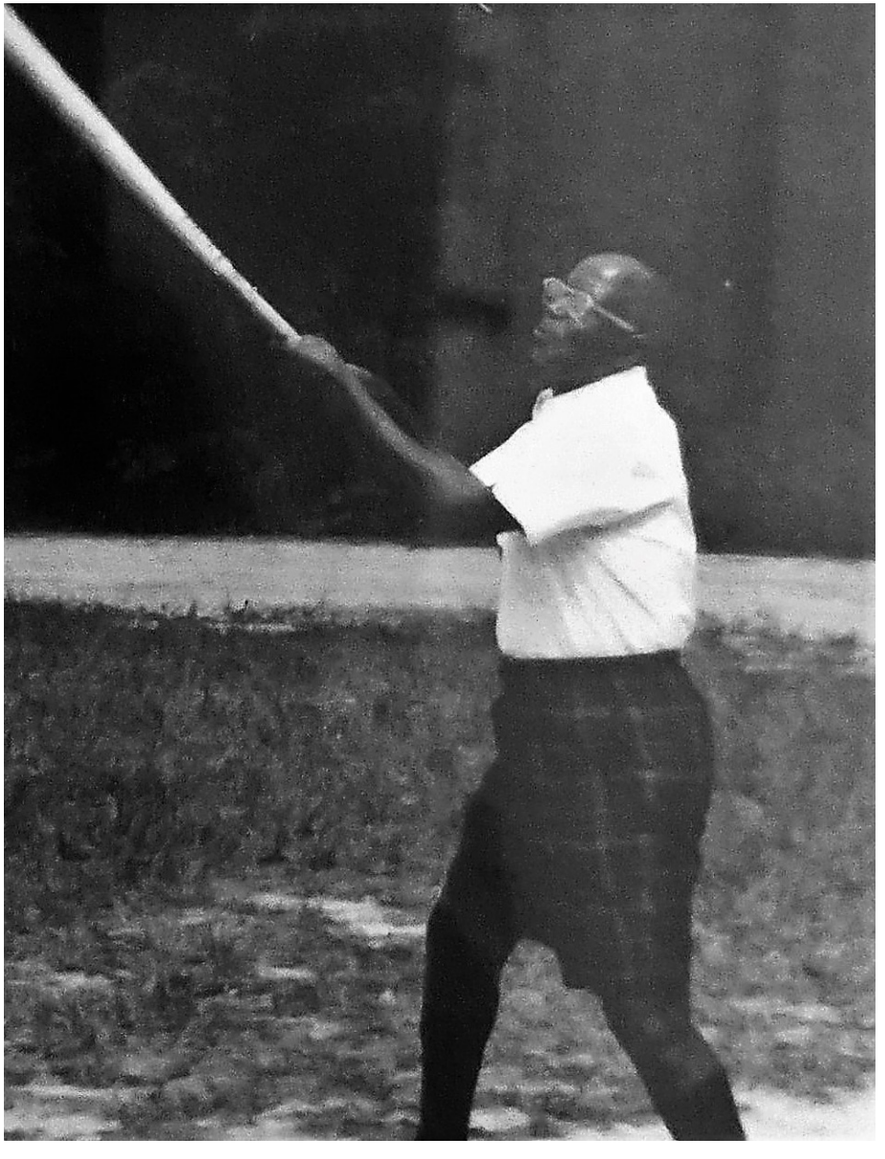


Fig. 36

My great-great grandfather Martin Campbell Sr. playing baseball in the late 1950s or early 1960s

Fig. 37

My great-great grandfather Martin Campbell Sr. in the late 1950s or early 1960s

Fig. 38

My great-great grandmother Alma Rebecca Holman in the late 1950s or early 1960s

Fig. 39

My great-grandfather Martin Campbell Jr. (standing on the right) with the fish he and his buddies caught in the late 1950s or early 1960s

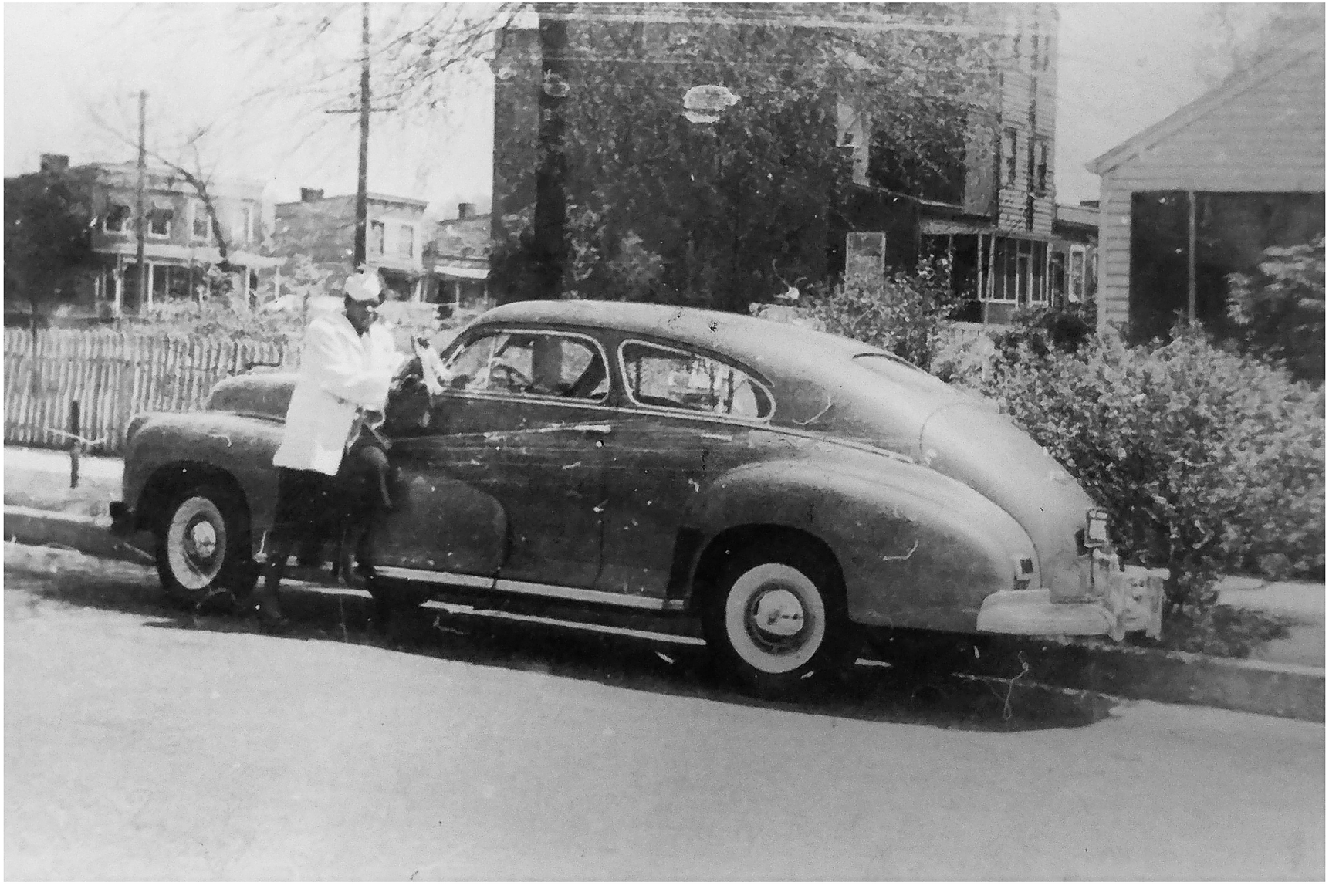


Fig. 40

My great-grandaunt Christine – Martin Campbell Jr.'s sister – leaning on an Oldsmobile in the 1950s

Fig. 41 and 42

My great-grandfather Martin Campbell Jr. in the early 1950s during the Korean War

Fig. 43

My great-great-grandparents Rosa Belle Plummer and Lynwood B. Harris Sr. in the 1950s

Fig. 44

My great-great grandmother Alma Rebecca Holman around 1949

Fig. 45 and 46

My great-great grandaunt Marie Sue Consuela Braxton in the 1940s. She was the younger sister of my great-great grandmother Sarah Braxton. She and Sarah were the two surviving daughters of my great-great-great grandmother Marie Pryor.

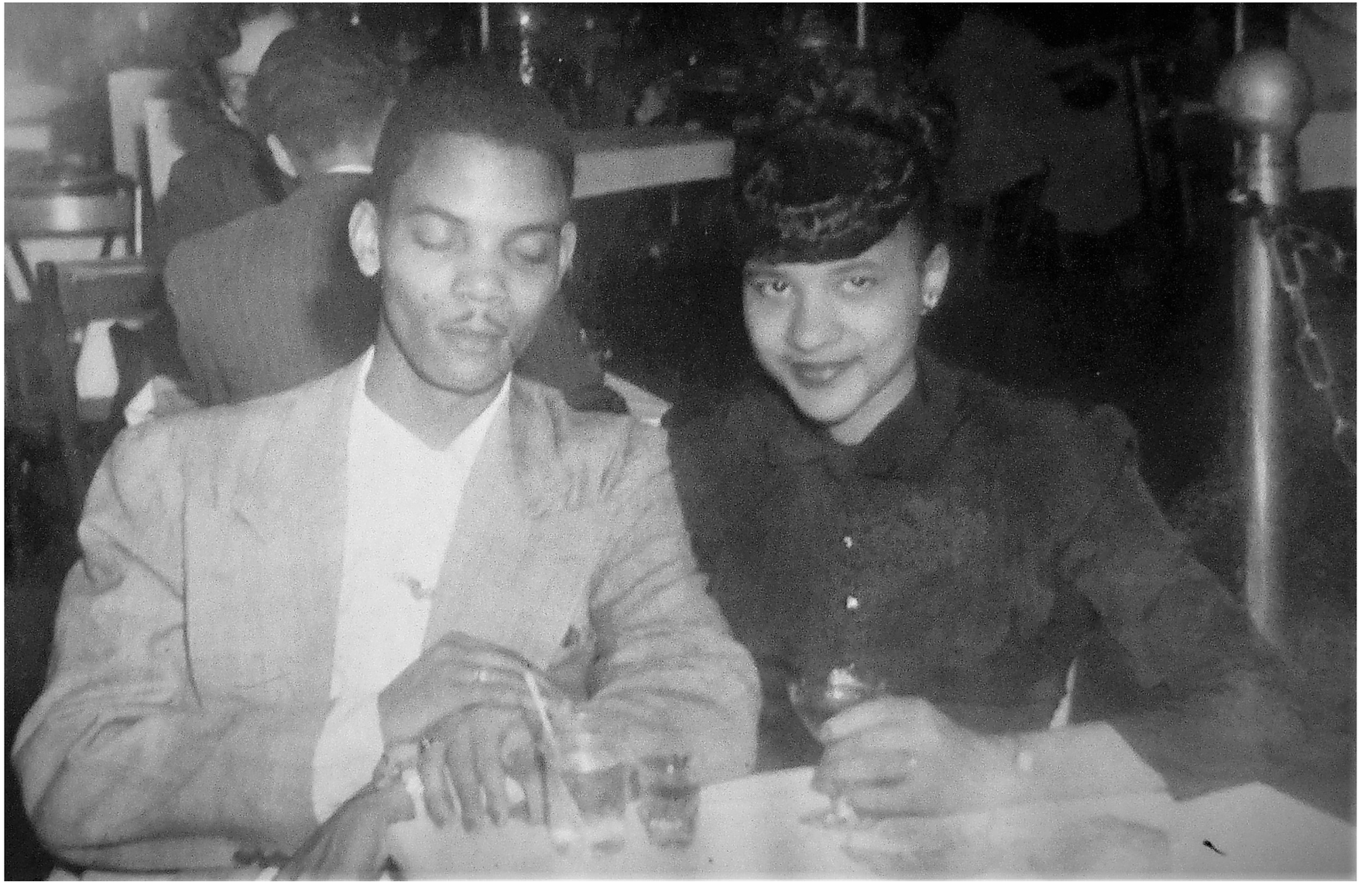


Fig. 47

My great-grandparents Lynwood B. Harris Jr. and Edna Alfreda Adkins at Smalls Paradise in the 1940s. Smalls Paradise was a nightclub in Harlem, New York, one of the few that catered to African Americans.

Fig. 48

My great-great-great-grandfather Allen Adkins (on the right) standing beside Ozias W. Adkins, Chief of the Western Chickahominy and son of his first cousin. The man seated may be Samuel Owen, a Mohawk man who married a Chickahominy woman in the community. They are standing in front of Samaria Indian Baptist Church in the 1930s.

Fig. 49

My great-grandfather Martin Campbell Jr. with his father Martin Campbell Sr. in the 1930s

Fig. 50

My great-great grandfather Martin Campbell Sr. wearing boxing gear when he was 16 years old, around 1920. There is text written around the border that reads, “Lest we forget the prize fighter Mr. Campbell”

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THE PEOPLE THAT OWNED MY PEOPLE

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