

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

The following texts have been written, compiled, and edited by Amy Kurtz Lansing, Jennifer Stettler Parsons, and Carolyn Wakeman, in consultation with William Earle Williams.

All photographs are silver gelatin prints and 7 ½ by 7 ½ inches unless otherwise noted.

The enumerated photographs in the Guide correspond to their Plate numbers in the first 80 pages of this book, where the reader will find larger images. The same Plate numbers are used to reference the photographs in the essay texts.

A NOTE TO READERS

Their Kindred Earth includes historical language derived from a period when enslaved people were considered property, instead of human beings. The writing of history and our understanding of it evolve constantly, in tandem with new research. The publication authors have sought to share this material sensitively and respectfully.

Research into enslavement is ongoing. Please note that the information in this catalogue is current at the time of printing.

Visit WitnessStonesOldLyme.org for ongoing and updated research.



1 Lieutenant River, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

The blowing grasses and active sky point to the windy day when Williams made this photo in November 2023. The gnarled branches of the old tree take on new meaning with the phrase “their kindred earth.” One leafless branch appears to reach for the skies. In the foreground, Williams’s shadow is discernible in the meadow.



1a Noyes Family Scrapbook, Noyes Papers
Lyme Historical Society Archives, Florence Griswold Museum



2 View of Goose Island and the Connecticut River from Old Lyme, 2023

During his residency, Williams explored the Connecticut River’s banks, wetlands, and tributaries, on foot and by boat, to consider the various ways enslaved people interacted with the river and landscape. He was introduced to several residents in town who invited him onto their properties to encounter different views, such as this one. Williams began making pictures about Black history in 1986. He remembers, “When I started, no one else was celebrating the roles that people of color played in American history. It’s important to tell all sides of a story.”



3 Railroad Bridge from Ferry Road Boardwalk, Connecticut River, Old Lyme, 2023

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

It was a hot, sunny day in June when Williams made his first visit as Artist-in-Residence. Jenny Parsons and Carolyn Wakeman drove him to the Ferry Road boardwalk to view the mouth of the Connecticut River. The location of historic Lyme had long facilitated the export of local agricultural goods, including livestock, timber products, and salted fish. Williams’s dramatic image of the railroad’s modern infrastructure calls to mind the river’s earlier role in the movement of goods and people.



4 Granite Cliffs, Pilgrim’s Landing, Connecticut River, Old Lyme, 2023

Stone is one of the Connecticut River Valley’s oldest resources, used for centuries by Indigenous people for tools, implements, and enclosures, and later by European settlers for dams, bridges, millstones, chimneys, and grave markers. Colonists likely used enslaved labor in local quarries to support a growing demand for stone. Williams saw these granite cliffs from the boat of a generous neighbor he met by chance while walking near today’s public boat launch at Pilgrim’s Landing.



5 Old Lyme Marina, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

This is the approximate site of Lyme’s earliest ferry crossing in 1662 and of an early house and wharf belonging to the slave-owning Mather family.

Williams’s compositional framing of these contemporary yachts gives them a sense of monumentality that encourages us as viewers to recall earlier sailing vessels that plied the Connecticut River, starting with the *Tryall*, built for the West Indies trade in 1649 and commanded by Greenfield Larrabee (1620–1661), a landowner in Lyme. Locally enslaved people felled timber for ongoing shipbuilding and produced agricultural goods for export.



6 Richard Lord’s House at Tantummaheag, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Williams stood on the scenic lawn with his back to the Connecticut River to capture this shot of the imposing home of Richard Lord (1752–1818), likely built in the 1790s. Lord purchased the boy Prince, age 11 or 12, “for the term of his natural life,” in 1792, sixteen years after the Declaration of Independence proclaimed all people to be created equal. Even as slavery declined in Lyme after the Revolution, the boy was sold for 32 pounds. While taking this picture Williams thought about how the Lord family had held enslaved persons near this site since 1725, among them Oxford and Temperance, who raised five children in Tantummaheag.



7 Tantummaheag Landing, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Looking towards the Connecticut River, Williams photographed this location while walking along the property where Prince was enslaved. Imagine a young boy in Lyme, his family unknown, sold as a slave for life in 1792. The view of the river through tangled brush invites us to ponder the unknown journeys of Prince’s ancestors from Africa or the Caribbean.



8 Beach at Ely’s Ferry Road, Connecticut River, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Along the banks of the Connecticut River, Williams noted manicured lawns and sites of recreation and leisure. He contemplated the ways in which this was a very different place 250 years ago. Not far from this beach is the site where Moses, the first documented enslaved person in Lyme, labored on Richard Ely’s Six Mile Island Farm before 1670.

Ely’s descendants built three houses on today’s Ely’s Ferry Road where Warwick, Cesar, Tonney, Peter Freeman, and others were enslaved. Warwick was 46 in 1769 when Mary Noyes Ely specified in her will that “my Negro man Named Warrick Should be free after my Decease . . . to be his own man.” She left Warwick some farm animals with which to begin his life anew.



9 Witness Stone Commemorating Mingo, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

This plaque, installed at the Sill Lane green, commemorates Mingo, enslaved nearby by Edward DeWolf (1646–1712), a carpenter, timber merchant, mill owner, and tavern keeper. Mingo was accused in 1704 of threatening to kill a visitor to the tavern. The charges were dismissed when 27 Lyme residents attested that Mingo had been “Industrious in his masters business” and that they did “nott Know of any Wronge that hee hath Dun to any person . . . Since hee Came to This Town.”



10 Stone Wall, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

While researching in the Museum's archives in 2010, Carolyn Wakeman came upon a startling discovery: a simple notebook, tied with string that included a list written by Martha Noyes (1833–1874) documenting four generations of a Black family enslaved by her great grandfather, Judge William Noyes (1728–1807), in a residence that stood on the site of what is now the Florence Griswold House. The stone wall in this image likely marks an early property line near a landing on the Lieutenant River.

Williams wondered about the age of the walls on farmland leading down to the river and whether they had been built by persons enslaved. These were likely built after slavery had ended in the 19th century, but enslaved people may have constructed similar walls.



11 Lieutenant River Landing, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

This dock marks the approximate site of an early landing that likely provided access to the river for Rev. Moses Noyes and his descendants. The minister named his enslaved servant after the ship *Arbella* on which the Massachusetts Bay Colony's governor John Winthrop emigrated from England in 1630. In 1719 Rev. Noyes specified in his will that "the negro maid Arabella" become the property of his daughter Sarah Noyes Mather (1683–1756). Six years later, church records document that "Bella" was baptized. Williams thought about Arabella providing domestic labor on the minister's large farm and assistance with his four children until his death in 1727.



12 Dr. Richard Noyes House, Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Williams was impressed by the great care with which Lyme Street's historic homes, once sites of enslavement, have been preserved. This house was built on the approximate site of Rev. Noyes's dwelling in 1814 by his great grandson Joseph Noyes (1758–1820). Various documents name enslaved people who served on this site, including Jube, Richard Jimmie, Warwick, Grace, Pompey, Sophia, and Samuel. A Noyes family letter describes the death of Prince Jr., in 1826 in this house, then owned by Dr. Richard Noyes (1787–1864). Prince's mother Jenny likely died here in 1832, and the census count in 1850 lists his sister Nancy, age 78, in Dr. Noyes's household.



13 Witness Stones at the Florence Griswold House and Museum, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

Florence Griswold's father Robert H. Griswold, a prospering Atlantic packet ship captain, purchased this elegant home for his bride Helen Powers in 1841. In an earlier house on this site [see 16], William Noyes, a large landowner and New London County judge, enslaved Jenny, Prince, their children, and grandchildren. Witness Stones on the Museum's front lawn honor Temperance Freeman, Harry Freeman, and Crusa. Temperance was likely given the name "Freeman" posthumously after she died enslaved at age 15. Harry used the surname after he became free at age 25, according to Connecticut's gradual emancipation law passed in 1784. Crusa, born before that law was enacted, was set free in an official emancipation certificate in 1817 at age 39. Additional Witness Stones will be placed on the FloGris lawn in 2025.

Slavery would not be abolished in Connecticut until 1848.



14 Former kitchen ell, Judge William Noyes House, Florence Griswold Museum, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

The back ell of the Griswold House, which later became the Lyme Colony artists' dining room, may have been left behind when an ox team removed and relocated William Noyes's [see 16] aging dwelling in 1816. Although the ell's date is uncertain, the enslaved servant Jenny, born in 1752, may well have labored there while raising her family. No emancipation certificate for Jenny has been found, but her gravestone in Duck River Cemetery, shown in photograph 44, gives her the surname "Freeman." A Noyes family scrapbook reveals that Jenny died "of a cancer" at age 80 in 1832 and that her husband Prince died at sea in 1791 [see 1a]. A Noyes cousin remembered "old black Jenny" in a family letter as "a good Christian woman."



15 Approximate Site of Deming's Landing, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Harvard-educated Rev. David Deming (1681–1745) purchased in 1726 a 60-acre farm along today's Lyme Street and baptized his enslaved servant Luce in 1741. Luce likely provided domestic labor for the retired minister's wife Maria Brigham Deming (1675–1760), who was brought up "delicately" in Boston. A family history states that even though Maria in her youth had "resided not more than forty rods [220 yards] from her school [she] had a negro to draw her there and back in a hand coach." When Williams photographed the approximate site of Deming's Landing in 2023, it was part of a sculpture park called *Studio 80*, now closed. Luce's enslavement nearby lends new context to this sculpture, which recalls the ball and chain of human bondage.



16 Noyes-Beckwith House, Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2011

When Williams made this photograph in 2011, he believed the house was a stop on the Underground Railroad, but no evidence has been found to support that attribution. The compositional choices seem to echo the sense of someone looking for a safehouse—a sidelong perspective with indicators of the address in clear view.

This house once stood on the site of today's Florence Griswold Museum. The first federal census count in 1790 noted five persons enslaved here in the household of William Noyes, likely Jenny, Nancy, Prince Jr., Pompey, and Crusa. The aging house was moved in 1816 to this location to make space for a stately new mansion built for William Noyes III and thought to have been designed by Samuel Belcher. Some eighty years later that mansion became the home of the Lyme Art Colony at Florence Griswold's boardinghouse.



17 Samuel Mather, Jr., House, Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

The federal census in 1790 reveals that Samuel Mather, Jr., later described as Lyme's "merchant prince,"

enslaved four persons here, but only Jenny's name is known. Lyme's vital records list the birth of her son Jack Howard in 1795. Jenny and those enslaved with her likely worked as agricultural and domestic laborers, as carters who hauled goods to Mather's four warehouses, and as deckhands on some of the thirteen ships he commissioned for the West Indies trade. Several were built at the Hill shipyard nearby on the Lieutenant River.

Jack Howard in 1809 at age 14 passed by will to Mather's unmarried son James Mather, age 24, who inherited the family home. The 1810 census shows one free non-white person in James Mather's household. Perhaps Jack Howard, who lived in a room above the kitchen ell, had been set free at age 15. Today the Mather house serves as the parsonage of the First Congregational Church.



18 Stephen Peck House, Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

This house is listed on Connecticut's Freedom Trail as a stop on the Underground Railroad. However, like the Noyes-Beckwith House [see 16], no evidence has

been found to support that claim. The idea may have come from the house's architecture and its rear stairway.



19 First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

See 20



20 Witness Stones at the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

The Witness Stones on the lawn of the Congregational Church memorialize six people enslaved nearby.

Today's church, designed by Samuel Belcher, was built in 1817 in an open field formerly owned by Rev. Jonathan Parsons (1705–1776), the town's second minister. Parsons held enslaved a boy Cato who died at age 10 and a serving maid Phyllis baptized in 1740. His son Colonel Marshfield Parsons (1732–1813), who turned the house into a coaching inn called Parsons Tavern, enslaved four persons in 1790.

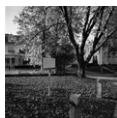
The names of Basil, Lewis Lewia, and Margaret Crosley have been found. Basil received town support as a "pauper" in 1812, while Lewis and Margaret Lewia, who married in servitude in 1802, later owned a small house with five acres of land on today's Sill Lane.



21 John McCurdy House, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Lyme's vital records show that between 1757 and 1764, five children, Jordan, Ezelphie, Clo, Caeser, and Shambaes, were born into hereditary slavery in John

McCurdy's household. McCurdy (1724–1785), a wealthy merchant who built local wharves and warehouses used in the West Indies trade, also held Humphrey, possibly the children's father. In 1776 Humphrey may well have served General George Washington, who rested at McCurdy's house while traveling to New York from Boston. In 1784, at age 22, Caeser fled. A notice posted in the *Connecticut Gazette* states that Caeser was mulatto (indicating that his mother or grandmother was likely Native American or white), that he had been to sea, and that he was a frequent runaway. By then Humphrey had purchased his freedom for 200 pounds, a large sum, possibly from earnings on privateering voyages.



22 Town Green, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Williams's documentation of Black history sites often includes historical markers that make the past visible when the buildings and landscapes where events took place have not been preserved.

The town green was used for militia training before the Revolution as opposition to British rule intensified. A *New London Gazette* article described the hanging in effigy in Lyme of the Connecticut colony's stamp collector Jared Ingersoll (1722–1781) in October 1765. The political theater almost certainly took place on the town green, where a "funeral ceremony performed by the blacks in the place" followed the mock hanging.

The view captured by Williams includes the home of suffragist Katharine Ludington (1888–1953) on the left, and a glimpse of the Congregational Church on the right. Williams centered the composition on the sign commemorating Ludington that was newly installed at the time of his visit. Williams's specific attention to signs developed from his interest in modernist photographers like Walker Evans [see 37].



23 Witness Stones, Old Shore Road, Black Hall, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Eight Witness Stones installed on a triangular plot of town land in the Black Hall section of Old Lyme in 2023 recognize persons enslaved by members of the

Griswold family, who owned extensive property along the shoreline between the Connecticut River and the Niantic River. Eighteen persons held in servitude in Black Hall have been identified, among them Cornelia, Neptune, Phyllis, York, and Prince Griswold Crosley.



24 Griswold Beach, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Florence Griswold's father grew up on Griswold Point, where members of his extended family still live today. For centuries Indigenous people lived seasonally on that land before their displacement by English

colonists starting in the 1630s. Today rising waters engulf the large rock at the center of Williams's composition, which once stood near a Native burying place washed away by a gale in 1815. In photographs like this one, landmarks may evoke the presence of those whose lives unfolded here before.



25 Bartholomew Field, Black Hall, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

This early site of Indigenous settlement served as agricultural land and pasturage for Griswold families whose profitable farm and husbandry business relied

for more than a century on enslaved workers. The leather-bound account book kept after 1743 by Judge John Griswold (1690–1761) documents continuing sales of rye, oats, potatoes, pork, and other farm products, as well as "potions" and medicinal cures. According to a family history, Phyllis, along with two Negro men "sold and delivered to" Judge Griswold during his lifetime, were "only a representation of his household slaves."



26 View of Griswold Point, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Williams stood on the lawn surrounding the former home of Governor Roger Griswold looking across the mouth of the Connecticut River to Saybrook Point,

where English colonists built a fort in 1635 to protect their trading interests. Near today's scenic lawn George, an indentured Indigenous servant, ran away for two months and five days from Matthew Griswold II (1652–1715), then served an additional six and a half months as punishment. More than a century later in 1810, the census count shows that Roger Griswold held one enslaved person, possibly “Negro Popo” who later received payment for agricultural labor.



27 Falls River, Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

As Williams explored the area earlier referred to as North Lyme, he walked along the Falls River that once allowed valuable timber to reach the Connecticut River. This was once a site of industry, and a sawmill

operated nearby in the 1680s. Rev. George Beckwith (1703–1794), the first minister of the north parish who later owned property near the sawmill, held at least two enslaved persons, Bristo and London. Today we know nothing about their lives except that Bristo was accused in 1756 of raping a white woman, sentenced to death, and later released when the accuser admitted her testimony was false.

Williams focused his composition on a weathered tree, which evokes a sense of endurance and survival.



28 Sill House, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

The once imposing house of Thomas Sill (1769–1853), built in 1799 and formerly described as a stately colonial mansion, had fallen into disrepair when Williams visited. Sill's home was erected near the

site of his grandfather John Sill's house, and his farm included three landings, for logs, boards, and hay, on the Lieutenant River. A family history describes “a portrait of a colored boy” named Daniel, owned and raised as a slave, who drowned attempting to save the life of a Sill child. John Sill in 1790 held one slave, likely Caesar, whom his sons freed in 1803 after their father's death. The emancipation document notes they “thought proper to Emancipate & set free our Negro man Cesar,” considering “the injustice of holding in Slavery any of the human race, who have not forfeited their freedom.”



29 Dr. Samuel Mather House, Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

Williams viewed from different angles the large house of Dr. Samuel Mather (1742–1834), then walked through the surrounding fields. Dr. Mather had conducted

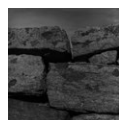
business as a merchant in addition to providing medical care in Lyme, and in 1799 he set free his “Negrowoman Jenny,” age about 54, noting her good and faithful service. Whether Jenny was related to the boy Robin whom Dr. Mather purchased in 1767 is not known.



30 Site of Prince Brown's House, Baker Lane, Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

From the owner of the house standing today near the location of Prince Brown's earlier dwelling, Williams learned the history of the site. Enslaved on the large

estate of William Browne (1737–1802) in today's town of Salem, Prince Brown was freed before 1790 and later owned 13 acres on today's Baker Lane, together with a small house, modest furnishings, and a cow. Prince Brown was the grandfather of abolitionist David Ruggles (1810–1849) [see 82]. Brown died insolvent in 1832.



31 Stone Wall, Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

Williams photographed imposing stone walls on today's Bill Hill Road that likely date from the 19th century, but mark boundaries of properties on which

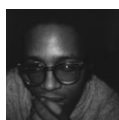
enslaved persons had labored. Daniel Ely (1693–1776), who owned a large farm nearby, held at least one enslaved servant. His estate inventory includes the “old negro wench Suberiah” appraised as property at three pounds.



32 Joseph Caples's House, Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

When Williams photographed this house on today's Gungy Road, the owner shared a scrapbook documenting the property's history.

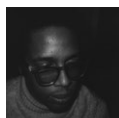
Joseph A. Caples (1874–1954) was born and died in this house built in 1800 by his grandfather Daniel R. Condol (1791–1875). Caples noted in his memoirs that stone walls on the property had been built by his great-grandfather Cuff Condol (1757–1814), a farmer and forester who purchased his freedom in 1790.



**33 Walker Evans (1903–1975)
Untitled (William Earle Williams, Oberlin, OH), 1974**

*SX-70 Polaroid print, 3 1/8 x 3 1/16 in.
Yale University Art Gallery.*

*Gift, Eliza Mabry and Jonathan Gibson, 2015.23.109
Facsimile copy printed by William Earle Williams, 2025*



**34 Walker Evans (1903–1975)
Untitled (William Earle Williams, Oberlin, OH), 1974**

*SX-70 Polaroid print, 3 1/8 x 3 1/16 in.
Yale University Art Gallery.*

*Gift, Eliza Mabry and Jonathan Gibson, 2015.23.110
Facsimile copy printed by William Earle Williams, 2025*

In 1973, Walker Evans began to work with the Polaroid SX-70 camera when the manufacturer gave him an unlimited supply of film.

At the age of seventy and infirm, the instant camera allowed him to return to some of his key motifs and to record his impressions of people he met. He made these images of young Williams during their pivotal meeting at Oberlin College in January 1974.

Williams's connection with Evans is what first brought him to the FloGris Museum in 2011, when he visited to see the exhibition *The Exacting Eye of Walker Evans*.



**34a William Earle Williams (born 1950)
Grave Marker with Plastic Flowers, Ohio, ca. 1973**

*Silver gelatin print, 14 9/16 x 14 3/16 in.
Metropolitan Museum of Art,*

Walker Evans Archive, 1994.263.139

During their meeting at Oberlin College, Williams traded this print with Walker Evans. Evans sent him a print of the Brooklyn Bridge in return.



35 Walker Evans (1903–1975)
Chris Voorhees Junkyard, Lyme, Connecticut, ca. 1962

Gelatin silver print on paper, 9 x 9 in.
Florence Griswold Museum,

Gift, the Walker Evans Estate, 1981.4.1

Walker Evans was introduced to Lyme in the 1940s by his first wife, Jane Smith Ninas, who would visit her college roommate, Billie Voorhees, daughter-in-law of the Lyme Art Colony painter Clark Voorhees. After Evans began teaching at Yale in 1964, he decided to build a home in Lyme on Grassy Hill Road. From that outpost he explored the region and captured views like this one that have become icons of American modernist photography. The remnants of this Model A Ford sat in a junkyard adjacent to Evans's home in Lyme for decades. It was reproduced in *Fortune* magazine in 1962 with the caption "A former Connecticut meadow of great charm."



36 Walker Evans (1903–1975)
Early Dawn Farm, Route 156, Lyme, ca. 1955

Gelatin silver print on paper, 7 1/2 x 9 in.
Florence Griswold Museum,
Gift, the Walker Evans Estate, 1981.4.3

Evans's persistent appreciation of everyday subjects came to be one of the hallmarks of the photographer's career. On his way to and from his home in Lyme, Evans traveled along Route 156, passing Early Dawn Farm as he went. In addition to this photograph, Evans stopped to capture the building again with his Polaroid camera in the 1970s, waiting for precisely the same lighting to paint shadows of the now larger tree branches across the façade. The barn is still extant and recognizable today.



37 Walker Evans (1903–1975)
Brookfield Center, Connecticut, 1930–1931

Gelatin silver print on paper, 6 1/4 x 8 1/8 in.
Florence Griswold Museum,
Gift, the Walker Evans Estate, 1981.4.4

As early as 1930, Evans struck upon visual themes that would remain strong in his work over the next forty years, including stark views of white churches and directional road signs. Williams also makes frequent use of these two subjects.



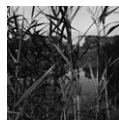
38 Dr. Richard Noyes's Property, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

The landscape behind the Lyme Street house inherited by Dr. Richard Noyes (1787–1864) recalls the place that Pomp (1776–1822) left behind when he fled in 1816 from Dr. Noyes's father Joseph Noyes (1758–1820). A runaway notice in the *Connecticut Gazette* states that Pomp, age 40, was blind in one eye and had poor vision in the other. The circumstances of his return are not known, but a gravestone in Duck River Cemetery inscribes his name as Pompey Freeman. [see 44]



39 Tantummaheag Brook, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Williams photographed a scenic brook in the Tantummaheag section of Old Lyme that Caesar may have crossed when he fled from enslavement by Enoch Lord, Sr., (1725–1814) in 1780. A runaway notice states that "Caesar spoke pretty good English, plays on the violin, and is much inclined to liquor." Caesar took with him a large bundle of clothes, about one thousand dollars, and a violin. Census records a decade later in 1790 show five enslaved persons in Enoch Lord's household.



40 Site of Deming's Landing, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

The early town landing seen in this photograph may have been too public for a runaway attempting escape, but this picture recalls the use of waterways as a route to freedom. Williams set his lens close to the vegetation, suggesting the perspective of a runaway who is standing in the water, watching the horizon in the distance and contemplating their next move.

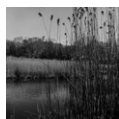


41 Johnny Cake Hill and McCurdy Road, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Williams considered that Caesar, enslaved by John McCurdy (1724–1785) and described as a frequent runaway who had been to sea, may have headed east when he fled in 1784. If so, he could have passed through the town's burial place and across Duck River, whose banks today are lined with the tall fronds of invasive phragmites.



42 Duck River, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023



43 Duck River Cemetery, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023



44 Gravestones of Jenny Freeman's Children, Duck River Cemetery, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

These deteriorating gravestones mark the burial places of Pompey and Prince, Jr., sons of Jenny and Prince, who were born enslaved in the household of William Noyes (1728–1807). [see 16] The gravestones, perhaps installed by members of the Noyes family, stand at the rear of the cemetery's ancient section alongside several other burial markers for those formerly enslaved.



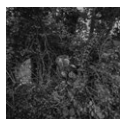
45 Gravestone of Prince Griswold Crosley, Duck River Cemetery, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

When Williams made a second visit to Duck River Cemetery in 2024, a veteran's gravestone had been placed by the Sons of the American Revolution honoring the Revolutionary service of Prince Griswold Crosley (1754–1818). Like his sister Margaret Crosley Lewia, buried nearby, Prince Crosley was born into hereditary servitude in the household of Matthew Griswold. A law passed early in the Revolutionary War granted freedom to slaves who served for three years, and Prince Crosley enlisted three times between 1777 and 1782. After wintering at Valley Forge with Washington's troops, he likely fought in the battles at Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth before returning to Lyme after the War. William's photograph captures the marble veteran's memorial in strong sunlight after its recent installation, conveying a sharp contrast to the aged brownstone markers nearby. The new marker stands alone in the landscape as solitary testimony to the service of at least five formerly enslaved Revolutionary veterans from Lyme.



46 Gravestone of Caroline, Wife of Prince Griswold Crosley, Richards Cemetery, Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Williams paused at the small Richards Cemetery in Lyme that for years remained covered in brush, its five gravestones largely buried and unnoticed. Here he viewed the burial place of Caroline Miller Crosley (1770–1855), who married Prince Griswold Crosley in East Haddam in 1788 after he had gained his freedom by fighting in the American Revolution. [see 45] Williams also noted the nearby marker for their daughter Olive Crosley Richards (1789–1858).



47 Meetinghouse Hill, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Before an elegant white church was built on Lyme Street in 1817, the town's meetinghouse stood a mile east on a hill with a clear view across the Connecticut River and a burying ground nearby. Williams photographed the scenic cemetery when he visited the place where enslaved persons had attended Sabbath services. A year before the last meetinghouse on the site burned down, the Church Society voted in 1814 "to raise the seats for the Black people in the Gallery in such a manner to enable them to see the Minister."

The Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery has no marked graves for persons who lived enslaved nearby. They may have been buried with only fieldstone markers or on farms and fields where they labored.



48 McCook Park, Site of Nehantic Burial Ground, East Lyme, Connecticut, 2023

Although *Their Kindred Earth* documents primarily sites of African American enslavement, Williams spent a summer afternoon at the site of this Nehantic burial ground. Many of the Indigenous persons who served terms as indentured laborers in Lyme were raised on land in the town's east parish set aside in 1651 as a reservation for those whose property English colonizers had claimed or purchased for a nominal sum.

Reflecting on the Nehantics' presence, Williams photographed a sign in today's McCook Park stating "who they are" and describing their service to Connecticut and the nation. Nearby and just out of view, a grave-like memorial reads: "Nehantic Indian Burying Ground/Tribe Declared Extinct 1870."



49 Witness Stones at Entrance to Duck River Cemetery, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2024

At the entrance to Duck River Cemetery, Williams photographed four Witness Stones commemorating persons held in servitude nearby on Meetinghouse Hill. His thoughts lingered on Phyllis, about whom nothing is known except for a New London County Superior Court inquest. It found that Phyllis, the "Negro woman servant to Archibald Starr Greenfield of Lyme," died on January 28, 1758, because "she had been poorly provided with proper clothing and bedding in freezing weather." Land records describe Greenfield (1718–1793) as owning a "mansion house" on what was sometimes called "Mile Creek Hill."

Another plaque honors Tantiphant, also called Philip, indentured to John Lay, Jr., of Lyme in 1732 for a term of six years and one month. The "Indian boy" likely performed agricultural labor for two years on Lay's farm until he shipped out on the sloop *Elizabeth* with Capt. John Sears (1707–1758), a Lyme mariner engaged in the West Indies trade. Lay sought financial compensation for the early departure of his indentured laborer.



50 Witness Stone Commemorating Pompey Freeman, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 2023



51 Perth Amboy Ferry Slip, New Jersey, 2024

Williams photographed the landing at Perth Amboy, New Jersey, in a way that layers the composition. A contemporary sign telling the story of the site coexists with a 1904 National Historic Landmark ferry terminal, a juxtaposition that suggests history's complexity. Perth Amboy is one of 55 documented Middle Passage arrival sites in the United States. A marker installed in 2021 near the ferry slip notes that one ship arrived with 240 enslaved people, after leaving 17 dead at sea and depositing 130 on the city's shore, where they were sent into bondage across the American colonies. Perth Amboy was designated a "Site of Memory" by the UNESCO Slave Route Project in 2019.



52 Jersey City, New Jersey, 2024

This view looks toward mid-town Manhattan from Jersey City. Williams composed the picture to evoke a haunting sense of being above the water, as if aboard ship, and included the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island to contrast the unfree arrival of Africans with the hope of freedom and dignity associated with those landmarks. New Jersey was the last northern state to adopt gradual emancipation in 1804. Jersey City became a major station on the Underground Railroad in the mid 19th century.



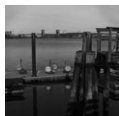
53 Douglass Landing Site, Battery Park City, New York City, 2024

The distinguished orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass [see 87-91] alighted in New York City at this site, having escaped servitude in Maryland. A plaque commemorating the landing site can be seen in this photograph, mounted to the pier's fence. Williams noted: "When I was there, staff at Battery Park helped with locating the area of Freedom's Crossing, which is adjacent to the Frederick Douglass Landing site. Freedom's Crossing is an area along the Hudson River within Battery Park, but there are no official monuments or designations other than the area where the historic docks were in busy New York Harbor in the 19th century." Another perspective on Freedom's Crossing is visible in 87.



54 Wall Street, New York City, 2024

The wall for which Wall Street is named was built by enslaved Africans brought to New Amsterdam by Dutch colonists. After the English took over New Amsterdam and it became New York City in 1674, a slave market (dating from 1711) was located at the end of Wall Street on the East River side. In the 19th century, the oyster house owned by Black entrepreneur Thomas Downing, located where today's Morgan Bank building stands at 23 Wall Street, was an active station on the Underground Railroad, facilitating the efforts of self-emancipating people seeking freedom.



55 Quinnipiac River, New Haven, Connecticut, 2010

It is uncertain when the first Africans arrived in Connecticut. Their presence was not recorded until 1639, but New Haven likely had enslaved people

at the time of its founding in 1638. New Haven was part of the system of transport, sale, and resale that also included the ports of Boston, Newport, Bristol, Portsmouth, New London, Hartford, and Middletown. The final sale of enslaved people in New Haven took place on the New Haven Green in 1825. [see 68]



56 Harbor Park, Middletown, Connecticut, 2016

Middletown is a part of the UNESCO Slave Route Project that launched in 1994. A marker erected in 2019 provides details about ships that docked near where Williams photographed Harbor Park on

the Connecticut River. The marker notes: "In 1761, the *Speedwell*, captained by Middletown native Timothy Miller, also arrived carrying its human cargo from Africa. On that voyage, 21 enslaved Africans perished during the Middle Passage, with 74 surviving." The gazebo in this picture, which was unaffiliated with enslavement, has been taken down since Williams's visit, a reminder that changes over time in the built environment and landscape affect our ability to read the past.



57 Waterfront of New London, Connecticut, 2023

The schooner *Speedwell* that docked in Middletown had stopped in New London several days earlier.

A marker nearby tells us that the *Speedwell* is the only documented New London arrival of a slaving ship directly from Africa, but vessels owned by New London merchants carried small numbers of enslaved Africans from the West Indies. Among them was likely Cornelia, whom Rev. George Griswold in Lyme purchased in 1730 for 80 pounds from Joseph Coit "in plain and open market in New London." William centers his composition on a contemporary offshore supply vessel with the words "Go America" on its side to encourage consideration of the contrast between that patriotic statement and America's history of enslavement.



58 Soldiers and Sailors Monument, New London, 2024

The dedication of this Civil War memorial near the New London waterfront in 1896 attracted 15,000 onlookers. It was erected on the site of the city's

first fort, which stood from 1691 to 1777. An inscription honors the "Memory of New London's Soldiers and Sailors Who Fought In Defense of Their Country." Williams focuses on the base of the granite obelisk in his composition, he says, "to reference the fort and the nearby port which relied on enslaved labor." An example of that labor is represented by the photograph of Adam Jackson's enslavement site. [see 104] The cropped monument may also be interpreted to suggest that monuments erected in that era convey an incomplete, or truncated, story that omits the essential contributions of African Americans during the Civil War.



59 Waterfront, New London, Connecticut, 2024

Williams notes: "What I'm interested in, really, is remembering, and witnessing. I go to places and make a photograph for which the historical context is not necessary, but it heightens the impact. I'm playing with temporality."

The food, livestock, and timber that flowed down New London's Thames River, shown here, to the West Indies, supported enslavement on Caribbean plantations. By 1774, New London County had more enslaved people than any other county in New England, and enslaved people comprised 9.7% of New London's population.



60 Pier at Bristol, Rhode Island, 2024

Enslavement was essential to Rhode Island's economy in the 1700s. The DeWolf family, originally from Lyme, was responsible for nearly 60 percent of all African voyages that originated in Bristol. They financed

88 slave voyages and brought an estimated 30,000 captured Africans to Cuba, the West Indies, and the American South. The DeWolfs took orders from other Bristol residents and often delivered them directly upon arrival.



61 Waterfront, Bristol, Rhode Island, 2024

When asked why he chooses to work in black and white, Williams responded: "I think black and white photography is more expressive than color because color is more literal. I'm interested in shades

of gray, and my main focus is light and the structure of pictures. Black and white is also timeless."



62 Linden Place, Bristol, Rhode Island, 2024

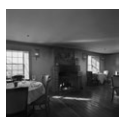
Linden Place was built in 1810 by George DeWolf, a slave trader, merchant, privateer, and ship owner. The Federal-style mansion with its magnificent Palladian windows and Corinthian columns reflects

the wealth derived from the African trade and the work of the many people of color whose labor contributed to the family's fortunes. While few structures where enslaved people lived have survived to attest to the conditions of their existence, mansions like the DeWolfs' have been preserved.

Williams's view centers on the gate, which is open. DeWolf family descendants have opened up the family's past by delving into their history of slave owning in a film and in books. Through Williams's lens, perhaps the portal's crown, or halo-like feature, invites us to imagine the many People of Color who contributed to the vast wealth of the DeWolf family.



63 Sculpture at Linden Place, Bristol, Rhode Island, 2024



64 DeWolf Tavern Restaurant, Bristol, Rhode Island, 2024

Williams contemplated Bristol's history of enslavement while eating lunch in a restaurant now located in the renovated 1818 warehouse built by the Bristol-based maritime merchants James and William DeWolf. The warehouse was used to store imported Caribbean goods, including molasses that was distilled nearby into rum—a key activity in Bristol's economy. Many of the stones used to construct the building came from Africa, taken from the ballast on ships traveling on the triangle trade route. A wharf originally ran alongside the tavern where ships docked and unloaded goods into both levels of the building.



65 Old Slater Mill, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, 2024

When wealthy Providence merchant Moses Brown invested in American manufacturing in the 1780s, he chose the Pawtucket Falls on the Blackstone River, already a site of industry, as the location for a mill that required waterpower to spin cotton fiber into thread. Brown relied heavily on slave-produced Southern cotton for his success, but he was also a vocal abolitionist. He helped found the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade and was known to support enslaved individuals and free Blacks with financial and legal assistance. In 1789 he hired Samuel Slater, an English immigrant, who redesigned the unsuccessful initial machinery, and in 1793 Brown launched the country's first water-powered textile mill. Northern industry thrived on enslaved labor and produced fabrics and other goods sold back to plantations to supply those in bondage with clothing, shoes, and tools.



66 Amistad Pier, New London, Connecticut, 2024

Several plaques mark the site where the *Amistad* was docked in New London. A Black Heritage Trail marker reads: "On June 28, 1839, the schooner *Amistad* set sail from Havana with fifty-three captive Africans: forty-nine adult males and four children, three of them girls. Four days later, in a life and death struggle for freedom, the Africans killed the captain and seized control of the ship. Attempting to sail home to Africa, they were captured by the United States Navy and, on August 29, towed into New London Harbor." Today, the pier serves as seasonal access to the 128-foot replica schooner. The floating classroom provides a space to learn about the *Amistad* captives and to explore ideas of freedom, power, justice, and equality. While the ship does not appear in Williams's photo, his focus on the marker sign suggests one way to reinsert Black history into the Connecticut landscape from which it has so often been erased.



67 Dock for Replica Amistad Schooner, New Haven, Connecticut, 2010

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

Williams photographed the dock in New Haven where a replica *Amistad* schooner serves as a floating education center to teach students about enslavement and injustice in the United States. The ship was built at Mystic Seaport Museum. The program launched in 2000 and continues today. Williams reflects on his ongoing research about this site and program: "I was in Barbados in 2008 and the *Amistad* was docked in Bridgetown. I did not know at the time that it was captained by a Black man. Captain Bill Pinkney (1935–2023), the first African American to solo circumnavigate the globe through the Southern Passage, was deeply involved with the *Amistad* replica docked at Long Wharf. Long Wharf was originally developed by William Lanson (1776/82–1851), a free Black man in New Haven who also engineered the Farmington Canal."



68 New Haven Green, New Haven, Connecticut, 2024

The *Amistad* survivors were incarcerated for almost a year, from September 1839 to August 1840, in a jail next to the New Haven Green. During that time, they were taken outside to exercise on the Green. Thousands of spectators each paid 12 and a half cents admission to see the African captives as they awaited their fate. Williams stood on the Green across the street from the jail site to capture this view. The inscription on an *Amistad* memorial placed in front of what is now City Hall notes in part: "On this site, the *Amistad* Africans were jailed awaiting trial for piracy and murder."



69 Yale University Quadrangle, New Haven, Connecticut, 2024

Williams took this photo of Yale University's Old Campus and the steeple of Battell Chapel as part of an extended meditation on the Mende *Amistad* Africans that moves forward and backward in time. He arrived there on foot from 1032 Chapel Street, formerly the homesite of Declaration of Independence signer Roger Sherman (1721–1793). The photographer considered what his grandson, Roger Sherman Baldwin (1793–1863), would have seen when walking the same path toward his law office just beyond the chapel. The abolitionist New Haven attorney successfully defended the African captives' rights over the course of two years. Writing about this photograph, Williams references an exhibition inside Battell Chapel about aid to the *Amistad* captives provided by Yale Divinity School faculty, students, and alumni, including James W.C. Pennington (1807–1870), who raised funds for the Mende Africans at his own Talcott Street Church congregation in Hartford. [see 103]

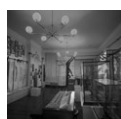
In recent years, Yale University has dedicated resources towards acknowledging and grappling with its complex historical relationship to enslavement.



70 United States Custom House, New London, Connecticut, 2024

In this photograph Williams focuses on the door and the bronze plaque at the U.S. Custom House in New London that memorializes the *Amistad* captives and their attempt to regain their freedom with a likeness of Sengbe Pieh, also known as Joseph Cinqué (1813/14–1879). Pieh was a rice farmer, trader, husband, and father of three children at the time of his capture by slave traders in 1839 in present-day Sierra Leone. Pieh returned to Africa in November 1841, but it is not known whether he reunited with his family, who may have perished during an ongoing war.

Williams is also interested in the materials of the door, which are fashioned out of wood once used in the *USS Constitution*, first launched in 1797, and the world's oldest commissioned naval warship still afloat. Enslaved people provided the timber for the walls of the wooden warship. Among the ship's first missions was to forcefully free captives of the Barbary corsairs—Muslim pirates operating from the west coast of North Africa.



71 Interior, United States Custom House, New London, Connecticut, 2024

The U.S. Custom House at New London, now also home of the Custom House Maritime Museum, contains a permanent exhibition titled "*Amistad: A True Story of Freedom.*" Williams keeps viewers somewhat removed from the exhibit's content, instead framing his photograph to take in a view of a spacious room where people working on both sides of the *Amistad* case once walked while the captives remained aboard ship.



72 View of the Farmington River from Burial Ground of the Mende, Farmington, Connecticut, 2012

The trials determining the fate of the captive Mende people for the revolt on the *Amistad* lasted 18 months.

In February 1841 their case was argued by former President John Quincy Adams before the Supreme Court, and on March 9, 1841, a decision declared the Africans to be free people with permission to return to their homeland. Nine days later, they arrived in Farmington, Connecticut, where abolitionists provided housing, schooling, and funding for the Mendes' passage back to their homeland. They remained in Farmington until November 1841, when they sailed back to Africa.

Williams shared, "This photo is taken from Foone's grave site. It is near where he drowned—it is said that he committed suicide due to depression." [see 73]



73 Gravesite of Foone, Mende African on the *Amistad*, Riverside Cemetery, Farmington, Connecticut, 2012

A limestone monument in Riverside Cemetery marks the burial place of Foone, who died in Farmington

while awaiting return to Africa. The inscription states: "A native African was drowned while bathing in the center basin Aug. 1841. He was one of the company of slaves under Cinque on board the Schooner *Amistad* who asserted their rights by hand; possession of the vessel after having put the Captain and others to death sparing their masters Ruez & Montez." While the formerly enslaved typically had few grave markers to preserve their names and stories, the extensive text filling Foone's headstone and a second plaque in front of the monument acknowledge his identity and the acts for which history has remembered him and the companions who fought the injustice of their enslavement and won their freedom.



74 First Church of Christ, Congregational, 1652, Farmington, Connecticut, 2012

Farmington abolitionists were prominent members of the congregation of this church, led by Rev. Noah

Porter from 1806–1866. The meetinghouse was a center of activity when the *Amistad* Mende Africans came to Farmington, following the Supreme Court ruling that freed them on March 18, 1841. Here the Mende attended Sunday services while money was raised to finance their return home to Sierra Leone. Friends from Farmington and eight surrounding towns gathered here for a farewell service on November 17, 1841, when some *Amistad* survivors read from the Bible and sang a hymn.



75 Union Hall, Historic Farmington Academy, Connecticut, 2012

Williams photographed this stairwell while imagining the footsteps of the abolitionists who climbed it in the 19th century. The building was constructed in 1816

and served multiple purposes: a community assembly hall, a chapel for the Congregational Church and the Farmington Academy, and a school operated by the church until the 1840s. The second floor of the building was rented out to both abolitionists and pro-slavery groups in the years before the Civil War. When the newly freed African survivors of the *Amistad* arrived in Farmington in 1841, women from the church's congregation gathered here to sew clothing for them. Although Williams's photograph includes modern equipment and construction materials that allude to the building's renovations, the composition's tone nevertheless conveys a sense of purity and transcendence.

Light reflecting off the smooth wooden railing encourages us to envision the many hands that grasped it as they ascended the stairs.



76 Samuel Deming's Store, Farmington, Connecticut, 2012

Taking a cue from his mentor, Walker Evans, Williams utilized the signage in the landscape to point us toward the importance of this store, run by Samuel

Deming (1798–1871) in the 19th century. Deming was a legislator, merchant, farmer, and one of Farmington's leading abolitionists. In 1838 he co-founded the Connecticut Anti-Slavery Society and his home was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Deming supported the *Amistad* Africans during their trials and arranged to bring them to Farmington after the trial in 1841. At that time, the second floor of Deming's store served as sleeping quarters and a classroom for the Mende. Knowing that history, the arrow on the pavement points to the site of refuge and safety that the Mende finally found before returning home to Sierra Leone.



77 Old State House, Hartford, Connecticut, 2024

Built in 1796, the Old State House in Hartford is the oldest state house in the nation. It was the seat of all three branches of Connecticut's government until 1878, when the present Capitol opened. The Old State

House was the site of some of the state's most important events related to freedom and civic action. The courtroom was the site of Prudence Crandall's 1834 trial, when she was tried for violating the state's "Black Law" (passed in the State House chamber) by operating a school exclusively for African American girls. The *Amistad* trial began here in 1839 on criminal charges of murder, mutiny, and piracy against the Africans aboard the ship. It went on for two months before the proceedings were moved to New Haven.

Williams's photograph centralizes the classical architecture of the Old State House against a backdrop of modern office buildings. The gleaming bronze sign bearing its name shows the pride and care with which the building has been preserved over centuries. The bus stop and "no parking" signs hint at urban activity that continues to surround this venerated building, now a museum.



78 Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, 2023

Williams visited the astounding twenty-five room brick residence that author Mark Twain (1835–1910) occupied from 1874 to 1891. The Missouri-born Twain's family

had owned slaves and he briefly fought for the Confederacy, but in works like the controversial 1884 novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* he used satire to make fun of and rebuke racism in American society. In the house shown in Williams's photograph, Twain employed as a butler George Griffin, a self-emancipated former slave who settled in Hartford, where, in Twain's words he "ruled his race in the town, he was its trusted political leader." Twain provided backing for Black Hartford artist Charles Ethan Porter's studies in Europe and funded the Yale Law School education of Warner Thorton McGuinn, who went on to a prominent career fighting segregation. Explaining his offer of financial support for the promising Black student to the Yale dean, Twain wrote: "We have ground the manhood out of them, and the shame is ours, not theirs, & we should pay for it."



79 Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Hartford, Connecticut, 2023

When visiting Mark Twain's home in Hartford's Nook Farm neighborhood, Williams went next door to make these photographs of Harriet Beecher Stowe's house.

Stowe (1811–1896) wrote more than 30 books, but it was her best-selling anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) that had a profound effect on American attitudes toward slavery, laid the groundwork for the Civil War, and catapulted her to international celebrity. Her impact was so great that when she met President Abraham Lincoln, legend has it that he addressed her as "the little lady that started this big war." Stowe spent the last 23 years of her life in this house. When she died here in 1896, she was memorialized as the most influential author of the 19th century.



80 Pathway, Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Hartford, Connecticut, 2023

Here Williams captured an overgrown hydrangea that flourishes in Harriet Beecher Stowe's historic gardens. Stowe was an avid gardener, a passion shared

by her great-niece, Katharine Seymour Day, whose home is today part of the Stowe Center. The Victorian-era gardens around their two homes reflect their fondness and knowledge of plant varieties. In Stowe's influential novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Uncle Tom kept a bountiful garden, as revealed in this passage:

In front it had a neat garden-patch, where, every summer, strawberries, raspberries, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, flourished under careful tending. The whole front of it was covered by a large scarlet bignonia and a native multiflora rose, which, entwining and interlacing, left scarce a vestige of the rough logs to be seen. Here, also, in summer, various brilliant annuals, such as marigolds, petunias, four-o'clocks, found an indulgent corner in which to unfold their splendors, and were the delight and pride of Aunt Chloe's heart.



81 Uncas's Leap, Norwich, Connecticut, 2023

This site is named after the Mohegan Sachem Uncas (1598–1683) and the extraordinary "leap" he took at these falls on the Yantic River in 1643. During the

Battle of Great Plain, fought between the Mohegan and Narragansett, warriors from each tribe chased each other to the chasm. Mohegan Sachem Uncas sent his best runner, Tantaquidgeon, who apprehended the Narragansett Sachem Miantonomo and held him for battle with Uncas. When Uncas arrived, he leaped over the chasm, which was narrower than today due to centuries of erosion.

Describing his reaction to the falls, Williams shared, "No man could jump that. When I made this, I was thinking of Thomas Cole and his painting *The Last of the Mohicans*. I used a wide-angle lens to get a lot of foreground to make you feel like you're right where he's standing, right on the precipice." To see the site, which remains deeply significant to the Mohegan Tribe, visit the newly dedicated Uncas Leap Heritage Park in Norwich.



82 David Ruggles Freedom Courtyard Marker, City Hall, Norwich, 2023

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

David Ruggles (1810–1849), one of the most effective freedom advocates of his era, was born a free man of color in Connecticut. This courtyard in front of Norwich's City Hall was dedicated in 2015 to honor Ruggles, who was raised in the Bean Hill section of town. Williams balanced the picture by showing the Ruggles plaza and Freedom Bell tower together with buildings of varied architectural style. In the foreground, the painted line on the pavement acts additionally to focus the viewer's eye on the memorial.

Williams seeks to photograph buildings, sculptures, and historical markers like those here as part of one unified landscape, an approach he developed from studying the way photographer Walker Evans placed images of shacks and churches next to each other, on what Williams describes as "an equal basis." Williams extends that "revolutionary" approach in his own work, saying "as a student of Evans, I use these lessons to come to a sense of what it means to be Black and to be a practitioner of a kind of visuality and communication that for many people has essentially belonged to the white elite."



83 View of Church from Jail Hill, Norwich, Connecticut, 2023

From this view of Jail Hill one can see the Congregational Church school where Ruggles received his education starting in 1815. At a time

when opportunities for literacy were scarce for Blacks, Ruggles became an author, editor, bookseller, and publisher advocating for abolition. His writings made him a target of pro-slavery groups and slave catchers attempted to capture him and sell him into bondage. The elevated vantage point, deep foreground, and framing trees that Williams included in his composition show the school Ruggles attended as distant and almost out of reach. A county jail built in 1833 on what became known as Jail Hill depressed property values and allowed African Americans to purchase homes in this neighborhood.



84 Yantic Cemetery, Norwich, Connecticut, 2023

Jailed numerous times for civil disobedience, David Ruggles was in failing health by 1842 and moved to what is now Florence, Massachusetts, where he joined a utopian community established by fellow abolitionists. He set up a “water cure” establishment, then in vogue, to treat himself and famous patients who included abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, May Brown (John Brown’s wife), and Sojourner Truth. He died at age 39 in 1849 and is believed to be buried in Yantic Cemetery.



85 Ruggles Family Plot, Yantic Cemetery, Norwich, Connecticut, 2023

Ruggles’s brazen and courageous anti-slavery activities led to an attempted kidnapping, several efforts to lynch him, and multiple physical assaults. Consequently, he suffered from many health issues including intestinal disorders and impaired vision. Ruggles is believed to be buried in an unmarked grave in the family plot owned by his brother, Felix, whose headstone appears in Williams’s photo. The grave may have been left intentionally unmarked to protect it from vandalism. Williams’s photos of grave markers here and elsewhere in the exhibition call our attention to the range of heights, silhouettes, styles, conditions, and postures of the stones, a variety that corresponds to the diversity of people and stories linked to the memorials placed over the decades.



86 Home of David Ruggles, 36 Lispenard Street, New York City, 2024

Ruggles arrived in New York City at age seventeen. From his home at 36 Lispenard Street, he opened a bookstore and circulating library that became a hub for abolitionists. He operated the first Black-owned printing press and published his own works, including *Mirror of Liberty*, the first Black magazine. His home at this site was also a station on the Underground Railroad. Ruggles estimated he guided 600 slaves, including Frederick Bailey (who changed his name to Frederick Douglass). During Bailey’s stay, Ruggles educated him about abolitionism, shared his library, and even hosted Bailey’s wedding to Anna Murray at his home. Ruggles gave Bailey a letter of recommendation and a five-dollar bill when he left the city. Williams shows us the building from a dynamic angle focused on the corner, and draws attention to the crosswalks, sidewalks, roads, and pedestrian signage to emphasize means of travel to and from this stop on the Underground Railroad.



87 Monument, Freedom’s Crossing, New York City, 2024

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

Williams explains, “Freedom’s Crossing was the first safe place reached by freedom seekers coming from New Jersey or any other points in the Deep South.” Frederick Bailey landed at approximately this location, on the shores of New York City on September 4, 1838, and found his way to David Ruggles’s safehouse. [see 86] Bailey was born enslaved in February 1818 on Holmes Hill Farm in Maryland. As a child he recognized that the ability to read and write could be his pathway to freedom. Through the tutelage of his “unsuspecting” mistress he garnered these skills and eventually used them to escape his bondage. To avert the attention of the slave catchers he changed his name to Frederick Douglass and found work as a common laborer in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Another view of this site showing a plaque commemorating Douglass’s landing is seen in 53.

“Freedom’s Crossing is also a monument located in Lewiston, New York, on the banks of the Niagara River across from the Canadian Border,” Williams notes. “I have been there and photographed the area as well as the City of Niagara Falls in Canada.”



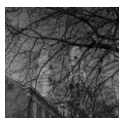
88 Site of Dart’s Hall, New London, Connecticut, 2023

Now a set of commercial loading docks, this scene lacks the gravitas merited by renowned orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who delivered four lectures here on a May weekend in 1848, inside the now demolished Dart’s Hall. New London housed a large population of abolitionists who attended Douglass’s final two lectures once word spread. A few weeks later, on June 12, 1848, Connecticut became the last New England state to abolish slavery.



89 Alternate view, Site of Dart’s Hall, New London, Connecticut, 2023

Williams circled around to the other side of the now demolished Dart’s Hall where Douglass spoke and found the headquarters of *The Day* newspaper. His photograph shows *The Day*’s brightly lit façade contrasting with the dark hedges on the left, perhaps to raise questions about presence and absence. Williams once explained of another picture: “On one side you see emptiness; on the other side you see that house. Part of my practice has been to propose these kinds of questions: where is the history available and where is it not available? To put them side by side. To ask the questions.”



90 Site of Frederick Douglass’s Speech, Center Church, Hartford, Connecticut, 2024

Frederick Douglass came to Hartford in 1843 and later wrote in his autobiography *Life and Times* that he and his companions “found several towns in which people closed their doors and refused to entertain the [idea of assisting them].... Notably among these were Hartford, Conn., and Grafton Mass. In the former [we] determined to hold our meetings under the open sky, which we did in a little court under the eaves of the ‘sanctuary’ ministered unto by the Rev. Dr. [Joel] Hawes, with much satisfaction to ourselves and I think great advantage to our cause.” The event took place at Hartford’s First Church of Christ, also known as Center Church. Williams favored this view of the place, noting that, “People coming to hear Douglass speak would have looked up and seen a similar view.”



91 Douglass Speech Marker at Center Church, Hartford, Connecticut, 2024

A Connecticut Freedom Trail marker commemorates the place where Frederick Douglass delivered his first address in Hartford at Center Church in 1843,

after other venues were denied to him. Years later, in 1889, President Benjamin Harrison appointed Douglass as Minister to Haiti. When he died in 1895 his legacy as a champion of human rights was secured. His work and memory serve as continued sources of inspiration in the pursuit of equality. Williams's photograph of the marker attached to a brick pillar against a backdrop of modern residential buildings juxtaposes past and present while acknowledging references to Black achievement introduced by the Freedom Trail and similar efforts to make Black history more evident in the landscape.



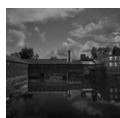
92 Site of John Brown's Birthplace, Torrington, Connecticut, 2023

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

This humble marker locates the house where eminent abolitionist John Brown (1800–1859) was born in

Torrington to a devout family holding strong anti-slavery views. Brown married twice and fathered twenty children, who moved with him to Ohio, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New York. He supported freedom seekers as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Williams positions his camera low, allowing us to view the marker nearly head on with trees towering above the hallowed space.

Brown's famous portrait, made by Black daguerreotypist Augustus Washington was created at the site seen in photograph 110.



93 Foundry site of pikes for raid on Harper's Ferry, Historic Collinsville, Canton, Connecticut, 2023

See 94



94 Historic Collinsville, Canton, Connecticut, 2023

Brown occasionally visited relatives in Canton at the family homestead. Nearby, he commissioned the Collins Company Axe Factory to make 1000 pikes to

aid the fight for freedom. Half of the weapons were found at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, in October 1859, where Brown intended to lead a slave insurrection at the U.S. Arsenal. He was armed with one of the pikes at the time he was captured. He was hanged not long after for treason, murder, and conspiring with slaves to rebel. Brown's raid helped catapult the nation into Civil War. Williams's serene compositions of the factory site quiet the clamor of historical events, suggesting instead the indelibility and endurance of memory.



95 Gravesite of abolitionist John Brown, John Brown Farm State Historic Site, North Elba, New York, 2023

After his unsuccessful raid on Harper's Ferry, Brown was captured, imprisoned, and hanged at Charleston,

Virginia. His body was returned to North Elba, high in New York's Adirondack Mountains, and was buried in front of his home on December 8, 1859. The remains of several of Brown's followers, who fought and died at Harper's Ferry, were moved to this small graveyard in 1899. In the years preceding the Civil War he made a telling prophesy: "I, John Brown, am quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood," a remark that suggests not only his certainty of coming Civil War but also the enduring legacy of enslavement.



96 John Brown Farm State Historic Site, North Elba, New York, 2023

Brown moved here in 1849 to teach farming practices to African Americans as part of a project funded by wealthy social reformer Gerrit Smith. Smith bought

120,000 acres of land in New York's North Country with the goal of helping Black people become property owners and subsequently eligible to vote. The most prominent of the eight settlements created was known as "Timbuctoo."

On a trip that Williams described as "walking in the footsteps of the ancestors in the Adirondacks," he wrote about the history of New York's Black settlement and visited a barn at the Brown historic site, pictured here.



97 Stairwell at Prudence Crandall's School, Canterbury, Connecticut, 2023

Archival digital ink print, 22 x 22 in.

In 1831, Quaker abolitionist and educator Prudence Crandall (1803–1890) purchased an existing home on

the village green and opened the Canterbury Female Seminary, a school supported by the town's prominent lawyers, businessmen, and clergy and attended by their children. The next year, she enrolled a 20-year-old Black woman, Sarah Harris. White parents reacted with outrage, threatening to remove their daughters from an environment where they would be living and learning alongside an African American person as equals. Crandall defied them, announcing that in spring 1833 she would enroll only African American women as pupils.

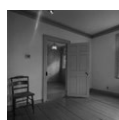
During his visit, Williams focused his lens on the staircase where teachers and young women fled for their lives when a mob attacked the school in 1834, forcing her to close it and leave the state.



98 Prudence Crandall's School, Canterbury, Connecticut, 2023

Williams shot this exterior view of the school, now a state-run museum located on the Connecticut Freedom Trail, from a distance, outside the pillared gate.

The composition suggests his continued interest in taking a step back from what we think we know about the past and re-framing our perspective from a new angle.



99 Classroom at Prudence Crandall's School, Canterbury, Connecticut, 2023

Abolitionists, including *The Liberator's* publisher William Lloyd Garrison, helped promote Crandall's school, which advertised that it was "open for the

reception of young Ladies and little Misses of color." Garrison also connected the young headmistress with Black New England families whose daughters traveled to Connecticut to enroll as Crandall's students. While the schoolroom appears sparsely appointed in Williams's photo, the curricular offerings were abundant: reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, natural and moral philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, drawing, painting, piano, and French.

Crandall's pursuit of educational and racial equality was met by opposition as citizens petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly to pass the 1833 "Black Law" that made it illegal for out-of-state African American students to attend Connecticut schools without local authorization. Crandall was arrested on August 23, 1833, for violating the law. Following her trials, she returned to teaching but was forced to close the school out of fear for her and her students' safety after mobs attacked and ransacked the building on September 9, 1834, while Crandall and the female students were inside.



100 Site of Prudence Crandall's Trial, Brooklyn Town Hall, Connecticut, 2023

For the enrollment of Black students at her school Prudence Crandall faced three trials, a process that began at the Windham County Courthouse (now

Brooklyn's Town Hall). Williams's focus on the neoclassical white clapboard building recalls many photographs of churches and other civic structures around the U.S. by the renowned photographer Walker Evans, one of the artist's mentors. Surrounded by paved roads and parking lots, the building stands today as an island, but the process set in motion there had far-reaching consequences.

The jury deadlocked, then convicted Crandall, a verdict that was later overturned. Legal arguments revolved around the constitutionality of the Black Law used to prosecute Crandall based on determinations about whether Blacks were citizens entitled to equal rights. The 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision that declared unconstitutional "separate but equal" education for white and African Americans cited Crandall's case.



101 Home of Sarah and George Fayerweather, New London, Connecticut, 2024

Following New London's Black Heritage Trail, which links several sites depicted in his photos, Williams reached the home occupied by Sarah Harris and

George Fayerweather from 1841 to 1855. Norwich-born Sarah Ann Major Harris had African, West Indian (possibly Haitian), and Native American heritage. As a 20-year-old in 1832, she was the first Black student at Prudence Crandall's Female Boarding School. According to an 1832 statement in the *Windham County Advertiser*, Harris told Miss Crandall, "I want to get a little more learning, if possible, enough to teach colored children, and if you will admit me to your school, I shall forever be under the greatest obligation to you." Harris approached Crandall several times before being admitted to study, later followed by her sister. Harris's formal education ended when she married in November 1833, and on the day that a mob attacked and attempted to burn down the school, Harris gave birth to her first child, Prudence Crandall Fayerweather. Eventually parents of eight children who lived with them in the house in Williams's photo, Sarah and her husband George were active in the abolition movement and the Underground Railroad during their time in New London.



102 Former Norwich Female Academy, Norwich, Connecticut, 2023

The distinguished historian Frances Manwaring Caulkins (1795–1869) was headmistress at the Norwich Female Academy at the same time that Prudence

Crandall opened her school for Black girls in Canterbury. [see 98] Caulkins founded the first female anti-slavery society in Norwich. Membership in the Second Congregational Church, [see 83] known for its interracial congregation, exposed her to the challenges African Americans faced gaining access to an education. One of Caulkins's fellow church members was Sarah Harris (1812–1878), the first Black student to enroll in Crandall's school. [see 97, 101]

Williams's photograph captures Norwich Female Academy in a neglected condition, with peeling paint and later alterations to its formidable structure. The landmark's weathered appearance gives visual form to the disruptions in the historical record that have particularly affected sites tied to the history of African American populations.



103 Site of Talcott Street Church, Hartford, Connecticut, 2024

Before 1819 Black churchgoers in Hartford, as elsewhere, were relegated to separate pews in the back of the building. In response, one group formed their

own congregation to this injustice, purchasing land at Market and Talcott streets and building a church in 1826. The pastor was James W.C. Pennington (1807–1870), who self-emancipated from slavery and attended classes at Yale Divinity School during the 1830s. He was refused enrollment, barred from speaking in class, but permitted to sit in the back of the classroom and listen. Pennington and his congregation were instrumental in raising funds for the *Mende Amistad* Africans. The Talcott Street Church was torn down in the 1950s during an urban renewal project, making way for the parking garage that Williams photographed. Researching Black history often requires searching under asphalt paving for burial sites, churches, and historic community centers.



104 Adam Jackson Enslavement Site, Joshua Hempsted House, New London, Connecticut, 2024

In this dense composition balancing light and dark planes with straight and diagonal lines, Williams

suggests the close quarters shared by the enslaved and their owners in Connecticut, as well as the complexity of those relationships. Born to a free father and an enslaved mother whose status applied to him, Adam Jackson was purchased at age 27 by Joshua Hempsted for eighty-five pounds in 1727. Most of what is known about Adam Jackson comes from Hempsted's extensive diaries. That source provides more information than is typically available about the life of an enslaved person in early America, but from the perspective of a slaveowner. Over 30 years, the men lived and worked on Hempsted's farm (now a historic site), with Jackson's uncompensated labor enabling Hempsted time away from agriculture to become Justice of the Peace and make money from other opportunities, accruing civic authority and generational wealth. Jackson never married and two years after Hempsted's death in 1758 is listed in the census as a free man, a status obtained by unknown means. He died around 1764, with two pounds to his name and no known burial location.



105 John Fox Slater and Marianna Slater House, Norwich, Connecticut, 2023

The angle from which Williams photographed the home of philanthropist and mill owner John Fox Slater (1815–1884) and Marianna Slater (1824–1889)

amplifies its sense of grandeur. John Fox Slater was the nephew of Samuel Slater (1768–1835), who pioneered the country's textile industry. In 1882, he used one million dollars of his fortune to establish the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen, to support "the blessings of Christian education" for newly emancipated African Americans, many of whom had cultivated cotton used in Slater's mills. Over thirty-six colleges in the South emphasizing vocational and teacher training benefitted from Slater's generosity, and when the fund ceased operation in 1937 it had distributed about \$4 million dollars.



106 Lemuel Haynes Memorial, West Hartford, Connecticut, 2023

Lemuel Haynes (1753–1833) is widely considered to be the first Black man in the United States to be ordained by a white Protestant church. Born in West Hartford

the son of an African-descended man and a white woman, he was abandoned by his parents and indentured to Deacon David Rose in Granville, Massachusetts. He developed a talent for writing sermons while attending Rose's racially segregated church. He paused his religious career to fight in the Revolutionary War, writing a poem about the Battle of Lexington in which he emphasizes the conflict between slavery and freedom and refers to himself as "a young Molatto who obtained what little knowledge he possesses, by his own Application to Letters." Haynes became ordained as a Congregational minister in 1785. His first appointment was as pastor of the all-white First Congregational Church in Torrington, which he left after two years due to members' prejudice.

This solemn memorial to Haynes belies the fervor expressed in a manuscript he wrote around 1776 in which he boldly declared "That an African... has an undeniable right to his liberty" and pointed out the irony of colonists passionately defending liberty while denying freedom to those who lived enslaved.



107 Guy and Sarah Drock House, Norwich, Connecticut, 2023

In 1742 Guy Drock was enslaved to Captain Benajah Bushnell. Drock's wife, Sarah Powers, formerly of Newport, purchased her husband from Bushnell

in 1759 in exchange for two years work as a servant, plus an unknown amount of money. Later, the couple purchased this home and a blacksmith shop across the street where Guy, trained in that trade, worked. This house, along with many other sites depicted in Williams's photographs, is part of the Norwich Freedom Trail.



108 Grave of Sappho, wife of Samuel Clancey, New London, Connecticut, 2024

This gravesite sits in the section for Black persons in the back of Ye Antientist Burial Ground, one of the earliest cemeteries in New England and the oldest colonial graveyard in New London County. Williams discussed, "Early gravesites such as this one are rare, and the fact that there is a gravesite for these individuals is a sign of great distinction. When I photographed these gravesites, they were overgrown. All of the headstones are in advanced stages of deterioration. Sappho and Samuel had a daughter named Morocco, who died young." The distinguished roles of Samuel and Sappho Clancey are still undetermined and perhaps will be learned over the course of the exhibition. Williams continued, "I found a partial list of Black Governors and did not see Samuel Clancey's name." Near this site Williams also photographed the grave of Florio, wife of Hercules, the earliest known Black Governor in Connecticut. The location of Hercules's burial site is unknown.



109 Gravesite of Boston Trowtrow, Colonial Burial Ground, Norwich Connecticut, 2024

Williams visited the gravesite of Boston Trowtrow, which is one of the few remaining that evidence the Black Governors of Connecticut. The tradition of

choosing a Black Governor began in Connecticut in the 1750s and was adapted from an African political practice. Enslaved individuals accompanied their enslavers to Hartford for annual gubernatorial elections and chose a Black Governor, or king, to represent their own population as well. Historical accounts indicate that Black Governors had little, if any, independent power, but it was a great honor and signals the community strength Blacks developed apart from Connecticut's slaveholding society. Trowtrow served as governor in Norwich from 1770–72. Both enslaved and free men could be Black Governors. The last known Black Governor elected in the state was Wilson Weston, who oversaw the Black community in Seymour beginning in 1855.



110 Site of Augustus Washington's Studio, Hartford, Connecticut, 2024

Williams explains his choice to take this picture and outlines some of the research he undertakes as part of his process: "When Frederick Douglass spoke in

1843 under the portico of Center Church in Hartford, he was a few doors away from Augustus Washington's photography studio at 136 Main Street. Washington (1820–1875) was born in New Jersey as a free person of color and migrated to Liberia in 1852. He is one of the few African American daguerreotypists whose career has been documented. The building that housed Washington's studio was torn down in the 1950s to provide more access to the Old Burial Ground. Another way of understanding the location is to place Washington's studio in the middle space between Center Church and the Sun Life skyscraper that occupies the remaining part of the block. I have not been able to locate any Washington portraits of Douglass. The most successful portrait and the one that lives on is Washington's portrait of John Brown taken in that studio."



111 73 Hempstead Street, New London, Connecticut, 2023

This home, along with many other sites depicted in Williams's photographs in this exhibition, is part of New London's Black Heritage Trail. During an

era when few people were willing to sell houses to Black residents, seventy-three Hempstead Street was one of five houses built by abolitionist Savillion Haley in the early 1840s. The area became one of the first Black neighborhoods in New London. Several distinguished members of the Black community lived here, including Lavinia Ruggles, the sister of eminent abolitionist David Ruggles. [see 82]



112 73 Hempstead Street, New London, Connecticut, 2024

When Williams first visited 73 Hempstead in 2023 a marker installed in front of the house proudly shared its significance. [see 111] When he returned in 2024

the marker had fallen, perhaps after being hit by a car. Williams took a second photograph while it sat waiting for repair. Together the two photographs point to the ephemerality of the historical record, and of how easily the record of a contribution can be erased. Williams's work brings recognition to the vastness of African Americans' contributions and how so few of them have been appropriately honored as they deserve.



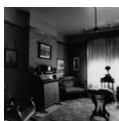
113 Abraham Brian Barn, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1986

In his Gettysburg Address at the Civil War battlefield, Abraham Lincoln declared, “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.” Yet during many visits to the site Williams heard little about African Americans like Abraham Brian, a freedom seeker who escaped slavery and through hard work purchased a twelve-acre farm in 1857. His farm was likely used as a station on the Underground Railroad. Brian successfully farmed the land, until his crops and buildings were destroyed during the battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863. Bullet holes from the battle can be seen in the upper right corner of this photograph. The Brian farm and barn are located near the Alexander Dobbin House, another station on the Underground Railroad. Williams’s photograph expands awareness of Black history and the National Park Service has added more information about the Black experience at Gettysburg since it was taken in 1986.



114 Jamestown Island, Virginia, 1996

This is near the place where the first African indentured laborers landed in the English North American colonies in 1619. Later this site became a Civil War fort built by enslaved African-descended people for the defense of the Confederate States.



115 Interior, Paul Laurence Dunbar House, Dayton, Ohio, 1995

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), an influential and eminent African American poet, based his writings on his observations of society and the experiences of his parents, who were formerly enslaved. Dunbar’s poetry voices the social dilemma of disenfranchised people and proclaims Black dignity. The author’s mother bought the house depicted in Williams’s photo in 1904. Dunbar lived there for only two years until his early death in 1906. His mother turned the suburban residence into an informal shrine to her son and after its purchase in 1938 by the state of Ohio it opened as one of the first public house museums dedicated to an African American. In 1962, the Paul Laurence Dunbar House became the first National Historic Landmark in the United States to be established in honor of an African American.



116 Forks of the Road, Slave Market Site, Natchez, Mississippi, 2004

This was the site of the South’s second largest slave market in the nineteenth century. Enslaved people were also sold on city streets and at Natchez Under the Hill. This market was last used for slave trading in 1863. When they captured the area in July 1863, the Union Army used the market buildings as a refugee camp for newly emancipated people and as housing for federal troops occupying Natchez. By 1864, the market buildings were torn down.



117 Bishop Peter Spencer Memorial and Grave, Wilmington, Delaware, 2006

Born enslaved, Spencer was the founder of the Delaware Black Church Movement. On this site in 1813 he founded The Union Church of Africans, presently known as the African Union Methodist Protestant Church. The church stood at this site until 1970 when the congregation moved to a new building. Under Bishop Spencer’s leadership the church and its members were active helpers on the Underground Railroad in Delaware.

Referencing a photo he took of a similarly dark statue, Williams described: “He becomes black against all that whiteness. That’s a certain stylistic trope that’s used to make the picture—but there’s an idea behind it too. I’m alert to a number of things, big and small, about where I am, and I try to be conscious and respectful of the history of the place.”



118 Interior, Fort Morgan, Battle Site, Mobile Bay, Alabama, 2003

An estimated 20,000 African Americans served in the Union Navy during the Civil War. Free men were able to join the Navy long before self-emancipated people were allowed to join the army, and during the Civil War, Union Navy ships were a refuge for Blacks emancipating themselves from bondage. A number of African American sailors were on board Union Admiral Farragut’s fleet, and African American soldiers were present to fight in the land and sea operations for control of Mobile Bay from August 5 to August 23, 1864.

Williams’s photograph focuses on a series of arches inside Fort Morgan. It was built with 46 million cubic yards of bricks made by enslaved people who labored for nearly 20 years to erect the fort.



119 Seneca Village, Central Park, New York City, 2024

Before it was Central Park, the landscape between West 82nd and West 89th Street was the site of Seneca Village, a predominantly free African American settlement. Seneca Village began in 1825 and by the mid 1850s there were 50 homes, three churches, burial grounds, and a school for Black students. New York abolished slavery in 1827, but discrimination was prevalent and limiting for the emancipated. Seneca Village provided refuge from the city’s crowded, unhealthy conditions. In 1855, New York State enacted a law whereby the City acquired 775 acres through eminent domain for the creation of Central Park. Roughly 1,600 residents were displaced by 1857. Research is ongoing to learn more about the residents of Seneca Village and where they relocated.



120 Earth Works, Battle Site, Fort Pillow, Tennessee, 1999

While they were surrendering on April 12, 1864, over 300 Black Union soldiers were murdered by Confederate soldiers under the direction of future Ku Klux Klan leader General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Williams navigated the sloping earth of this trench to photograph the area where they were originally buried at Fort Pillow. After the massacre, Black troops adopted the battle cry “Remember Fort Pillow” as a reminder that surrender was no longer an option. In 1867, the soldiers’ remains were removed and buried in the Memphis National Military Cemetery. On February 4, 2025, Tennessee Congressman Steve Cohen introduced legislation that directs the Department of the Interior to conduct a resource study to determine whether Fort Pillow State Historic Park qualifies as a National Park Service site.



121 54th Massachusetts Memorial, Boston Common, Boston, Massachusetts, 2015

Williams's discussion of this photograph reveals the multifaceted, thoughtful and meticulous nature of his process: "What goes into making a picture?"

Well, this particular photograph [...] took me about thirty-one years . . . a pretty slow picture. But it also says a bit about the kind of engagement that's involved in making photographs." Williams first came across *The Shaw 54th Regiment Memorial* in 1975 when he was working at the Boston Public Library. Commissioned from American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, it commemorates Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the men of the 54th Massachusetts, one of the first Black Civil War regiments enlisted in the North. Its site on Boston Common marks the spot where the regiment marched by the State House on May 28, 1863, as they left Boston to board ships for the South.

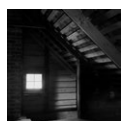
While others may have photographed the well-known bronze sculpture from the front, Williams explains why it does not appear in his image at all: "the appropriate way to consider the memorial is to look at the *setting* for which it was made. The setting was custom-designed for it. You can see the shadow that's cast by this tree onto the back of the memorial." He continues, "The work, the place, and the image are laden with so many meanings that it took me a couple of decades to figure it out, just to make this type of picture."



122 Interior, School Room, Site of Fort Henderson, Athens, Alabama, 2004

An abandoned child's bike holds space between three grids—floor tile, windowpanes, and a cinderblock wall—in a former school that served the African

American community until its closing in 1979 following desegregation. Trinity School was a Freedman's School organized near the fort in 1865, sponsored by the American Missionary Society and specifically designed to educate formerly enslaved African Americans following the Civil War. The building burned and was reconstructed on the site of Fort Henderson, originally built by U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War, in 1907. This fort and others surrounding Athens were surrendered by Union commanders in 1864 after a brief firefight. Books, clothing and equipment were left as they were when the institution, the first accredited high school for Blacks in Alabama, closed. The building, including the auditorium, is in ruins.



123 Second Floor Interior, Slave Cabin, Centreville, Maryland, 2008

The glowing sunlight from a window is counterbalanced by inky-black shadows under the sloping rafters where enslaved people once lived.

This building is located where historical records and maps place the slave village at Hermitage Farm. Once a 2000-acre estate, it is one of Maryland's oldest continuously inhabited farms held by direct descendants of the original settlers, the Tilghman family, since the mid 1600s. Williams skillfully composed the picture to enhance the abstract quality of the space—at once eerie and calm.



124 Jay, New York, 2023

Jay, New York, is named for Founding Father John Jay, whose greatest achievement as Governor of New York was the successful passage in 1799 of the Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery by the state legislature.

Jay's antislavery sentiments were apparent throughout his decades of public service. Still, Jay never reconciled his antislavery views with the paradox that he and his family were slaveholders. An inventory of Jay's property in 1798 recorded his ownership of six enslaved people.

The covered bridge in Williams's photograph spans the Ausable River in New York's Adirondack Region. It stands about twenty miles from North Elba, home of historic sites tied to abolitionist John Brown and an African American agricultural community depicted in other photos in this exhibition. [see 95, 96]



125 Old Norwich Burial Ground, Connecticut, 2023