

The Pittsburgh Memorial:

A Forgotten Document of Pittsburgh History

by Eric Ledell Smith

FASCINATING EARLY DOCUMENT of political history is "The Memorial of the Free Citizens of Color in Pittsburgh and its Vicinity Relative to the Right of Suffrage."¹ Drafted by African Americans in Pittsburgh in response to efforts to prevent black Pennsylvanians from voting, the Pittsburgh memorial became part of the state's political history when it was presented in 1837 to a convention considering changes to the state constitution. The memorial is especially interesting because it did not originate in Philadelphia, which was thought to be the home of the state's most active black political leaders.

Although the document is mentioned only in passing in two monographs, and has received generally scant attention from historians,² a few scholars, in fact, have recognized the Pittsburgh memorial's significance. Ann Wilmoth concludes that African Americans intended the memorial "to indicate their value as Pennsylvania citizens ... that blacks act just as responsibly as whites and therefore should be given the right to vote." Julie Winch considers it "significant that blacks in Pittsburgh should have entered their protest [against disenfranchisement] before the Philadelphians." She argues that Pittsburghers in 1837 were "faced with the loss of a right that they had been accustomed to."³ This essay shall bring into sharper focus the reasons for the issuance of the document, which also gave a cross-section of Pittsburgh's black community during the 1830s. The document appears in its entirety at the end of the essay.

Before considering events connected with the issuance of the Pittsburgh memorial, a review of the earlier history of black suffrage in Pennsylvania is necessary. After passage of the Gradual Abolition Act of 1780, which prescribed a gradual outlawing of slavery in the state, a small number of African Americans began voting in the counties of Allegheny, Bucks, Dauphin, Cumberland, York, Juniata, and Westmoreland. In Huntingdon County in 1796,

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citizens presented a petition to the Pennsylvania Senate requesting legislation allowing for the education of slaves to prepare them for citizenship responsibilities such as voting.⁴

In Philadelphia County, however, where the largest number of blacks in the state lived, none voted. The causes were not only racial prejudice and local custom. Paying taxes was an important requirement to qualify as a voter, and there is some evidence that Philadelphia authorities deliberately failed to assess and collect taxes from African Americans as a tool for ensuring political disenfranchisement.⁵

Strangely, neither Philadelphia city election notices nor the state constitution clearly banned black voting. The 1776 Pennsylvania constitution, Article III, Section 6, granted voting rights to “every freeman” who was a taxpayer of at least 21-years-old and a state resident for at least one year. The 1790 state constitution, likewise, made no reference to race. Prominent blacks such as Robert Purvis of Philadelphia would later argue that this was not an omission, but rather a recognition of the obvious: all Pennsylvanians, regardless of race, should be entitled to vote if they met all other legal qualifications. The issue remained unsettled through the early years of the 19th century, and this distinction between a “free” man (not a slave) and a “freeman” (taxpayer/property owner/voter) was a central point of contention between blacks and whites when suffrage was considered once more during the constitutional convention of 1837-38.⁶

There were other issues, as well. Among them were the race riots that broke out in Philadelphia in 1834 and 1835. Another was that many fugitive slaves from nearby states were entering Pennsylvania via an informal network of hiding places and “safe houses” that came to be known as the “Underground Railroad.” Abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison lectured often in the Keystone State, and these occasions sometimes resulted in violence. In early 1838, the Philadelphia abolitionist meeting hall, Pennsylvania Hall, was burned by a mob. Abolitionists were accused publicly of seeking political power and voting rights for former slaves, a campaign that ensured continual tensions in race relations.⁷

Abolitionism also was often associated with anti-Masonry. Joseph Ritner, an anti-Mason, was the Commonwealth’s governor in 1837 and the Anti-Masonic/Whig party held the majority of seats in both the General Assembly and at the constitutional convention. In his 1837 annual address before the legislature, Gov. Ritner announced that he favored abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, as well as elsewhere.⁸ State Democrats were able then to argue for a connection between Anti-Masonry and abolitionism in their attempts to disgrace the governor’s majority party. One politician especially adroit in the use of this tactic was a convention delegate from Montgomery County, John Sterigere, whose influence will be considered a bit later in this article.

An important event leading up to the black franchise crisis was the court case of *Hobbs v. Fogg*.⁹ In 1835, an African American man in Luzerne County named William Fogg was turned away from the polls in a county election. Fogg sued. The case made history because it was the first time a black man had sued for the

right to vote in Pennsylvania. The county court ruled in Fogg’s favor, but defendant Hobbs appealed. Although the Pennsylvania Supreme Court eventually ruled on behalf of Hobbs, the court decision was not made until after the constitutional convention had ended. Its timing, however, undoubtedly impressed upon convention delegates in 1837 and 1838 the seriousness of African Americans’ quest for the ballot.

But the action ultimately responsible for the black franchise crisis was taken by John Sterigere (1793-1852). A former state and U.S. congressman, Sterigere, a Democratic kingpin in Montgomery County, had his eye on a state Senate seat in 1838. Sterigere believed “the Negro fit only for slavery,” and took every opportunity to declare what he considered to be a popular position, while linking Gov. Ritner to abolitionism. During proceedings at the constitutional convention on June 19, 1837, Sterigere offered a motion to insert the word “white” before “freeman” in the part of the constitution dealing with suffrage; other states banned blacks from voting, he pointed out to his colleagues.¹⁰ Debate on the convention floor made clear that the voting by blacks in some Pennsylvania counties was not common knowledge in all corners of the Commonwealth, while delegates also expressed fears that clarifying the constitution to allow “universal suffrage” would make Pennsylvania a haven for fugitive slaves.

When news of the constitutional convention’s deliberations reached Pittsburgh’s African Americans, a mass meeting was held June 13, 1837, to gather opinion. Afterward, a group of blacks sent to the constitutional convention its report on the moral, social, and political conditions considered important to the race in Pittsburgh. This “Pittsburgh Memorial” actually had several sections: a petition to action; an economic and social survey of black community life; a statement by the Pittsburgh “overseer”; and a statement from the Pittsburgh city collector. By presenting it to the convention, black Pittsburghers hoped to convince delegates that there were many among them employed and paying taxes.

When the convention received the memorial on July 8, 1837, many delegates grumbled and raged. “How dare the blacks ask us to consider their rights,” objected some delegates. The body voted not to print the document in its proceedings, then assigned it to a special suffrage committee for consideration. But Sterigere was persuaded to withdraw his amendment before the convention’s summer adjournment. It was a political victory for Pittsburgh blacks. For the first time in state history, Pittsburghers organized and spoke for African Americans statewide, without the

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leadership of Philadelphia blacks.

However, the victory was short-lived. When the convention reconvened in the fall of 1837, it again took up the black suffrage issue. This time, Sterigere's amendment found widespread support among white politicians who feared the specter of "black power." In October 1837, in Bucks County, the Anti-Masonic/Whig party ticket triumphed over Democratic candidates. Almost immediately, the Democrats charged election fraud; some 39 "Negro voters," reported a Bucks County newspaper, had gone to the polls in that county north of Philadelphia.¹¹ What is more, said the *Doylestown Democrat*, blacks had gone to the polls armed with guns, and allegedly some were fugitive slaves. But at least one observer said the media exaggerated the polling scene: both black and white voters came to the polls with rifles because it was the first day of hunting season.

During this period of racial tension, a series of meetings among white citizens of Bucks County was held. The result was a court challenge to the October election results, and the drafting of numerous memorials or petitions to the constitutional convention urging black disenfranchisement. It was pointed out that Southern states such as Louisiana (1812) and Alabama (1819) had state constitutions restricting the franchise to white males. Pennsylvania, said convention delegates, echoing Sterigere's sentiments from the year before, ought to do the same.¹²

By late December 1837, with the constitutional convention still in session, Bucks County Judge John Fox ruled in favor of the Democrats in the election case.¹³ In his interpretation of the federal and the Pennsylvania constitutions, Fox concluded that "a free Negro was not a freeman as it was understood by the provincial law-makers, William Penn and his associates." Furthermore, the 1780 abolition act freed slaves gradually over time, said Fox, but did not give these "new" freemen the right to vote. Significantly, Fox's decision was echoed later in 1838 when the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in *Hobbs v. Fogg*. It may have also influenced the thinking of the U.S. Supreme Court in the famous *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case in 1857. Both courts echoed the tenor of Judge Fox in 1837: the African American was not an American citizen and thus could not vote.

On January 20, 1838, the constitutional convention voted 77 to 45 to amend the Pennsylvania constitution to restrict suffrage to white males only. Among the Allegheny County delegates, Walter Forward, William Hays, and Harmar Denny voted against black disenfranchisement, while Hezeriah G. Rogers and William Purviance voted for it.¹⁴ It only remained for the people of the Commonwealth to ratify the new state constitution. Meanwhile, led by Robert Purvis, the African American population of Philadelphia rallied to draft a protest document known as "Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens Threatened with Disenfranchisement to the People of Pennsylvania."¹⁵ This eloquent plea to Pennsylvania voters, however, was made too late to turn the tide of prejudice.

The winning margin on October 9, 1838, was very small: 113,971 in favor of ratification and 112,759 against it (Allegheny County bucked the tide, voting 5,049 to 4,460 against ratification).¹⁶ Thus, for the next 32 years, until passage of the Four-

teenth Amendment in 1870, African Americans in Pennsylvania could not vote.

Although the Pittsburgh memorial failed to secure the franchise for Pennsylvania's African Americans, it stands as important evidence of the willingness of Pittsburghers in the 1830s to assert their rights. One cannot read the memorial without appreciating their courage and political sophistication. ✱

The Pittsburgh memorial starts on the following page.

Notes

¹ The original document is at the Pennsylvania State Archives, in RG 5, *Records of the Constitutional Conventions and the Council of Censors, 1837-1838* Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, Journal series, Box 3, folder dated July 8, 1837.

² Edward Raymond Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania, Slavery-Servitude-Freedom 1639-1861*. (New York, 1969), 191; Ira V. Brown, *The Negro in Pennsylvania History* (University Park, Pa., 1969), 191.

³ Ann Greenwood Wilmoth, "Pittsburgh and the Blacks: A Short History, 1780-1875," Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1975, 124; Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848* (Philadelphia, 1988), 206, footnote 26.

⁴ A copy of the Abolition Act of 1780 can be found in Pennsylvania, *Statutes At Large*, X, 67-69. It is reprinted in Louis M. Waddell, compiler and ed., *Unity From Diversity: Extracts From Selected Pennsylvania Colonial Documents, 1681 to 1780 in Commemoration of the Tercentenary of the Commonwealth* (Harrisburg, 1982), 86-88. For documentation of black voting, see John F. Denny, *An Essay on the Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States and the Constitution of Pennsylvania* (Chambersburg, Pa., 1836), 51; "Speech of Mr. McCahen," *Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to Propose Amendments to the Constitution, Commenced and Held at Harrisburg, on the Second Day of May 1837* [(Harrisburg, 1837) hereafter cited as *Proceedings*], vol. 9, 380; and Pennsylvania, *Journal of the Senate*, 1795, 43.

⁵ Benjamin Martin, a Democrat and delegate from Philadelphia, told the Constitutional Convention on June 23, 1837, that "in Philadelphia, we have hitherto escaped being associated with these [black] persons at the polls, owing to the construction put on the [state] constitution, that the right to vote could not be exercised without a previous assessment. But... it is not so in other counties, for, I understand that these persons are in the habit of voting in several [counties]." *Proceedings*, vol. 3, 83. Turner, 185, cites several Philadelphia newspapers, such as the *United States Gazette* (Oct. 30, 1812 and Oct. 9, 1832), which reported on how neglect by tax assessors disenfranchised Philadelphia blacks.

⁶ Turner, 185; Robert Purvis, *Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens Threatened with Disenfranchisement to the People of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1838).

⁷ For information about racial unrest in 1830s Philadelphia, see Emma J. Lapsansky, "'Since They Got Those Separate Churches': Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia," *American Quarterly* 32 (March 1980), 54-78; and John Runcie, "'Hunting the Nigs' in Philadelphia: The Race Riot of August 1832," *Pennsylvania History* 39:2, 187-218.

⁸ Joseph Ritner, "Governor's Annual Message to the Pennsylvania Assembly, January 16, 1837," in George Edward Reed, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives* (Harrisburg, 1901), 4th series, vol. 6, 290-292.

⁹ *Hobbs v. Fogg*. In Frederick Watts, ed., *Report of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania*, vol. 9, May-Sept. 1837, (Philadelphia, 1838).

¹⁰ By 1837, all of Pennsylvania's neighbors had state constitutions which either denied the vote to blacks — New Jersey (1820), Delaware (1792), Maryland (1809), Ohio (1817) and Virginia (1830) — or, as in New York (1821), proscribed a property test for African American voters.

¹¹ Quoted in the *Pennsylvania Reporter and Journal*, Nov. 3, 1837, 2.

¹² See W.W.H. Davis, "How the Word 'White' Became Inserted in Our Constitution of 1838," *Bucks County Historical Society Papers* 11 (1909), 595-600; Lyle L. Rosenberger, "Black Suffrage in Bucks County: The Election of 1837," *Journal of the Bucks County Historical Society*, Spring 1974, 29-36.

¹³ *Opinion of the Honorable John Fox Against the Exercise of Negro Suffrage in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1838).

¹⁴ *Proceedings*, vol. XIII, 260-261.

¹⁵ Purvis, *Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens*.

¹⁶ *Proceedings*, Vol. XIII, 260-261.

Memorial of the Free Citizens of Color in Pittsburgh and its Vicinity Relative to the Right of Suffrage

(the Pittsburgh memorial)

To the Honorable Convention assemble[d] for the purpose of proposing to the people of Pennsylvania, amendments to the existing constitution of Pennsylvania.

The Memorial of the undersigned from citizens of color, residing in Pittsburgh and its vicinity, respectfully represents: That they have heard, with surprise and alarm, of an intention seriously expressed by some of the members of your honorable body, so to amend the Constitution as to make the right of suffrage depend not on the fact of being a freeman and a tax-payer, but on the complexion, whether dark or fair, which it may have pleased God to confer on the good people of the Commonwealth.

That such an attempt should be mediated by a single individual in the year eighteen hundred and thirty seven, may well be regarded as a matter of astonishment.

It has been deemed both at home and abroad, a matter of just sarcasm, that, whilst the Declaration of Independence boasts of the universal equality of men, in many of the States, one half of the community is the absolute property of the other subject to the despotic will, nay to the passion, caprice, and cruelty of a master. In Pennsylvania, public sentiment has triumphed over this glaring inconsistency. [T]he brave spirits who achieved the Revolution, laid the foundation of a system by which slavery has been extinguished. The preamble of the noble act of the first of March, 1790, breathes a spirit which surely cannot have departed from the land. We beg leave to recall its imperishable language:

“When we contemplate our abhorrence of that condition to which the arms and tyranny of Great Britain were exerted to reduce us, when we look back on the variety of dangers to which we have been exposed, and how miraculously our wants in many instances have been supplied, and our deliverance wrought, when even hope and human fortitude had become unequal to the conflict we are unavoidably led to a serious and grateful sense of the manifold blessings which we have deservedly received from the hand of that Being, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh. Impressed with these ideas, we conceived that it is our duty, and we rejoice that it is in our power, to extend a portion of that freedom to others, which hath been extended to us, and release from that state of thralldom to which we ourselves were doomed and from which we have now every prospect of being delivered. It is not for us to inquire why, in the creation of mankind, the inhabitants of the several parts of the earth were distinguished by a difference in feature and complexion. It is sufficient to know that all are the work of an Almighty hand. We find in the distribution of the human species, that the most fertile as well as the most barren parts of the earth are inhabited by men of complexions different from ours and from each other, from whence we may reasonably as well as religiously infer, that he who placed them in their various situations, hath extended equally His care and

protection to all, and that it becometh not us to counteract His mercies. We esteem it a peculiar blessing granted to us, that we are enabled this day to add one more step to universal civilization, by removing as much as possible, the sorrows of those who have lived in undeserved bondage, and from which, by the assumed authority of the Kings of Great Britain, no effectual legal relief could be obtained. Weaned by a long course of experience from those narrow prejudices and partialities we have imbibed, we find our hearts enlarged with kindness and benevolence toward men of all conditions and nations; and we conceive ourselves at this particular period extraordinarily called upon, by the blessings which we have received, to manifest the sincerity of our profession, and give a substantial proof of our gratitude.”

Such were the sentiments promulgated fifty-seven years ago, by the fathers of the Commonwealth: The undersigned cannot but believe that to discard these now and to fall back upon barbarous prejudices, would not be less impolite than unjust and cruel. The danger under which some of our sister states is now trembling is, that they hold within their bosom a population cut off from social rights, and looking with sullen discontent or eager hostility on all around them. In Pennsylvania, the colored man, under her liberal and enlightened policy, has been taught to feel that he has an interest in common with the white man in sustaining her free institutions. He has felt that he shared in the blessing of her condition; and it has been his pride to show by his conduct as a citizen, that he is not unworthy of having been restored to the rights of humanity.

Believing that information would be interesting, we beg leave to submit to your honorable body, certain statements which accompany this memorial, (marked respectively A, B, and F.) They show our present condition, the stand that has been taken in the useful pursuits of life, in the requisition of property, and the efforts made to ameliorate the condition of our race.

And your memorialists will ever pray, etc.* Signed at Pittsburgh, Penn., June 26, 1837

*[Many petitioners, being illiterate, endorsed the memorial by marking an “X” by their printed name- Author]

John B. Vashon
George Powell
H. Vashon
A. D. Lewis
C. R. Lewis
R.L. Hopkins
George Powell
Robert Bailey
Otho Matthews

J. W. Brown
James McKnight
Zelicher Newman
Daniel Smith
Henry Anderson
Othello Darsey
Samuel Collins
Samuel Berry
Charles Cook

George Parker	John M. Mitchell
C. S. Williamson Jr.	Samuel Ranyolds
B. J. Colder	Chambers Peters
Thomas Morris	Benjamin Jones
Samuel Sanders	Charles Clark
Peter Ennis	William O. Krow
Va. Johnston	James F. Douglass
George Woods	Henry Myers
Matthew Jones	Richard Bryans
S. Morris	Joseph Manks
Samuel Bruce	Lewis Davis
John Graham	Abraham Strawdeo
Owen Barrett	George W. Boler
Henry Woods	Edward Talbert
John Cook	Thomas Knox
Solomon Phillips	Henry Seaton
James Gillard	George Speares
Charles Weddly	Robert Bowen
B. W. Wilkins	Lewis Woodson
James Parker	John Newton
A. Bell	George Carney
Peter Starks	Benjamin Russell
E. Sears	George Wheeler
Edward R. Parker	David Body
Steven McGill	Robert Henderson
Issac Sheldon	Joseph Mahonney
A. Bedford	Reuben Farmer
Hugh Tanner	James Coleman
Samuel Johnston	Nathaniel Dixon
Henry M. Collins	Ebenezer Findlay
	John Peck

Statement A

The committee appointed by the free colored citizens of the city of Pittsburgh, at their next public meeting on the thirteenth of June 1837, to make certain inquiries concerning the moral, social, and political condition of the colored population of Pittsburgh, and its vicinity, have performed the duty assigned them and beg leave to submit the following report:

The number of colored population of the city of Pittsburgh, and villages immediately adjacent, is supposed to be about two thousand five hundred. Their manner of living is generally the same as that of those among whom they are located. The sacred obligations and duties of the family relation are respected and practiced among them, as it is among all Christian people. They are believers in the doctrines of the Bible and the worshippers of that God whose attributes and character it more fully unfolds. They are the decided friends of good order, and the supremacy of the laws under which they live; and feel a warm interest in the peace, safety, honor and prosperity of the Commonwealth.

The colored population of the city of Pittsburgh have under their exclusive government, one African Methodist Episcopal Church of two hundred and five members. The house in which they worship belongs to them, and is a substantial brick building,

newly enlarged and repaired, and furnished with comfortable pews, carpets, venetian window blinds, and opaque lamps, and is valued at ten thousand dollars. The congregation is large, orderly, and well attended. Their doors are always open to all well-behaved people; and no person has [been] excluded from the best of their seats, on account of the complexion which it may have pleased the Almighty to give him. Besides these, there are a number of colored persons assigned to the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, and Catholic congregations of the city.

They have a very flourishing Sunday School of ninety-seven scholars and fifteen teachers; furnished with a Library, selected chiefly from the publications of the American Sunday School Union. This school is exerting a most happy influence on the moral character of the rising youth.

They have a common day school, taught by a young colored man, a graduate of Ohio University. The number of scholars now in regular attendance is eighty-five, many of whom are making rapid progress in their studies, and are preparing for future usefulness and respectability in society. The house in which it is taught and the lot on which it stands, both belong to the colored people, and is valued at two thousand dollars; and the school is supported entirely by the colored people.

They have a Temperance Society of about one hundred and seventy members. This society is now in active operation; and no institution ever exerted a more happy influence on the moral character of any people than this has done on the moral character of the colored people of Pittsburgh. They have purchased with their own funds, and distributed gratuitously, three hundred copies of the Temperance Almanac; besides a considerable number of Temperance tracts. And they are now regularly taking eighty copies of the Pennsylvania Temperance Recorder.

They have a moral reform and literary society, whose object is the improvement of morals, the promotion of the mechanic arts, and the diffusion of useful knowledge among all classes of the colored people.

They have among them four benevolent societies, male and female; the oldest of which has in its treasury, a fund of two hundred and twenty dollars. And the treasuries of the others are solvent and well-supported. The object of these societies is to relieve the wants of their members and friends; when in sickness or distress; thereby preventing the disgrace of their becoming chargeable to the State as paupers, or going to the common poorhouse.

The amount of property and poll tax paid by the colored citizens of Pittsburgh, amounts to about four hundred and twenty-two dollars, according to the reports of the City Collector, which accompanies this report and is marked F. The amount of water tax paid by them is about four hundred dollars. And the amount of real estate owned by them is about ten thousand dollars. And the amount of real estate owned by them is valued at ____ [sic] thousand dollars.

In the city of Pittsburgh there are colored mechanics embracing the following trades viz: carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers, stone masons, boot and shoemakers, plasterers, painters, tanners

and curriers, coppersmiths and shipwrights; and in the vicinity of the City there are several farmers. All these are constantly, and some of them very successfully employed in their several avocations. It has been frequently remarked by impartial observers, that there is less idleness and drunkenness among the colored people who actually live in the City than among any other class of her population. The amount of pauperism among them is extremely small and, according to the report of the overseers of the poor, which accompanies this report, and is marked B, does not average more than three in a year (his own language was "perhaps only a little over two; and the annual expense of these is about \$75 each.)

In the village of Arthurville, immediately adjacent to the City on the east side, about seventy-one colored families reside. Thirty-six of these are the owners of real estate; the very lowest estimate of which is thirty-six thousand dollars. For some of the lots as much as two thousand five hundred dollars has been offered. The remaining thirty-five families are tenants, at from three to four dollars a month rent; amounting in the aggregate to about fourteen hundred and twenty-eight dollars. The people of this village have erected for themselves a small church, in which divine service is celebrated every Sabbath day. They have a Sunday School of from eighty to eighty-five scholars; and also a very full common school. The people of this village have done much to acquire the property they possess — to improve and make their dwellings comfortable — to educate their children, and to prepare them for future usefulness and respectability.

In the borough of Allegheny town, lying immediately west of the City, twenty-seven colored families reside. Seven of these are the owners of real estate, some of which is highly valuable, lying near the center of the business part of the borough. Eight are the owners of valuable leases and twelve are tenants, whose aggregate rent is four hundred and fifty-eight dollars. The property tax of some of them is ten dollars and forty cents, whilst some is as low as three dollars seventy cents. All the others pay the usual poll tax.

The Committee has not had time to pursue their investigations further. They believe, however, that enough has been exhibited, to satisfy any unprejudiced mind that the colored population appreciates their present privileges; and are endeavoring to sustain themselves honorably, and respectably in the community in which they live. Whatever of ignorance or degradation there is among us, owes its existence chiefly to our former condition in life. Slavery, that unrighteous, and unnatural state in which many of us were raised, deprived us of every means of moral cultivation, and caught in its own sordid interest in shutting out every ray of intellectual light. The fathers of this Commonwealth abolished this wicked system; and the wisdom of their deed is evinced in the fact that as we further recede from the fetters of the slave, we are better prepared to sustain the honors and high responsibilities of freemen.

In conclusion, the Committee would say: Let it be the chief pride of our existence to render ourselves worthy of the land of William Penn.

Signed at Pittsburgh June 19, 1837 by
The Committee:
 John B. Vashon of Pittsburgh
 Joseph Mahonney of Alleghenytown
 Samuel Ranyolds of Pittsburgh
 Thomas Knox of Arthursville
 Lewis Woodson of Pittsburgh

[To whom it may concern:]

The foregoing report was read and unanimously adopted in the public meeting of the free colored citizens of Pittsburgh, and ordered to accompany their memorial to the Convention for proposing amendments to the existing constitution of Pennsylvania, now met at Harrisburg.

Lewis Woodson, Secretary
 Pittsburgh, June 28, 1837

Statement B

The colored population of the City [of Pittsburgh] averages three persons chargeable, or something like \$75.00 per year per person.

Charles Craig, Overseer
 Pittsburgh, July 3, 1837

Statement F

J. B. Vashon	pays	\$130.00
Ch. Richards	pays	\$ 46.00
Geo. Gardner	pays	\$ 24.00
Frone Logan	pays	\$ 22.00
A. Lewis	pays	\$ 30.00
J. Mitchell	pays	\$ 20.00
T. Morris	pays	\$ 18.00
Mrs. Lewis	pays	<u>\$ 7.00</u>
		\$297.00

The above named persons pay the [respective] amount of city and poor tax, and there are at least one hundred men who pay a poll tax of \$1.25 each.

Thos. Dickson, City Collector
 Pittsburgh