

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The Whitecuff Family (c. 1776)

Long Islanders, both black and white, were split in their loyalties between the British and the American forces during the Revolutionary War. The Whitecuff family of Hempstead (2) is a good example. The father, a prosperous black land owner, joined The Continental Army as a sergeant, and was soon followed by the elder of his two sons. However, the younger Benjamin Whitecuff joined the British, who had offered full rights as British subjects to free blacks who enlisted, as well as immediate freedom to slaves. Like many other African-American loyalists, he enlisted to serve The Crown in 1776. Black men fought bravely on either side. Some 5,000, both slave and free, served under Washington's command.

See also: **Crispus Attucks** and **James Armistead**

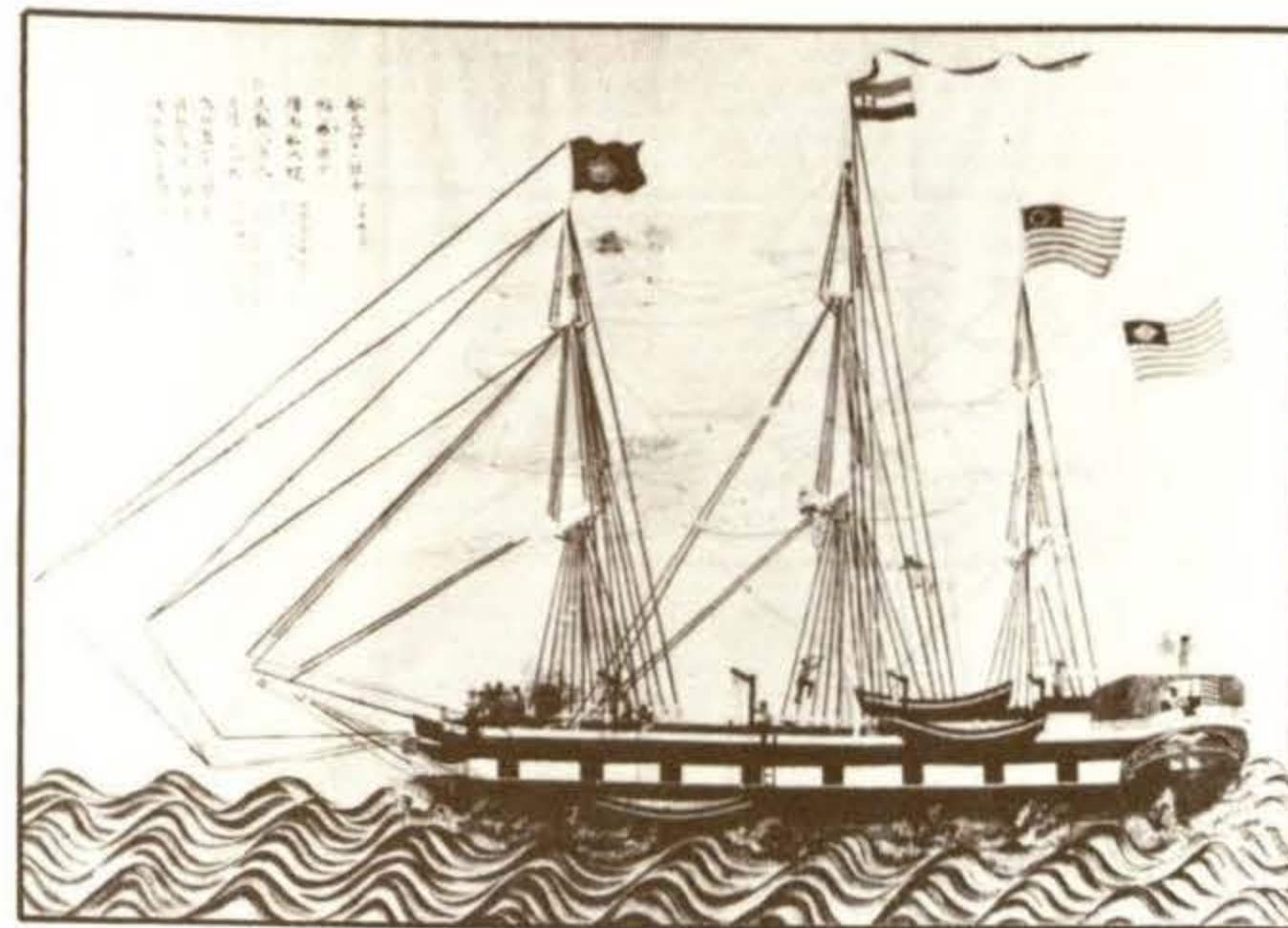


CRAFTSMEN & SEAFARERS

Pyrrhus Concer (1814-1897)

Most free blacks earned their living as skilled craftsmen, agricultural workers, or in the maritime trades. By the middle of the 19th century, half of all American seamen were African-Americans. Pyrrhus Concer was the steerer on Capt. Cooper's whaleship, *The Manhattan*, which sailed into restricted Japanese waters on a mission of mercy, returning shipwrecked Japanese sailors. Concer was proud of the astounded admiration given him by the Japanese who had never seen a man of African ancestry. After traveling the world and joining in the gold rush, Concer returned to his Southampton (3) home. His tombstone read: "Though born a slave, he possessed virtues without which kings are but slaves."

See also: **Capt. Paul Cuffee**

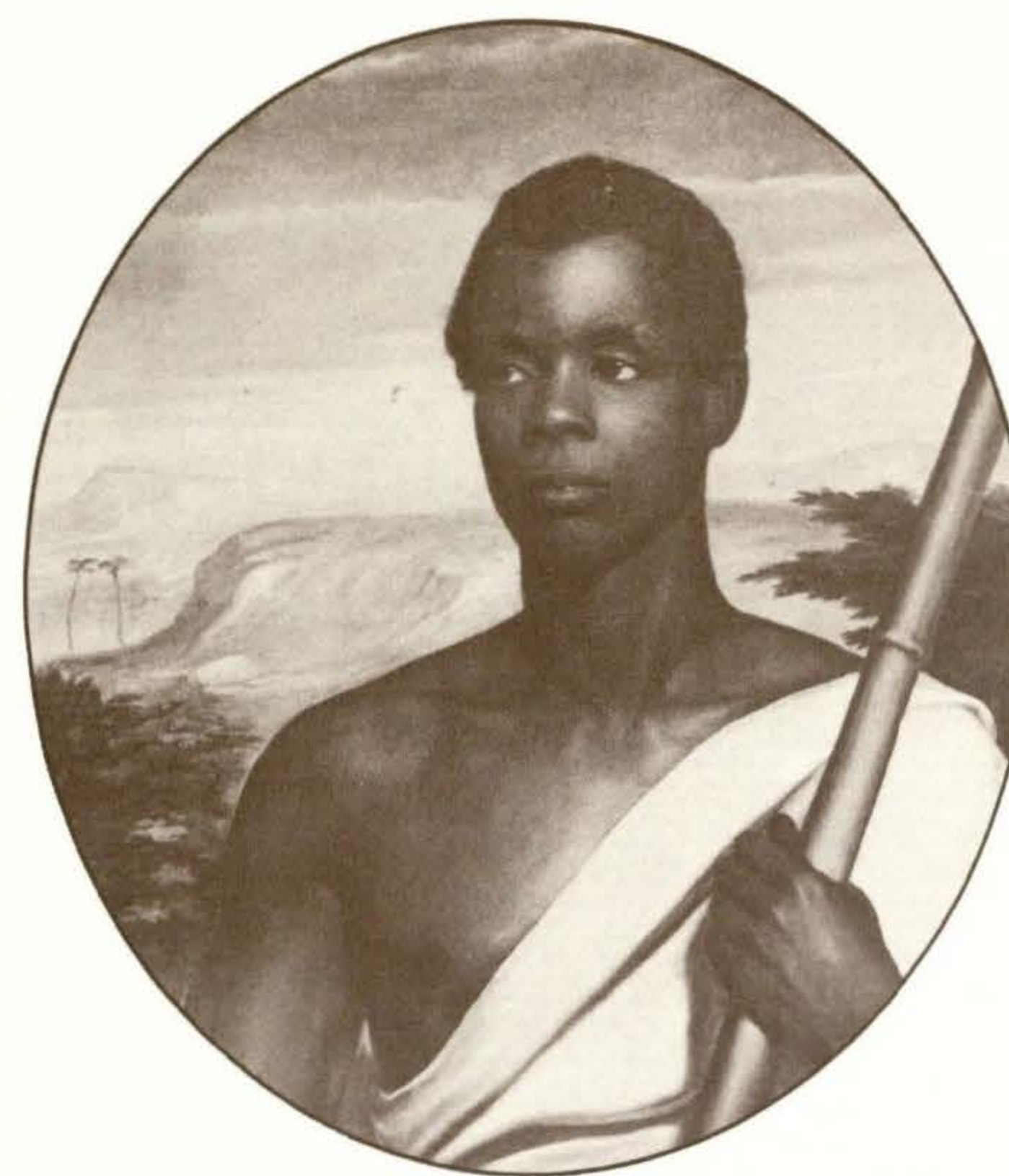


REBELLIONS

Joseph Cinque (c. 1840)

One of the most astounding mutinies came to a head off Montauk Point (4) in 1839. Cinque, the son of a Mendi chief, had been taken captive in Sierra Leone and placed on the slave ship, *The Amistad*. While in Cuba, he and his fellow Africans killed the captain, released the crew, and ordered the two Spanish owners to take them back to Africa. Instead, the ship zigzagged up the coast for sixty-three days until stopped by a U.S. Navy brig and Cinque was arrested. The ensuing trial brought the venerable John Quincy Adams out of retirement to argue the Africans' case in front of the Supreme Court. They were finally granted freedom and sailed back to their homeland in 1842.

See also: **Nat Turner** and **Denmark Vesey**

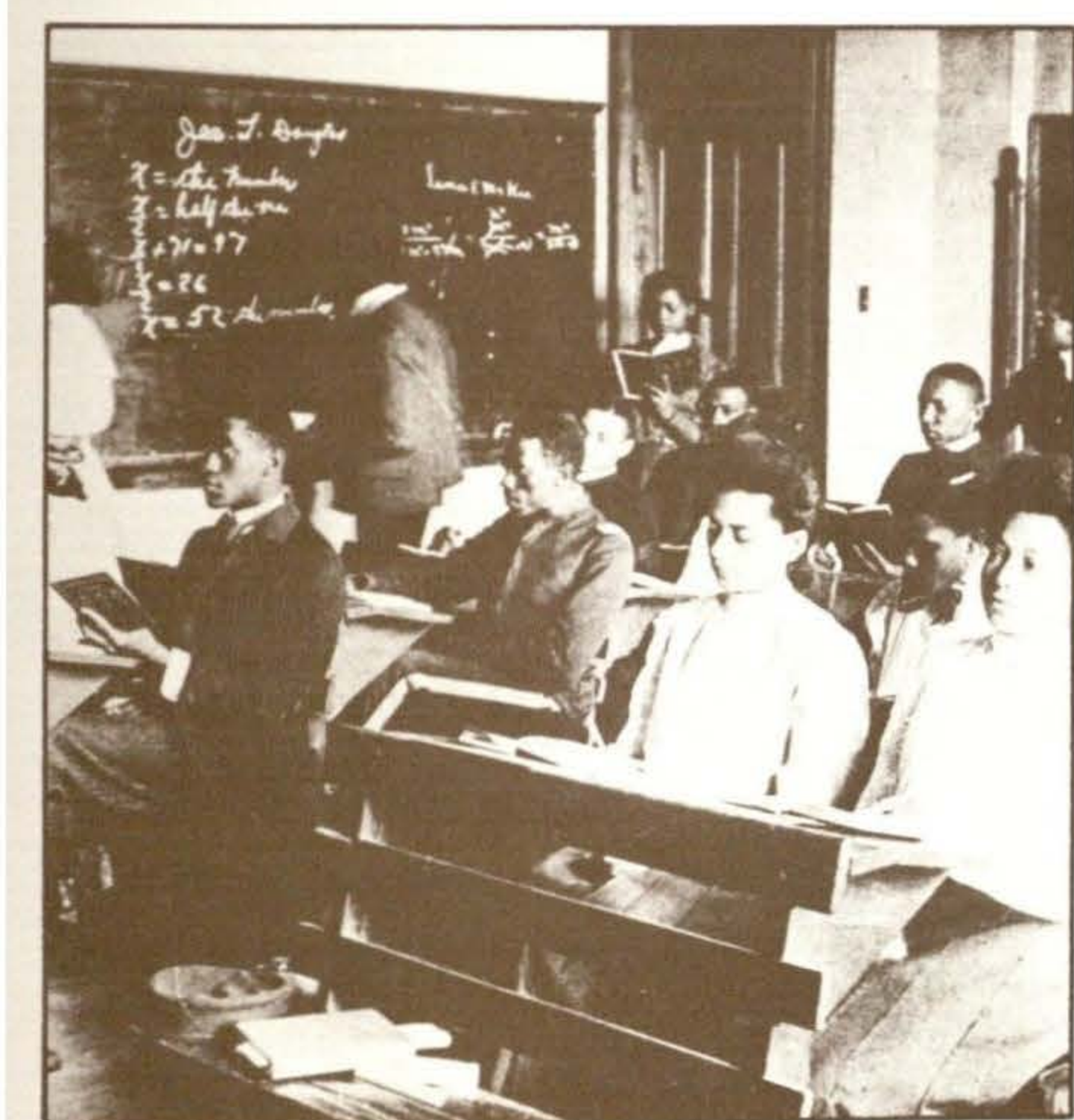
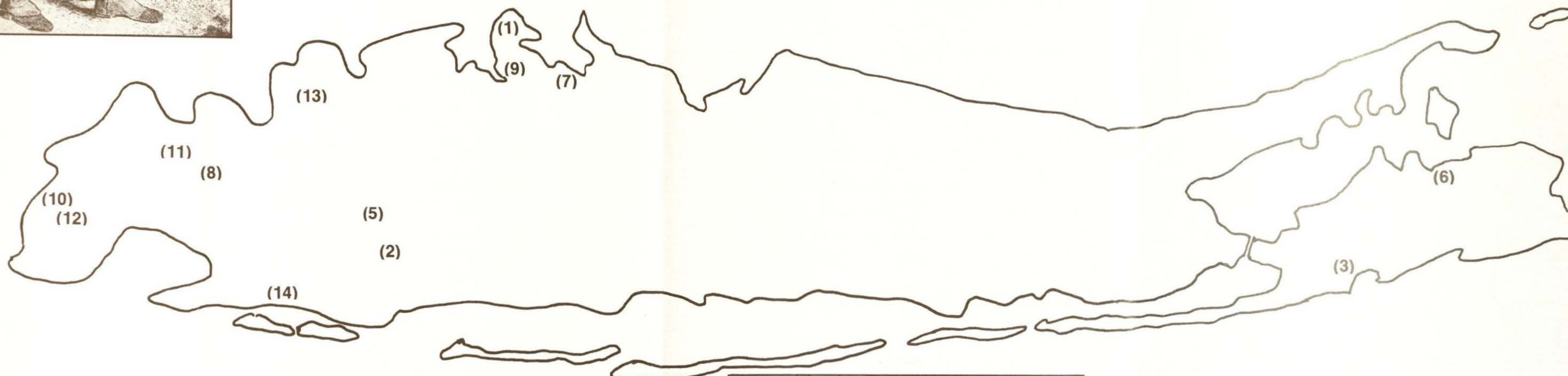
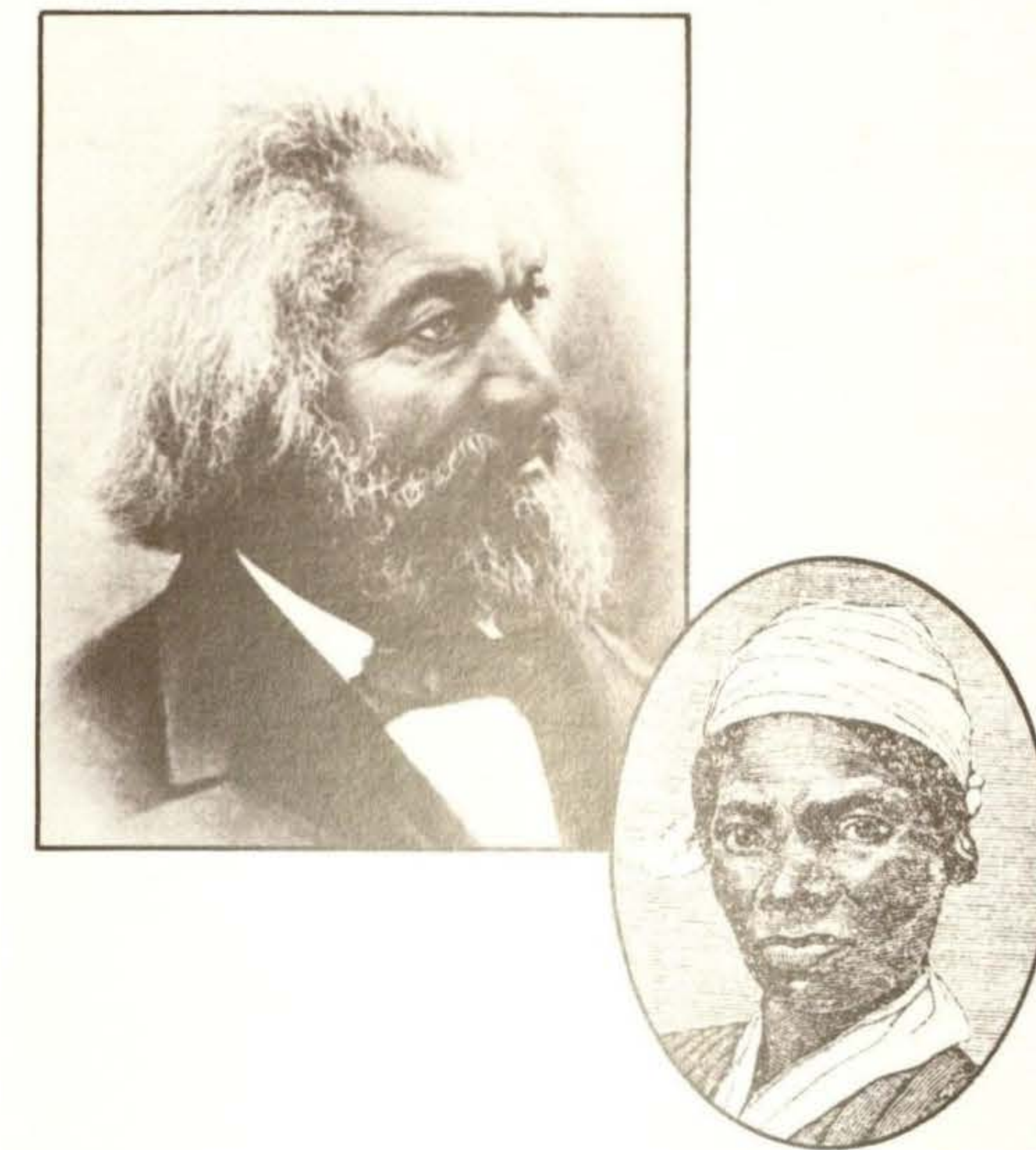


THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883)

African-Americans were at the forefront of the anti-slavery movement. Sojourner Truth started her preaching pilgrimage by traveling from New York City to Brooklyn, walking to Huntington, spreading the word of freedom. The nationally known orator, Frederick Douglass, was in communication with the abolitionist Quaker community in Westbury (5) and spoke in Brooklyn and Hempstead. Small community churches, such as St. David's AME Zion church in Eastville (6), may have provided safe haven for slaves escaping via the sea route north in the underground railroad.

See also: **Major Martin R. Delany**

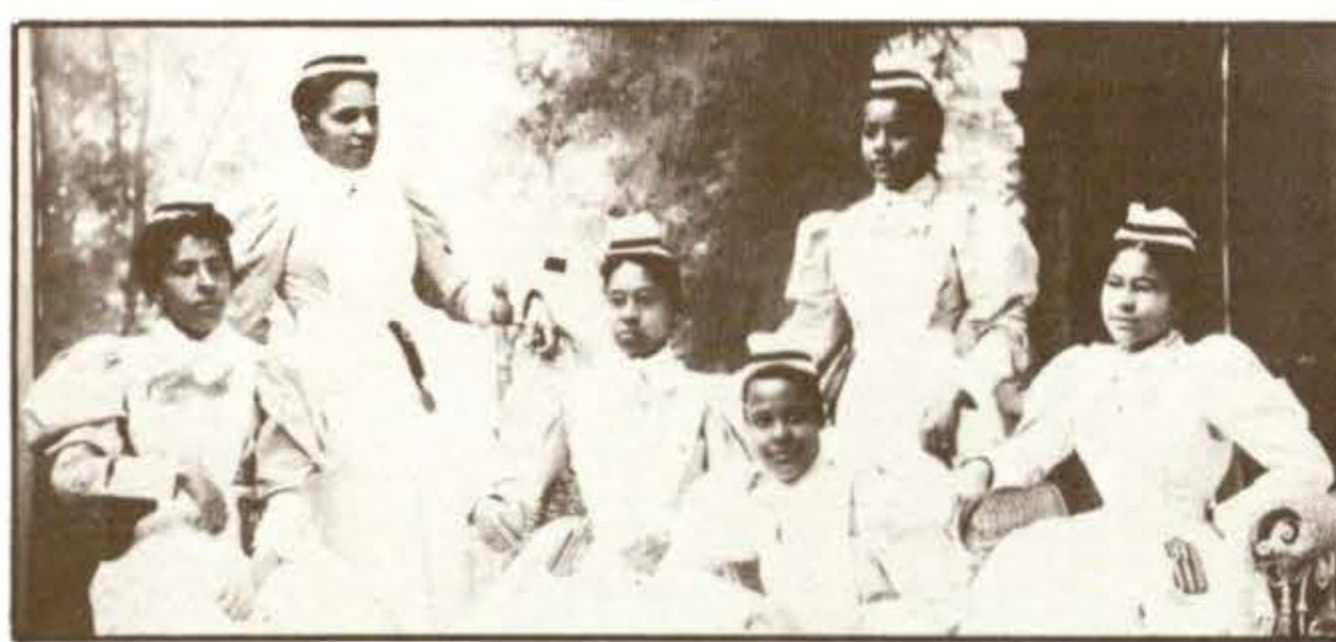


EDUCATION

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915)

In 1824, the City of New York took over the support of its seven African Free Schools, the oldest of which dated back to 1787 when it was founded by The Manumission Society. Thus, African American children in New York were offered free public education before white children were. This was the exception, rather than the rule. In 1881, Booker T. Washington established Tuskegee Institute, which would become famous for practical education aimed at economic freedom. The "spirit of Tuskegee" became synonymous with the spirit of independence. After the turn of the century, Booker T. Washington moved his northern base to New York City and to his summer home in Huntington (9), where he championed his causes with the most influential politicians, business tycoons, and philanthropists of the day.

See also: **Mary McCleod Bethune**



MEDICINE

Dr. Susan Smith McKinney-Steward (1847-1918)

Weeksville (8), a tightly-knit African-American community, now an African-American Historical Site in Brooklyn, was the home of many prominent black leaders in the 19th century. One of them, Dr. Susan Smith McKinney-Steward, opened her medical practice in Brooklyn in 1870. She was the first Afro-American physician in New York State and the third in the country. Like so many other community organizers, she was active in the suffrage movement and philanthropic causes. At her funeral, she was eulogized by W.E.B. DuBois, arguably the most influential black leader of the early 20th century.

See also: **Dr. Daniel Hale Williams**



LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS

William H. Johnson (1901-1970)

African artistic traditions traveled with the first blacks brought to this country and influenced many arts, such as woodcarving, pottery, and quilting—as well as oral and written forms. A powerful outpouring of black literary expression known as The Harlem Renaissance occurred in the 1920's and continues to this day. Visual artists also emerged. William H. Johnson, who spent his last years on Long Island, exhibited both in New York and abroad, and is only now receiving his rightful recognition as a modern master.

See also: **Richard Wright, Alice Walker, and Romare Bearden**



MUSIC

Louis Armstrong (1900-1971)

African American musical influence and accomplishments range from classical opera to Latin calypso to its own distinctive gospel and blues. The jazz idiom was revolutionized in the 1920's by artists like Louis Armstrong who took elements of his native New Orleans ragtime, rephrased it in a strong "lead and solo" style and added scat (wordless) singing. Although he traveled extensively as a creative artist and "cultural ambassador", Satchmo always returned to his modest home in Corona, Queens, which is now designated as a National Historic Landmark (11).

See also: **Scott Joplin, Andre Watts, The Dance Theater of Harlem**