

Religion and the Construction of Community in Mathew Carey's Philadelphia¹

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In early national Philadelphia, groups that faced racial or ethnoreligious discrimination employed a range of strategies in defining community. The leaders and spokesmen of some groups—such as Irish Catholic and African-American “elites,” of whom men like Mathew Carey, Absalom Jones, and Richard Allen are prominent examples—emphasized social, political, and economic connections with white, Protestant Philadelphians even while maintaining cultural distinctions. Carey’s, Jones’s, and Allen’s views and actions have been closely analyzed, but contemporary and current emphasis on the use of the public sphere by these men obscures the place that black refugees from the Haitian Revolution—men, women, and children—held in the shaping of community. In contrast to African Americans and Irish Catholics, migrants of African descent from the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue sought to retain ties of language (French) and religion (Roman Catholic) with one another.

As a result of their choices and responses, these migrants were largely alienated from African Americans in the city, most of whom, like Jones and Allen, were members of Protestant denominations. It cannot be said that ties with other Catholics were any warmer, however, due in part to color prejudices, but also differing views on Roman Catholic practice and structure. Where white Catholics like Mathew Carey were influenced by republican thinking in their emphasis on trustee-administered parishes, black Saint-Dominguans in the city defined themselves as Catholics through their adherence to clerical authority and guidance. Differences among Roman Catholics and among people of African descent in Philadelphia cannot be understood by analyzing race, ethnicity, class, or gender alone, but by examining the lived experiences and interactions of Irish Catholics, black Philadelphians, and Saint-Dominguan migrants alike.

The presence of Saint-Dominguan migrants beginning in the 1790s added another layer to the development of African-American and Catholic communities already underway for a decade. 1784 had marked a key turning point in this history, with the arrival of two newcomers who would strongly influence the ethnoreligious development of Philadelphia. On October 1, 1784, the thirty-seven-year-old Absalom Jones purchased his freedom from Benjamin Wynkoop. One month later, on November 1, the twenty-four-year-old Mathew Carey arrived in the city, having left his native Ireland rather than face prosecution for libel there.²

Both men quickly worked to better themselves, and in doing so, became leaders within their communities. Religion—more specifically, issues of religious freedom—played an important role in this process. For Jones, as a founder of the Free African Society (1787), social respectability and religious observance were closely linked. By 1793, dissatisfaction with their treatment within St. George’s Methodist Church led Jones, his friend Richard Allen, and a number of other free blacks to leave that congregation. Jones became minister of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in 1794, while Allen would form a separate denomination, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, that same year.³ Carey utilized fortuitous connections to enter the world of printing and publishing. He quickly gained prominence. As seen in his publication of the “first American Catholic Bible” in 1790, and in letters to Philadelphia newspapers in the winter of 1792, Carey used the public sphere to promote Catholic practice, and to defend Catholicism against local critics and more universal negative stereotypes

² George F. Burgess, *The Story of the First of the Blacks, the Pathfinder Absalom Jones, 1746-1818* (Baltimore, 1929), 3-4; Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 67-68, 299 n. 3; James N. Green, *Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot* (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia, 1985), 3-5.

³ Burgess, *First of the Blacks*, 4-7; Richard S. Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 60-62, 70-72. The Free African Society was a mutual-aid society with both religious and political dimensions; see William Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church, in the United States of America, Now Styled the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1862), 15-57.

at a time when Catholics were a minority group viewed with some suspicion within the United States. Carey communicated with the American bishop, John Carroll, on these issues. Both Carey and Carroll framed the practices of Catholicism in the context of the civil and political republican values of the newly formed American state.⁴

In the 1790s, Carey, Jones, and Allen alike were trying to enhance the image of their particular denominations, show them to be compatible with the republican principles of the new nation, and strengthen the faith and understanding of individual believers. During this same period, people fleeing the French and Haitian revolutions bolstered the numbers of Catholics in Philadelphia and the United States even while creating new tensions within the Church and the larger community. Those escaping the slave revolt that swept through Saint-Domingue beginning in August 1791 first arrived in small numbers. The refugee population exploded in 1793 after the burning of the port city of Cap Français. Along with some 3,000 white refugees, at least seven hundred enslaved refugees and one hundred free people of color arrived in the city between 1791 and 1804, making up a significant minority within the larger black population.⁵ Slaves brought to Philadelphia were in a liminal position: according to Pennsylvania law, they were to be emancipated and placed into indentured servitude after six months' residence in the

⁴ Green, *Mathew Carey*, 3-10; Michael S. Carter, "'Under the Benign Sun of Toleration': Mathew Carey, the Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789-1791," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 438-9, 447, 456 (quotation in Carter, 439); "For the American Daily Advertiser," [Philadelphia] *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, January 7, 1792, p. 3, col. 4, *America's Historical Newspapers*, NewsBank/Readex; "Men of Glass, Throw No Stones," [Philadelphia] *National Gazette*, January 19, 1792, p. 108, col. 2, *America's Historical Newspapers*, NewsBank/Readex; "The Calumnies of Verus," *The American Catholic Historical Researches* 11, no. 1 (January 1894): 2-6.

⁵ This was just part of a much larger migration to North America, the Caribbean, and Europe. Over 25,000 refugees and migrants arrived in the United States through 1810. Winston C. Babb, "French Refugees from Saint Domingue to the United States, 1791-1810" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1954), 370, 375; Thomas Fiehrer, "From La Tortue to La Louisiane: An Unfathomed Legacy," in Carl A. Brasseur and Glenn R. Conrad, eds., *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792-1809* (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1992), 21, 23. Ashli White discusses the range of estimates on refugee numbers made by contemporaries and later scholars. Ashli White, "'A Flood of Impure Lava': Saint Dominguan Refugees in the United States, 1790-1820" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2003), 37.

commonwealth. While some slave owners did not comply with the law, over 700 slaves were freed between 1791 and 1806, although most remained in the service of their former masters.⁶

Saint-Dominguans arriving in Philadelphia in 1793 likely brought yellow fever with them. Through the medium of Philadelphia's lively public sphere, the aftermath of the epidemic also brought confrontation between Carey, and Jones and Allen over the actions of African Americans during the epidemic, and by extension, their place in society. In his *Short Account of the Malignant Fever*, Carey praised Jones and Allen's efforts in organizing African-American nurses, porters, and carters to help the sick and carry off the dead during the height of the epidemic in September 1793. But this praise was counterbalanced by Carey's charges that some of these workers were guilty of extortion and robbery. He further characterized the assistance of African Americans in the crisis as a last, worst, resort. In this, Carey seemed to acknowledge Jones and Allen as social equals even while maintaining color prejudices in accusing African-American workers.⁷ In 1794, Jones and Allen responded with *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793*. This was both a defense of those workers and a memorial to the roughly 200 African Americans who died

⁶ James T. Mitchell and Henry Flanders, comp., *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801*, vol. X, 1779–1781 ([Harrisburg?]: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1904), 69–71, vol. XIII, 1787–1790 (Harrisburg: Harrisburg Publishing Co., 1908), 53; Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 136–137; Papers of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, Series IV: Manumissions, Indentures, and other Legal Papers, Manumission Books A-G, Microfilm Reels 20–21, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Collection (microfilm publication), Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

⁷ Phillip Lapsansky, "'Abigail, a Negress': The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic," in J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic* (Canton, Mass.: Science History Publications/USA, for the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1997), 61–63 (quotation in Estes and Smith, *Melancholy Scene*, 63); Sally F. Griffith, "'A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society': Community Death and Regeneration in Mathew Carey's *Short Account of the Malignant Fever*," in Estes and Smith, *Melancholy Scene*, 54–55; Jacqueline Bacon, "Rhetoric and Identity in Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's *Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, during the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia*," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 125, no. 1/2 (Jan.-Apr., 2001), 67–68.

from the fever. It was also an attack on the racism that persisted in the aftermath of gradual emancipation and the growth of free black communities in Philadelphia.⁸

With their pamphlet, Jones and Allen were acting as mediators between black and white Philadelphians, yet forcefully promoting the interests of black Philadelphians. Carey, though, saw things in a different light. In responding to Jones and Allen's criticisms, or as he put it, their "abuse," Carey portrayed himself as "an advocate, endeavouring to palliate facts" on behalf of black Philadelphians.⁹

This controversy reveals much about Carey's personality and prejudices. Yet it also speaks to his role in shaping notions of community, while making clear the difficult task that black leaders like Jones had in protecting and expanding the rights and social standing of African Americans. Carey, Jones, and Allen were also contesting definitions of citizenship in the new nation, with Carey willing to include elites like Jones and Allen in his definition, but not black laborers. Jones and Allen would not accept this. The debate over the role of black Philadelphians in the epidemic helped shape an emerging public sphere in which representatives of that group—like Jones and Allen—would continue to stress their rights and privileges as citizens.¹⁰

These debates over citizenship obscure the similar social and economic conditions that most Irish immigrants and African Americans lived in. There was some overlap in residential patterns,

⁸ Lapsansky, "'Abigail,'" in Estes and Smith, *Melancholy Scene*, 64–69.

⁹ In his *Address of M. Carey to the Public*, Carey challenged criticisms of his conduct during and after the epidemic. This pamphlet was aimed largely at the charges of a writer with the pseudonym Argus. Argus claimed that Carey, instead of fulfilling his civic duty during the fever outbreak, chose instead to flee and only returned when unable to find refuge elsewhere. In refuting Argus, Carey also took on Jones and Allen. Mathew Carey, *Address of M. Carey to the Public* (Philadelphia: Printed by Mathew Carey, 1794), 6; Griffith, "Community Death," in Estes and Smith, *Melancholy Scene*, 54.

¹⁰ For analyses emphasizing the civic and political dimensions of the controversy, see David Paul Nord, "Readership as Citizenship in Late-Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," in Estes and Smith, *Melancholy Scene*, 19–20; Lapsansky, "'Abigail,'" in Estes and Smith, *Melancholy Scene*, 61; Bacon, "Rhetoric and Identity," 69–74; Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, Phillip Lapsansky, eds., *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790–1860* (New York, Routledge, 2001), 32. For another approach to considering use of the public sphere by free blacks, see Patrick Rael, "Free Black Activism in the Antebellum North," *The History Teacher* 39, no. 2 (Feb., 2006): 221–5.

with members of both groups living in the northern part of city, as well as in the Northern Liberties on the outskirts of the city proper. Evidence like that found in prison dockets suggests that poorer African Americans and Irish immigrants (and, most likely, poorer Saint-Dominguans) formed so-called “shadow communities,” rejecting the middling values of men like Carey and Jones. These people mingled on the streets, in taverns and at bawdy houses, and in prisons; they loved and fought one another, and in some cases formed families.¹¹

These points of contact did not mean total harmony between the two groups. Despite, or because of, class-based similarities, African Americans and the Irish were often in competition for employment in Philadelphia. The Irish also had political advantages that African Americans did not have. While the status of Irish Catholics may have been contested by some, white males of Irish descent were considered “free white persons.” They had access to the American legal and political system, even after 1830, when the majority of immigrants from Ireland were predominantly Catholic, not Protestant.¹² By contrast, African Americans were subject to enslavement, and ran the risk of such even when legally free; free blacks had some legal rights, but were generally political bystanders. In Pennsylvania, for instance, due to ambiguous wording in the state constitution, free blacks could apparently vote, though few or none attempted to do so.¹³ Also, while a number of states attempted to restrict the migration of people of African descent, no such limits were placed on the Irish.

¹¹ *Gales's Independent Gazetteer*, 3 January 1797, p. 3.; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 216; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 40–4; John Davies, “Saint-Dominguan Refugees of African Descent and the Forging of Ethnic Identity in Early National Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 134, no. 2 (April 2010): 114.

¹² Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (New York: Longman/Pearson Education Inc., 2000), 40–2, 68–9; Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 41; Eileen McMahon, review of Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, in *American Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (April 1997): 571.

¹³ Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 292–294.

Nor did the condition of African Americans attract the sympathy of Irish elites in the United States. Despite their calls for liberty and equality and a stated opposition to slavery back home in Ireland, once in the United States, Irish radicals held a variety of positions on the institution and largely ignored the status and treatment of free blacks in the United States. Many kept quiet on the matter of slavery, so as not to offend political allies; others became defenders of slavery or even slaveholders themselves. In Philadelphia, Irish newspaper editors such as William Duane drummed up Irish support for Jefferson in the 1796 election, and would again in 1800; yet their newspapers did not speak out against slavery in the 1796 election, and comment in 1800 would also be limited. Carey, the self-described “advocate” for African Americans, had endorsed colonization (transporting freed slaves to Africa) in 1786, and would do so again later in life.¹⁴

For their part, as they were apparently discouraged from voting, black Philadelphians pursued their political agendas through the public sphere. Absalom Jones was a leading figure in these activities. Along with co-authoring the *Narrative* with Richard Allen, Jones signed his name to a 1792 draft of a petition to Congress that urged support for colonization (the petition was never delivered), as well as a 1799 petition protesting the enslavement of free blacks under the cover of the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, and petitions in 1799 and 1800 to the Pennsylvania legislature calling for an end to slavery. Slavery was a topic of Jones’s sermons as well, with perhaps the best known example being his “Thanksgiving Sermon” of 1808, acknowledging the formal end of the Atlantic slave trade to the United States.¹⁵

¹⁴ Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, 39–43, 134–139; Michael Durey, *With the Hammer of Truth: James Thomson Callender and America's Early National Heroes* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 137–138.

¹⁵ Richard S. Newman, Roy E. Finkenbine, and Douglass Mooney, “Philadelphia Emigrationist Petition, circa 1792: An Introduction,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (January 2007): 161; Burgess, *First of the Blacks*, 13; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 186–190.

In contrast, Saint-Dominguans of African descent generally eschewed politics altogether. They had no spokesmen. In the 1790s and early 1800s, these newcomers faced an array of choices and opportunities, as well as familiar constraints. Even in the service of their former owners, they would have been in close contact with free and enslaved African Americans, learning English and adapting to life in Philadelphia, with some, at least, falling into the same “shadow communities” that poor Irish and African Americans were part of. Many of these former slaves vanished from the historical record even before gaining full freedom as early as 1800, perhaps assimilating into African-American or working class communities, or else leaving, or being taken from, the city. Some 400 Saint-Dominguans were reported to have returned to the newly-independent Haiti in 1804 and 1805, responding perhaps to the stirrings of patriotism, or, as French diplomats claimed, cash incentives of forty dollars per person offered by the Haitian ruler Dessalines.¹⁶

Of the remaining Saint-Dominguans of African descent who remained in Philadelphia, their numbers would be bolstered through the first few decades of the nineteenth century by births, and by new arrivals, whether from the Caribbean or other parts of the United States. In contrast to tendencies toward assimilation during the 1790s, many of those who remained in Philadelphia after 1805 formed an ethnic community based on family ties, the French language, and Roman Catholicism. This community survived through the first half of the nineteenth century. Its existence was both influenced and complicated by the development of African American and Roman Catholic communities during the same period.

¹⁶ Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776–1891* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1941), 162–64, 173–74; Julie Winch, *American Free Blacks and Emigration to Haiti* (San Germán, Puerto Rico, 1988), 1–2; Davies, “Saint-Dominguan Refugees,” 117.

The African-American population stood at roughly 10,000 in 1810, with four black Protestant churches in existence.¹⁷ Differences of language and religion, and possibly class, translated into limited contacts between Catholic, French-speaking black Saint-Dominguans and Protestant, English-speaking black Philadelphians. Among those black Saint-Dominguans who did assimilate into African-American communities, some became members of the African Episcopal church, and a few became part of the elite. Through contact with these people, Absalom Jones must have been aware of the larger migrant community. If he ever made mention of them, however, no record of his thoughts remains.

Into the early 1800s, black Saint-Dominguans would have been found along Second, Third, and Fourth Streets, “[gathered] together on Front Street and out Spruce and Pine as far as Eighth Street,” in close proximity to Roman Catholic churches, such as St. Joseph’s and St. Mary’s.¹⁸ In terms of community building, black Saint-Dominguans may not have frequently encountered white Catholics, as masses were not integrated. As a nineteenth century historian of St. Joseph’s Church noted of the 1790s, “on Sundays, . . . service was held at St. Mary’s, the smaller church [St. Joseph’s] remaining closed. But now, every Sunday morning and afternoon, it [St. Joseph’s] was filled with a most devout congregation of colored people.”¹⁹ In this way, the arrival of black Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia was largely responsible for the small but growing number of black Catholics in the early nineteenth century.

¹⁷ This was out of a total population of approximately 92,000. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 137, 143, 192–3.

¹⁸ Childs, *French Refugee Life*, 103–4, 110; quotation from Joseph G. Rosengarten, *French Colonists and Exiles in the United States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1907), 87.

¹⁹ *Annals of St. Joseph’s Church, Philadelphia* (n. p.: Philadelphia, 1873), 104. For differing views on segregation in Catholic churches, see Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 273–5; and Diane Batts Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time: The Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828–1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 20. Morrow’s argument that such separation was widespread, and a “social convention,” is supported by the practice’s occurrence in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and elsewhere.

By 1801, four Roman Catholic churches were home to roughly 2,000 white and black parishioners.²⁰ Sacramental records give confirmation of communal ties, and show the importance of the Catholic Church for refugees. The registries of St. Joseph's contain the names of black Saint-Dominguan men and women joining in marriage, or baptizing children. Over one hundred baptisms were recorded between 1795 and 1800. Very few marriages were taking place at that time; but after 1813, the number of marriages increased dramatically.²¹

The expression of cultural identity through Catholicism had a parallel with that of black refugees in nineteenth-century Baltimore, where ethnic identity helped shield those Saint-Dominguans from cultural hostility and racial discrimination. As Diane Batts Morrow wrote of the Baltimore-based Oblate Sisters of Providence, “[t]he French language and Roman Catholicism reinforced each other as cultural as well as religious traditions and served to distinguish the Oblates from white, Anglophone, Protestant, and racist American society.”²² But even where race was not an issue, French or Afro-Caribbean culture and the Catholic religion distinguished black Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia from Protestant African-American society. It seems that for these newcomers, kinship networks and ties of language and culture provided greater opportunity for socioeconomic security than assimilation did.

The emphasis on social networks reflected practices of free people of color in Saint Domingue, where “family, . . . in all its forms, was an enormously important part of free colored Dominguans’ lives.” There, the freedom or economic success of an individual would be used to

²⁰ Thomas B. Falls, “Development of the Diocese and Province of Philadelphia,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* (hereafter *RACHS*) 64, no. 1 (March 1953): 51.

²¹ “Sacramental Registers at St. Joseph’s Church,” *RACHS* 15–20 (1904–1909). I am grateful for the efforts of the late Bobbye Burke, and Mary Jane Green, Old St. Joseph’s Church Archives, in compiling a list of Saint-Dominguan baptisms and marriages at that church, taken from the information found in the *RACHS*. That list was used in my research.

²² Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time*, 78.

gain the freedom or economic security of other family members.²³ In Philadelphia, connections among kin and neighbors—for instance, serving as sponsors or witnesses for one another’s baptisms or weddings time and again—are revealed in part through religious practice.

Many black Saint-Dominguans continued to define community on the basis of ethnic identity well into the 1820s. At least 92 marriages involving black Saint-Dominguans took place in the period between 1800 and 1830. The largest number of marriages, some 50, took place between 1812 and 1818. Saint-Dominguans seem to have married along class lines: free people of color with free people of color, former slaves with former slaves.²⁴ But evidence of ties to other people of African descent is slight. Among black Catholics at St. Joseph’s, out of those marriages involving Saint-Dominguans, some fourteen marriages took place between Saint-Dominguans and other Philadelphians between 1800 and 1830. The frequency of such marriages did not increase over time, but remained steady, with rarely more than one per year. Even those listed as witnesses for such marriages tended to be Saint-Dominguan.²⁵

In the early nineteenth century, black Saint-Dominguans found St. Joseph’s conducive to building a distinctive sense of community. But other churches served a similar purpose for other ethnic groups. Into the late eighteenth century, increasing numbers of Irish Catholics attended St. Mary’s, not far from St. Joseph’s on Walnut Street. Holy Trinity, located on Sixth and Spruce Streets, was built primarily to serve the needs of German Catholics. The three churches were only blocks away from one another, but reflected the ethnic differences within Catholic Philadelphia. Of course, too much can be made of such differences. By 1807, the pastor of Holy

²³ Stewart R. King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 180–1.

²⁴ *RACHS* 20 (1909); Nash, “Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Dominguans in Philadelphia.” *Pennsylvania History: Explorations in Early American Culture* 65 (1998): 59; Susan Branson and Leslie Patrick, “Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange: Saint-Dominguan Refugees of Color in Philadelphia,” in David Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 202–3.

²⁵ Davies, “Saint-Dominguan Refugees,” 12.

Trinity was asking for “an assistant who could hear confessions and instruct the very large number who could not speak German.” Yet just as it would into the twentieth century, the interplay between religion and ethnicity shaped the early development of American Catholicism.²⁶

For Saint-Dominguans, even if their separation from services at the larger churches was a result of social or racial discrimination, it also allowed them to pursue religious practices that strengthened ties of community. Differences in church administration among St. Joseph’s and other Philadelphia churches may also have helped such communal ties. In Philadelphia, St. Mary’s and Holy Trinity were each administered under the trustee system. As trustees, laypeople within individual parishes had considerable influence on church administration and finances, and occasionally the actions of clergy. Rooted in the unique circumstances of American Catholicism, the trustee system reflected republican, even democratic impulses within parishes, as trustee decisions often had the support of the majority of the congregation. Trustees also reflected the ethnic composition of their parish, though ethnic identity—and conflict within ethnic groups—could create serious problems within the larger church and with notions of religious community.²⁷

Such conflicts divided congregations in disputes with Church officials over the hiring and firing of priests at Holy Trinity from 1796 to 1802, and St. Mary’s, first from 1812 to 1814, and

²⁶ St. Mary’s and Holy Trinity were both incorporated in 1788, although St. Mary’s was built in 1763. The Jesuits founded St. Joseph’s in 1733, however, while the Augustinians dedicated Saint Augustine’s in 1801, incorporating it in 1804. Joseph L. J. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia: From the Earliest Missionaries Down to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: John Jos. McVey, 1909), 34–5, 91, 93, 122–4, 128, 159–162, 166–7, 171.

²⁷ Patrick Carey, “The Laity’s Understanding of the Trustee System, 1785–1855,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 64, no. 3 (July 1978): 359–60. Carey argues that the trustee system was rooted in “diaspora conditions” of the Church in America, where in the absence of clerical direction, laypeople had to assume practical responsibilities for parish life. This sense of ownership carried over into taking responsibility for governance, the selection of priests, and even playing a role in the spiritual life of parishioners, leading “prayer meetings, Bible readings, and other quasi-liturgical services, and helping to organize the religious instructions of their children.” Carey, “Trustee System,” 362–3.

then in the notorious “Hogan schism” of 1820-1827. Mathew Carey played a role in both episodes at St. Mary’s: he argued in 1812 that St. Mary’s trustees were correct in attempting to lower their pastors’ salaries in the face of rising debt, and in 1820, he led the defense of the embattled pastor William Hogan. Hogan’s public pronouncements and private misdeeds had resulted in Philadelphia’s bishop dismissing the priest, yet Hogan’s charm and charisma was such that his supporters split the congregation through their vociferous defense. The resulting schism lasted for seven years, before being ended by papal judgment.²⁸ These incidents show that although it was meant to sustain a sense of religious community through democratic participation, the trustee system often fell short in this regard. In claiming responsibility for the hiring and firing of clerics, with the bitter disputes that often followed such decisions, trustee boards also drew the ire of both episcopal and papal authorities after 1815, leading to a curbing of trustee power by American bishops between 1829 and 1849.²⁹

In its claims for lay leadership, the trustee system was influenced by similar forms of administration in Protestant denominations. These too had their share of conflict, and African-American churches were not immune from such controversies. In 1810, Absalom Jones’s leadership of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas was challenged when disaffected members broke away from the church in a dispute over a possible successor to Jones. This split was described as responsible for “a party spirit in the congregation which was not healed” even with the death of Jones in February 1818.³⁰

²⁸ Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia*, 152–9, 195–218, 220–261. Previous to his involvement in these disputes, Carey had been a pew-holder at St. Augustine’s from 1801 to 1807. T. C. M., “Note on Mathew Carey,” in “Selections from the Correspondence of the Deceased Mathew Carey,” *RACHS* 9 (1898): 356.

²⁹ Carey, “Trustee System,” 359, 371; Joseph A. Varacalli, *The Catholic Experience in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 156–159.

³⁰ Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church*, 115–117 (quotation, 116); Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 192, 261; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 166–8, 222.

For both African-American Protestants and Irish Catholics, lay participation in church governance was a form of religious expression, rooted in republican principles. Trustees or members of the congregation influenced the content of services through their influence on pastors. By contrast, Saint-Dominguan congregants at St. Joseph's developed a religious community based on traditional models of piety. This was seen through the involvement of some 27 Saint-Dominguan women from Philadelphia in a Catholic confraternity, the Confraire de Notre Dame du Rosaire. The confraternity was based at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, the seat of Roman Catholicism in the early republic. Confraternities, with roots in medieval Europe, were "devotional societies" in which a cross-section of believers "selected one act, such as reciting a specific prayer, wearing a certain medal, or regular assistance at Mass as its distinguishing feature or bond of association. Such groups might also hold regular, exclusive meetings or weekly rites, thus fostering a sense of bonding and cohesion." But confraternities served many purposes throughout the early modern world, as did those in the United States.³¹

For the Confraire de Notre Dame du Rosaire, two groups from Philadelphia are listed for 1812, one in May, the other in October. The groups were led in their devotions by clergy, just as both religious and practical matters at St. Joseph's were. Most likely, the group said the Rosary, "with recitation of prayers and meditation on the mysteries of the life of the Virgin and Christ" being the focus of their activities.³² While the practice would have been easily taken back to Philadelphia, participation in the confraternity also held a much greater weight, as it can be understood as providing "frames of reference that interpreted experience and constructed reality

³¹ Quotation from Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time*, 18–19; "Registre des noms des Personnes . . . dans la Confraire de N. D. du Rosaire," Baltimore Record of Confraternities, SAB RG 1 Box 17, Sulpician Archives, St. Mary's Seminary. My thanks to Alison M. Foley of the Associated Archives at St. Mary's Seminary and University for providing me with a copy of the document, and additional information on St. Mary's.

³² Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time*, 20; quotation from Christopher Black, "Introduction: The Confraternity Context," in Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock, eds., *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 10.

for its members,” as well as “[creating] exclusive social networks, [that] communicated ideas and mobilized large numbers of [people].” Religious practice provided context and structures through which Saint-Dominguan women could make meaning of their lives.³³

Other characteristics of confraternities are applicable to the experiences of these migrants. Confraternities were “a powerful tool for mobilizing solidarity,” and in early modern Europe, served to resolve crises of self-identity, social structure, and social order, concerns that Saint-Dominguans shared. In the seventeenth century, confraternities were a means of “acculturation into and resistance against revolutionary change” for native Americans, enslaved Africans, Asian as well as French unmarried women. In much the same way, the *Confraire de Notre Dame du Rosaire* made the practices and teachings of Catholicism more familiar to its female participants, even as it suggested an alternative to marriage or convent life.³⁴

In colonial North America, confraternities also furthered religious creolization, the process by which African and European beliefs and practices influenced one another in the forging of an American Christianity. New Orleans has been used as an example of this process, which took generations. First came exposure to Catholicism, largely through the baptism of females, beginning in the 1730s. In the 1750s and 1760s, adult males were then brought into the Catholic fold. Then “people of African descent increasingly assumed ritual responsibility for induction into Catholicism by becoming godparents.” The significance of becoming godparents was that such a role entailed a degree of religious commitment, and that “bonds created by religious sponsorship could be tied to social purposes.” The early nineteenth century witnessed “the

³³ Nicholas Terpstra, “De-Institutionalizing Confraternity Studies: Fraternalism and Social Capital in Cross-Cultural Context,” in Black and Gravestock, *Early Modern Confraternities*, 264–5.

³⁴ Terpstra, “De-Institutionalizing Confraternity Studies,” in Black and Gravestock, *Early Modern Confraternities*, 265–7.

expansion and formalization of the leadership role of black women in religious instruction and benevolence,” whether in fraternal organizations or religious orders.³⁵

The model does not completely hold for Philadelphia, as an attenuated and compressed version of this process took place there. The extent of West African cultural survivals among Saint-Dominguan migrants is unclear. While some migrants may have been new converts to Christianity, both slaves and free people of color had exposure to Catholicism in Saint-Domingue. No evidence exists to show the extent of African influences on Catholic practice, unless it is the singing heard during services at St. Joseph’s: “singing, sweet and stirring, filled many a heart with longing after the sweeter strains of Sion.”³⁶

There were similarities to the creolization process in New Orleans. There were more adult females who first converted to Catholicism as compared to men, however, only about ten adults were baptized at St. Joseph’s between 1793 and 1810. Regarding the third stage of the process, after 1801, more men and women of African descent, rather than white Saint-Dominguans, became godparents of other black Saint-Dominguans. This suggests that these people were gaining familiarity with the teachings of the Church, perhaps as they ended indentures. There was only a small number of baptisms—roughly 25 in all—between 1801 and 1810, however, and the numbers of Saint-Dominguans receiving the sacraments of the church—specifically marriage—only increased in 1813.³⁷

Finally, there was no formalization of female leadership among Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia, although the close ties that existed within the community suggest strong informal female support for Catholicism. Names from both groups of *Confraire de Notre Dame du*

³⁵ Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould, “The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727–1852,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (April 2002): 413, 425.

³⁶ *Annals of St. Joseph’s Church, Philadelphia* (n. p.: Philadelphia, 1873), 104.

³⁷ “Sacramental Registers at St. Joseph’s Church,” *RACHS* 15–19.

Rosaire participants appear in the sacramental registers for St. Joseph's: Marie Claude witnessed the January 1813 marriage of Nicholas and Anisette Laupair, as well as the August 1811 wedding of Sylvain Valere and Emilie Lewis, and the October 1813 wedding of Jean Le Brun and Marie Françoise Le Roy; Marie Fortuneè Charlotte witnessed a number of weddings between 1813 and 1824. The presence of these women suggests a dedication to the religious and community-building aspects of these sacraments.³⁸

The extent to which Saint-Dominguans looked to clerical authority, whether in terms of fraternal organization or submission to administrative control, seems to anticipate both the transformation of American Catholicism that occurred between 1830 and 1860, and the “devotional revolution” that would further transform Catholicism in both Europe and the Americas after 1850. This transformation, coupled with increased Irish Catholic immigration to North America during the 1840s in the aftermath of the Great Famine would lead to Irish clergy, not French, having greater influence over the direction of Catholicism.³⁹ Even before this, Irish Catholics were playing a role in the larger religious life of their faith. Just as Saint-Dominguan women experienced religious meaning and community within fraternal organizations, white Catholic women had similar experiences in religious orders. The first American female religious order was established in the United States in 1808, with the founding of the Sisters of Charity in Baltimore. The order moved to Emmitsburg, Maryland in 1809.⁴⁰

As the name suggests, the Sisters were involved in charitable work, and established a school in Emmitsburg, as well as orphanages and hospitals as they expanded their mission within the

³⁸ “Marriage Registers at St. Joseph’s Church, Philadelphia, Pa.,” *RACHS* 20: 132, 137–9, 167, 174, 184.

³⁹ Kenny, *The American Irish*, 75–7.

⁴⁰ Margaret Susan Thompson, “Discovering Foremothers: Sisters, Society, and the American Catholic Experience,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 5, no. 3/4, “Women in the Catholic Community” (Summer - Fall, 1986): 273 n. 2; John Gilmary Shea, *Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll, Bishop and First Archbishop of Baltimore* (New York: John G. Shea, 1888, 645). Three European orders of women religious established missions between 1727 and 1795. Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time*, 48.

United States. Anna Maria (Maria) Murphy, daughter of Mathew Carey's sister, was among the first women to join Seton's order in April 1809. Murphy's life illustrates the precarious position of even elite Irish Catholic women in the early republic, the instability of elite status for minority groups, and also the ways in which religious orders served a number of purposes in the lives of their members, just as fraternal organizations did for laypeople. Murphy's parents brought her to America in 1794, where her father John Murphy owned a tavern before his death from yellow fever in 1798. Margaret, Maria's mother, continued to operate the tavern, but the stresses of doing so while raising her children led her to remarry within a year. After a series of economic and family hardships, including the death of her mother's second husband in 1806, Maria, along with her friend Cecilia O'Conway, began to entertain thoughts of entering a Spanish convent.⁴¹

Conveniently enough, at that time a French priest, Pierre Babade, entered the life of her family. Babade, a member of the Sulpician order headquartered in Baltimore, encouraged Murphy and O'Conway to enter the Sisters of Charity. This they did, and after some difficulties, soon Murphy's family was settled in the Emmitsburg area for a time, with her siblings offered an education at reduced rates, and her mother given a position as something of a housekeeper at the Mount St. Mary's boys academy.⁴²

Despite the clear differences between a religious order and a lay fraternal organization, useful parallels may be found in comparing the two. Within the order, Murphy would have been under the authority of male clerics as well as her Superior and other female administrators, just as the members of the Confraire de Notre Dame du Rosaire were under the direction of a priest. Both socioeconomic and cultural motives guided sisters and laywomen to their callings. Yet where

⁴¹ Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time*, 48–9; Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia*, 195; Kerby A. Miller, *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 351–9.

⁴² Miller, *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan*, 359.

communion and contemplation within the confraternity was but one dimension of laywomen's lives, for women religious, taking the vows meant taking on a new life. It was a life of hardship, suggesting the primacy of religion for those who worked to maintain their vows. In fulfilling their mission, the Sisters of Charity practiced an ascetic lifestyle; although in community with other women religious, they each had individual physical, intellectual, and psychological burdens to bear, and while the order's home on the "Mountain" outside of Emmitsburg may have provided an appropriate setting for contemplation and learning, it was also a dangerously unhealthy place to live.

Maria Murphy was proof of this. She died from consumption in March 1812, one of many such deaths at Emmitsburg. The order itself survived and grew, however; a few weeks before Murphy's death, three Sisters made the journey to Philadelphia, where they took residence at an orphan's asylum on Sixth Street, near Holy Trinity. In the same neighborhood, the sisters opened a school as well.⁴³ In drawing women away from their homes and communities in the name of a spiritual calling, women's religious orders shaped those communities in a number of ways. In a society where the public role of white middle-class women was increasingly constrained, religious life provided some women the opportunity to do public good in answering a higher calling.

While white and black Catholic women both sought ways of practicing their religion outside of attending Masses, this did not necessarily lead to cross-racial cooperation. There was no religious order for women of African descent until the formation of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, of Baltimore, in 1828. While the Oblates relied on the moral and financial support of white women, the order and its members worked in a climate of narrowing social and racial

⁴³ Miller, *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan*, 360; Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia*, 195; Charles G. Herberman, *The Sulpicians in the United States* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1916), 225; Sara Trainer Smith, "Philadelphia's First Nun," *RACHS* 5, no. 1 (January 1894): 444.

hierarchies. This narrowing was not isolated to Baltimore, or even the American South, as unfolding developments in Philadelphia would show.⁴⁴

After 1800, Philadelphia's population continued to grow, from 69,700 to 112,800 in 1820, with African Americans making up 10.7 percent of the population in 1820. While numbers of blacks increased by roughly 50 percent during the first half of the nineteenth century, the proportion of blacks in the general population declined after 1820, to 9.8 percent in 1830, and 8 percent in 1840, when 18,000 blacks and 204,000 whites were counted in the federal census. By 1850, over 15 percent of Philadelphia's population was Irish. Through the 1820s, a shift in residential patterns was also taking place. While whites and blacks of varying social status continued to live in proximity to one another, two-thirds of black households were concentrated in the northeast and southeast sections of the city by 1820.⁴⁵

While Irish, African-American, and Saint-Dominguan communities in Philadelphia still had a number of connections, existing conflicts increased during and after the 1820s. Growing numbers of Irish Catholics stirred fear and resentment among a number of non-Catholics. African Americans lived in a society where color prejudices held against them were increasingly expressed in forms of social, political, and cultural racism. And while a significant minority of Saint-Dominguans was finding cultural and socioeconomic stability, their numbers were not growing, making cultural autonomy increasingly difficult to maintain.

Through the early nineteenth century, even as Mathew Carey was deeply involved in debates over church governance, even as he was gaining attention for his works on political economy and

⁴⁴ Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time*, 44–58; Herberman, *Sulpicians in the United States*, 233–5.

⁴⁵ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 143, 165–167, 206–207, 247; Nash also noted a correlation between places of residence and places of worship for blacks in the 1830s. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 267–268. Conflicting figures on the number of Irish in 1850 Philadelphia may be found in Bruce Laurie, “‘Nothing on Compulsion’: Life Styles of Philadelphia Artisans, 1820–1850,” *Labor History* 13, no. 3 (Summer 1974): 338, and Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia; Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973, 29. Laurie gives a figure of 27 percent; Clark, 18.

national unity, he continued to promote religious toleration, an understanding of Irish Catholicism, and also aid for the poor. This reflected his understanding of the situation of many Irish, who made up the majority of immigrants to Philadelphia through 1840, and found themselves competing with one another, African Americans, and native-born residents for jobs on the docks and newly forming industries of the city. Into the 1830s they largely aligned with Jacksonian democrats in political matters, and for a time, also aligned with Irish Protestants in labor struggles.⁴⁶

The growth of African-American communities contributed to the deterioration of race relations in the first half of the nineteenth century, due in part to black socioeconomic success.⁴⁷ As a result, black Philadelphians faced economic constraints and the erosion of political rights, and indeed became the targets of increased racial violence during this time. In the face of such conditions, the black leadership, divided as it may have been, rallied to formulate a unified African-American cultural identity, even while organizing for political and social reform. The limited participation of black Saint-Dominguans in these efforts illustrates the slow pace of assimilation, and the extent to which such assimilation was driven by socioeconomic, not cultural or political, concerns in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The development of social, economic, and cultural institutions among black Philadelphians was clear to interested observers by the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Mutual aid

⁴⁶ Harry C. Silcox, *Philadelphia Politics from the Bottom Up: The Life of Irishman William McMullen* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989), 28–30; Kenny, *The American Irish*, 54–66, 71–8; Judith Hunter, “Before Pluralism: The Political Culture of Nativism in Antebellum Philadelphia (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1991), 98; Michael Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study of Ethnic Conflict* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 92–4; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 10–2; Emma Lapsansky, “‘Since They Got Those Separate Churches’: Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia,” *American Quarterly* 32 no. 1 (Spring 1980).

⁴⁷ On this point, see, for instance, Lapsansky, “‘Since They Got Those Separate Churches’: Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia,” *American Quarterly* 32 no. 1 (Spring 1980); Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 246–279; Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 283–311.

societies, separate churches, and an emerging, national African-American press all played a part in addressing local concerns, reflecting a recognition of, and an attempt to shape, common African-American interests.⁴⁸

Despite growth in numbers and the development of community institutions, black Philadelphians faced a number of socioeconomic obstacles. Employment opportunities for black males declined after 1800. Those who worked at the city's ports or as sailors—and this must also have included a number of Saint-Dominguans—faced lower wages and less work with federal restrictions on maritime trade enacted in 1807 and after. While this period saw growth in manufacturing activity, blacks were generally passed over for factory jobs. As a result, African-American men “most often . . . found employment at the bottom of the job hierarchy as common laborers.” Women tended to rely on domestic service, especially as laundresses for elite whites, to earn livings. For black men and women alike, personal or domestic service to whites sometimes meant living with white families, with roughly 27 percent of African Americans in such a situation as of 1820.⁴⁹

But a number of black Philadelphian males—some estimates state 19 percent—were employed as professionals, skilled tradesmen, or entrepreneurs. While black doctors, teachers, and ministers generally provided their services within the African-American community, both black and white customers often frequented black-owned businesses. These trades and services included shoemaking, hairdressing, and catering, vocations in which black Saint-Dominguans could be found. Gary Nash has indirectly compared the middle class status of these blacks with

⁴⁸ Arthur Donaldson, “An Account,” *The Juvenile Magazine* 3 (July 1813): 21–23; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10–13, 155; Lapsansky, “Since They Got Those Separate Churches,” 58; Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 4–9, 119; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 98–104, 109–28, 190–211, 259–267; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 204, 234.

⁴⁹ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 145–146, 150, 161, 214–216. Quotation from 145–146.

the poverty of European immigrants, noting that members of these groups—English, German, Irish, and others—were overrepresented to a greater extent in the almshouse than were blacks.⁵⁰

While some whites might have patronized black businesses, others resented the notion of black socioeconomic success. But whether well to do or poor, black Philadelphians faced challenges to their civil and legal rights in the first half of the nineteenth century. This included five failed pieces of legislation aimed at limiting the movement of blacks into and around the city, legal harassment such as wrongful imprisonment, and the elimination of public assistance to blacks after 1817.⁵¹

For Saint-Dominguans, places of residence, commercial dealings, and the passage of time eroded cultural insularity as the nineteenth century progressed. Away from church, by 1820 a number of vocational or residential contacts existed among black Saint-Dominguans and other black Philadelphians. From Christian Street to the south, Vine to the north, Dock and Second Streets to the east, and Twelfth Street to the west, small clusters of black Saint-Dominguans could be found throughout the city. This distribution fell heavily in, but was not confined to, the concentration of black households found in Cedar, New Market, and Locust Wards, as well as Southwark at this time. Like African-American households of the period, the majority of the few black Saint-Dominguan households recorded in the 1820 federal census were most likely nuclear households.⁵²

Black Saint-Dominguan households included laborers and sawyers on Shippen (now Bainbridge) Street, and a variety of artisans, craftsmen, tradesmen, and other middling

⁵⁰ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 146–158.

⁵¹ Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, 19, 130–142; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 180–181, 227, 272.

⁵² Edward Whiteley, *The Philadelphia Directory and Register for 1820* (Philadelphia: McCarty & Davis, n.d.); Ancestry.com, 1820 United States Federal Census; Emma Jones Lapsansky, *Neighborhoods in Transition: William Penn's Dream and Urban Reality* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 74–78; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 166–167. Findings taken from census information for Cedar, Chestnut Walnut, Locust, New Market, South, Upper Delaware Wards.

entrepreneurs—often hairdressers—and a teacher on Gaskill Street, Lombard Street, and Fifth and Sixth Streets near St. Joseph’s, as well as a number of alleys and smaller streets. In a few instances, seemingly unrelated Saint-Dominguans lived at the same address, but more commonly a few households would be close to one another on a given street. These households were interspersed with African-American and occasionally white households, presenting opportunities for interaction, whether between neighbors, or business owners and customers.⁵³

Some newly arrived Saint-Dominguans found success in black Philadelphia, and took up positions of leadership within the community. Families like the Dutrieuilles, Cuyjets, and Baptistes quickly established themselves in various crafts and trades. Another newcomer who found a place among early black entrepreneurs was Peter (or Pierre) Augustin, who “hurtled into view about 1816, and on the instant [gained] fame” through the establishment of his catering business. Eugene Baptiste, Sr., who most likely arrived in the United States as a boy by 1818, ran both a cabinetmaking shop, and a catering business with his wife, Mathilda Grey, whom he had met in the United States. Pierre Eugene Dutrieuille, a shoemaker, and his wife Mary (Lambert) arrived in the city sometime before 1838, when one of their two sons, Pierre (also known as Peter) Albert Dutrieuille, was born. Before the Haitian Revolution, members of these families were most likely free Saint-Dominguans of color, and in the second half of the nineteenth century they would leverage their socioeconomic success to gain entry into Philadelphia’s black elite.⁵⁴

Evidence of contacts between African Americans and Saint-Dominguans through the 1820s remains thin. Few Saint-Dominguans professed a Protestant faith by 1830. Only a very small number of Saint-Dominguans appear to have belonged to Bethel African Methodist Episcopal

⁵³ Whiteley, *Philadelphia Directory*.

⁵⁴ “Pencil Pusher Points,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 9 March 1912, 4.

Church and the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas.⁵⁵ The presence of these few families like the Appos and Depees at St. Thomas' suggests a more direct route to assimilation among black Saint-Dominguans in the nineteenth century, yet this seems to have been a path less taken among first and even second generation Saint-Dominguans.

The same holds true for social, political, and cultural movements aimed at creating a sense of African American identity. Whether the creation of libraries, or responses to the institution of slavery, Saint-Dominguans were notable by their limited numbers.⁵⁶ This suggests the limits of assimilation among middling black Saint-Dominguans in the first half of the nineteenth century, illustrated by the expression of ethnic identity. For refugees in Philadelphia, marriage within the refugee community (endogamy), an affinity with Roman Catholicism, and a lack of involvement in the cultural and political movements of black Philadelphians all suggest a sense of ethnic identification with Saint-Domingue. This development of an ethnic identity only after leaving a homeland suggests parallels with later European immigration to the United States, and also with Nathalie Dessens' analysis of ethnic identification among Saint-Dominguans in New Orleans.⁵⁷

Yet this identification was with a world that these migrants had lost. Philadelphia's Saint-Dominguans seemingly had little sympathy for the revolutionary Haitian state. In the 1820s, considering Haiti as a refuge from white racism and a symbol of black achievement, African

⁵⁵ Entry for 15 October 1828, Minutes and Trial Book, 1822–1835 (reel 8), Record of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: Carlton & Porter, n. d.), Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection, The Records of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, 1760–1972; African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Register Records, Absalom Jones, Rector, Births and Baptisms; Whiteley, *The Philadelphia Directory*.

⁵⁶ Efforts to strengthen black culture and to protect African Americans against the worst effects of racism and slavery have been analyzed in a range of sources, and those Saint-Dominguans involved in such efforts may also be found there. Dorothy B. Porter, "The Organized Educational Activities of Negro Literary Societies, 1828–1846," *The Journal of Negro Education* 5, no. 4 (October 1936): 557–561; Joseph Willson, *The Elite of Our People: Joseph Willson's Sketches of Black Upper-Class Life in Antebellum Philadelphia*, Julie Winch, ed., (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 113–114, 153 n. 76; Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, 91–129; Peter P. Hinks, ed., Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia, Accounts 1854–1857, Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 37, <<http://www.hsp.org>>; "An Address," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, November 23, 1855, African-American Newspapers, Accessible Archives.

⁵⁷ Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 54–56.

Americans in Philadelphia and throughout the United States began to emigrate to the black state.⁵⁸ This was the culmination of a process that first began in 1818–1819. By 1824, African Americans in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore had formed organizations encouraging relocation to Haiti.⁵⁹ Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia did not join them.

Richard Allen and James Forten, the prominent African-American businessman and community activist, were leaders of the Haytien Emigration Society of Philadelphia (HESP); organizational meetings were held in Allen's Bethel AME church in the summer of 1824. While conceived as an enterprise to escape the political and social oppression of white racism in the United States, the movement also had religious overtones. In November 1824, church officials gave Thomas Roberson permission to move to Samaná in Haiti, apparently to preach. That month, a Bethel committee drafted a request to Boyer's agent Jonathas Granville on the subject of where missionaries might be most needed in Haiti.⁶⁰

By that point, a number of African Americans had already sailed for Haiti. The *Charlotte Corday* was the first ship to leave from Philadelphia in August 1824, with 30 families on board.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 237–240; Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787–1863* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 10–11, 21–53; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 178–194.

⁵⁹ Prince Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, vii, 115–132; *An Address Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; A Memoir Presented to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery*, 7–16 (Philadelphia: Rhistoric Publications, 1969); Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church*, 123–124; Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, 50–52; Arthur O. White, "Prince Saunders: An Instance of Social Mobility among Antebellum New England Blacks," *Journal of Negro History* 60, no. 4 (October 1975): 529–535; Miller, *Search for a Black Nationality*, 76 n. 36.

⁶⁰ Entries for 3, 21, 22 November 1824, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Minutes and Trial Book; Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 245–258; Miller, *Search for a Black Nationality*, 77–78; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 244. See also Loring Daniel Dewey, *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Hayti, of the Free People of Colour, in the United States* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1824) and various July 1824 issues of the *National Gazette* and *Poulson's*. For a differing interpretation of evangelical motives among emigrants, arguing that religion played less of a role in emigration, see Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000), 36–37.

⁶¹ "Port of Philadelphia," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 24 August 1824, p. 3, col. 3 (hereafter *Poulson's*); *The National Gazette and Literary Register*, 23 August 1824, p. 2, col. 1, "Marine Register," 24 August 1824, p. 2, col. 5 (hereafter *National Gazette*).

A number of ships followed throughout that autumn, into December. Eventually, as many as 500 people sailed from Philadelphia.⁶²

It is not clear whether any former black Saint-Dominguans or Haitians were passengers on these ships. A number of factors argue against large-scale involvement with the Haytian Emigration Society. Few black Saint-Dominguans were members of the AME church during the 1820s. Given the role of the church in the Society, and the missionary aims of the HESP, this suggests limited Saint-Dominguan participation. In contrast, Saint-Dominguan involvement in the Roman Catholic Church continued through the 1820s, as seen in the number of marriages between black Saint-Dominguans at St. Joseph's Church during this period.⁶³

Also, those Saint-Dominguans still in Philadelphia would have had two decades to return to Haiti if they had desired. It is likely that their memories of the violence and dislocation of the revolutionary period, and knowledge of events in Haiti such as ongoing political turmoil, and the possibility of French re-conquest, were strong arguments against return. Ethnic identity as Saint-Dominguans did not necessarily mean identification with the state of Haiti, or a desire to return there. But equally important, first and second generation Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia must have realized that they had advantages for social and economic advancement not available elsewhere in the United States, or even Haiti.

For a number of reasons, black Philadelphian emigrants returned from Haiti beginning in the spring of 1825. The overall failure of the Haitian emigration project caused many black leaders, including Forten and Richard Allen, to renounce emigration.⁶⁴ But Haiti itself continued to hold

⁶² Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 245, 337 n. 95. See also *National Gazette*, 23 August 1824, p. 2, col. 1, "Marine Register," 24 August 1824, p. 2, col. 5, 20 September 1824, p. 2, col. 3, "Hayti," 9 November 1824, p. 2, col. 4, 1 February 1825, p. 2, col. 5, 24 February 1825, p. 2, col. 4; *Poulson's*, "Emigration to Hayti," 15 October 1824, p. 2, col. 6, "Extract of a letter from Harrison McKinley & Co.," 24 February 1824, p. 2, col. 6.

⁶³ *RACHS* 20, 187, 189, 293, 295–298, 300–302.

⁶⁴ Miller, *Search for a Black Nationality*, 82.

a place in the imagination of many African Americans, even as projects for emigration would surface again by the 1850s. Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia did not share this vision of Haiti.

As developments of the 1820s gave way to those of the 1830s, Irish Catholics, African Americans, and Saint-Dominguans experienced a series of transitions and transformations. The deaths of Richard Allen in 1831, and Mathew Carey in 1839, as well as the passing of the oldest among the first generation of Saint-Dominguan migrants marked the end of an era. Religious structures and communities were also changing during this period. Irish Catholic and African American elites continued to emphasize religion in building community. Many Saint-Dominguans placed less importance on Catholic observance, as other forms of identity and community took precedence.

Growing populations among Irish Catholic and African-American communities meant a revitalization of religious communities. Irish Catholics in 1832 formed a majority of the city's 32,000 Catholics. African Americans could count "nearly 4,000 church members in fourteen churches." For Saint-Dominguans, although a middling elite generally prospered and continued to worship as Catholics, their numbers did not increase in the same proportions and were not increased through continuing migration. The religious loyalties of Saint-Dominguans are open to question during this period. Evidence suggests that fewer identified as Catholic by the late 1830s.⁶⁵

The growing numbers and cultural distinctions of Irish and African Americans would invite anger, resentment, and violence, and religious institutions would become targets of such violence. Catholic resistance to use of the King James Version of the Bible in public schools would lead to violent conflict between Irish Catholics and Protestants in the 1840s. Between

⁶⁵ Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 58; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 266–7.

1834 and 1849, Philadelphians experienced five “major” riots targeting African American homes and churches. These riots had an economic dimension, but also stemmed from the resentment of whites over the economic success, social mobility, and claims to “respectability” of some blacks.⁶⁶

Saint-Dominguans do not seem to have been caught up in the violence of the 1840s. Instead, some black Saint-Dominguans were meeting with success as entrepreneurs and tradesmen. In the 1838 *Register of Trades of Colored People*, commissioned by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, at least sixteen black Saint-Dominguans involved in eight trades are listed, including dressmaking, hairstyling, and shoemaking.⁶⁷ Economic stability must have been built on interactions with both black and white Philadelphians. After the Civil War, some Saint-Dominguan families entered the black elite as a result of similar business and cultural interactions. But in the antebellum period, Saint-Dominguans appeared to becoming more insular, and neither ties of race nor religion seemed to connect them with African Americans or Irish Catholics.⁶⁸

Among all three groups, religion was significant both in terms of providing meaning to individual lives and in shaping notions of community. Yet the impact of religion was related to one’s pace in the community. Elites, considered here as members of the emerging middle class, led and shaped religious institutions. Lay-led church administration gave Irish Catholics and African-American elites influence that the poor did not have. While many Saint-Dominguans

⁶⁶ Lapsansky, “Separate Churches,” 57–64, 75–77. Kidnapping was another form of violence exercised against African Americans of varying social classes. Daniel Meaders, “Kidnapping Blacks in Philadelphia: Isaac Hopper’s Tales of Oppression,” *The Journal of Negro History* 80, no. 2 (Spring, 1995): 47–65.

⁶⁷ *Register of Trades of Colored People in the City of Philadelphia and Districts* (Philadelphia: Merrilow and Gunn, 1838), 3–8; Henry M. Minton, *Early History of Negroes in Business in Philadelphia* ([Philadelphia?]: 1913), 4–5. As Minton pointed out, the *Register* cannot be taken as the last word on black tradesmen, as materials collected for the *Register* list several other occupations not included in the published version. Minton, *Early History of Negroes in Business in Philadelphia*, 7–8.

⁶⁸ Davies, “Saint-Dominguan Refugees,” 18–21.

valued the Catholic faith and its ties to the old order, others chose assimilation and took their chances in African-American society.

Men like Mathew Carey and Absalom Jones were invested in republican ideals, and their faith was influenced by those ideals. Men like Pierre Augustin submitted to the authority of the Roman Catholic church, but connections of family, language, and culture shaped religious practice. But these men did not build communities on their own, regardless of social status. Baptisms and marriages were not just rituals, but signified the role of women and children in the growth of communities. Women religious and lay women in confraternities simultaneously challenged and reinforced the social order, even as they provided service, knowledge, and cultural continuity within their respective religious communities.

Among the elites of the groups discussed, a majority of people viewed religion as a major component of both individual and group identity, and aligned with others on the basis of religion. Even then, constructions of race, ethnicity, language and culture, and gender meant that these communities would be imperfect reflections of the universal church, or of the heavenly kingdom to which they sought entry. The building of communities shaped life in Mathew Carey's Philadelphia, and is an ongoing project. Religion remains a vital, contested, part of that project.