

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN: BRISTER AND FENDA FREEMAN



In WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS, Henry Thoreau either confused or purposefully conflated Concord's Bristo or Brister Freeman (circa 1744-1822) with the neighboring town of Lincoln's Sippeo or Sippio Brister (circa 1756-1820). Sippeo was the slave of Lincoln's John Hoar. He changed his name to Sippio Brister sometime around 1791 and is buried, as Thoreau noted correctly, in the Lincoln cemetery, in a section set apart for blacks and other outcasts, including the British soldiers who died on April 19, 1775. Thoreau copied the epitaph in his journal.



May 31, 1850: Close by stood a stone with this inscription

In memory of
Sippio Brister
a man of Colour
who died
Nov 1. 1820
AEt. 64.

Was Thoreau merely confused, when in WALDEN he conflated in this manner the two black men Brister Freeman of Concord and Sippio Brister of Lincoln?

WALDEN: Down the road, on the right hand, on Brister's Hill, lived Brister Freeman, "a handy Negro," slave of Squire Cummings once, -there where grow still the apple-trees which Brister planted and tended; large old trees now, but their fruit still wild and ciderish to my taste. Not long since I read his epitaph in the old Lincoln burying-ground, a little on one side, near the unmarked graves of some British grenadiers who fell in the retreat from Concord, -where he is styled "Sippio Brister,"- Scipio Africanus he had some title to be called, -"a man of color," as if he were discolored. It also told me, with startling emphasis, when he died; which was but an indirect way of informing me that he ever lived. With him dwelt Fenda, his hospitable wife, who told fortunes, yet pleasantly, -large, round, and black, blacker than any of the children of night, such a dusky orb as never rose on Concord before or since.

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN

BRISTO FREEMAN
BRISTER FREEMAN

If this was confusion, it was a master stroke of confusion, because blending the two in this manner allowed him to invoke the Roman general Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Major (234-183BCE) of the Punic Wars, who defeated Hannibal at Zama -and invoking such a classic hero made his Walden Woods the locale



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not for a marginal and marginalized life but for an important and heroic life –and transformed Brister’s Hill into a local monument both to Concord slavery and to the perpetuation in Concord, after slavery, of an aftermath that was all too similar to enslavement, too similar for anyone to feel great comfort with the community’s progress. Then, insofar as Thoreau was able to associate his own experiment in his shanty on Walden Pond with Brister Freeman’s post-slavery mode of subsistence living, he was able to infuse his own endeavors in voluntary simplicity with heroism. Prior to Thoreau’s reformulation, Brister’s Hill had been merely a hill with an old field on it, and a cellar hole. Now, of course, it’s got a granite monument on it to Henry, and to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and others – due to the power and authority of his chapter “Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors.” One may be allowed to suppose that perhaps (only perhaps) Thoreau’s conflation was not confused, but purposeful. The conflation allowed him to deepen the links he needed to forge between local memory and the landscape.



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1744

Isaac Davis was born to Mary Gibson Davis and Ezekial Davis. He would be a gunsmith by trade and would live with his wife Hannah and children in [Acton](#). He would be said to have been so moved on one Sunday by a sermon on the state of the colonies that at its conclusion he applauded, and then asked the minister to repeat the sermon.

The [Acton](#) Town Meeting had for four years been pestering [Ammi Ruhammah Faulkner](#) and Samuel Jones, owners of the Mill Corner Dam of South Acton for four years, to open their dam so that alewives and other spawning ocean fish might get upstream. At this point the dam owners in frustration took the problem to the Middlesex Superior Court, pointing out that no alewives had been seen in the brook for more than two decades, and the court advised the Acton Town Meeting that the dam was “so formed in Nature” that opening it would cause “an unspeakable damage” which “cannot ... ever serve the Public or any Private Interest.”

In [Concord](#), Samuel Heywood, Joseph Wright, John Jones, Ephraim Jones, and Nathaniel Whittemore were Selectmen.

In [Concord](#), Samuel Heywood was again Town Clerk.

James Minott was [Concord](#)'s deputy and representative to the General Court.

It was in approximately this year that [Brister Freeman](#) of [Concord](#) was born. We don't know whether his [enslavement](#) was something that happened in Africa, or whether he was born in slavery here on the American continent. As a young child, we may presume, he was the property of housewright Timothy Wesson of Lincoln, because Wesson owned a child whom he had baptized as “Bristol” just before the wedding of his daughter Abigail Wesson to [John Cuming](#) in Concord on February 8, 1753.¹

The period from 1744 to 1760 was remarkable for the large drafts of men and money from the town [of [Concord](#)] to carry on that series of wars which then took place between the Indians and French on one part and the English and the Americans on the other. ... There were three foot companies and a troop in [Concord](#); and all the able-bodied men from 16 to 60 years of age were enrolled. They, as well as their arms, were pressed into the service when required. Sometimes whole companies were called upon to perform actual service at once; and few escaped the call at some time, either to go themselves, or furnish a substitute in those troublesome wars.

In particular, Jonathan Hoar of [Concord](#) would be an officer in the provincial service during the war.

1. “Bristol,” “Boston,” and “Cambridge” were relatively common slave names. The child, who may have been the father-in-law's present to the bride and bridegroom, would grow to be 5 feet 7 inches tall.



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1751

[Fenda](#) was born. Since this name is African, possibly Muslim, and doesn't match the pattern of slave naming in Concord, possibly she was brought to [Concord](#) at a later date, possibly even from Africa. She would get married there with another former [slave](#), [Brister Freeman](#), and bear at least three children: [Nancy](#) (born on March 9, 1772), [Edward](#) (born on November 17, 1781, died on September 13, 1788), and [Amos](#) (born during 1784). Both Nancy and Amos would marry, Amos twice. Nancy would be married by the [Reverend Ezra Ripley](#), although it is not clear whether this wedding took place in the church. She would have two children, a son named Jacob in 1791 and a daughter in 1798 who would die in 1803. Amos would have two children, both of whom would die young.

ESSENCE IS BLUR. SPECIFICITY,
THE OPPOSITE OF ESSENCE,
IS OF THE NATURE OF TRUTH.



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1753

February 8, Thursday: In [Concord](#), Massachusetts, Dr. [John Cuming](#) married Abigail Wesson, a daughter of housewright Timothy Wesson of Lincoln. The father-in-law had just had a slave child baptized as “Bristol” and the wedded couple would later be in possession of a [slave](#) bearing that name — so we presume this black child to have amounted to a wedding present.²



(Above, their home in Concord.)

2. “Bristol,” “Boston,” and “Cambridge” were relatively common slave names. The child would grow to be 5 feet 7 inches tall, and eventually would choose to be known as [Brister Freeman](#).

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1777

September 28, Sunday: The [slave](#) who would eventually come to be known as [Brister Freeman](#) was enlisted in the American revolutionary forces under the name “Bristol Cuming,” to serve alongside his master, Colonel [John Cuming](#) (1728-1788), a wealthy [Concord](#) physician and land speculator. “Bristol” was a relatively common slave name, as were the names of other cities such as Boston, Cambridge, etc. Cuming and his enlisted slave would be present at the surrender of Lieutenant General John Burgoyne and his British troops on October 17, 1777.

In subsequent enlistment and military records, Dr. Cuming’s slave would appear during November 1778 as “Brister” Cummings [*sic*], in 1779 as Bristol Freeman, in 1780 as Bristo Freeman, and on a 1786 payroll as Brister Freeman, the name he would bear for the rest of his life.



Above is the home of Dr. John and Abigail Wesson Cuming (photo by Elise Lemire), where the slave they referred to as “Bristo” would serve them until sometime in 1778-1779. Now, as the Victim Service Unit of the Massachusetts Correctional Institute at Concord, it is not open to the public:

National Register of Historic Places, Middlesex County:
Cuming, Dr. John, House (added 1977 - Building - #77000175)
West of Concord at 999 Barretts Mill Road and Reformatory Circle, Concord
Historic Significance: Person
Historic Person: Cuming, Dr. John
Significant Year: 1754
Area of Significance: Social History, Military, Health/Medicine
Period of Significance: 1750-1799



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Owner: State
Historic Function: Domestic
Historic Sub-function: Secondary Structure, Single Dwelling
Current Function: Domestic
Current Sub-function: Secondary Structure, Single Dwelling

Since his name signified his enslavement, Brister dropped the name Cuming and chose the name Freeman upon acquiring the power to fashion his own identity sometime between November 1778 and 1779.

At some point [Brister Freeman](#) married a woman named [Fenda](#), who according to [Henry Thoreau](#) “told fortunes.” Since this name is African, possibly Muslim, and doesn’t match the pattern of slave naming in Concord, possibly she was not born in [Concord](#), and possibly she was from Africa. The couple registered the births of three children: [Nancy](#) (born on March 9, 1772), [Edward](#) (born on November 17, 1781, died on September 13, 1788), and [Amos](#) (born during 1784).

**ESSENCES ARE FUZZY, GENERIC, CONCEPTUAL;
ARISTOTLE WAS RIGHT WHEN HE INSISTED THAT ALL TRUTH IS
SPECIFIC AND PARTICULAR (AND WRONG WHEN HE CHARACTERIZED
TRUTH AS A GENERALIZATION).**



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1780

In [Concord](#), Ephraim Wood, John Buttrick, and George Minott were Selectmen.

In [Concord](#), Ephraim Wood was again Town Clerk.

In [Concord](#), Abijah Bond was again Town Treasurer.

Joseph Hosmer was [Concord](#)'s deputy and representative to the General Court.

By this year in which, in Bohemia and Hungary, serfdom was being discontinued, in [Concord](#), Massachusetts, [Brister Freeman](#) had become a free man (probably he became free in 1778 or 1779). In this year, therefore, his name appeared on the tax roll, as a single person. In the years ahead, struggling financially, he either could not or would not pay taxes.

In THE FIRST EMANCIPATION: THE ABOLITION OF [SLAVERY](#) IN THE NORTH (1967), Arthur Zilversmit wrote:

Despite growing antislavery sentiment, when the General Court drafted a constitution for the new state it took no steps to end [slavery](#). On the contrary, the 1778 constitution (which was rejected by the electorate) recognized slavery and denied Negroes the right to vote.... The new charter that was finally adopted did include a bill of rights that ... declared all men to be free and equal by birth. But the new constitution did not mention slavery, and there is no evidence that the convention considered its abolition. Nonetheless, the 1780 constitution became the means for eliminating slavery in Massachusetts. In a new series of freedom cases, the abolitionists succeeded in persuading the courts to interpret the constitution in a way that was probably never intended by its framers. (112-113)

In Concord, as throughout Massachusetts, slaves won their freedom on a case-by-case basis.³

Caesar Robbins, who had been the slave of Simon Hunt who lived near the North Bridge, was in this year freed.⁴ Here is a synopsis of the Robbins family in [Concord](#):

- Rose Robbins was Caesar Robbins's wife. She bore at least two children, Peter Robbins and a daughter for whom we have established no given name.
- Peter Robbins, son of Caesar Robbins and Rose Robbins, also lived in the area. It would have been either Peter Hutchinson or Peter Robbins that was the origin of the place-names "Peter's Field" and "Peter's Spring."
- The Robbinses lived across from the old Manse in the Great Meadow and the Great Fields. "Caesar's Wood," as part of the Great Meadows, was named after Caesar Robbins.

3. Later, in the Quock Walker cases of 1781 and 1783, "bold judicial construction" would gradually transform the 1st clause of this Declaration of Rights until by re-interpretation and construction it had been made into a virtual abolition of [slavery](#). (However, the key word here is "gradually.")

4. Would Miss Martha Emmeline Hunt the schoolteacher who evidently lived at her parents' home on Ponkawtasset Hill, and who committed suicide in 1845 by drowning herself in the Concord River, be a descendant of this slaveowning Simon Hunt who had lived near the North Bridge in [Concord](#)?



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The Hon. Eleazer Brooks of Lincoln would be, until 1786, a senator.

Nearby Lincoln has been said to have been (despite lack of real statistics upon which to base such a claim) a reasonably healthy town:

From 1760 to 1770, to 1780, to 1790, to 1800, to 1810, to 1820, —Total.							
Intentions of Marriage	56	79	65	69	73	59	=401.
Marriages	38	40	35	48	87	56	=274.
Births	185	196	186	192	168	164	=1091.
Deaths	83	122	104	86	118	94	=607.

It appears from this table that the excess of births over the deaths is 484, more than two to one; and, according to the census, that, from 1790 to 1800, one in 86 died annually; from 1800 to 1810, one in 64; and from 1810 to 1820, one in 78; a result which is highly favorable to the healthiness of the town



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[of Lincoln].⁵

Town Clerks of Lincoln⁶

Ephraim Flint	1746-1752, 1754, 1756-1757	Grosvenor Tarbell	1799-1803
Ebenezer Cutler	1753, 1755, 1759	Thomas Wheeler	1804-1806
Samuel Farrar	1758, 1760-1766	Elijah Fiske	1810-1821
John Adams	1767-1777	Stephen Patch	1822-1827
Abijah Pierce	1778-1779, 1781	Charles Wheeler	1828-1830
Samuel Hoar	1780, 1782, 1787-1798, 1807-1809	Elijah Fiske	1831
Richard Russell	1783-1786		

Representatives of Lincoln⁷

Chambers Russell	'54-57, '59, '62, '63, '5.	Joshua Brooks	1809-1811.
Samuel Farrer	1766-1768.	Leonard Hoar	1812-1814.
Eleazer Brooks	'74-'78, '80, '5, '7, '90-'2.	William Hayden	1815, 1816.
Chambers Russell	1788.	Elijah Fiske	1820-1822.
Samuel Hoar	'94, '95, '97, '98, 1801, '3-'8.	Joel Smith	1824.
Samuel Farrar, Jr.	1800.	Silas P. Tarbell	1827, 1828.
Not represented 1758, '60, '62, '69-'73, '79, '81, '82, '86, '89, '93, '96, '99, 1802, '17, '23, '25, '26.			

5. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;....](#) Boston MA: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: John Stacy, 1835
(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry David Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study.)
6. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;....](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)
(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study. On July 16, 1859 he would correct a date mistake buried in the body of the text.)
7. Ibid



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1782

In [Concord](#), Ephraim Wood, John Buttrick, and George Minott were Selectmen.

In [Concord](#), Ephraim Wood was again Town Clerk.

In [Concord](#), Timothy Minott was Town Treasurer.

James Barrett was [Concord](#)'s deputy and representative to the General Court.

When Dr. [John Cuming](#), a prominent citizen of [Concord](#) of the most impeccable revolutionary and social standing, fell ill in this year, he made a will in which he declared: "I give and bequeath to my two negros (that was) viz. Bristo and Jem thirty pounds sterling each, the expending of which money to be under the Special Directions of the Selectmen of Concord."⁸

BRISTER FREEMAN

[Concord](#)'s revolutionary Committee of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety was renewed.

The committee of correspondence, etc., chosen March, 1776 [for [Concord](#)], were [John Cuming](#), Esq., Ephraim Wood, Jr., Esq., Capt. Jonas Heywood, Capt. Joseph Hosmer, James Barrett, Esq., Capt. David Brown, and Capt. George Minot. In 1777, Colonel John Buttrick, Josiah Merriam, Isaac Hubbard, Capt. Abishai Brown, Capt. David Wheeler, Mr. Ephraim Potter, and Lieut. Nathan Stow. In 1778, [John Cuming](#), Esq., Colonel John Buttrick, Ephraim Wood, Jr., Esq., Jonas Heywood, Esq., James Barrett, Esq., Capt. David Brown, and Mr. Josiah Merriam. These were re-elected in 1779, 1780, 1781 & 1782. In 1783, James Barrett, Esq., Jonas Heywood, Esq., Ephraim Wood, Jr., Esq., Capt. David Wood, and Lieut. Joseph Hayward. This committee was not chosen afterwards.⁹

8. Note that as "Bristo" was short for "Bristol," so also "Jem" was short for "James"; in the context of a legal document what we have here is two adults being diminished. The designation of the Town Selectmen as custodians for the fund makes it clear that Cuming's bequest was in no sense largesse, but was intended merely to reassure his fellow white townsmen that after his death his [manumitted slaves](#) would not make themselves a financial burden on the town. (Cuming would live until 1788 and then it would require several additional years before this will would be settled.)

9. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;....](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)

(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study.)



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April 8, Monday: The town of [Concord](#) disbursed to [Brister Freeman](#) more than £2 for “keeping” Thomas Cook. (There were no almshouses in Massachusetts until the year 1790. By March 1784 Thomas Cook would have died and the town would vote to sell his house. Where it was that Freeman would live between his years at the Cuming estate and his inhabitation of Walden Woods is unknown. In 1783, Freeman would again provide board for an impoverished Concord resident — he would receive more than £2 from the town for “keeping” Betty Russel [*sic*].)

“HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE” BEING A VIEW FROM A PARTICULAR POINT IN TIME (JUST AS THE PERSPECTIVE IN A PAINTING IS A VIEW FROM A PARTICULAR POINT IN SPACE), TO “LOOK AT THE COURSE OF HISTORY MORE GENERALLY” WOULD BE TO SACRIFICE PERSPECTIVE ALTOGETHER. THIS IS FANTASY-LAND, YOU’RE FOOLING YOURSELF. THERE CANNOT BE ANY SUCH THINGIE, AS SUCH A PERSPECTIVE.

[Joshua Barney](#)’s *Hyder Ally* captured General Monk.





THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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1783

The town of [Concord](#) disbursed to [Brister Freeman](#) more than £2 for “keeping” Betty Russel [*sic*].



YOUR GARDEN-VARIETY ACADEMIC HISTORIAN INVITES YOU TO CLIMB
ABOARD A HOVERING TIME MACHINE TO SKIM IN METATIME BACK
ACROSS THE GEOLOGY OF OUR PAST TIMESLICES, WHILE OFFERING UP
A GARDEN VARIETY OF COGENT ASSESSMENTS OF OUR PROGRESSION.
WHAT A LOAD OF CRAP! YOU SHOULD REFUSE THIS HELICOPTERISH
OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL PAST, FOR IN THE REAL WORLD THINGS
HAPPEN ONLY AS THEY HAPPEN. WHAT THIS SORT WRITES AMOUNTS,
LIKE MERE “SCIENCE FICTION,” MERELY TO “HISTORY FICTION”:
IT’S NOT WORTH YOUR ATTENTION.



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1785

December 9, Friday: Humphrey Barrett, [Concord](#) constable, was reimbursed for more than £1 in taxes that [Brister Freeman](#) had left unpaid. These were the Concord tax totals for this year:

State Tax.	County Tax.	Minister.	Incidental.	Total.
£711. 6s. 4d.	£25. 3s. 3d.	£100. 10s. 9d.	£748. 8s. 1d.	£1,585. 8s. 5d.

**THE TASK OF THE HISTORIAN IS TO CREATE HINDSIGHT WHILE
INTERCEPTING ANY ILLUSION OF FORESIGHT. NOTHING A HUMAN CAN
SEE CAN EVER BE SEEN AS IF THROUGH THE EYE OF GOD.**

December 23, Friday: [Brister Freeman](#) and another former slave, Charlestown Edes, formerly of Groton (Isaiah Edes of Groton is listed as having owned two slaves), purchased an acre of [Concord](#) land from Jacob Potter for £15, 18s. In a 1784 mortgage, the plot had been described as a “piece of old Field lying up Stratton Hill.” In this deed the property was again described as “on the top of Stratton’s hill.” The subsequent designation of the hill as “Brister’s Hill” helps place Freeman there from 1785 until his death in 1822 and points out to us that although the white inhabitants of this town always carefully referred to each other by their family names, they were continuing to refer to this black man by his familiar name even after he was no longer anyone’s slave. The original deed included the provision that the transaction would include “a small frame of a corn barn to be put thereon.” Whether Freeman and Edes succeeded in growing enough Indian corn to provide their own bread is unknown, but it certainly would have been difficult to do so in such infertile droughty depleted post-glacial podsol. The early white settlers who had attempted to raise farm crops in Walden Woods had soon learned better. Impoverished former slaves, abandoned without assets after a lifetime of labor, could subsist only on various out-of-the-way parcels that whites had found thus undesirable. It is for this reason that former slaves were able to purchase, rent, and squat on property in Walden Woods.



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1788

[Brister Freeman](#) was paid 18 shillings for making repairs to the [Old North Bridge](#), which had been erected in 1760 and was in such terrible condition that it would have to be abandoned and demolished in 1792. (From 1793 to 1874 no bridge would exist at this exact historic site.) Peter Wheeler also worked on these repairs and received £2, 13s. Later it would be this Wheeler who would play a near-fatal trick on Freeman.

“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY



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July 3, Thursday: [Dr. John Cuming](#) of [Concord](#) died at the age of 60 after being bled over his objections by the physician of neighboring Chelmsford, and was buried in the Old Hill Burying Ground beneath a headstone carved by Thomas Park (this isn't it).



Dr. Cuming left some clothing and some military equipment to [Waldo Emerson](#)'s father, the Reverend [William Emerson](#) of [Boston](#). He left £300 pounds sterling to [Harvard College](#), the income from which was to endow a chair of physics (medicine), that would be useful as seed money for the establishment of Harvard Medical School with Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse and Surgeon John Warren as its 1st professors. In addition, he left £150 sterling to benefit the [Town School](#) in [Concord](#), and £150 sterling to be distributed among the poor. He also left behind a small sum to ease the anxieties of the Selectmen, with which they could care for Bristo and Jem, his two former slaves, should they ever become a burden upon the town.

BRISTER FREEMAN



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His benevolent and liberal disposition was manifest in the judicious disposition of his estate. Beside many other legacies, he bequeathed "for the use of the town of Concord three hundred pounds sterling, one moiety thereof to be equally distributed for the benefit of the private schools in the town of Concord, and to be especially under the direction of the Selectmen for the time being; the other moiety thereof to be annually disposed of among the poor of said town, at the discretion of the minister and Selectmen of the town of Concord for the time being – the use of the above sum of money to be for the above purposes and for no other under any pretence whatever." He also made it the residuary legatee of one quarter of his real estate undisposed of at the death of his wife. The whole amounted to £500 lawful money or \$1,666.66. He gave "to the church of Concord, fifty pounds sterling, to be laid out in silver vessels to furnish the communion table" and also twenty five pound sterling to be forever kept as a fund to be disposed of by the minister and deacons for the benefit "of the poor communicants"; and also £20 to the Rev. Dr. Ripley.

He bequeathed "to the University in Cambridge three hundred pounds sterling, the income of the same to be appropriated for a professor of physic" and also made it a residuary legatee in the same manner as he did the town of Concord.¹⁰

Another class of donations has been made to the town for the relief of the *silent* poor, – those individuals who are needy, but do not wish to throw themselves on the town for support. They are as follows; from

Peter Wright ¹¹	\$277.42	Abel Barrett ¹²
\$500.00		
John Cuming	833.33	Jonathan Wheeler ¹³ 500.00

The town of Concord has also a fund of \$833.33 given by John Cuming, Esq., for the benefit of the "private schools," in the language of his Will, which has been distributed in all the districts but the centre one. Another donation now amounting to \$744.92 was given by John Beaton, Esq.,¹⁴ for the support of

10. [Lemuel Shattuck's 1835 A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;....](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)

11. PETER WRIGHT was a weaver, son of Captain Edward Wright, and died January 15, 1718, aged 53. He bequeathed all his real estate, after the death of his wife and Cousin Elizabeth Hartwell, to the poor of Concord, to be under the direction of the selectmen, and of the minister, who is "to have a double vote to any of the selectmen." What belonged to the town was sold, in 1731, for £500 currency.

12. ABEL BARRETT was brother to Humphrey Barrett just mentioned. He commenced the mercantile business in Concord, but afterwards removed to Boston. He died in Liverpool, England, January 12, 1803.

13. JONATHAN WHEELER was the son of Ephraim Wheeler, and was successively a merchant in Concord, Boston, Baltimore, and England. He died, September 4, 1811, in the city of New York, ten days after his arrival from Europe.

14. JOHN BEATON, Esq. was a native of Scotland, and emigrated to this town, where he acquired a respectable estate as a merchant. He was remarkable for his honesty, integrity, and Christian virtues, and had the unlimited confidence of his fellow citizens. "As honest as John Beaton," was long a current saying, expressive of the character of a strictly honest man. He was Town Treasurer 17 years from 1754, and appointed justice of the peace by the crown, June 6, 1765. He died without issue, June 9, 1776, aged 47.



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schools and the poor.¹⁵

WALDEN: Down the road, on the right hand, on Brister's Hill, lived Brister Freeman, "a handy Negro," slave of Squire Cummings once, -there where grow still the apple-trees which Brister planted and tended; large old trees now, but their fruit still wild and ciderish to my taste. Not long since I read his epitaph in the old Lincoln burying-ground, a little on one side, near the unmarked graves of some British grenadiers who fell in the retreat from Concord, -where he is styled "Sippio Brister,"- Scipio Africanus he had some title to be called, -"a man of color," as if he were discolored. It also told me, with startling emphasis, when he died; which was but an indirect way of informing me that he ever lived. With him dwelt Fenda, his hospitable wife, who told fortunes, yet pleasantly, -large, round, and black, blacker than any of the children of night, such a dusky orb as never rose on Concord before or since.

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BRISTER FREEMAN

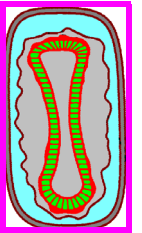


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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

(Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, a [Quaker](#), would later be dismissed as a Professor at the Harvard Medical School on account of his principled opposition to war ([the Quaker Peace Testimony](#)) and because he persisted in administering inoculations against the [small pox](#).)



However, below, in a depiction dating to 1783, is the righteous surviving professor, Surgeon John Warren, no deluded Quaker, who righteously **did** believe in war and righteously **did not** believe in vaccination — and was therefore entitled to teach Harvard men to become physicians.)





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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1790

March 1, Monday: On March 1st in our national capital, [New-York](#), the federal congress enacted a Census Act calling for a census every tenth year effective immediately. Domesday was an idea whose time had come. When conducted, this 1st US census revealed us to be a nation of 3,929,214 persons eligible to be counted. When analyzed, the census data would indicate that our 13 states consisted of roughly 500,000 [slaves](#) and 3,500,000 free citizens. About 92% of black Americans, with the Freeman household of [Concord](#), Massachusetts being among the few exceptions, were enslaved.¹⁶

The census that would be completed by August 1st would list seven members in this Freeman household on Brister's Hill, although now we can identify but five: [Brister](#), [Fenda](#), [Nancy](#), [Amos](#), and Charlestown Edes. Whether Edes also had family or whether Brister and Fenda had additional children is unknown. These five persons definitely did not fit in among the enumerated roughly 500,000 American slaves, since they were no longer slaves, but then, again, they did not exactly fit in among the enumerated roughly 3,500,000 free citizens either — since it is quite a stretch to think of them as being treated as citizens.

Squire Duncan Ingraham, owner of the slave Cato Ingraham (or, we might say, “former owner and present master” — since in 1783 slavery had allegedly been done away with entirely in the sovereign state of Massachusetts, and for some seven years there had been “no slaves in Massachusetts at all”), was in about this decade the most prominent citizen of [Concord](#), having made his pile in part, but only in part, in the [slave trade](#). The indications of this census are that more than 90 out of 100 of the persons in the United States at this point

SLAVERY IN MASSACHUSETTS

with identifiably French surnames were descended from [Huguenot](#) refugees, mainly in the 3d or 4th generation but with a few survivors of the 2d and 3d generation after flight still alive (for instance, [Pierre Thoreau](#) had

16. The rise in [manumissions](#) in the post-Revolutionary period would increase the proportion of free black Americans to about 13.5% by 1810, where it would remain through 1840. A decline in manumissions in the late antebellum period, combined with the lesser fecundity of free black Americans, would then move the free-to-enslaved proportion back down to about 11% when we reached the point of civil war:

Year	% in Population
1790	8
1810	13.5
1840	13.5
1861	11



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represented the 1st generation of the Thoreaus, the generation that had fled from the Poitou-Charentes district of France in 1685 to find refuge in St. Hélier on the island of [Jersey](#), the 2d generation had been represented by [Philippe Thoreau](#) (1720-1800), the 3d generation had been represented by [Jean Thoreau](#) who had come to America in 1773, and in Boston, [John Thoreau](#) had just been born as a member of the 4th cohort after the great diaspora that had begun during the 16th Century, and in 1817, [Henry Thoreau](#) would be born in Concord as a member of the 5th cohort of this diaspora).

**THOREAU
LIFESPANS**

**HENRY'S
RELATIVES**

This figures out to be a little over 60,000 diaspora persons.

More on our 1st national census:



The population of Massachusetts remained overwhelmingly English in origin through the end of the eighteenth century. The first census, in 1790, reported a total population of 378,556 in the state. of those 373,187 were white and 5,369 "colored" (presumably "Indians" and blacks); to each 100 white inhabitants, there were only 1.4 "colored." Of the 373,187 white residents, 354,528 (95%) were of English origin; 3.6 percent were Scots and 1 percent Irish, making a total of 99.6 percent from the British Isles. French amounted to only 0.2 percent, Dutch to 0.1 percent. Germans, "Hebrews," and all other nationalities were represented by less than one tenth of 1 percent.... Boston was growing again after the decline brought about by years of Revolutionary agitation; the 18,038 inhabitants reported in 1790, however, seem a modest increase over the 1743 peak of 16,182, when the town was the largest in British North America. The census reported forty towns in the state with populations in excess of 2,000; those were almost evenly divided between the coast and inland areas. The four of these forty that exceeded 5,000 were, however, all seaports: Boston, Salem (7,921), Gloucester (5,137), and Marblehead (5,061). The situation was about to change radically and rapidly.

NEVER READ AHEAD! TO APPRECIATE MARCH 1ST, 1790 AT ALL ONE



THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

**MUST APPRECIATE IT AS A TODAY (THE FOLLOWING DAY, TOMORROW,
IS BUT A PORTION OF THE UNREALIZED FUTURE AND IFFY AT BEST).**



THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1791

January 17, Monday: [Brister Freeman](#) signed a deed selling “one half of the house and land that I now live in and upon” “on the county road leading from Concord to Boston” for £7, 19s “to me paid by Ephraim Woods Esq, Jacob Brown and Asa Brooks Gentlemen and Selectmen of [Concord](#) and Trustees of the Legacy given me in the last will of [John Cuming, Esq.](#),” who had died in 1788. (Freeman did not, however, seem to relinquish possession of the plot on “Brister’s Hill,” for in another title document in 1797 Duncan Ingraham would sell John Richardson a piece of land “bounding northwesterly ... to land in possession of Brister Freeman, a black man.”)

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT



August: Charlestown Edes, [Brister Freeman](#)’s land partner, died in [Concord](#) at the age of 32. The cause was scurvy, which is due to a diet lacking in fresh fruits and vegetables and indicates that Edes and Freeman had been struggling financially.

October 27, Thursday: The Reverend [Ezra Ripley](#) of [Concord](#) officiated at the wedding of [Brister Freeman](#)’s daughter [Nancy](#) and Jacob Freeman of Lincoln. The couple would name their infant after its father. Jacob Freeman, Jr. would survive only to the age of 19.



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1792

February 7, Tuesday: During the years since they had purchased their acre of land on Brister's Hill, the two former slaves [Brister Freeman](#) and Charlestown Edes seem to have been having difficulty with their taxes and other expenses. At some point Charlestown Edes had died. The deed for the acre they had purchased in 1785 was on this day belatedly delivered to the county by the previous owner, Jacob Potter, due to the fact that Freeman was needing to turn over half the property to the [Concord](#) Selectmen. Freeman's inability or unwillingness to pay taxes may be why the Selectmen were insisting that Freeman sacrifice half the property, or for a more benevolent spin, were providing him this opportunity to hold onto some of it. It is not now clear whether Freeman was abandoning his share or Edes's. Indications are that Freeman continued to reside in the house.

According to a survey note by Henry Thoreau, Brister's land to the east of Walden Street, with his cider-apple orchard, was seized because he "was a foreigner." (Since we have a record of a property transaction in 1811 in

Brister Freeman was a passionate negro, profane and suspicious. He was said to have once stolen a haddock and was therefore tormented and hooted by boys. Then he would swear and storm. This gathered boys and men about him who insulted and violated him to greater passion. This want of respect for humanity and disregard of men's feelings was extended to many of these classes of the weak, and the higher cultured had not power or did not see their way to overcome it. They did not approve nor encourage these waywardnesses, but they endured and even found amusement in relating them to their families and neighbors.

SLAVERY IN MASSACHUSETTS

which Freeman sold the property, or an interest in the property, for \$20 to Rachel Harrington LeGross, and a record of a property transaction in 1822, the year following his death, in which LeGross resold what she had purchased for \$10 to William Lawrence of Weston, Thoreau seems to have been referring in his survey note to this 1792 surrender of a portion of his property to the town Selectmen.)

NO-ONE'S LIFE IS EVER NOT DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY HAPPENSTANCE





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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

April 1, Sunday: [Brister Freeman](#) acquired a new neighbor when Stephen Nutting, a bachelor, purchased a house and barn on 113 acres adjacent to the [Concord](#)-Lincoln-Wayland Road. Like Brister, Nutting would be mentioned by [Henry Thoreau](#) in [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#):

[WALDEN](#): Once more, on the left, where are seen the well and lilac bushes by the wall, in the now open field, lived Nutting and Le Grosse.

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN

STEPHEN NUTTING

LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT'S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN'S STORIES.
LIFE ISN'T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.



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1798

There was a church revival in [Carlisle](#) which significantly increased the congregation. (However, the number of original communicants, as of 1781, had been 34, and by 1829, the number would have dropped to 27.)

In [Concord](#), ?????????, Reuben Hunt, and Roger Brown were Selectmen.

Ephraim Wood was [Concord](#)'s deputy and representative to the General Court.

William Jones practiced law in [Concord](#).

A daughter was born to [Brister Freeman](#)'s daughter [Nancy](#) and her husband Jacob Freeman. We do not know this child's name. She would survive only until age 5.

THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1800



In Concord, John Wyman (or Wayman) the potter, one of Brister Freeman's neighbors in Walden Woods, a person who like Brister would be mentioned in Thoreau's WALDEN, died.

WALDEN: An old man, a potter, who lived by the pond before the Revolution, told him once that there was an iron chest at the bottom, and that he had seen it. Sometimes it would come floating up to the shore; but when you went toward it, it would go back into deep water and disappear. I was pleased to hear of the old log canoe, which took the place of an Indian one of the same material but more graceful construction, which perchance had first been a tree on the bank, and then, as it were, fell into the water, to float there for a generation, the most proper vessel for the lake. I remember that when I first looked into these depths there were many large trunks to be seen indistinctly lying on the bottom, which had either been blown over formerly, or left on the ice at the last cutting, when wood was cheaper; but now they have mostly disappeared.

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN

JOHN WYMAN

The new census of Concord, Massachusetts recorded four residents in the Freeman household on Brister's Hill. We know this included Brister, Fenda, and their son Amos, age 16. The identity of the 4th person is, however, uncertain; it might be Charlestown Edes.

POPULATION.— Concord possesses few of those advantages of water-power, peculiar to many manufacturing towns, which favor a rapid growth. It is dependent on the industry of its inhabitants, its improvements in agriculture and the mechanic arts, and the general advancement of the surrounding country, for its increase in wealth and population. The incorporation of other towns, principally within its original limits, has, at various times, reduced its population and resources, and renders it difficult to estimate its growth with accuracy. In 1706 the polls were 230, nearly half as many as they now [1835] are; but they were scattered throughout six now incorporated towns. In 1753, just before the incorporation of Lincoln, the polls were 442, greater than at any other period in our history prior to 1820; and it is probable the population and wealth of the town was proportionably great. The population in 1764, including part of Carlisle, then belonging to Concord, was 1584, of whom 736 were white males, 821 white females, and 27 negroes. There were 6 slaves in 1725; 21 in 1741; and 19 in 1754. September 1, 1783, three years after the town was reduced to its present [1835] territorial limits, it contained 1321 inhabitants, of whom 15 were blacks. In 1790, there were 1590. The following table give



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the number at three different periods since.

	1800		1810		1820	
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.
Under 10 years	202	195	207	195	210	207
From 10 to 16	121	126	115	101	117	138
From 16 to 26	142	189	153	168	184	165
From 26 to 45	159	172	162	175	186	205
45 and upwards	158	177	150	179	150	192
	<u>782</u>	<u>859</u>	<u>787</u>	<u>818</u>	<u>847</u>	<u>907</u>
Blacks		38		28		34
	Total	<u>1679</u>		<u>1633</u>		<u>1788</u>

In 1820 there were 9 foreigners not naturalized, 262 engaged in agriculture, 16 in commerce, and 140 in manufactures.

From the above statement and a subsequent one on the valuation, it will appear that the town, from 1800 to the close of the war in 1815, remained nearly stationary. Since that time it has had a slow but gradual increase. The proportion of births to the deaths is estimated at about 3 to 1, producing a large redundant population, which is scattered in every state in the union. The associations with "Old Concord" are dear to many in distant lands, who owe their ancestral origin to its inhabitants.¹⁷

17. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;...](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)

(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry David Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study. On July 16, 1859 he would correct a date mistake buried in the body of the text.)



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1807



[Amos Freeman](#), [Brister](#) and [Fenda Freeman](#)'s son, married Sally Coffey of Medway. (Although we don't have a record, Sally must have died shortly thereafter as [Amos](#) would remarry with Love Oliver on September 6, 1809.)

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT






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BRISTER AND FENDA FREEMAN

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1809

 September 6, Wednesday: [Amos Freeman](#), [Brister and Fenda Freeman](#)'s son, had married Sally Coffey of Medway during 1807. Sally must have died, as at this point [Amos](#) again married, with Love Oliver.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*4th day 6 of 9 Mo// It is a sort of a low time with me today, & how ever poor my prospects are both the outward & inward I desire to retain a thankful heart for the [that which] I do receive, being at this time renewedly sensible that I have received beyond what I deserved both of the outward substance & inward or spiritual food -Oh that I could be found worthy of a greater share of the spiritual. I often long to feel my mind cloathed with that spiritual breathing to God which can alone Sustain the mind thro' all the probations & temptations that can beset poor mortals in their Passage to eternity -
Mother & Niobe have been several days at Narragansett & a little after dinner returned - They say & doubtless they have had a pleasant visit, but Dear Mother seem'd much affected at seeing Aunt Molly - my mind was also not a little affected allmost to weeping - Set the eveng at home perusing Old records of minutes*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1810



July 20, Friday: In South America on this day, the nation of Columbia achieved its independence.

In [Concord](#), Massachusetts, [Amos Freeman](#) and Love Oliver Freeman's infant died at 3 months of age.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

6th day 20 of 7 Mo// It has been a day of no small seriousness to me I heard it had intimated that a certain dear friend of mine was assailed with a weakness that I had no Idea of — OH! how necessary it is for the very foremost of us to be careful & Watchful over every part of our conduct, & particularly our appetites & propensities to excess in every particular. Who will fail, or fall into evil & become as burden next, is unknown — sure this dear precious friend of mine has known much of religion & advanced much further in it than myself — I feel hurt, yea deeply afflicted, but what shall I say? certain it is a Solemn Warning to me to be Strictly on my Watch for the enemy is forever lurking as in ambush that he may overthrow those that are desirous to Walk in the paths of virtue

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

THE FALLACY OF MOMENTISM: THIS STARRY UNIVERSE DOES NOT CONSIST OF A SEQUENCE OF MOMENTS. THAT IS A FIGMENT, ONE WE HAVE RECOURSE TO IN ORDER TO PRIVILEGE TIME OVER CHANGE, A PRIVILEGING THAT MAKES CHANGE SEEM UNREAL, DERIVATIVE, A MERE APPEARANCE. IN FACT IT IS CHANGE AND ONLY CHANGE WHICH WE EXPERIENCE AS REALITY, TIME BEING BY WAY OF RADICAL CONTRAST UNEXPERIENCED — A MERE INTELLECTUAL CONSTRUCT. THERE EXISTS NO SUCH THING AS A MOMENT. NO INSTANT HAS EVER FOR AN INSTANT EXISTED.



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November 2, Friday: Jacob Freeman and [Nancy Freeman](#)'s son Jacob Freeman, Jr. died at the age of 19.

Friedrich Hermann Otto replaced Hermann Friedrich Otto as Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen.

The Prussian government issued an edict ending the restriction of certain trades to guild members.

President Madison decreed that as of February 2d of the following year, trade with France would be restored and trade with Great Britain ended.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

6th day 2nd of 11 Mo// The day passed away in rather a dreary manner, it was a severe snow storm in consequence of which I did not go home at noon & dined at my fathers - notwithstanding the severity of the weather many of our friends that went to Somerset Quay Meeting returnd.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

BETWEEN ANY TWO MOMENTS ARE AN INFINITE NUMBER OF MOMENTS, AND BETWEEN THESE OTHER MOMENTS LIKEWISE AN INFINITE NUMBER, THERE BEING NO ATOMIC MOMENT JUST AS THERE IS NO ATOMIC POINT ALONG A LINE. MOMENTS ARE THEREFORE FIGMENTS. THE PRESENT MOMENT IS A MOMENT AND AS SUCH IS A FIGMENT, A FLIGHT OF THE IMAGINATION TO WHICH NOTHING REAL CORRESPONDS. SINCE PAST MOMENTS HAVE PASSED OUT OF EXISTENCE AND FUTURE MOMENTS HAVE YET TO ARRIVE, WE NOTE THAT THE PRESENT MOMENT IS ALL THAT EVER EXISTS — AND YET THE PRESENT MOMENT BEING A MOMENT IS A FIGMENT TO WHICH NOTHING IN REALITY CORRESPONDS.




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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1811


 February 27, Wednesday: [Fenda Freeman](#) of Brister's Hill in [Concord](#) died of "dropsy" (edema) at the age of 60.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*4th day 27 of 2 Mo// Nothing material to insert - perhaps I may say that my mind has been favord to experience a Sweet little current of life running as it were running by the way - I dare not speak very highly of my experience as in these days it is a low time indeed & therefore seldom of late insert much in that head -I desire to be thankful for the little -
Brother David Set the eveing with us -*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT EITHER THE REALITY OF TIME OVER THAT OF
CHANGE, OR CHANGE OVER TIME — IT'S PARMENIDES, OR
HERACLITUS. I HAVE GONE WITH HERACLITUS.

 September 1, Sunday: [Brister Freeman](#) sold his land on Brister's Hill in [Concord](#), Massachusetts for \$20 to Rachel Harrington LeGross, a white orphan who, on January 14, 1804, had been permitted by her guardian Jonathan Maynard, Esq. of Concord to marry a neighbor, Francis Le Grosse. The land deed listed Freeman as a barber, although he performed various day jobs around town and Thoreau would rightly term him a "handy" man.

[WALDEN](#): Once more, on the left, where are seen the well and lilac bushes by the wall, in the now open field, lived Nutting and Le Grosse.

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN

STEPHEN NUTTING

The LeGross couple had resided on nearby property they rented from Peter Wheeler in Walden Woods. Francis had died at the age of 45 on September 11, 1809. There is no evidence that Brister Freeman would move out
[Brister and Fenda Freeman](#) "Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project



THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

BRISTER AND FENDA FREEMAN

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

after this sale. Rather, given the recent death of [Fenda Freeman](#), it seems likely that he cohabited with the widowed Rachel Harrington LeGross and that this land transaction was meant to insure her possession of the property if she was predeceased by Brister Freeman. The couple obviously could not formalize their relationship, as interracial marriage was impossible in Massachusetts. The race aspect of this bonding and the fact that LeGross was Peter Wheeler's former tenant may explain the harassment Freeman would experience from Wheeler in the following year.

In [WALDEN](#); OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS, [Henry Thoreau](#) would be able to write of Brister's relationship with Fenda, but not with Rachel.

[WALDEN](#): Down the road, on the right hand, on Brister's Hill, lived Brister Freeman, "a handy Negro," slave of Squire Cummings once, -there where grow still the apple-trees which Brister planted and tended; large old trees now, but their fruit still wild and ciderish to my taste. Not long since I read his epitaph in the old Lincoln burying-ground, a little on one side, near the unmarked graves of some British grenadiers who fell in the retreat from Concord, -where he is styled "Sippio Brister,"- Scipio Africanus he had some title to be called, -"a man of color," as if he were discolored. It also told me, with startling emphasis, when he died; which was but an indirect way of informing me that he ever lived. With him dwelt Fenda, his hospitable wife, who told fortunes, yet pleasantly, -large, round, and black, blacker than any of the children of night, such a dusky orb as never rose on Concord before or since.

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN

BRISTO FREEMAN

BRISTER FREEMAN

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

1st day 1 of 9 M 1811// Our meeting in forenoon was of its usual size & to me a pretty good time & Mary Morton was concern'd in a sweet & fervant supplication on behalf of the Aged & Youth In the Afternoon felt the mind drawn to attend the funeral of Patience Easton Sister to Dr Easton which was to be at the same hour in which meeting begins so father & myself walked to the beach where she lived & attended -- We were at my fathers today & spent the hours that were not meeting hours. Uncle & Aunt Stanton being there made our Stay the more agreeable -



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1812



Winter: On a cold day toward the end of the year, [Brister Freeman](#) sought work at Wheeler's slaughterhouse. Peter Wheeler was, as a result of the British fleet's embargo of the port of Boston, undergoing severe financial hardship, and he quite possibly was unwell (he would expire the following May). What then transpired survives in Cyrus Stowe's 1857 "Memoir of Peter Wheeler" as published in THE CENTENNIAL OF THE SOCIAL CIRCLE IN CONCORD, 1782-1882 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1882):

Mr. Wheeler once had a most ferocious bull to kill. He and his men succeeded with some difficulty in getting the animal into his slaughter-house. They were afraid, however, to go in and encounter his fury, and, while outside conferring upon the safest mode of proceeding, Brister Freeman, the celebrated negro, happened along. Wheeler, giving his men the wink, inquired very affectionately after Brister's health, and told him if he would go into the slaughter-house and get an axe, he should have a little job to do. Brister never suspected mischief, at once opened the door and walked in, when it was quietly shut upon him, and the appalled negro found himself face to face with the enraged bull. It was already a "case of fight or die," after sundry minuets about the house, the celerity of which would have established a French dancing-master, Brister fortunately spied the axe he had been sent in for, and, seizing it, commenced belaboring his adversary, giving him a blow here and there as he had opportunity. All this while stood Peter and his men watching through the dry knot-holes the valiant exploits of Brister, and cheering him on with the most encouraging roars of laughter. Fortune at length decided in favor of the negro; he laid the bull dead upon the floor, and casting down his weapon of fight, came forth unharmed. But imagine the amazement of his tormentors when at length he emerged, no longer the dim, somber negro he was when he entered, but literally white with terror, and what was once his wool, standing up straight like so many pokers, they could hardly persuade themselves to believe it was Brister; but without waiting for them to identify him, or receive their congratulations for the notable manner in which he sustained himself, the affrighted and indignant negro turned his back upon them and departed.

IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT IT IS MORTALS WHO CONSUME OUR
HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS, FOR WHAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO DO IS
EVADE THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE HUMAN LIFESPAN. (IMMORTALS,



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WITH NOTHING TO LIVE FOR, TAKE NO HEED OF OUR STORIES.)



THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

BRISTER AND FENDA FREEMAN

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1814



Jonas Lee was [Concord](#)'s deputy and representative to the General Court.

In [Concord](#), John Buttrick continued as Town Treasurer.

In [Concord](#), Nathan Barrett was a Selectman.

[John Keyes](#) of [Concord](#) became Treasurer of Middlesex County.

In [Concord](#), Thomas Wheeler was a Selectman.

In this year [Amos Freeman](#) and [Love Oliver Freeman](#) had a son John who would survive only to the age of 8 years.

ONE COULD BE ELSEWHERE, AS ELSEWHERE DOES EXIST.
ONE CANNOT BE ELSEWHEN SINCE ELSEWHEN DOES NOT.
(TO THE WILLING MANY THINGS CAN BE EXPLAINED,
THAT FOR THE UNWILLING WILL REMAIN FOREVER MYSTERIOUS.)



THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

BRISTER AND FENDA FREEMAN

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1817



[Brister Freeman](#) took financial responsibility for his grandson John, then 3 years old. [Concord](#)'s Overseer of the Poor paid him 50 cents for so doing. Freeman's son [Amos](#), John's father, must have died or abandoned his family. The mother, [Love Oliver Freeman](#), continued to live with her father-in-law and her young son on Brister's Hill.

CONTINGENCY

ALTHOUGH VERY MANY OUTCOMES ARE OVERDETERMINED, WE TRUST
THAT SOMETIMES WE ACTUALLY MAKE REAL CHOICES.




THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:


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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1818

 [Brister Freeman](#) again, as he had in the previous year, took financial responsibility for his grandson John, then 4 years old. [Concord](#)'s Overseer of the Poor again paid him 50 cents for so doing.

FIGURING OUT WHAT AMOUNTS TO A “HISTORICAL CONTEXT” IS WHAT THE CRAFT OF HISTORICIZING AMOUNTS TO, AND THIS NECESSITATES DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE SET OF EVENTS THAT MUST HAVE TAKEN PLACE BEFORE EVENT E COULD BECOME POSSIBLE, AND MOST CAREFULLY DISTINGUISHING THEM FROM ANOTHER SET OF EVENTS THAT COULD NOT POSSIBLY OCCUR UNTIL SUBSEQUENT TO EVENT E.

 July: The [Concord](#) Female Charitable Society donated 9½ yards of [cotton](#) cloth to be made into clothes for “[Love Freeman](#)’s boy.” Later, the Society would add two yards of gingham and a “small shirt.”

HISTORY’S NOT MADE OF WOULD. WHEN SOMEONE CHOOSES TO REVEAL, FOR INSTANCE, AT THIS PARTICULAR POINT IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT, THAT LATER THE SOCIETY WOULD ADD TWO YARDS OF GINGHAM AND A “SMALL SHIRT,” S/HE DISCLOSES THAT WHAT IS BEING CRAFTED IS NOT REALITY BUT PREDESTINARIANISM. THE RULE OF REALITY IS THAT THE FUTURE HASN’T EVER HAPPENED, YET. NOT ONLY DO YOU KNOW NOTHING OF IT, BUT ALSO, AT THIS POINT IT ISN’T REAL.



THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1820



George Russell, born on September 23, 1795 son of Dr. Richard Russell, graduated in this year at the Medical Institution at Cambridge, and would establish a medical practice in Lincoln.

The population of Lincoln, which in 1764 had been 639 inclusive of 28 negroes, had at this point risen to 786.

According to a valuation taken [in Lincoln] in 1784, it appears that there were 143 polls, 26 of whom were not rateable; 88 dwelling-houses, 84 barns, 1 tan-yard, 1 grist-mill, and 21 other buildings; 454 acres of tillage land, 429 of English mowing, 800 meadow, 1502 pasturing, 2057 wood land, 2128 'other land,' and 137 unimproveable; 840 barrels of cider were made, 105 horses, 155 oxen, 266 neat cattle, 378 cows, 155 sheep, and 136 swine were held. Probably, if an estimate was made now [1835], it would not essentially vary from the above. The polls in 1790, were 156; the houses in 1801, 104. The population in 1764 was 639, including 28 negroes, and in 1790, 740; in 1800, 756; in 1810, 713; in 1820, 786; and in 1830, 709.¹⁸

Lincoln has been said to have been (despite lack of real statistics upon which to base such a claim) a reasonably healthy town:

From 1760 to 1770, to 1780, to 1790, to 1800, to 1810, to 1820, —Total.							
Intentions of Marriage	56	79	65	69	73	59	=401.
Marriages	38	40	35	48	87	56	=274.
Births	185	196	186	192	168	164	=1091.
Deaths	83	122	104	86	118	94	=607.

It appears from this table that the excess of births over the deaths is 484, more than two to one; and, according to the census, that, from 1790 to 1800, one in 86 died annually; from 1800 to 1810, one in 64; and from 1810 to 1820, one in 78; a result which is highly favorable to the healthiness of the town [of Lincoln].¹⁹

18. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;...](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)

(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study. On July 16, 1859 he would correct a date mistake buried in the body of the text.)

19. Ibid.



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In [Concord](#), John Buttrick continued as Town Treasurer.

In [Concord](#), Nathan Barrett was a Selectman.

In [Concord](#), Isaac Lee continued as a Selectman.

Thomas Wheeler was [Concord](#)'s deputy and representative to the General Court.

The census of [Concord](#), Massachusetts recorded three residents in the Freeman household on Brister's Hill: [Brister Freeman](#), [Love Oliver Freeman](#) (who was presumably ill, as she would die in August at the age of 49), and her young son John. A question obviously arises as to the whereabouts of the widowed Rachel Harrington LeGross — did these black Concordians perhaps see fit not to apprise the white visitor of the presence of a white Concordian?[ADDITIONAL RESEARCH HERE: PERHAPS THIS TWO-ROOM HOME WAS CONSIDERED TO BE TWO HOUSEHOLDS AND THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE WIDOW LEGROSS IS LISTED ELSEWHERE IN THE CENSUS? -- NEED TO CHECK]

The following table exhibits the appropriations for several objects at different periods in the town of Acton:²⁰

	1750	1760	1770	1780	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830
Minister	£50	£52	£70	£3,562	£80	\$353	\$353	\$363	—
Schools	13	12	24	2,000	49	333	450	450	450
Roads	26	70	60	800	120	400	500	600	800
Incidental	20	12	80	10,000	100	500	1,000	1,400	600

The votes on the constitution [by citizens in [Concord](#)], as revised in 1820, were as follows: The first article 46 yeas and 77 nays; the 2d, 46 yeas, 81 nays; the 3d, 76 yeas, 49 nays; the 4th, 59 yeas, 68 nays; the 5th, 55 yeas, 72 nays; the 6th, 78 yeas, 50 nays; the 7th, 69 yeas, 58 nays; the 8th, 67 yeas, 60 nays; the 9th, 62 yeas, 65 nays the 10th, 58 yeas, 68 nays; the 11th, 78 yeas, 48 nays; the 12th, 68 yeas, 58 nays; the 13th, 81 yeas; 44 nays; and the 14th, 49 yeas and 69 nays.²¹

The Population [of Acton] in 1764 was 611; in 1790, including [Carlisle](#), 853; in 1800, 901; in 1810, 885; in 1820, 1047; and in 1830, 1128.²²

In 1820, there were 3 foreigners [in Lincoln] not naturalized, 81 engaged in agriculture, 5 in commerce, and 34 in

20. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;...](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)

(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study.)

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.



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manufactures. The militia is comprised in one company of about 50. An estimate, made by Dr. Stearns in 1820, appears in the church records in which the following "averages from the beginning of the town are determined (the nearest being taken when there is a fraction:) births, 22 in a year; baptisms, 19; admissions into church, 4; marriages, 4; and deaths, 10." These average annual estimates, will hold good now [1835], excepting in the baptisms, the number of which has diminished.²³

Representatives of Lincoln²⁴

Chambers Russell	'54-'57, '59, '62, '63, '5.	Joshua Brooks	1809-1811.
Samuel Farrer	1766-1768.	Leonard Hoar	1812-1814.
Eleazer Brooks	'74-'78, '80, '5, '7, '90-'2.	William Hayden	1815, 1816.
Chambers Russell	1788.	Elijah Fiske	1820-1822.
Samuel Hoar	'94, '95, '97, '98, 1801, '3-'8.	Joel Smith	1824.
Samuel Farrar, Jr.	1800.	Silas P. Tarbell	1827, 1828.
Not represented 1758, '60, '62, '69-'73, '79, '81, '82, '86, '89, '93, '96, '99, 1802, '17, '23, '25, '26.			

The population of nearby [Carlisle](#), which in 1800 had been 634, had at this point risen to 681, but this trend would reverse.

The population [of [Carlisle](#)] in 1800 was 634; in 1810, 675; in 1820 681; in 1830, 566. In 1820, 119 persons were engaged in agriculture, 1 in commerce. and 34 in manufactures.

The valuation in 1831 gives the following results: 138 rateable polls, 17 not rateable, 83 dwelling-houses, 88 barns, 4 grist and saw mills; 314 acres of tillage land, 524 acres of upland mowing, 661 acres of meadow, 294 acres of pasturing, 882 acres of woodland, 3607 acres unimproved, 884 unimproveable, 213 acres used for roads, and 109 acres covered with water; 46 horses, 200 oxen, 474 cows and steers; 3668 bushels of corn, 541 bushels of rye, 490 of oats, 362 tons of English hay, and 468 tons of meadow hay. By comparing the valuations for several periods since the incorporation it will appear that the town has made little or no progress, but in many things has retrograded.²⁵

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid

25. Ibid.



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These were the appropriations made by the town of Carlisle:

	1785	1790	1795	1800	1805	1810	1815	1820	1825	1830
Minister	£91	90	85	\$285	290	280	320	275	320	500
Schools	36	30	60	360	300	360	360	450	360	360
Roads	60	45	60	300	480	350	400	400	350	400
Town Charges	74	60	50	300	500	550	550	700	600	600
County Tax	—	11 ³ / ₄	22	58	—	117	72	99	56	22
State Tax	484	48	64	227	—	210	130	180	—	65

Treasurers of Carlisle

Samuel Heald	1780-1785
Simon Blood, Jr.	1786-1788
Samuel Green	1789-1803
Nathan Green	1804-1819
Nathan Green	1820-1828
John Nelson	1829—

Justices of the Peace of Carlisle

Name	Died	Age
Jonathan Heald	December 28, 1816	60
Nathaniel Hutchinson	July 30, 1820	34
Asa Parlin	October 8, 1822	68
Jonathan Heald, Jr.		
John Heald		
John Nelson		



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August 11, Friday: On Brister's Hill in [Concord](#), Massachusetts, [Love Oliver Freeman](#) died at the age of 49.



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1822



January 30, Wednesday: Ramon Lopez Pelegrin replaced Jose Gabriel de Silva y Bazan, marques de Santa Cruz as Spain's First Secretary of State.

[Brister Freeman](#), former [slave](#), died of "fever and age" at the age of 78. In his final months he had been loaned "a pair of sheets, and woolen bed quilt" by Concord's Female Charitable Society, which noted in its records that he was "sick." Freeman's burial place is listed as [Concord](#) but of course it would have cost money to mark the spot with a stone.

In [Newport, Rhode Island](#), Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal that his wife, Friend Hannah Rodman Gould, had offered him an adequate explanation for Quaker quietism, to wit, this world with its web of alluring interests is the abode of Satan, and a place of temptation:

4th day 30th of 1 M / A Difficulty about a Worldly concern between Several individuals having been in agitation, in which my mind has been exercised, & that pretty much since yesterday – It called fourth this remark from my wife – She observed that "the time had been, when she did not see why the World Should stand first in the Trio of our potent enemies, as the 'World the Flesh & the Devil', but the longer she lived the more she was confirmed, that it would be out of place anywhere else" – It is indeed the most promonent forerunner, & sets the devil at work in some, in whom it would seem as if more of an overcoming had been experienced but alas some object is turned up, which touches the interest, & Satan steps in & agravates the case, by stirring up evil surmisings, then to detraction, till the breach is sufficiently widened for him to effect his purposes, by laying waste & destroying love & harmony, & introducing that in which his dominion consists, Hatred Strife & every evil thing –



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May his power be averted

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



February 17, 1st Day morning: Friend John Alley, Jr. appeared at the [Quaker](#) meetinghouse in Lynn still wearing his sword, and moved to seat himself in one of the high seats traditionally reserved for recognized ministers and elders. Friend Isaac Basset grabbed him about the waist pinning his arms to his side while several others cut the belt of the sword and pulled it away. He, Friend [Jonathan Buffum](#), Friend Benjamin Shaw, and several other “New Lights” then managed to seat themselves in the high seats, some of them by clambering over the main benches in the meetinghouse. The elders of the meeting quickly brought that morning meeting for worship to a close.

At the afternoon meeting for worship, these “New Light” Quakers again seated themselves in the ministers’ section. Friend Isaac Basset invited them to come down and when they accused him of being disorderly, accused them of being the ones who were being disorderly. He gave a signal and three Friends seized Friend Benjamin Shaw, and carried him struggling from the building. Then Friend Jonathan Buffum was removed, and then Friend John Alley, Jr. The three were confined in a nearby house under guard and Friend Preserved Sprague, who had on other occasions behaved in a disruptive manner, was added to their number. There were shouts of “Mob! Mob!” and a deputy sheriff of the town appeared and read the riot act.

That evening a Salem sheriff would take custody of the four detained Quakers of Lynn.

Meanwhile on this day, in [Concord](#), Massachusetts, it was 18 days subsequent to the death of [Brister Freeman](#), and his grandson John Freeman for whom he had been providing, an 8-year-old whose father was long gone and whose mother had died a year and a half earlier, also succumbed — apparently of neglect.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

1st day 17th of 2nd M 1822 / In the forenoon Father Rodman was engaged in a short lively testimony. - Afternoon Silent - both meetings were rather small in consequence of the walking - both



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to me were seasons of but little life –

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



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1823

 November 13, Thursday: Rachel Harrington LeGross sold the Brister's Hill property she had acquired for \$20 from [Brister Freeman](#), to William Lawrence of Weston for \$10.

In [Newport, Rhode Island](#), Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:


5th day 12 of 11 M / Small comfortable Meeting. -

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: March 22, 2016



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.