

sadie hall

11/8/39

### Paul Cuffe.

Paul Cuffe born in 1759 on the island of Gutterhunker near Westport, Massachusettes can be considered one of the first revolutionists among the blacks in America.

His parents were Cuffe Slocum, a Negro who had purchased his freedom, and Ruth Moses a Pequot Indian maiden. He was one of a large family and did not have the advantages of a rudimentary education. Only the amazing innate traits of the man could have made him the accomplished shipbuilder and sea captain that he later became. As he progressed he supplied the deficiency in education by his personal efforts and learned not only to read and write with facility but became an instructor in the art of navigation to both whites and black.

At sixteen years of age Paul became a sailor. Ill luck overtook him and on his third voyage was captured by the English. He was held captive for three months. After his release as a prisoner of war he decided to go into business for himself. Aided by his elder brother David he built an open boat, inwhich they went to sea. At the first intimation of danger his brother gave up the adventure and Paul was forced to undertake the work singlehanded.

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His successful course in shipping cargo was from Newfoundland to Savannah, and as distant as Gottemburg. He owned the Ranger, a schooner of sixty to seventy tons; a half interest in a brig called Traveller, of 109 tons; the ship Alpha, 286 tons and a three quarter interest in a larger vessel.

At twenty-five years of age he married an maiden from his mother's tribe named Alice Pequit. They hired a small house on the Westport River to which he and his family moved. At a latter date he purchased this and the adjoining property for thirty-five hundred dollars. ( A tremendous sum at this period)

In 1797 he built a schoolhouse for Negro and Indian children on his own property. He also formed societies for the mutual relief and the physical betterment of Negroes in Philadelphia and New York. Before the close of the Revolutionary War Paul refused to pay a personal tax, on the grounds that colored people did not enjoy the rights and privileges of citizenship. After considerable delay and an appeal to the courts he paid the tax under protest. He then petitioned the legislature which finally agreed to his contention. This was the first record of a person of African descent making a successful appeal in behalf of his civil rights.

He sailed for Africa in his brig Traveller in 1811. After a voyage of two months he reached Sierra Leone on the west coast. Here he organized the Friendly Society of Sierra Leone and then went to Liverpool.

While in London he consulted such friends as Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce. These men were interested in a proposition to promote the settlement on the west coast of Africa, of free people of color in America. ( This at the period was

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the prevailing sentiment in England respecting what was best for the Negro) Because of the unfriendly relation between England and America, governmental support could not be obtained.

In 1815 he was able to see the crystalization of his big idea. He sailed from Boston for Sierra Leone with thirty-eight free Negroes as settlers on the Black continent. The journey took fifty-five days and the balance of the expense for the trip was paid from the pocket of Cuffe. (\$25,000) He returned home to take another colony but died on September 7, 1817, in his fifty-ninth year. At the time of his death there were over two thousand named on intending immigrants on his list awaiting transportation.

The American Society for Colonizing the Free People of color on the United States commonly known as the American Colonization Society WAS FORMED IN WASHINGTON IN 1816. The president was a southern man, twelve of the seventeen vice presidents were southerners and all of the twelve managers were slave holders. Consternation spread among the Negro people of the Country. North as well as the South were drawn into the argument. People were convinced that the real purpose of the organization was to rid the States of all the free people of color so that the slaves could be more securely bound. Meetings of protest were held, the most important in Philadelphia where the presiding officer was James Forten, a prominent business man. Another leading spirit was Richard Allen, now a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In view of this new development any personal attempt toward colonization was naturally overwhelmed.

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Sadie Hall,

// A discourse delivered on the death of Paul Cuffee.

A man of colour, before the  
African Episcopal Zion Church Oct. 21, 1817 by  
Rev. Peter Williams Jr.

Published by request of some members of that insti-  
tution. New York printed, reprinted by W. Alexander,  
sold also by Darton and W. Darton, Jun. London 1818. //

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A Discourse on the Death of Captain Paul Cuffee.

Here lies one whose exertions, in behalf of oppressed humanity, have entitled him to esteem of the world, and the greatest remembrance of latest posterity.

Paul Cuffee, the son of a poor African who was consigned to rigorous and unlimited bondage; subjected to all the disadvantages which unreasonable prejudice heaps upon that class of men; destitute of the means of early education; and more frequently struggling under the frowns of fortune than basking in her smiles: by perseverance, prudence, and laudable enterprise; he raised himself to wealth and respectability: and, having attained that eminence, he so distinguished himself by his amiable and upright deportment, and his zealous exertions in the cause of humanity and religion, that he became, not only an object of general notice and regard throughout the civilized world; but even the untutored tribes, that inhabit the regions of Ethiopia, learnt to consider him a father and a friend.

In his person Captain P. Cuffee was a large and well proportioned man. His countenance was serious, but mild. His speech and habit, plain and unostentatious. His deportment, and dignified and prepossessing; blending gravity with modesty and sweetness; and firmness with gentleness and humility. His whole exterior indicated a man of respectability and piety. "

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Born in 1759 on one of the Elizabeth Islands, near New Bedford. His parents had ten children, four sons and six daughters. He was the youngest of the sons. His father died when he was about fourteen, at which time he had learned little more than his alphabets.

The care of his mother and sisters devolved upon him. He obtained his learning from his own indefatigable exertions, and the scanty aids which he occasionally received from persons who were friendly toward him. By this means he advanced to a considerable proficiency in arithmetic, and skill in navigation. He acquired such knowledge of navigation in two weeks, as enabled him to command his vessel in the voyage which he made to Russia, to England, to Africa, to the West Indies Islands, as well as to a number of different ports in the southern sections of the United States.

Before he had grown to manhood he made several voyages to the West Indies and along the American coast.

At the age of twenty he commenced business for himself in a small open boat. With this he set out trading to the neighboring towns and settlements: and though Providence seemed rather unpropitious to him at first, by perseverance, prudence, and industry his resources were so blessed with an increase that after a while, he was enabled to obtain a good sized schooner.

In this vessel he enlarged the sphere of his action; trading to more distant places, and in articles requiring a larger capital; and thus in the process of time, he became owner of one brig. Afterwards of two, then he added a ship, and so on until 1806 at which time he possessed one ship, two brigs and several smaller vessels, besides considerable property in houses and lands. Hence during the rigors of winter, when he was detained from going abroad in the pursuits of business, he usually devoted his time to the teaching of navigation //

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to the young men of the neighborhood and the family.

In the year 1780 Captain Cuffee being just then of age, was with his brother John, called upon by the collector to pay personal tax. At the time the coloured people of Massachusetts were not considered entitled to the right of suffrage or to any of the privileges peculiar to citizens. They refused to pay it. At the next session of the legislature they presented a petition, praying that they might have the rights, since that had to bear the burdens of citizenship.

It was granted and all ~~people~~ free coloured people of the State, on paying their taxes, were considered from henceforth, as entitled to all the privileges of citizens.

In 1797, Captain Cuffee lamenting that the place in which he lived, was destitute of a school for the instruction of youth, he resolved at length to build a school house on his own land and at his own expense.

In 1811 he sailed in his own brig manned by persons of colour and sailed for Suerra Leona in hope of benefitin~~g~~ the natives and descendents. He recommended the formation of a society for the purpose of promoting the interests of its members and of the colonists in general. "The Friendly Society of Sierra Leona".

Formed two societies one in Philadelphia and the other in New York.

The war between this country and Great Britain put a bar in the way of his operations.

He solicited the government ( Washington ) to favor his views, and ~~asked~~ to let him depart and carry with him those persons and their effects whom he had engaged to go and settle Sierra Leona.

In December 1815 he took on board his brig 38 persons of the dispersed race of Africa; and after a voyage of 55 days landed them safe- )

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// ly on the soil of their progenitors.

He was taken ill in February and expired on September 7th in ~~his~~  
his 59th year. //