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Abstract

In the 1862 Pennsylvania College album there is a photograph of John Hopkins, who that year was entering his fifteenth year of service as the college's janitor. In one student's book, the portrait of Hopkins jokingly refers to him as the school's "vice president." This appellation speaks volumes about the life of the African-American custodian, for while it was clearly made in jest as a token of the students' genuine affection for Hopkins, it symbolizes the gulf between the white students and the black janitor. It goes without saying that the students found the picture humorous because they understood that in their time, a black man could never be the vice president.

John Hopkins was born in Maryland in 1806. The 1860 census lists him as a mulatto. Very little else is known about Hopkins's first forty-one years. Was he born free or a slave? Did he leave Maryland openly, or escape via the Underground Railroad? All that is known for certain is that Hopkins was in Pennsylvania by 1841 or early 1842. Unfortunately, large gaps like these are fairly typical when researching Pennsylvania's antebellum African Americans. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Adams County Historical Society, ACHS, Adams County, Pennsylvania History, Civil War, Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania College, Gettysburg College, Jack Hopkins, Edward Hopkins, Battlefield, Gettysburg

Vermilyea: Jack Hopkins' Civil War

JACK HOPKINS' CIVIL WAR

Peter C. Vermilyea

In the 1862 Pennsylvania College album there is a photograph of John Hopkins, who that year was entering his fifteenth year of service as the college's janitor. In one student's book, the portrait of Hopkins jokingly refers to him as the school's "vice president." This appellation speaks volumes about the life of the African-American custodian, for while it was clearly made in jest as a token of the students' genuine affection for Hopkins, it symbolizes the gulf between the white students and the black janitor. It goes without saying that the students found the picture humorous because they understood that in their time, a black man could never be the vice president.

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Hopkins reemerges in the historical record in April 1847, when Peter Aughinbaugh resigned as the steward of Pennsylvania College. The trustees authorized the faculty to employ a janitor to assume the task of cleaning Pennsylvania Hall, and John Hopkins was quickly hired at a salary of \$15 a month, which was the average income for a free black in the North at the time.¹

These were eventful days in the borough's African American community. The state constitution was rewritten less than a decade earlier specifically to prevent African Americans from voting. Prior to this, the document was ambiguous on the subject, and local courts were forced to intervene, meaning that laws related to black suffrage varied from locality to locality. Only one state legislator refused to sign the new constitution, Gettysburg's Thaddeus Stevens.² In 1841, African American members of several Gettysburg churches organized the Slaves' Refuge Society with a resolution that proclaimed: "We feel it our indispensable duty to assist such of our brethren as shall come among us for the purpose of liberating themselves, and to raise all the means in our power to effect our object, which is to give liberty to our brethren groaning under the tyrannical yoke of oppression."³

Later that year, the *Pennsylvania Freeman* reported that the Maryland Legislature was afraid of an abolitionist group in Gettysburg and had recently passed legislation prohibiting their black Pennsylvania "neighbors from passing and repassing through the state, subjecting many of our colored friends to great inconvenience." Perhaps this law was enacted in response to the more than 10% reduction in the slave population of Maryland from 1830 to 1840. Maryland's rapid rate of manumissions might be reflected in the twenty-five percent growth in the African American population of Gettysburg the following decade.⁴

Hopkins arrived in Gettysburg around the time the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision in the *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* (1842) case. This decision

declared the state's personal liberty laws, designed to protect African Americans from being brought south by bounty hunters, marshals, or kidnappers, unconstitutional as they violated the extradition clause of the Constitution. However, Justice Joseph Story, writing for the majority, declared that while states should abide by the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, they were not compelled to. This led to a statewide appeal from African Americans for additional personal liberty laws.⁵ These laws, ultimately passed by the legislature, were designed to offer some protection from kidnappers. This was a fear all too familiar for the African American residents of a town only ten or so miles from the Mason-Dixon Line, whose newspapers carried advertisements for the return of runaways, and, at least in the well-known 1845 incident involving Catherine Paine, learned of a resident of nearby Bendersville seized by slave hunters.⁶

If Gettysburg's location near the Mason-Dixon line resulted in an undercurrent of fear in the black community, the town also offered economic opportunities for newly freed or escaped slaves. Jobs were available on the bountiful farms of Adams County or in the town's brick kilns or carriage shops.⁷ Additionally, unlike many Northern communities, no black codes existed in Gettysburg, and African Americans were free to visit the town's shops or restaurants.⁸

But Jack Hopkins had neither the time nor the means for much shopping or dining out. Five months after Hopkins was hired, Pennsylvania College trustees authorized the faculty to "purchase a bell not to exceed 300 lbs in weight." Manufactured in Philadelphia, the bell rang to begin classes for more than 40 years. It was Hopkins' responsibility to ring the bell at 8 am, noon, 4:30, and finally at 10 pm, to signal the time for students to retire.⁹ The 1860 edition of "Odds and Ends, and Things Wise and Otherwise," a campus literary journal, included a poem by Homer, Jr., identified by Henry Eyster Jacobs to be James Q. Waters, entitled "Jack the Janitor." The opening stanzas give us a glimpse of Hopkins's duties at the College:

There's one who treads our College hall
Not quite so white as College walls;
But not less true than he who calls
Him Jack – our Jack the Janitor.

Jack makes our beds and sweeps our rooms,
But precious little time consumes,
And all our books with dust entombs,
Jack does – our Jack the Janitor.

I tell you now, "it am a fac,"
And nothing of the truth doth lack;
At making beds Jack has a nack,
Jack has – our Jack the Janitor.

Jack turns the tick just like a feather,
And spreads the clothes, on all together,
Sometimes one way, sometimes t'other
Jack does – our Jack the Janitor.

Jack sweeps our rooms by sleight of hand,
Or else his boys at his command,
But leaves the dirt in corners stand,
Jack does - our Jack the Janitor.

From morn to morn, from noon to noon,
From night to night, and then too soon,
Jack rings the students home from town,
Jack does - our Jack the Janitor.

In short, Jack is a useful man
And long has been a faithful Jan
He does well all and all he can,
Jack does - our Jack the Janitor.¹⁰

A few other tidbits about Hopkins's professional career survive, especially in the reminiscences of Pennsylvania College students. He apparently made simple, cheap furniture that was perhaps sold to students. Henry Minnigh, who attended the college from 1856 to 1859 and later served as Captain of Company K, 1st Pennsylvania Reserves, offered three reminiscences of Hopkins at work under unusual circumstances. First he recounted the time:

The book of mathematics or some other text book was changed against the wish of the class. Soon afterward at recitation every member of the class who roomed in the college building pled the want of preparation, in as much as that all the books had mysteriously disappeared from their rooms. That afternoon what seemed to be a newly made grave was discovered in the lower part of the Campus, about where Brua Chapel now stands. The attention of one of the faculty was called to this, and the janitor, Jack Hopkins was summoned who opened the grave, when a rough box was lifted to the cavity; this in turn being opened revealed a regular coffin and within this, the lost books.

Hopkins' unorthodox contributions to campus life were not limited to the exhumation of text books, however. Minnigh wrote of the:

Night the college bell commenced ringing at midnight. Jack Hopkins the janitor was hurriedly called, and a rush was made for the bell room, when the door was not found locked as usual, but actually nailed shut. Presently it was opened and the bell rope was missing; next, the belfry was climbed and everyone present was anxious to see the culprit. No one was there, but the bell was still ringing. Finally a rope attached to the bell was found leading out over the building to the fields beyond. The rope was cut promptly, and when the grounds beyond was searched of course no one was found. We do not know that the frolicsome bell ringers ever were located.

Finally, Minnigh remembered the time when:

After the service, our class, the Freshman, gathered as usual at the door of the recitation room awaiting the Professor who always unlocked the door upon his arrival. He arrived in due time, but when the attempt was made to open the door, it would not respond. It yielded just enough to reveal the fact that the room was full of new hay. Taking in the situation at a glance, the Professor very quietly stepping back remarked, "Step in gentlemen, there is sufficient fodder for all the calves."¹¹

Hopkins was apparently called in to dispose of the hay, and reportedly was so angered over being forced to clean up after a student prank that he threatened to quit. And the college was sometimes upset with Hopkins. Dr. Charles Glatfelter, in his history of the college, writes, "The faculty were often displeased with the way in which Hopkins performed his duties. He did not ring the bell on time, his cleaning of the rooms did not suit them, and he sometimes let the classroom fires go out. On one occasion they dismissed him, and on another he resigned."¹²

Yet not only did Hopkins remain on the job, but his responsibilities were increased to include care of the grounds.¹³ And he continued to be popular with the students. As James Q. Waters' poem, the honorary title of "vice president" of the college, and an extant – albeit anonymous – July 4, 1851 toast at a college celebration – "To our worthy Janitor – may the day of his final graduation be far off" – attest Hopkins may have been a sort of mascot to the students, a figure whose work cleaning up after them they appreciated, but one whom they understood could never enjoy equal standing with them.¹⁴

In his own community, however, Hopkins would have been considered a success. At some point, presumably in the early 1840s, he wed his wife, Julia Ann, sixteen years his junior and a native of Pennsylvania. The fact that their son John Edward was born in Pennsylvania in 1842 offers evidence to suggest that Jack arrived in the state before that point. Two years later a second son, Wilson, was born, and a daughter, Mary, arrived a year after that.¹⁵ In 1857 the family purchased a one-story frame house at 219 South Washington Street – which still stands – from an African American man, Abraham Brien, whose new home on Cemetery Ridge would be almost at the center of bitter fighting in July 1863.¹⁶

There are indications that Hopkins, on the eve of the Civil War, was involved in the Underground Railroad. Hopkins reportedly worked on the line that linked Thaddeus Stevens's Mariae's Furnace, at the western end of Adams County, Edward McPherson's farm, and the abolitionists in Gettysburg. An illustration exists of a silhouetted figure in a wagon driving in the railroad cut west of town, with the caption, "Steven's RR used by fugitives from his iron workes to PA College. Jack Hopkins notified the BDs who took them to Wright's."¹⁷ The BDs were the Black Ducks, allegedly an unofficial anti-slavery fraternity whose headquarters were on East Middle Street in town and who reportedly maintained a cave on Culp's Hill for the purpose of hiding runaways.¹⁸ Regardless of the veracity of these episodes, a reminiscence published in a *Star and*

Sentinel article from the early twentieth century provides a tantalizing clue as to Hopkins' role in the black community:

When all the excursionists and picnickers from Gettysburg had returned to their homes, July 4th, 1860, the festivities of the day wound up with fireworks which were pronounced fine, but would be considered very commonplace to-day.

The fireworks, however, were not the grandest feature of Gettysburg's Independence evening, 1860. They were simply nowhere alongside of the 'Grand Fancy Dress Ball' given at the residence of John Hopkins, janitor of the College, which was attended by all the colored aristocracy of the town, with specially invited guests from York, Harrisburg, Columbia, and Chambersburg.

It was the swellest function of the colored citizens the town had ever seen. As the house was not large enough for all to be inside at once, the dancing was conducted on the relay system. There were heartburnings for years afterward on the part of some who were not invited.¹⁹

It is not known if this was Hopkins' home on South Washington Street or on the college campus, for the ball took place in the year of his move. Regardless, this episode suggests that Hopkins might have been seen as a local or even regional African American leader.

As war approached and Hopkins assumed a position of greater prominence in the local African American community, he took on additional responsibilities at the college. In 1860 Jack and his family moved into an on-campus house provided to him by the Trustees.²⁰ The steward system was abolished, eliminating this constant supervisory presence on campus. Hopkins, without being an overt spy, could have been the eyes and ears of the administration and helped students from getting too rowdy, an event not uncommon in this time period. Dickinson College, for example, had several student riots during the time Hopkins was janitor, including one in 1847 – the McClintock Riots – over the confiscation of three African Americans from Carlisle by two Maryland men who claimed them as their fugitive slaves.²¹

The new Hopkins home was located 40 yards behind, or north, of Pennsylvania Hall. Following construction of the building in 1837 there were three or four wells, gardens, a washhouse that doubled as a bake house, a smoke house, and a stable. Also there were privies, a woodhouse, and a bathhouse that also served as a gymnasium. Given this architectural hodge-podge it is little wonder that no 19th century photographer made the north side of Penn Hall the focal point for a camera. At any rate, the washhouse was enlarged and made into a residence for Hopkins and his family.²²

On the eve of civil war, John Hopkins was a family man, active in the political interests of the local African American community, and a long time employee of the college whose responsibilities increased over the years. He was 54 years old when South

Carolina seceded, and his approaching old age inspired several more stanzas of James Q. Waters' poem:

Jack's summer days have fled apace,
And frosts of time have left their trace
Upon his somber, solemn face,
Jack's face, our Jack's, the Janitor.

Yes, Jack has now become quite old,
Has weathered many a winter cold,
And we are sad when we behold,
Old Jack – our Jack the Janitor;

Bowed down beneath the weight of years,
Jack scarce can climb the college stairs,
Or ring the bell for Prep, or Prayers,
Poor Jack! Our Jack the Janitor.²³

In the spring of 1863, the community that Jack Hopkins had known and been a prominent fixture in for about twenty years, was changed forever. On June 15, the leading elements of Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia crossed the Potomac River, moved rapidly through Maryland, and entered Pennsylvania. Before them traveled a mass of African American fugitives. That night, Salome Myers, who lived around the corner from Hopkins' South Washington Street home, recorded in her diary, "the Darkies made such a racket up and down by our house that we could not sleep."²⁴ Gettysburg's African American population was hurriedly making preparations to evacuate the town. Of this flight, Tillie Pierce, who lived on Baltimore Street, remembered years later, "I can see them yet; men and women with bundles as large as old-fashioned feather ticks slung across their backs, almost bearing them to the ground. Children also, carrying their bundles, and striving in vain to keep up with their seniors. The greatest consternation was depicted on all their countenances as they hurried along; crowding, and running against each other in their confusion; children stumbling, falling and crying. Mothers, anxious for their offspring, would stop for a moment to hurry them up, saying: For' de lod's sake, you chillen, cum right long quick! If dem rebs dun katch you dey tear you all up." Gettysburg's black population correctly feared that the Confederates would enslave African Americans they encountered in Pennsylvania.²⁵

Among those fleeing the Gettysburg area were the members of the Hopkins family. At the regular meeting of the Pennsylvania College Board of Trustees, on June 30, 1863 – incidentally, with Union cavalry in the borough, and Confederate infantry on its western outskirts – it was resolved, "That Mr. Garber be directed to ring the College bell, during the absence of the Janitor."²⁶ Garber was a tutor hired to replace Frederick Klinefelter, who was serving as Captain of Company A of the 26th Pennsylvania Emergency Militia, composed primarily of students from the college and the Lutheran Theological Seminary.



This Mathew Brady image taken on July 15, 1863 is looking east from Seminary Ridge. The Jack Hopkins home is visible in the upper left hand corner of the view near Pennsylvania Hall (white building with cupola). Image courtesy of the Gettysburg National Military Park

Where did the Hopkins family go? No one can say for sure, but it is likely that Gettysburg's African American residents who fled the borough – and many did stay behind to take their chances – went one of three places. First was Harrisburg, where the *Harrisburg Telegraph* reported on June 24, “Contrabands are arriving here constantly, and it really is a distressing sight to see women and children huddled in wagons, bringing all their worldly possessions with them.”²⁷ A second possibility was Philadelphia. Fannie Buehler, who lived just off of Gettysburg's Diamond, wrote of her servant, “I know not whither [she fled], for I never saw [my servant] afterwards. I heard of her from someone who had seen her on the way to Philadelphia.”²⁸ A third possibility was to disappear into the forested areas around Yellow Hill, near today's Biglerville. Here existed an African American community whose AME church had close ties to Gettysburg's AME church. It seems likely that those African Americans who held property and therefore had strong incentive to return to Gettysburg fled to nearby Yellow Hill, while those without significant attachment to Gettysburg went to Harrisburg or Philadelphia and remained there. Jack Hopkins and his family were in Gettysburg in the fall of 1863, for their names appear on the tax rolls. Of the 186 African Americans who were listed as Gettysburg residents in 1860, only 87 appear on the 1863 tax roll. Eighty-five percent of those in town in the fall of 1863 had ties to real estate.²⁹

The destruction wreaked by the battle meant more work for Hopkins. The College received \$625 from the Quartermaster Department for the use of Pennsylvania Hall as a hospital and toward returning it to pre-July 1 appearance, and later another \$1000 was awarded on appeal. In a July 21 appeal on behalf of the college and the seminary, the *Adams Sentinel* noted, “Our quiet and orderly town heretofore known only for its nurseries of literature, science and religion, has been selected as the theatre for one of the fiercest, most extensive and eventful conflicts of the age.” These institutions “have been made a sad scene of devastation and ruin.” “The Seminary and the College are, and for a month to come, probably will be occupied as hospitals for the sick and wounded of both armies, and will require not only many repairs, but also much purification and painting, before they can be occupied for their appropriate purposes.” The college reopened for students in September, despite remaining battle debris, as recorded by the Reverend M. Colver:

On our arrival we found in and around the building, according to the estimate given us, seven hundred wounded rebels. When I came to my room I saw it afforded ample accommodation for three – one on the bed and two on the floor... All rooms, halls and hallways were occupied with the poor deluded sons of the South. The moans, prayers and shrieks of the wounded and dying were heard everywhere.³⁰

The damage was not limited to the college edifice, however. The Hopkins' campus home had been ransacked by Confederates. In 1868, Jack's wife Julia applied for reimbursement from the state government for losses suffered as a result of the battle.

*

Accompanying her claim was the following note from Clara Baugher, wife of the college president:

In July 1863 during the Battle of Gettysburg she lived about 100 yards from Pennsylvania College in the house occupied by her husband then President of said college and about 140 yards from the house then occupied by John Hopkins who was janitor of Pennsylvania College. That during the Battle of Gettysburg the Rebel soldiers had possession of the house occupied by said John Hopkins distant about 40 yards from said college which was used by the Rebels as a Hospital—that witness knows of her own knowledge that the Petitioner had a considerable quantity of good bed clothing, carpeting, and household and kitchen furniture which was taken or destroyed whilst the Rebels had possession of the building and that the property taken was the property of the said John Hopkins.

Julia listed all of the items stolen or destroyed by the Confederates:

19 quilts
8 blankets, 2 double
11 Comforts
5 feather beds
5 Chaff beds
20 yards imported carpet
18 yards Rag carpet
1 dozen china cups and saucers
18 plates
2 rocking chairs
1 copper kettle
4 table cloths
30 towels
2 cooking glasses
2 water bowls and pitchers
2 large buckets
1 coffee mill
1 fat hog
3 chickens
1 pair of shoes
1 clock

A separate affidavit certified the weight of the fat hog at 150 pounds. The total value of the lost personal estate was estimated at \$339.35. But Julia also petitioned the state for five dollars in lost real estate property – “potatoes in the ground.” In 1871 she was awarded the full amount of her request.³¹

On June 10, 1863, five days before Confederate forces crossed the Potomac, Henry J. Fahnestock of Gettysburg wrote to his townsman Daniel Skelly, serving with the Union army: "The Colored Company here under command of Captain Randolph Johnston have offered their services to Governor Andrew of Mass., but have understood since that they will not be allowed to leave the state, but will join a Colored Regt or Brigade to be formed in this state." Whether this unit was one of the many local home guard units being formed in the area, emergency troops who would serve with distinction at the Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge on June 27 where they fought off an advance guard of Confederates trying to capture the bridge, or perhaps was just passing through on its way to Camp William Penn in Philadelphia, is unknown.³² They were, however, a precursor to military service for many of Adams County's black residents. Before the war ended, 50 of the county's 474 African American men served the Union cause, representing, in the words of former Gettysburg College history professor Robert Bloom, "more than the traditional ten percent of the whole."³³

John Edward Hopkins, Jack and Julia's twenty-one year old son, a five foot seven inch waiver, enlisted in Company F of the 25th United States Colored Troops on January 26, 1864.³⁴ Six other men from Gettysburg enlisted in the 25th, including Nelson Royer who previously, as a servant to Surgeon T.T. Tate of the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry, had tended to the wounded in his hometown.³⁵ This regiment was organized at Philadelphia's Camp William Penn, and sailed to New Orleans on the steamer "Suwahnee" on March 15. The vessel sprang a leak off Cape Hatteras and put into Beaufort, North Carolina, where they remained on duty in the defenses for a month before continuing to New Orleans, arriving there on May 1. In July 1864 the unit was attached to the District of Pensacola, stationed first at Fort Pickens and then at Fort Barrancas, guarding the naval approaches to Pensacola, for the remainder of the war.³⁶ Hopkins must have acclimated well to the life of a soldier; he was rapidly promoted to corporal, and then in October 1864 to sergeant, becoming one of the 16% of blacks who achieved noncommissioned officer status.³⁷ While life at Barrancas was filled with the tedium that pervaded Civil War garrison duty, the men of the 25th were equally beset with feelings of frustration caused by the belief, correct as it turned out, that they would never see combat. Frederick L. Hitchcock, colonel of the 25th summarized the situation: "after a proper time had been devoted to drill, I never for a moment doubted what would be its conduct under fire. It would have done its full duty beyond question. An opportunity to prove this the Government never afforded, and the men always felt this a grievance."³⁸

Of the Spring and Summer of 1865 at Fort Barrancas, Samuel P. Bates, in his massive work, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers*, wrote, "the men suffered terribly from scurvy, about 150 dying, and as many more disabled for life. The mortality at one time amounted to from four to six daily. This was the result of want of proper food. Urgent appeals were made by the officers in command, but not until the disease had run its course, were these appeals answered."³⁹ Hopkins did not escape the epidemic, for records show him in the infirmary from September 29 to November 13, 1865. James A. Patterson, Hopkins's bunkmate in the army, witnessed his friend's suffering from illness:

I knew John Edward Hopkins while he was a soldier in Co F 25th Regiment Cold Vols Infantry. I did not know him until he enlisted. He suffered from rheumatism while we lay at New Orleans. Also from his eyes, and pain in his head from the heat of the sun. When we left Mooreshead, North Carolina, on the vessel, the heat of the sun from the water hurt his eyes and gave him great pain in the head. At Key West, Florida, he was overcome by the sun, had a partial sunstroke, which disabled him from duty. At Fort Barrancas, Florida, he also suffered from the sun, and always complained of it until he was discharged, and afterward up to the last time I saw him at Gettysburg, August 1889. Hopkins went blind in one eye altogether and could not see much out of the other. He received this disability while in the service and in the line of duty.

Furthermore, Hopkins's medical records show him hospitalized with pleuropneumonia from October 5 to November 7, 1865, and with epidemic catarrhal (inflammation of the mucus membranes) in December 1865. His medical condition was so severe that Hopkins was permanently scratched from guard duty.⁴⁰

The war made three widows in Gettysburg's African American community. Many Gettysburg men fought with 8th USCT at Olustee and one, Fleming Devan was killed. John Watts and William Devan, both of 8th both died during the war, Watts of a leg injury and Devan from pain in his eye. On the eve of the war the Devans had been married in a double wedding.⁴¹

Black soldiers were not demobilized as quickly as whites following Appomattox. Most African American soldiers joined in 1863 or 1864 with 3-year enlistments, and the army could therefore legally hold them in the service. Plus, the soldiers were ideal for occupation duty in areas where blacks were heavily recruited. These soldiers faced frequent episodes of violence from local whites, who felt the presence of black troops was an affront to their honor.⁴² The 25th USCT mustered out on December 6, 1865 and Hopkins returned to Gettysburg.⁴³

As was the case across communities north and south, black Gettysburgians anxiously awaited their soldiers' return. Unlike most northern soldiers, Gettysburg's returning veterans needed only to view the ruins in the town to be constantly reminded of the personal losses caused by the war. And those scars of battle perhaps reminded them that little had changed in the ways of civil and voting rights.

The post-war period saw enormous changes in Gettysburg's African American community. The population of the community grew to over two hundred and thirty, but of the 186 blacks that lived in Gettysburg in 1860, no more than 74 still lived in the borough in 1870. At the most, only 31 percent of the 239 African American living in Gettysburg in 1870 had lived in the town in 1860. Ninety percent of the blacks who moved to Gettysburg between 1863 and 1870 were natives of Maryland and Virginia, some of whom were most likely former slaves escaping the land of their persecution.⁴⁴

Those entering the African American community of Gettysburg after 1865 would find increased economic opportunities because of the birth of the tourism industry. Tourism offered blacks employment as cooks, waiter, porters, caretakers, and a vari-

ety of other jobs. This increase in economic opportunity may help explain why the percentage of black-owned real estate increased at a rate seven times greater than the percentage of African Americans in the overall population of Gettysburg between 1860 and 1870.⁴⁵

The percentage of black children attending school decreased in the years after the war despite the construction of a new school for African American children, and the hiring of a black schoolteacher, Lloyd F. A. Watts, a Gettysburg native. Forty-six percent of African American children were in school in 1860. That number had fallen to forty-two percent ten years later, most likely as a result of the need for workers in the tourist industry. The illiteracy rate showed a corresponding increase.⁴⁶

In the postwar period Jack Hopkins could have become a symbol of a “good” and longstanding member of the African American community in contrast to the new African Americans who came during the war or were coming up from the South in the immediate postwar period. This idea was possibly reflected in an action of the college late in Hopkins’s life. In 1867 – his 20th year working for the college – the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution authorizing the treasurer of the College “to pay John Hopkins \$20 for cleaning the College buildings, and \$20 for each succeeding cleaning.”⁴⁷ This represents a five dollar per month raise, or a much more substantial amount if he could clean the college buildings more than once a month. It is easy to speculate that this was a way for the college to try to provide for a loyal and well-liked employee and his family near the end of his life. It is probably not coincidence that Hopkins, the same year, converted his home on South Washington Street to two stories; this was likely the result of both the increase in pay, and the realization that Hopkins’s days of working – and of a campus home – were dwindling.⁴⁸

The July 24, 1868 issue of the *Star and Sentinel* reported that the “death of John Hopkins, a well known colored man of this place, took place on Sunday, (July 19). He has been the Janitor of Pennsylvania College for about thirty years, serving during the larger [sic] part of the Dr. Krauth’s presidency, and the entire presidency of President Baugher. The name of ‘Jack Hopkins’ is a familiar one with the students and graduates of the Institution during this long period, his integrity and fidelity commanding general confidence. The Faculty and Students, in a body, attended his funeral on Monday evening, the services being conducted by Dr. Valentine, assisted by Profs. Ferrier and Conrad.”⁴⁹ Until it was recently incorporated into matriculation ceremonies, the faculty and students of Pennsylvania or Gettysburg College had processed in a body on just two occasions – one was Hopkins’ funeral, and the other was to attend the Gettysburg Address.

An interesting comparison is offered by the fact that Thaddeus Stevens, long a benefactor of Pennsylvania College, died less than a month after Hopkins. At its August 1868 meeting, the Board of Trustees approved resolutions to mark both occasions. That for Stevens read as follows:

Resolved, That this Board have heard with sentiments of deep regret, the announcement of the death of Hon. Thaddeus Stevens, [an] early patron of this Institution, and a member of this Board from the date of its organization.

Resolved, That we gratefully acknowledge the valuable services and the constant friendship of the distinguished deceased, whose earnest devotion to the great cause of education will claim the gratitude of posterity."

The trustees further specified that a copy of the resolution be sent to Stevens' family.

The resolution in honor of Hopkins read as follows:

Resolved 1 – That we gratefully acknowledge by the kind Providence that continued for so long a time to the College the valuable services of the deceased.

2 – That in the removal of the deceased the College has lost a most forceful and efficient officer.

3 – That we desire to place on record our appreciation of his long and devoted services – his strict integrity - & honor – his uniform & gentlemanly deportment among the students – our high esteem in which he was held by all connected with the College.

4 – That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the bereaved family, and be published in the papers of the town.

The language of Stevens' resolution is notably bland for someone who sold, bought, or donated much of the land on which the college was built, and who had repeatedly secured grants from the state legislature for the college. This was undoubtedly because of some of Stevens' radical positions during Reconstruction.⁵⁰

The Hopkins family returned to 219 South Washington Street following Jack's death. The 1870 census lists John Edward as head of household, identifying him as a 25-year-old restaurant worker living with his 20-year-old wife, and children John R., 2, and William, 2 months.⁵¹ His military service may have reaped economic benefits, for as Donald Shaffer argues in his book, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans*, black veterans worked at higher status jobs more frequently than non-veterans.⁵²

While John Edward worked to provide for his family, including his mother Julia, for whom he was the sole means of support, he also worked with his fellow black veterans to keep comradeship and their legacy alive. While the transition back to civilian status brought both opportunity and in some cases danger to the veterans, it also provided some with the opportunity to provide leadership roles in their communities. In Gettysburg, African American veterans were instrumental in forming the Sons of Goodwill, an organization founded to provide disability pay to those of Gettysburg's African American community who had been wounded or injured in the war, and which was instrumental in the creation of a black cemetery in Gettysburg, created primarily as a resting place for the veterans as a means of honoring their contribution to the war. In a similar vein, Memorial Day activities were widely announced and reported in newspapers. The June 4, 1873 *Star and Sentinel* recounted one such event:

It seems that there are four colored soldiers buried in the colored burying ground on York Street, who died of disease in the service. As the program of the day had special reference to the dead who lie in the National Cemetery, we were glad to notice the thoughtful care of the colored people in doing honor to the memory of *their* dead heroes. At 10 o'clock, AM, a procession passed down Baltimore Street to the tap of the drum, composed mainly of children of the colored Sabbath School, each carrying a bouquet, marshaled by Mr. John E. Hopkins, and proceeded to the burying grounds to deposit their floral tributes.⁵³

This ceremony was apparently organized in response to activities honoring the veterans buried in the National Cemetery, and in this way the black veterans sought to keep their legacy alive. And while white southerners and most white northerners ignored the contributions and existence of black vets, their former white officers also celebrated their legacy, as is witnessed by the aforementioned quote from Colonel Hitchcock of the 25th.

If the Sons of Good Will's most tangible accomplishment was the creation of what became known as the Lincoln Cemetery, it was founded at a meeting related to the establishment of black voting rights. As historian Shaffer has written, "Some black soldiers emerged from the Civil War with the feeling of a battle half won." Henry Maxwell, a sergeant in the 3rd United States Colored Infantry wrote after the war, "We want two more boxes beside the cartridge box – the ballot box and the jury box."⁵⁴ While Gettysburg's own Thaddeus Stevens was a leader in the fight for black suffrage, perhaps the most memorable event in the Gettysburg African American community's struggle for voting rights was the 1869 visit of Frederick Douglass to the borough. The *Gettysburg Compiler* summarized Douglass' as follows:

Douglass described the Negro "in the most flattering colors, and paramount credit was claimed for the colored troops in the late war. The right to vote and be voted for to sit in the legislature n Congress and even higher – all these were claimed by Douglass for himself and his race."⁵⁵

The passage and ratification of the 15th Amendment granted suffrage to Gettysburg's African Americans in time for the 1870 election. In the weeks leading up to that election, the *Star and Sentinel* carried the following notice:

Any person interfering or attempting to intimidate any colored voter in the exercise of his newly acquired rights is liable to heavy fines and penalties. As such actions will be tried in the United States District Court. We make this declaration for the purpose of assuring our colored fellow citizens that no one will attempt to molest them upon election day, while in discharge of their duties as citizens and electors.⁵⁶

Ten thousand of the 57,000 African Americans in Pennsylvania voted. Fifty-five blacks voted in Gettysburg, and while Democrats carried Adams County, all 55 of Gettysburg's black voters went for Republicans.⁵⁷

John Edward continued to suffer from the health problems contracted during the war, especially from rheumatic fever and dizziness. Dr. J.C. Felty was called in to attend to him in March 1890 after a stroke left him paralyzed. He died on March 8, 1890, leaving his wife Margaret and three children. His obituary identified him as "the well-known colored sportsman."⁵⁸

His mother Julia lived only another year. Never remarrying, she demonstrated in the years after her husband's death that she was a strong and sagacious woman. She took in two boarders at the Washington Street home. In the 1870s she pursued a claim with the State of Pennsylvania for damages caused by the Rebels. And after John Edwards' death Julia successfully demonstrated, with the help of her attorney William Scott that she never aided or abetted the rebellion, that she was in needy circumstances, and that she depended upon her late son for her economic survival and thereby won a pension from the federal government – only 36% of African American mothers won such a pension, compared with 70% of white mothers. African Americans often found themselves at a disadvantage because of the bureaucratic process, the need for lawyers, and the costs associated with travel, and of finding witnesses. Many African Americans found these costs more than they could afford on their \$250 average annual salary. And on the application forms for the claim and the pension she did something her husband never could do – she signed her own name! Julia Hopkins died in 1891.⁵⁹

The story of the Hopkins family provides a picture of one of Gettysburg's African American families in the Civil War era. In many ways their experiences were typical of those of the community as a whole, for they lived through the anxiety of the years leading up to the war, the fear of the Confederate invasion, the excitement and sacrifice of service in the Union army, the triumph of voting rights, and the unease of making their way in a radically-different society. On the other hand, their association with Pennsylvania College left future researchers with far more sources about their lives than are available for the typical black family in Gettysburg in the mid-19th century. One of the sources, the final stanza of James Q. Waters's poem, provides a final glimpse of the impression Jack Hopkins left on the students of the college:

How oft he'll ring the College bell,
Ere it shall toll his funeral knell,
We are not able now to tell,
But hope it may at last be well
With Jack, "Old Jack,"
Yes, "Jack our Janitor."⁶⁰

Endnotes

- ¹ Charles H. Glatfelter, *A Salutary Influence: Gettysburg College 1832-1985* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Gettysburg College, 1987), 151.
- ² Harry Bradshaw Matthews, *Whence They Came: The Families of United States Colored Troops in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1815-1995* (Oneonta, NY: Harry Bradshaw Matthews, 1995), 108.
- ³ File 160, "Slaves Refuge Society," ACHS.
- ⁴ Harry Bradshaw Matthews, "Revisiting the Battle of Gettysburg: The Presence of African Americans Before and After the Conflict," Presentation to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 6, 1993, 4.
- ⁵ George F. Nagle, "Fugitive Slave Incidents in Central Pennsylvania," http://www.afrolumens.org/rising_free/fugitive.html.
- ⁶ Margaret Creighton, *The Colors of Courage: Gettysburg's Forgotten History* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005), 52.
- ⁷ Peter C. Vermilyea, "The Effect of the Confederate Invasion of Pennsylvania on Gettysburg's African American Community," *Gettysburg Magazine*, 24 (January 2001), 112-128.
- ⁸ Robert L. Bloom, *A History of Adams County, Pennsylvania 1700-1990* (Gettysburg, PA: Adams County Historical Society, 1992), 172-173.
- ⁹ Charles H. Glatfelter, *Yonder Beautiful and Stately College Edifice: a History of Pennsylvania Hall (Old Dorm), Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania* (Gettysburg, PA: Gettysburg College, 1970), 28, 30-31.
- ¹⁰ James Q. Waters, "Jack the Janitor," *Odds and Ends: Or Things Wise and Otherwise, Pennsylvania College* (Hagerstown, MD: Daniel Dechert, 1860), 17-19.
- ¹¹ Henry Minnigh, "Pennsylvania College Fifty Years Ago," *Star and Sentinel*, June 19, 1907, 1.
- ¹² Glatfelter, *A Salutary Influence*, 151.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 151.
- ¹⁴ "Toasts," *Adams Sentinel*, July 14, 1851.
- ¹⁵ ***United States Census***, 1860.
- ¹⁶ William Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1995), 109.
- ¹⁷ James M. Paradis, *African Americans and the Gettysburg Campaign* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 8.
- ¹⁸ J. Howard Wert, *Episodes of Gettysburg and the Underground Railroad* (Gettysburg, PA: G. Craig Caba Antiques, 1998), 73.
- ¹⁹ "Old Time Notes of Adams County," *Star and Sentinel*, January 30, 1907, 1.
- ²⁰ Pennsylvania College, Board of Trustees Minutes, Special Collections, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
- ²¹ "The McClintock Riots," accessed at http://chronicles.dickinson.edu/encyclo/m/ed_mcClintockriot.htm. *Adams Sentinel*, February 11, 1856, 2.

- ²² Glatfelter, *Yonder Beautiful*, 38. The Hopkins home on campus is visible in photographs of the Gettysburg area. See especially a well-known photograph of Gettysburg taken from Seminary Ridge by Matthew Brady in July 1863, William A. Frassanito, *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 74-75.
- ²³ Waters, 17-19.
- ²⁴ Salome (Myers) Stewart diary, Robert Brake Collection, United States Army Military History Institute.
- ²⁵ Tillie (Pierce) Alleman, *At Gettysburg: Or What a Girl Saw and Heard of the Battle* (New York, NY: W. Lake Borland, 1889), p. 19.
- ²⁶ Pennsylvania College, Board of Trustees Minutes, June 30, 1863, Special Collections, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Glatfelter, *A Salutary Influence*, 184.
- ²⁷ *Harrisburg Telegraph*, June 24, 1863, 1.
- ²⁸ Fannie J. Buehler, *Recollections of the Rebel Invasion and One Woman's Experiences During the Battle of Gettysburg* (Gettysburg, PA: Star and Sentinel, 1896), 11.
- ²⁹ Vermilyea, "The Effect of the Confederate Invasion," 122.
- ³⁰ Glatfelter, *Yonder Beautiful*, 46.
- ³¹ Julia Hopkins Claim, RG 2, Border Claims, Pennsylvania State Archives.
- ³² Frassanito, *Early Photography*, 110.
- ³³ Bloom, 187.
- ³⁴ Pension Number 429663, John E. Hopkins, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
- ³⁵ Matthews, 6.
- ³⁶ "An Abbreviated History of the 25th United States Colored Infantry Regiment," accessed at http://www.angelfire.com/pa5/8usct/25usct_history1.html.
- ³⁷ Donald Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 18.
- ³⁸ Samuel P. Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5* (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1869-71), volume 5, 1027.
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- ⁴⁰ Hopkins Pension, National Archives.
- ⁴¹ Matthews, *Whence They Came*, 97.
- ⁴² Shaffer, 25.
- ⁴³ Betty Dorsey Myers, *Segregation in Death: Gettysburg's Lincoln Cemetery* (Gettysburg, PA: Lincoln Cemetery Project Association, 2001), 67.
- ⁴⁴ Vermilyea, "The Effect of the Confederate Invasion," 123.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Pennsylvania College, Board of Trustees Minutes, May 22, 1867, Special Collections, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
- ⁴⁸ Frassanito, *Early Photography*, 110.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵⁰ Pennsylvania College Board of Trustees Minutes, August 13, 1868, Special Collections, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

⁵¹ *United States Census*, 1870.

⁵² Shaffer, 52.

⁵³ Myers, 7, 89.

⁵⁴ Shaffer, 68.

⁵⁵ Matthews, "Revisiting the Battle," 14.

⁵⁶ *Star and Sentinel*, October 7, 1870.

⁵⁷ Matthews, "Revisiting the Battle," 16-17.

⁵⁸ Hopkins Pension, National Archives; Myers, 68.

⁵⁹ Hopkins Pension, National Archives; Shaffer, 122; Julia Hopkins Claim, Pennsylvania State Archives.

⁶⁰ Waters, 19.