

The Family of Samuel Greene

§ Compiled by Marian Pierre-Louis §

“On the opposite corner, now Mrs. Schools’, lived Samuel Greene, his wife, and two children, Robert and Catherine. They were of African descent. Very respectable people they were, the children attended the public school, and were equal to any other scholar in their ability and attainments.”

This unattributed quote in a compilation of Medfield recollections begins to describe the Greene family, an 19th century African American family living in Medfield. The quote continues.

“The father was an industrious, hard-working man, much respected. For many years he was “first-man” in the employ of Capt. William Peters; and few men there were who could equal him in amount of work done, any one who had the temerity to attempt to “cut his corners” in the hayfield was sure to come to grief. The family was finally removed to Frairy Street, and passed the remainder of their days at the place now owned by Miss Dow.”

Samuel Greene was just one of a number of African Americans who lived in Medfield in the 18th and 19th centuries. Samuel was born 23 Feb 1789. He was raised in Wrentham, bound out to Inn Keeper David Mann, as his parents were too poor to raise him themselves. Upon reaching adulthood, he settled in Medfield.

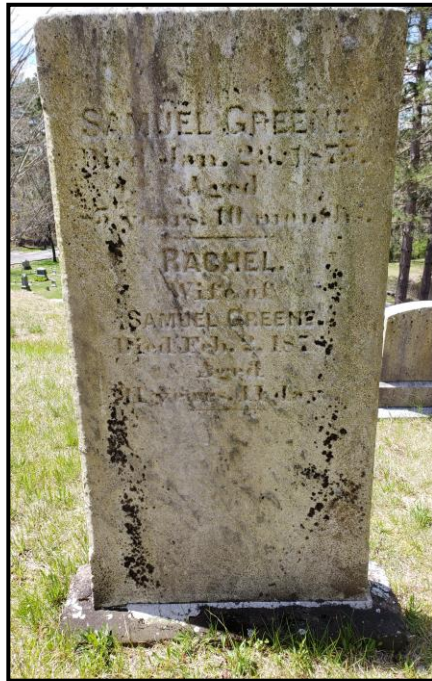
Sam married Rachel Coffee of Medway, the daughter of Revolutionary War Soldier Ishmael Coffee, in 1821. He likely moved to Medfield not long after his marriage. The birth of his son, Johnson (later known as Robert) in 1822 in Medfield is the first record that exists of him in town. Not long after in 1825 his daughter, Catherine Brown Greene was born.

Not much is known about the details of the lives of Sam Greene or his family except for some anecdotal evidence. Another quote from called “60 Years Ago” (1838) by C. E. Adams contained the following information describing the homestead of Capt. William Peters:

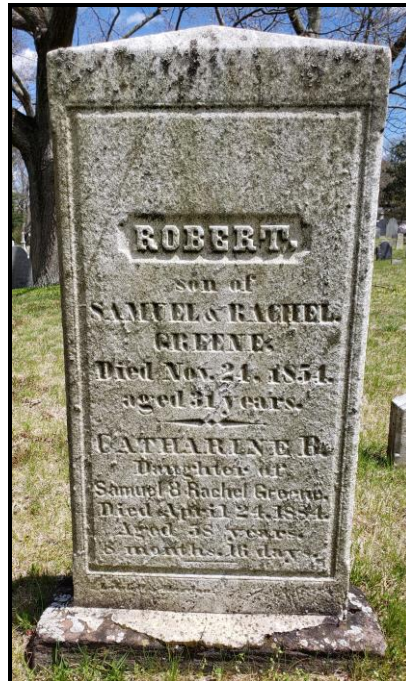
“Tim Harding was the foreman and Sam Greene led off with the work. Haying was then a momentous affair. It took fully six weeks to gather in all the hay. Rising at the break of day the men would enter the field, led on by Sam Greene, and work was continued till so many hours.”

Without any doubt Sam Greene was a hard-working man. Despite historical stereotypes about African Americans not owning property, Sam bought his own home on Frairy Street in 1857. By 1864, he had paid off his mortgage and owned the property outright.

Sam died on 23 Jan 1875. His house stayed in the family being passed on first to his wife and then to his daughter. Regrettably, both of Sam’s children died without having children of their own. The whole family - Sam, Rachel, Robert and Catherine are all buried in Vine Lake Cemetery.



Section A-3, Lot 194



Gravestone was carved by D. A. Burt of Taunton (lower left)



Samuel Greene
Grave 5
b. February 23, 1789 in unknown location
m. February 8, 1821
d. January 23, 1875 in Medfield at age 85; cause of death was old age



Rachel (Coffee) Greene
Grave 4
b. January 22, 1787 in Medway
d. February 2, 1878 in Medfield at age 91; cause of death was acute bronchitis



Robert Greene
Grave 2
b. Johnson Greene, May 17, 1822 in Medfield
d. November 24, 1854 in Medfield at age 31; cause of death was typhoid fever



Catharine Brown Green
Grave 3
b. August 8, 1825 in Medfield
d. April 24, 1884 in Medfield at age 59; cause of death was unknown



Lydia Anna Dow
Grave 1
The ultimate owner of the house in which she and the Greene family lived
b. January 25, 1825 in Frankestown, New Hampshire
d. July 26, 1899 in Medfield at age 74; cause of death was paralysis