

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM: THE SAGA OF CAESAR HUNT/PETER WARREN

§ Compiled by Robert Tucker Gregg in 2014 and Revised in 2024 §

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Peter Warren was a 5' 6" man of mixed ancestry who first served in Medfield's militia, and in his 30's was detached for service in 1780 at or near West Point, New York. Upon discharge that year, it took him 10 days to travel the 200 miles back to Medfield. Little is known about Peter's life in this town, either before or immediately after his military service [*Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the War of the Revolution*, Volume 16, Page 630].

Warren was one of four African American men in Medfield who served in the Continental Army; the others were James Arculus, Warrick Green, and Newport Green [*Dedham Historical Register*, Volume 8, July 1897, pages 74-75].

There is speculation about Peter's ancestry as being biracial. William Smith Tilden states that he "is said to have been a natural son of Admiral Warren of the British navy" [*Dedham Historical Register*, Volume 8, July 1897, page 75]. This Irish Admiral Peter Warren was in the American colonies by the 1730's with command of a ship calling at eastern ports, including Boston [Julian Gwyn, *The Enterprising Admiral: The Personal Fortune of Admiral Sir Peter Warren*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1974, p. 30]. While speculative, the facts are inconclusive about the affirmation of one parent being this Admiral Peter Warren.

For the first part of his adult life, he was known as Caesar Hunt, a slave to Joseph Lovell Jr. and earlier to Joseph's father, both of Medway. In 1769, between the age of 23 and 26 years, Caesar bought his freedom and changed his name.

A SLAVE BUYS HIS LIBERTY

Caesar Hunt paid to Joseph Lovell Jr. the sum of £13, 6s., 8d. for his freedom, on condition that if, in the judgment of the selectmen of Medway, he be idle or prodigal of his time and interest so that there be danger of his becoming a burden on the estate, he be remanded to the condition of servitude.

The following is a copy of the legal instrument of emancipation:

"Know all men by these Presents that I, Joseph Lovell of Medway in the County of Suffolk and Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England yeoman for divers and good and valuable considerations me thereunto moving, as well as in consideration of the sum of thirteen pounds six shillings and eightpence paid me by Caesar Hunt *alias* Peter Warren a molatto slave, late the Property of my Father Joseph Lovell late of Medway afore^{sd} deceased, and from him descended to me, have released

and acquitted and discharged and by these Presents do freely fully and forever release the s^d Caesar Hunt, *Alias* Peter Warren from my service and the service of my Heirs forever: so that neither I myself, my heirs, exec^{tr} or any other Person or Persons for me or Them shall ever hereafter claim any Right, Title, Interest in the Person or the Service of the said Molatto, Provided, nevertheless, that if the s^d Caesar Hunt, *alias* Peter Warren shall in the judgment of the Select Men of the town of Medway for the time being, at any Time hereafter become idle and prodigal of his Time and Interest so that there shall appear danger of his becoming a burden upon my estate or that of my heirs, I hereby reserve to myself and Heirs the Power at the advise and by the Direction of the Select Men of Medway for the time then being to remand s^d Caesar Hunt, *alias* Peter Warren to our service and to command Him in such a manner as to prevent his becoming an Incumbrance upon our estate, but during his good Behaviour in the opinion of the Select Men afore^{sd} He is to all Intents and Purposes emancipated or set free from all obligations to me and mine forever by these Presents.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal this . . . Day of ... in the ninth year of the Reign of King George the Third Anno Domini 1769.
Signed Sealed and Delivered."

The above was duly executed and the said Caesar Hunt, *alias* Peter Warren, became a freedman and was never remanded to slavery. He removed to Medfield, where he died. Upon his tombstone is this honorable inscription: "*A respectable man of color.*" [*History of Medway Massachusetts*, Page 321–322].

A NOTE ABOUT JOSEPH LOVELL SR. AND JOSEPH LOVELL JR.

Joseph Lovell Sr. was born about 1698 in Medway, Norfolk, MA, son of Alexander and Elizabeth (Dyer) Lovell. He died 14 May 1759 in Medway, ten years before Caesar Hunt was granted his freedom, which is what the above Medway document states.

Joseph Lovell Jr. was born 28 August 1741 in Medway, son of Joseph Sr. and Prudence (Clark) Lovell. (He was close to the same age as Caesar Hunt.) On 27 September 1764 in Medfield, Norfolk, MA he married Jemima Adams, daughter of Henry and Jemima (Morse) Adams. She was born 11 April 1740 in Medfield. Joseph Jr. died 2 October 1827 and Jemima died 27 October 1814, both in Medway.

Jemima Lovell, daughter of Joseph Jr. and Jemima (Adams) Lovell was born 5 June 1767 in Medway. On 5 July 1786 in Medway she married Ezra Richardson, son of Asa Sr. and Abigail (Barber) Richardson. Ezra, born 17 March 1760 in Medway, was a brother to Asa Richardson Jr. born about 1746 in Medway. On 19 June 1791 in Medway Asa Jr. married Catherine Adams, daughter of Jonathan and Catherine (Boyden) Adams.

Warren Richardson, son of Asa Jr. and Catherine (Adams) Richardson, was born 8 March 1794 in Medway and died 4 November 1829 in Andover, Essex, MA.

In the will of Peter Warren (below), both the Lovell and Richardson families connect. The sole heir of Peter Warren's property is Warren Richardson, just 17 years old at Peter's death in 1814. This Warren Richardson is a 3rd cousin twice removed of Joseph Lovell Jr., Warren's second master. Thus, Peter Warren maintained a connection with the Lovell family from whom he purchased his freedom.

PETER'S DEATH AND BURIAL

A Peter Warren, "...A Molatto Man," died in Medfield on 8 January 1814 aged 74 years and 3 months [*Vital Records of Medfield, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*, page 240]. No reference can be found to his birth date and parents in the Medway records.



Peter's Gravestone

On his gravestone is the remark that he was aged "about 70 years." This reference would allow for his birth about 1744. Warren died 8 January 1814 in Medfield [*Vital Records of Medfield, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*, page 240], and to the other five persons interred in the same lot in Vine Lake Cemetery [Section A-3, Lot 197], his relationship is unclear.

The persons interred in Lot 197 are:

Grave 1 – Augustus Sylvanus Hamilton, son of David and Betsy, born 27 August 1833 in Exeter, Penobscot, Maine, died 9 August 1926, Medfield, Norfolk, MA; cause of death was arteriosclerosis [*Medfield Vital Records*] [Inscription – Augustus/1834-1926]

Grave 2 – Almeda Hamilton, daughter of David and Betsy, born 21 February 1847 in Dedham, Norfolk, MA, died 2 April 1865, Newton Upper Falls, Middlesex, MA; cause of death was typhoid fever [*MA Vital Records Volume 184, Page 133*] [Inscription – Almeda/Many are the Friends that mourn for thee/Almeda/Daughter of David & Betsy Hamilton/died April 2 1865/Æt. 18 years, 1 mo, 12 days]

Grave 3 – Sally Ephraim, daughter of unknown parents, born 1777 [gravestone], died 14 November 1808 in Medfield, Norfolk, MA at the home of Joseph Clark, Jr.

[*Vital Records of Medfield, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*, page 210] [Inscription – In Memory of Miss Sally Ephraim who died Nov 14th 1808, Æt. 31/Farewell my dear brother, the Lord bids me come/I leave you with Jesus until you're called home;/And then do I hope to meet you again/With Jesus in glory forever to reign.]

Sally or Sarah Ephraim died at the home of Joseph Clark, Jr.

Grave 4 – Peter Warren [Inscription – In Memory of/Mr. Peter Warren/who died Jan. 9th 1814/Aged about 70 years/A respectable man of colour]

Grave 5 – Betsey Towle Hamilton, wife of David, daughter of Paul and Polley (Merrill) Towle, born 30 June 1810 in Newbury, Merrimack, NH, died 1 January 1896 in Medfield, Norfolk, MA; cause of death was tumor of the spleen [*MA Vital Records Volume 464, Page 527*] [Inscription– Betsey His Wife/1810–1896]

Grave 6 – David Hamilton, son of John W. Hamilton and unknown wife, born 6 March 1795 in Augusta, Kennebec, ME, died 28 March 1878 in Medfield, Norfolk, MA; cause of death was paralysis [*MA Vital Records Volume 302, Page 229*] [Inscription – David Hamilton/Born March 6, 1795/Died March 28, 1878/The Husband, Father, Friend]

Of these persons, David would have been 19 years of age when Peter Warren died in 1814.

PETER'S WILL

Peter Warren did compose a will on 8 March 1811 and it was filed 2 February 1814[Norfolk County Probate Court, Docket #19435].

“In the Name of God. Amen.

I Peter Warren of Medfield in the County of Norfolk and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Yeoman – being considerably advanced in Age – but of a disposing mind and retentive Memory – Thanks be to God therefore calling to mind the Mortality of my Body and knowing that it is appointed to Men once to die – do this eighth day of March in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred eleven Make and ordain this my last Will & Testament – that is to say – In the first Place – I give and recommend my precious Soul into the Hands of God who gave it & my Body to the Earth to be buried in a decent Christian Manner at the Discretion of the Executor – not doubting but at the Resurrection I shall secure the fame again by the mighty Power of God. And as touching such worldly Estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bestow on me in this Life which remains in my Hands I do Will – Give- and dispose of in the following Manner – Namely – In the first Place, I will & bequeath to Warren Richardson – Son of Asa Richardson Jun^r of Medway the whole of My Personal Estate situated and being in Town of Medfield – He the said Richardson to Pay all my said just debts together with my funeral Charges – I do constitute – name – ordain and appoint Moses B. Harding to be the Executor of this My last

Will and Testament . And I do whereby attest disallow & revoke all and every Other former Testament – Wills & Bequests in any way before named willed or bequeathed – Ratifying and conforming This and no other to be my last Will and Testament

In Testimony whereof Thereunto sett my Hand and Seal the Day and Year above written.

Signed and sealed Peter **X** Warren his mark

In Presence of
Lothario Danielson
Moses B Harding
Augustus Plympton
Mercy Harding”

A NOTE ABOUT THESE WITNESSES

Lothario Danielson was a medical doctor in Medfield. Moses Bullen Harding and his wife Mercy were both 40-year-old residents of Medfield while Augustus Plympton was a 54-year-old bachelor in the same town.

THE ADMINISTRATION AND INVENTORY OF PETER’S ESTATE

“To the Hon. Edward H. Robbins Esquire Judge of the Probate of Wills etc. for the County of Norfolk. – The account of Moses Adams Administrator of the Will annexed of the estate of Peter Warren late of Medfield in said County, – Yeoman, deceased. – The Administrator charges himself with the Personal Estate of said deceased, as the same was appraised in the inventory therof amounting to \$77.70 also

	\$77.70
The rental of the real Estate amounting to	<u>\$60.00</u>
	\$137.70

The said Administrator prays allowances for the following charges and payments viz.

Nº.	1	Paid	Moses B. Harding for going as a witness to prove the Will	7.50
“	2	“	Augustus Plimpton for do.	1.50
“	3	“	Samuel Haven Probate fees	4.61
“	4	“	Joseph Lovell Esq. for appraising	1.00
“	5	“	Sylvanus Adams for do. Etc.	1.50
“	6	“	Doc. Lothario Danielson for Medicines, etc.	10.00
“	7	“	Doc. Nathaniel Miller for consultations etc.	6.00
“	8	“	Doc. Timothy Fisk for Boarding etc.	8.50
“	9	“	W ^d Sarah Wheelock for boarding etc.	28.00
“	10	“	Noah Daniels for lumber etc.	9.01
“	11	“	Oliver Wheelock for tolling Bell etc.	1.50
“	12	“	Thaddeus Morse for labour etc.	13.24
“	13	“	Nathan Allen for taxes etc.	5.43
“	14	“	Beriah Brastow on balance in Accts.	2.44
“	15	“	Nathan Jones Jr. for sling	3.08

“	16	“	Dyer Lovell a balance in Accts.	2.91
“	17	“	John Bullard for Boots	2.75
“	18	“	Willard Onion for Sundries	1.50
“	19	“	Phillips Clark for attendance at auction	0.50
“	20	“	John Fairbanks for Coffin	3.00
“	21	“	Henry Richardson for Basket & Hoops	0.62
“	22	“	David Fairbanks for Rum & Sugar	0.86
“	23	“	D. Adams, Esq a balance due on a Judgment of Court	17.18
“	24	“	Arnold Russell for Fuel & lumber	2.43
“	25	“	W ^d Olive Morse a Note etc	3.69
“	26	“	Edward Breck for shoes etc per order of D. Pratt	3.00
“	27	“	John W. Adams on balance of accts	40.34
“	28	“	John Baxter Esq. for Hay	1.00
“	29	“	Asahel Adams the amount of a note of hand	20.08
“	30	“	Sylvanus Adams do. [means ditto]	16.00
“	31	“	Lucy Brann do.	29.34
“	33	“	Asa Clark do.	18.14
“	34	“	Daniel Green do.	24.15
“	35	“	Amos Turner do.	3.31
“	32	“	John Bullard do.	6.95
“	36	“	Thaddeus Morse do.	7.33
“	37	“	Micah Adams do.	8.00
“	38	“	Silas Bullard do.	0.67
“	39	“	Samuel Haven Probate fees	3.50
“	40	“	for printing notice in newspapers	1.00
			Also prays the allowance for loss in the sales of the personal property	14.01
				\$336.37
			Also prays allowance for his service in the settlement of the estate	25.00
			Probate fees	1.90

Dated on April 4th 1815 a correct account of my administration aforesaid
Moses Adams

Personal Estate		
1	To Wearing Appearel	\$38.63
2	To Book 1	1.5
3	To One feather Beed and Beeding bedsted & Cov	14.25
4	To Tow Cloath yarn and thread, with case of Razors	2.65
5	To puter and Tin ware	2.80
6	To one case with 11 Glafs bottles	2.00
7	To Stone and Earthing ware	1.30
8	To 2 Iron Cittles one Scillett	2.58
9	To 5 Trunks 3 Chests one Table	11.35
10	To husbandry tools and tacklings	6.3
11	To Shoop Tools	3.88
12	To Nails Syth tacklin and Buttons	.80
13	To Wooden Ware	4.39

Medway March 16th 1814

Sum Total

\$91.71

Joseph Lovell)
Abicah Adams) Appraisers
Sylvanus Adams)

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PETER THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION

Immediately west of Lucy Bran's residence (661 Main Street as of 2024) stood a house which is speculated to have been built in 1784 by Peter Warren, a man of mixed race and 13 years her elder.

In the August 12, 1884 edition of the *Boston Post*, a Sarah Forbes, wife of William Forbes, states in an article, "Quaint Old Medfield," that Peter Warren was the builder. The houses' proximity to each other may have occasioned Peter and Lucy's friendship. What follows is a story from that article as told by Sarah (Harding) Forbes who along with her husband were residents of the house next to Lucy's, 57 years after her death.

"'It was built by Peter Warren,' she said. 'Peter Warren, who is buried in the old graveyard yonder, under the stone which reads, 'A respectable man of color.' He was a slave, who bought his freedom and then settled down on his farm here.

In the little house up the road lived Lucy Brandt. She was the last of the Natick Indians, and her skin was copper-colored, like that of a mulatto. Peter Warren was very black, but he fell in love with Lucy Brandt, and began paying many neighborly attentions. He confided at last to one of the village wags that he was going to ask Lucy to marry him.

Lucy was quietly informed of this intention, and, it is said, was very indignant at his presumption. At any rate, when Peter Warren went to do his courting a neighbor stole into the house to see the sport, and the story runs that the Indian woman rose up in wrath and took the broomstick to her black suitor. So Peter Warren lived on alone here, and for all I know died here.'" [*Boston Post*, August 12, 1884, Page 19, composed by Amy Robsart].

Today the house at 671 Main Street is called the Peter Warren House [Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System MED41].

THE PETER WARREN HOUSE AS OF 1998

"The original structure is represented in a photograph... which illustrates it as a classic colonial style center entrance building with a large center chimney. 9 over 6 windows, wood clapboard siding and a fieldstone (sp) basement. The house still has its Post & Girt heavy timber frame with hewn and pegged joints as discovered by recent renovations and restorations.



The Peter Warren House 1998

During the first quarter of the 20th century the new owner of the house (William Weicker) extensively renovated the house, which in essence updated the house for that time. An ell was added, the original center chimney and fireplaces were removed and replaced with a conventional chimney which serviced a newly added hot water coal fired central heating system.

The 9 over 6 windows were replaced with 2 over 1 windows with window weights. The center entrance to the house was also altered, creating a symmetrical entrance.

A wrap around porch was also added with chamfered supporting posts. When the ell added the kitchen was also included as part of the new addition. The older kitchen was moved from the main part of the house which was turned into a dining room. The second floor of the house still has the original wide pine floors, original wall base boards and door moldings, christian style doors with hand wrought iron hinges and latches.

The house was purchased from the Weicker family by current owner, Robert Mannino, Jr. and Catherine McCarthy in 1980. In 1987 an addition was added which included a two car garage. The addition was built to match and replicate the architecture that was incorporated during the first quarter of the 20th century.

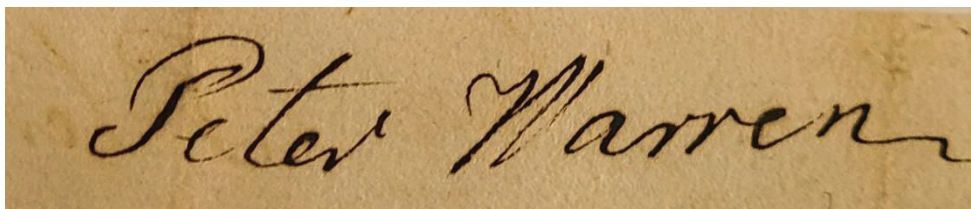
Past owners as recorded at Suffolk County and Norfolk County Registry of Deeds:

- 1784 – Jonathan Breck to Peter Warren
- 1796 – Peter Warren “Mansion” to John Baxter & Sabin Mann to Warren Richardson
- 1815 – John W. Adams
- 1816 – Lemuel K. Brastow
- 1824 – Hopestill & Prudence Lovell
- 1850 – William Forbes
- 1925 – William Weicker
- 1964 – Richard Weicker” [MACRIS MED41].

WHAT WE ARE LEFT WITH REGARDING PETER'S SAGA

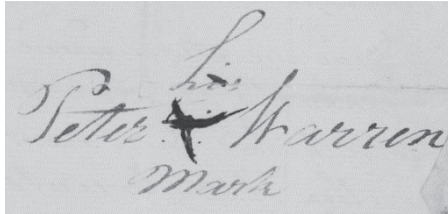
There are more questions than answers.

- When and where was Caesar Hunt born?
 - His exact birth year is unknown. There is a discrepancy between 1743 (Medway Vital Records) and 1746 (his gravestone).
 - His birth location is unknown.
 - How did the Hunt surname become part of Caesar's name? Who were the Hunts?
- Was Admiral Peter Warren indeed the father of Caesar Hunt?
 - From reading the 1811 will, we are left with an appreciation of Medfield's Peter Warren's devotion to God. If he was a pious man, did he, at his emancipation, choose to honor his father the Admiral by taking his name?
 - A Medfield Vital Record lists a Sir Peter Warren of England as the father. An M. Morse was the informant.
- Who was Caesar's mother?
 - A black woman to be sure if the white Admiral was the father.
 - A Medfield Vital Record lists a negro woman as the mother. An M. Morse was the informant.
- How was Caesar Hunt, a slave, able to earn enough money (13£) to buy his freedom?
 - In today's conversion rate [2024], Caesar had to raise about \$3,699.
 - What was his motivation to buy his freedom?
- What was Peter's occupation and residence in Medfield?
 - He is not listed in the 1800 Federal Population Census.
 - His administration states the he owed money both to the widow Sarah Wheelock and to Doctor Timothy Fisk for boarding, an indication of a residence. Born 1750 and died 1844, Sarah was the wife of Eleazar Wheelock (1724-1812). Their original home at the corner of Main and North streets was torn down in 1780.
- Who initiated the idea of having a will?
 - Was it Peter or a friend? It appears that Peter had a very small estate, with no land or buildings.
- What was the state of Peter's health in 1811 as evidenced by his hand?
 - Earlier in his life, he had a legible signature.



Peter's Signature – Medfield Historical History

- By the time he signed his will, he was only able to leave a mark.



Norfolk County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1793–1900. Page 19435:7

- It appears Peter prepared for final things as he owed John Fairbanks \$3.00 for making a coffin. At today's rate (2024), that amount is \$54.19.
- When Peter died in 1814, he owed \$336.37 (\$6,075.46 at today's rate 2024) to numerous persons. Among them:
 - Lucy Bran, his neighbor, \$29.34. (\$529.93).
 - Oliver Wheelock, \$1.50 for a tolling bell. Its purpose? At a funeral? (\$27.09).
 - Nathan Jones, Jr., \$3.08 for a sling. Possibly a projectile weapon consisting of two cords and a pouch (\$55.63).
- What was Peter's connection to Moses Bullen Harding, the executor of his will?
- What were the reasons for Peter's burial location?
 - By 1814, Sally Ephraim and Peter Warren are the first and only burials of an Indian and an African American, respectively, in the cemetery.
 - Their locations just happen to be on the western-most perimeter (the outer edge) of what was then called the Burying Grounds. No burials happened beyond this perimeter before that date.
 - A case could be made that in this area were buried Medfield citizens who were colored.
 - Peter was the second one to be buried in what later became the lot owned by David Hamilton. Neither the Hamilton nor the Towle families appear to have any near or remote connection to the Lovells or Richardsons of Medway.
- Who was Sally Ephraim, the person earlier interred next to Peter?
 - From subsequent but not extensive research, her lineage appears traceable to the Indian family of Ephraims in Natick.
 - She died in 1808 at the Medfield home of Joseph Clark, Jr. How can her presence or role there be interpreted?
 - Although the word 'brother' appears in her inscription suggesting perhaps that she had one, the complete line of that inscription, 'Farewell my dear brother, the Lord bids me come,' is in fact a line from a hymn 'The Christian's Song,' by Sarah Jones.
 - How well did Sally and Peter know each other?
- Who carved Peter and Sally's similarly-styled slate gravestones? Possibly Cady Soule of Canton, MA with inscription by Coomer Soule II. Who funded them?

