

RECOGNITION, REASSESSMENT, AND REMEDICATION

A small scale approach to improving harmful or exclusionary descriptive practices in the archives

HELIN conference
June 16, 2021

INTRODUCTIONS

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Providence College, December 2019 -

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New England Archivist President, March 2021 -

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AGENDA

- Introductions & Definitions
- Discussion questions
- Providence College, Michelle
- Salve Regina University, Genna
- Discussion questions

WHAT IS REPARATIVE DESCRIPTION OR CONSCIOUS EDITING?

reparative description

*n.*remediation of practices or data that exclude, silence, harm, or mischaracterize marginalized people in the data created or used by archivists to identify or characterize archival resources

archival silence

*n.*the unintentional or purposeful absence or distortion of documentation of enduring value, resulting in gaps and inabilities to represent the past accurately

WHAT IS REPARATIVE DESCRIPTION OR CONSCIOUS EDITING?

conscious editing

[The archives] “seeks to redress historical inequities and injustices in the ways language is used in archives and special collections. These efforts include replacing racist and derogatory language and removing biased language that assumes whiteness as a default. It also involves updating unbalanced descriptions... and bringing the voices and experiences of marginalized groups to the forefront. Hidden lives and erased histories thus become discoverable for researchers, in the classroom, and through exhibitions.”

EXAMPLE INITIATIVES & DESCRIPTIVE GUIDANCE



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH
CAROLINA

Conscious
Editing Initiative



TUFTS
UNIVERSITY

Content Warnings
and Harmful
Description
Remediation



ARCHIVES FOR
BLACK LIVES
PHILADELPHIA

Anti-Racist
Description
Resources

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

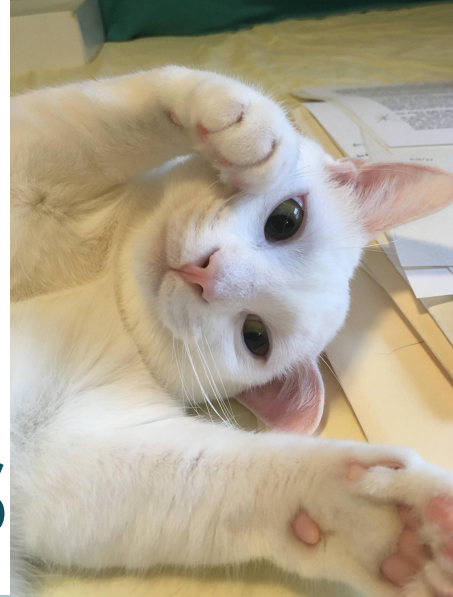
Please think about these questions as we present our experiences. We will have time at the end to answer other questions and respond to thoughts on these:

1. Have you made any changes to your descriptive practices? Were these staff/faculty driven or were they in response to concerns or complaints from users?
2. Who on your library or archives staff should be included in these discussions and the resulting work?
3. Do you have in mind collections you would like to prioritize for reparative description? How would you assess your particular collections?



Michelle Chiles

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE ASC



WHO DOES THE WORK?

ARCHIVISTS & LIBRARIANS

- Setting standards
- Best practices
- Access

STUDENT WORKERS

- Following processes
- Identifying issues
- Skills & perspective



COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

- Expertise
- Mutual support
- Access

USERS

- Identify needs
- Feedback
- Access

TRAINING & PREPARING FOR THE WORK

- Webinars & readings
 - ◆ Include all staff, students, anyone working on this
 - ◆ Create a shared context
- Set small goals for specific projects
 - ◆ Used small collections as case studies
- Established workflows
 - ◆ Identified impact points



END USER CONSIDERATIONS

- Improved access points & new areas of research
- How users get to collections
 - ◆ Archivist-aided vs independent access



Photo by [Kiwihug](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Kyle Gregory Devaras](#) on [Unsplash](#)

END USER CONSIDERATIONS

- Problematic descriptions of primary sources
- Harmful primary sources
- Actions & response
 - ◆ Trigger warnings
 - ◆ Transparency
 - ◆ Take down requests



DOCUMENTING PROGRESS

- Retain copies of legacy descriptions and collection access points
 - ◆ Citations and references
- Cross-department impact
 - ◆ Cataloguing
 - ◆ Digital collections
 - ◆ Teaching resources
- Iterative process
 - ◆ Never done



EXAMPLES FROM PROVIDENCE COLLEGE ASC

Graduate Assistant revision project

→ Rhode Island 11th Heavy Artillery Collection

- ◆ U.S. Civil War collection, RI Black regiment
- ◆ Military records and personal papers
- ◆ Some digitized

→ Challenges

- ◆ Formal title of Black regiments include harmful term to describe Black troops
- ◆ Descriptions of soldiers and other persons include harmful or triggering language
- ◆ Lack of biographical detail causes misinterpretation

The next 2 slides contain images of text which includes racist, outdated, and/or harmful language pertaining to people of color

EXAMPLES FROM PROVIDENCE COLLEGE ASC

Graduate Assistant revision project

→ Rhode Island 11th Heavy Artillery Collection

Collection Overview

Title:	Rhode Island 11th United States Heavy Artillery (<u>Colored</u>)
Date range:	1853-1913
Creator:	Rhode Island 11th United States Heavy Artillery (Colored), 1863-1865
Extent:	3 <u>box</u> (es) The collection consists of official records of the Rhode Island 11th United States Heavy Artillery (Colored) and the the personal correspondence of <u>Lt. Allen F. Cameron</u> , who was one of the regiment's officers. The regimental records consist of materials such as regimental reports, orders, <u>rosters</u> , and <u>courts-martial records</u> detailing activities of the regiment, life in the Union Army and treatment of black troops by white officers.
Abstract:	

EXAMPLES FROM PROVIDENCE COLLEGE ASC

Graduate Assistant revision project

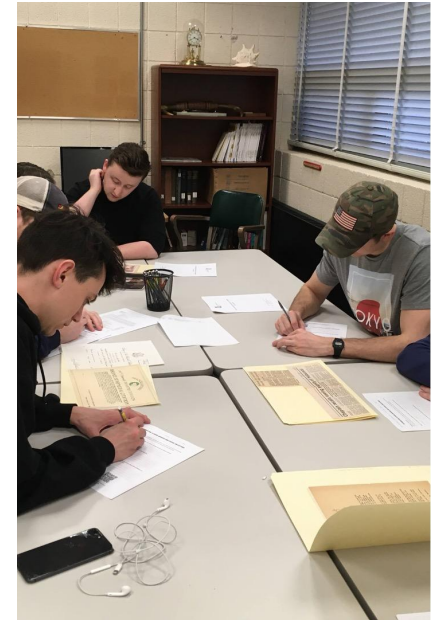
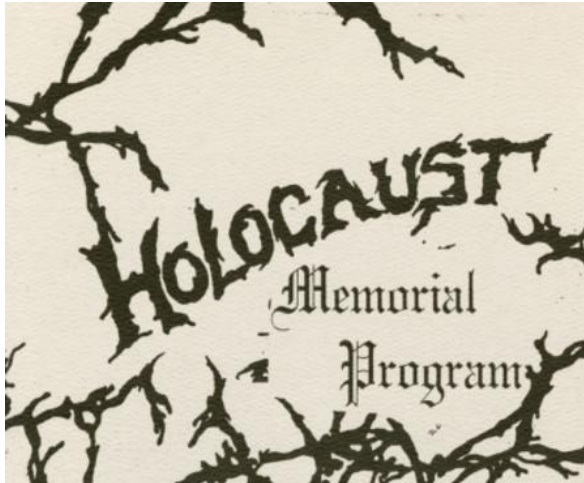
→ Rhode Island 11th Heavy Artillery Collection

Published in 2008, <u>Revised 2021</u>	
Collection Overview	
Title:	Rhode Island 11th United States Heavy Artillery (Colored)
Date range:	1853-1913
Creator:	Rhode Island 11th United States Heavy Artillery (Colored), 1863-1865
Extent:	3 <u>box(es)</u>
Abstract:	The collection consists of official records of the Rhode Island 11th United States Heavy Artillery, <u>a Bblack volunteer infantrym (Colored)</u> and the the personal correspondence of Lt. Allen F. Cameron, who was one of the regiment's <u>white commanding</u> officers. The regimental records consist of materials such as regimental reports, orders, rosters, and courts-martial records detailing activities of the regiment, life in the Union Army and <u>Bblack troops' dealingsinteractions with white officers. treatment of black troops by white officers.</u>

EXAMPLES FROM PROVIDENCE COLLEGE ASC

Teaching hard histories

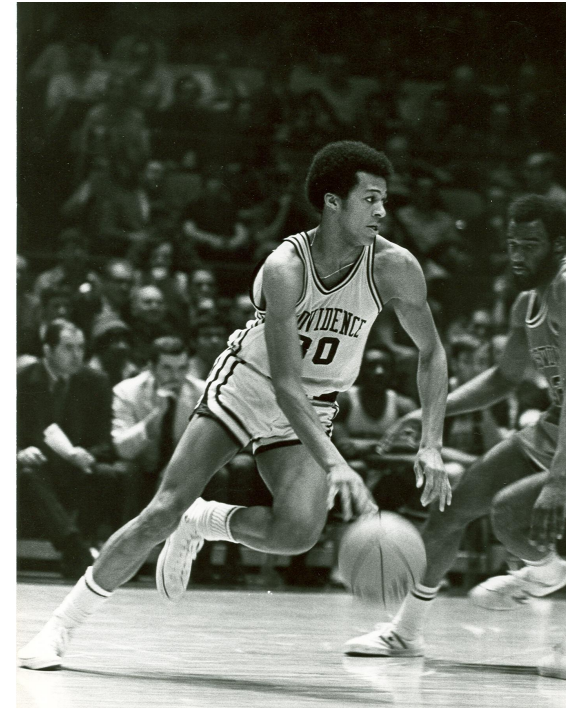
- Not always about removing objects or changing vocabulary
 - ◆ Selecting materials for instruction
- Preparing users for the experience
- Providing context for understanding and self care



EXAMPLES FROM PROVIDENCE COLLEGE ASC

Domino effect: Image renaming & collection reorganization

- Sports collections arranged by sport
- Male as default
- Women's sports are described Women_sport
- Co-ed club & recreational sports



UP NEXT FOR PC

- Formalize workflow
 - ◆ Address legacy finding aids
- Collections without finding aids or access points
 - ◆ Applying to new descriptions vs revising legacy guides
- Improved descriptions and access to college records
 - ◆ Will help us identify archival silences
 - ◆ Target outreach
 - ◆ Opportunities for student involvement (documenting activism, etc.)



Genna Duplisea

Salve Regina University

Assistant archivist attends
the 2021 New England
Archivists Spring Meeting.



examining gender bias in metadata

- Erasure of women/people occupying traditionally “feminine” roles
- Assumptions of gender
- Extra research necessary to locate and identify women in historical documents
- Religious names, changed names, and shifting identities

names & personhood



[th your keyboard](#)

<https://library.artstor.org/public/2464...>

COPY

Item Details

PUBLIC

Creator

[Corbett, John W.](#)

Title

George Andrade and Robert McKenna shaking hands with [Stacey Andrade](#) and [Mary Jane McKenna](#) look on

Work Type

still image

Date

1991

Measurements

(w x h): 18 cm x 13 cm

Description

George Andrade and Robert McKenna shake hands near center of photograph. Stacey Andrade is smiling and Mary Jane McKenna is facing away from the camera. Caption: "Governor's Ball, [Mr. & Mrs. George Andrade](#) - Faculty. Mr. & Mrs. [Robert McKenna](#) - Administration."

George Andrade and Robert McKenna shaking hands [...] (1991),
<https://library.artstor.org/public/24647386>

prefixes as placeholders



CITE THIS ITEM

PRINT PREVIEW

<https://library.artstor.org/public/SS7731274>

COPY

Item Details

PUBLIC

Title

Mrs. D'Amico, Albert D'Amico, Sister Lucille McKillop, Bernice Holland, and Major General Leonard Holland with guests

Work Type

still image

Date

ca. 1979-1980

Measurements

(w x h): 12.7 cm x 8.9 cm

Description

Mrs. D'Amico, Albert D'Amico, Sister Lucille McKillop, Bernice Holland, and Major General Leonard Holland greet two guests in receiving line. Caption: "Mrs. Albert D'Amico; Mr. Albert D'Amico R.I.P. (Board of Trustees)."

Mrs. D'Amico, Albert D'Amico, Sister Lucille McKillop [...] (ca. 1979-1980),
https://library.artstor.org/public/SS7731274_7731274_12920033

local resources for name authorities

Sullivan, Catherine M., 1931-

 Person


Dates

Existence: 1931-

Class of 1956; class of 1985.

Found in 2 Collections and/or Records:

Kate Sullivan Oral History

 Digital Work Identifier: AV_RG21-5_001

Dates: 2013

Found in: Salve Regina University Archives

Kate Sullivan Collection on the Nursing Program at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras

 Collection – Box: 1 for RG21.5 Identifier: RG21.5

Abstract Oral history with Catherine "Kate" Sullivan regarding her work on the nursing program at Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras, with supporting objects, documents, and correspondence.

Dates: 1965-1970, 2013

Found in: Salve Regina University Archives / Kate Sullivan Collection on the Nursing Program at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras

More about 'Sullivan, Catherine M., 1931-'

Names Forms

Also known by the following names:

- Sullivan, Marilyn, Sister, R.S.M.
- Citarella, Catherine

Additional filters:

Type

Digital Record 1

Collection 1

Agent entry for Catherine M. Sullivan,

https://salvearchives.libraryhost.com/agents/sullivan_catherine_m

decentering gender assumptions



<https://library.artstor.org/public/SS7...>

COPY

Item Details

PUBLIC

Title

The Foreigner performance photograph

Work Type

still image

Date

2002

Measurements

(w x h): 15.2 cm x 10.2 cm

Description

Cast picture from the play *The Foreigners*. It is a color picture of three students. The student farthest left is standing next to the stairs aiming a croquet mallet at the student farthest right. The student next to them is sitting on the stairs aiming a knife at the student farthest right. The student farthest right is sitting on the stairs looking back at the other two students.

The Foreigner performance photograph (2002),
https://library.artstor.org/public/SS7731274_7731274_13004057

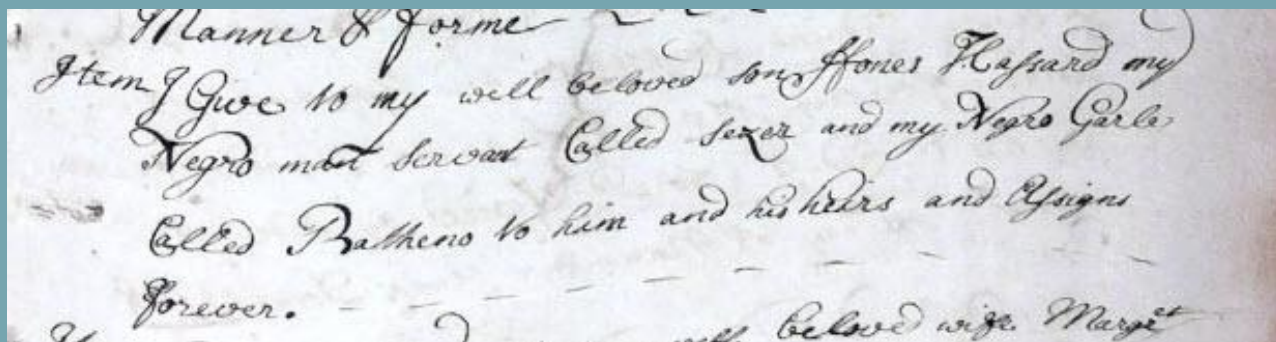
nota bene: a pause

The following slides include images of historical documents which use outdated or offensive language to describe race, and which demonstrate the evaluation of human beings as property. I will not say these racial terms out loud. My goal of this presentation is to address how to describe such content and meaning without repeating the harm these terms can cause.

documenting slavery project

- Partnership with South Kingstown Town Clerk's office, faculty, students
- First semester of student work funded by Rhode Island Foundation's Joseph O'Neill Ott Fund
- Goal: To recognize the dignity and humanity of people represented in archival records, which they were not granted in the time period represented

locating people in slavery

A snippet of a handwritten document in cursive script, likely a will or inventory. The text is written on aged, slightly stained paper. The visible text includes the words 'Manner & forme', 'Item I Give to my well beloved son James Hassard my Negro man servant Called Jexer and my Negro Carle', 'Called Pathens to him and his heirs and Assigns', and 'forever.' followed by a line of dashes. Below this, the words 'well beloved wife Marget' are partially visible.

Manner & forme
Item I Give to my well beloved son James Hassard my
Negro man servant Called Jexer and my Negro Carle
Called Pathens to him and his heirs and Assigns
forever. -----
well beloved wife Marget

Will and Inventory of Estate of Stephen Hassard (1718),
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.23933590>

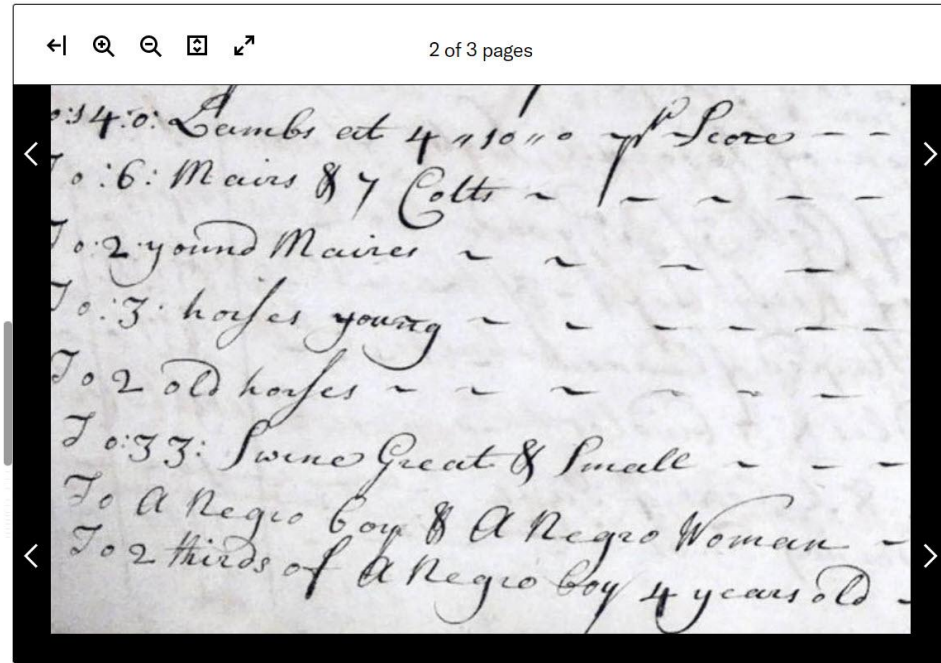
“preserve but contextualize” language

SPATIAL COVERAGE

Washington

DESCRIPTION

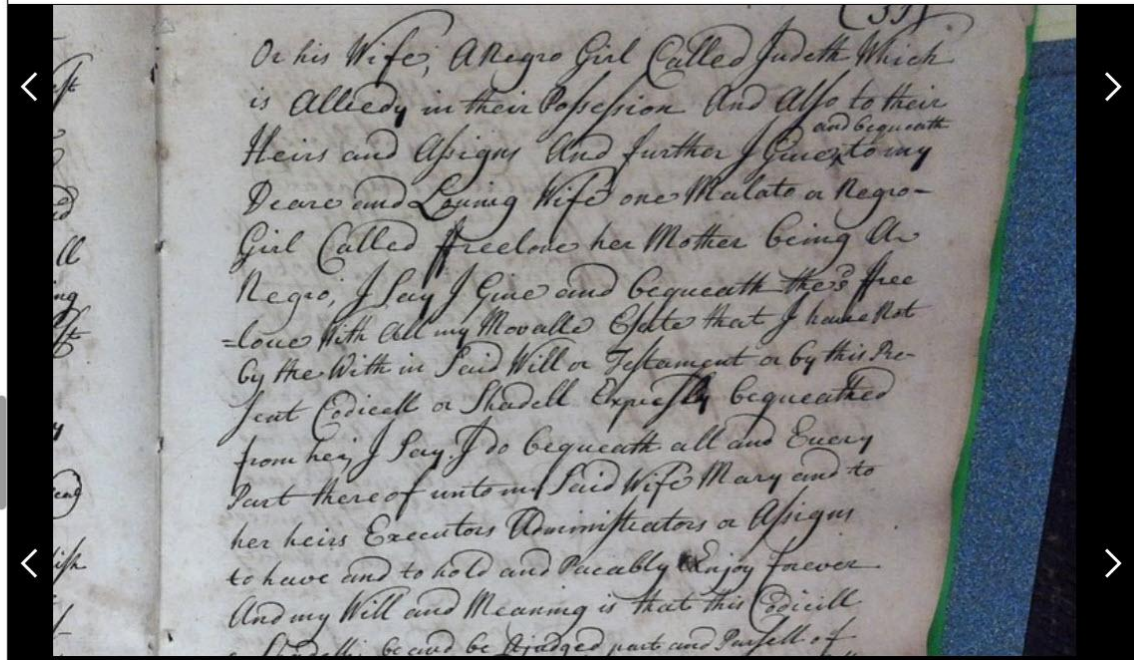
This document is the inventory of estate of Ephraim Smith. The Town Council of North Kingstown has named Smith's wife, Margaret Smith, as the executor of his estate. The inventory included enslaved workers, furniture, tools, guns, livestock, lumber, half of a boat, and bonds. The inventory states that Smith owned 2/3 of an enslaved four-year-old boy as well as an additional enslaved boy and an enslaved woman. Four bonds accumulated the most financial value of the inventory being 104 pounds. Ephraim Smith's entire estate is worth 828 pounds 12 shillings and 8 pence.



Will and Inventory of Estate of Ephraim Smith (1722),
<https://www.istor.org/stable/community.24125578>

creator-supplied & archivist-supplied language

Chipuxet River, two enslaved boys named Peter and James, and livestock. Hannah left his daughter, Mary Niles and her husband Nathaniel Niles, the part of his land residing on the west side of the Chipuxet River and an enslaved women named Jane and her daughter Judeth. When Nathaniel and Mary Niles pass away, the land will be passed down to their two sons named Nathan and Robert Niles. Hannah is also leaving his granddaughter Mary Niles an enslaved girl named Katherine. Hannah leaves the house, the rest of the land, and a mixed-race enslaved girl named Freelove to his wife Mary Hannah. The inventory of his estate includes livestock, one enslaved women and her five children. sons and

A photograph of a handwritten manuscript page, likely a will or inventory of an estate. The text is written in cursive and is partially obscured by a dark blue binding strip on the right side. The visible text includes: "Or his Wife, A Negro Girl Called Judeth Which is Alledy in their Possession And also to their Heirs and Assigns And further I Give and Bequeath my Dear and Loving Wife one Malato a Negro Girl Called Freelove her Mother being a Negro, I say I Give and Bequeath these free Love with all my Moveable Estate that I have not by the Will in Said Will or Testament or by this Present Codicill or Sheddell Expressly bequeathed from her, I say I do bequeath all and Every Part thereof unto my said Wife Mary and to her heirs Executors Administrators or Assigns to have and to hold and Peaceably Enjoy forever. And my Will and Meaning is that this Codicill shall be and be judged part and parcel of". The page is numbered "35" in the top right corner. There are also some faint markings on the left side of the page, possibly from another page or a different part of the document.

Will and Inventory of Estate of Robert Hannah (1706),
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.23933520>

when standards are not justice



DOCUMENT

Will and Inventory of Estate of William Gardner

1710/11-01-18, 1710/11-03-12

Gardner, William, Gardner, Elizabeth, Gardner, William,
Gardner, Rebeckah, Gardner Susanah, Gardner, Dorcas,
Gardner, Tabitha, Gardner Rachell, Gould John, Gould,
Elizabeth, Huling, Honour, Gardner, Benonie, Huling, Elizabeth,
Huling, Alexander, Hall, William, Smith, William, Robinson,
Rowland, James, Phillip, Zepporah

Will and Inventory of Estate of William Gardner, Vol. South
Kingstown Town Council Records, Book 1, pp. 1-4

Part of South Kingstown Colonial Records

Niles, Robert
Niles, Mary
Jane
Katharine
Tefft, Elizabeth
Langdon, Mary
Whaley, Theophilus
Gardner, George
Gardner, Tabitha
Knowles, Allice
Champlin, Jeffery
Tefft, Samuel
Tefft, John
Jones, Samuel
Eldred, Thomas
Hall, William
Newton, James
Willet, Andrew
Jane
Judeth
Freelove

Will and Inventory of Estate of William Gardner
(1710),
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.2393352>

Will and Inventory of Estate of
Robert Hannah (1706),
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.23933520>

slavery and indenture

To 812 Sheep at 10 p Score	175		
To 18 Swine	8	5	8
To 23 horse Red young and old	110		
To 1 Negro Man	50		
To 1 Negro Woman	40		
To 1 Boy that has 6 years and a half to serve	19	10	
To bills of Editt	8		
To money Due by Bond	90	5	
To money Due by bill	22		
To Book Debt	12		
	4	10	

Will and Inventory of Estate of Jeffery Champlin (1717/8),
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.23933564>

looking ahead

- Linked data creation and contribution to enslaved.org
- Examine descriptors of enslaved workers to illuminate the presence of people who were Indigenous and Black
- Base class assignment or entire course on using documents
- Support historical and perhaps genealogical research

collections links

Archives photographs:

<http://bitly.com/salve-archives-photos>

South Kingstown Colonial Documents:

<https://www.jstor.org/site/salve-regina-university/south-kingstown-colonial-records/>

Salve Regina's ArchivesSpace:

<http://salvearchives.libraryhost.com>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*We welcome responses to the questions shared or you may ask your own. **Please use the raise hand function OR type your question in the chat.***

1. Have you made any changes to your descriptive practices? Were these staff/faculty driven or were they in response to concerns or complaints from users?
2. Who on your library or archives staff should be included in these discussions and the resulting work?
3. Do you have in mind collections you would like to prioritize for reparative description? How would you assess your particular collections?

THANK YOU

The background features a dark teal color on the left side, transitioning into a light blue area on the right. The light blue area is composed of several overlapping triangles of varying sizes and orientations, creating a dynamic, geometric pattern.

RESOURCES

Antracoli, Alexis A., Annalise Berdini, Kelly Bolding, Faith Charlton, Amanda Ferrara, Valencia Johnson, and Katy Rawdon. "Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia: Anti-Racist Description Resources." October 2020.

https://archivesforblacklives.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/ardr_202010.pdf

Caswell, Michelle. "Teaching to Dismantle White Supremacy in Archives," *The Library Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (July 2017): 222-235.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/692299>

Dean, Jackie. "Conscious Editing of Archival Description at UNC-Chapel Hill." *Journal of the Society for North Carolina Archivists* 16 (2019): 41-55. http://www.ncarchivists.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/jsnca_vol16_dean.pdf

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<https://wiki.harvard.edu/confluence/display/hmschommanual/Guidelines+for+Inclusive+and+Conscientious+Description>

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RESOURCES

New England Archivists Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. "Anti-Racist and Anti-oppressive Readings and Resources for Archivists." August 2020.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sg3mG2oPmmg9vgF3zou3Go-umfZgwtXTPhGbSkOUSxM/edit?usp=sharing>

O'Toole, Marjory Gomez. *If Jane Should Want to be Sold: Stories of Enslavement, Indenture and Freedom in Little Compton, Rhode Island*. Little Compton, RI: Little Compton Historical Society, 2016.

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<https://sunshinestatedigitalnetwork.wordpress.com/2020/09/16/introduction-to-conscious-editing-series/>

Tai, Jessica and Stephanie Bredbenner. "Remediating Euphemistic Language in Yale's Collections Documenting Japanese American Incarceration." *New England Archivists Newsletter*, Vol. 48, no. 1, January 2021.

<https://www.newenglandarchivists.org/resources/Documents/Newsletter/2021/NEA%202021%20January.pdf>