

3
The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

REMEMBERING GAD ASHER

by

Theodore Groom, Ph. D.
Chairman, Technology
The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

October, 2013

Edward Smith Library
P.O. Box 130
Northford, CT 06472
484-0469

Introduction:

While digitizing various research documents for The Totoket Historical Society, Inc. the author ran across the name Gad Asher several times. Those references said only that he was a former slave, served in the Revolutionary War and lived near the Beech Corner School. My curiosity raised, I looked for more on this individual but little appeared to be available in the Society's files. This little document is the result of further inquiries. This account is not intended to be a scholarly document worthy of publication in a renowned historical journal. Rather, it is the story of a North Branford resident who deserves considerably more notoriety than he has received in the past. Numerous references were used including the internet.

Many residents of this State believe that slavery did not exist in Connecticut, but was peculiar only to the South. Indeed, they would be astonished to think that slavery existed right here in North Branford. In fact the U. S. Federal Census of 1790 reports that there were 2764 slaves in Connecticut in that first census year. In Branford alone (North Branford was a part of Branford until 1831) out of a population of 2267 there were 54 slaves. By 1810 there were only 7 slaves, but a population of 34 free blacks in Branford. Some of those reported as slaves may have been Indians, not blacks. Slavery was abolished in Connecticut only in 1848.

The following is the story, if it can be called that, of one slave, Gad Asher. Gad was sold into slavery at age four, served his master for thirty five or more years, fought in the Revolutionary War, bought his freedom, married, raised a family and lived here in North Branford. He died in 1835.

Gad Asher never learned to read and write so the "story" consists only of the records he left and the writings of his grandson, Rev. Jeremiah Asher^{1,2}. The records are few: birth, marriage, death, military, census and legal, but important, as they tell an incomplete tale of a much abused man, a man who fought for his country, and was severely injured in doing so. Through his herculean efforts he escaped slavery and became a small farmer in North Branford.

¹ Incidents in the Life of Rev. J. Asher, Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Philadelphia, U.S.: and a Concluding Chapter of Facts Illustrating the Unrighteous Prejudice Existing in the Minds of American Citizens Toward Their Colored Brethren, by Rev. Jeremiah Asher, London, 1850

² An Autobiography, with Details of a Visit to England, and Some Account of the History of the Meeting Street Baptist Church, Providence, R.I., and of the Shiloh Baptist Church, Philadelphia, PA. [bound with]: Articles of Faith and Covenant of the Shiloh Baptist Church [Philadelphia, by Rev. Jeremiah Asher W.G.P. Brickloe, Printer, 1861

Prior to relating the “story” of Gad Asher an effort will be made to relate information on slavery in Connecticut and in North Branford in particular between 1750 and 1848 when it was abolished.

Statistics for Connecticut (North Branford Was Part of Branford Until 1831)

Year	Population	Free Blacks	Slaves
1750	200,000	1,000	10,000
1800	250,000	1,500	15,000
1850	300,000	2,000	20,000
1860	350,000	2,500	25,000

Statistics for Branford, Connecticut (North Branford Was Part of Branford Until 1831)

Year	Population	Free Blacks	Slaves
1750	1,000	5	50
1800	1,500	10	100
1850	2,000	15	150
1860	2,500	20	200

¹ Timeline of Connecticut Slavery <http://www.britainonline.com/ctslavery.htm>
² Ancestry.com, U.S. Federal Census
³ According to Jane Douglas, Branford Town Historian, there is an error in the 1850s for the 1850 census and there are only 30 slaves total. <http://www.branfordhistory.com/ctslavery.htm>

I Slavery in Connecticut and in North Branford

Let us look briefly at the slave population in both The State of Connecticut and Branford in particular to get some idea of the role of the slave in our local society. Slavery unquestionably existed in Northford and North Branford but apparently played a relatively minor role in the life of the community. Not so in the lives of those condemned to slavery. Certainly the average farmer in Branford had no slaves. They were expensive and their upkeep might be prohibitive. Only the wealthy kept slaves. One wealthy slave owner in Northford was the Rev. Matthew Noyes, the second pastor of the Northford Congregational Church. The Reverend Noyes owned one slave in 1800. In many cases the slaves were retained as servants rather than laborers. This was probably true in the case of Rev. Noyes. It is hard in this day for us to imagine a preacher having slaves but it occurred.

Slave Populations in Connecticut and in Branford *Statistics for The State of Connecticut³*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Slaves in Connecticut</i>
<i>1790</i>	<i>2759</i>
<i>1800</i>	<i>951</i>
<i>1810</i>	<i>310</i>
<i>1820</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>1830</i>	
<i>1840</i>	<i>17</i>

Statistics for Branford, Connecticut⁴ *(North Branford Was Part of Branford Until 1831)*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Free Blacks</i>	<i>Slaves</i>
<i>1790</i>	<i>2267</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>54⁵</i>
<i>1800</i>	<i>2156</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>1810</i>	<i>1932</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>1820</i>	<i>2230</i>		<i>9</i>

³ Timeline of Connecticut Slavery <http://www.fortunestory.org/resources/timeline.asp>

⁴ Ancestry.com, U.S. Federal Census

⁵ According to Jane Bouley, Branford Town Historian, there is an error in the totals for the 1790 census and there are only 50 slaves total. <http://www.branfordgenweb.com/cens1790.htm>

The Gradual Abolition Act of 1784⁶

By the beginning of the nineteenth century all states north of Maryland began implementing restrictions on slavery which eventually resulted in its demise. There was a movement for the abolition of slavery within the state of Connecticut but unfortunately only Vermont, Massachusetts and New Hampshire legislated a fairly rapid end to slavery. In 1784 the Connecticut Legislature introduced "The Gradual Abolition Act." Note that the act actually freed no slaves. This act stated that "no negro or mulatto child, that shall, after the first day of March, One Thousand seven hundred and eighty-four, be born within this state, shall be held in servitude, longer than until they arrive to the Age of twenty-five years notwithstanding the Mother or Parent of such Child was held in Servitude at the Time of its Birth; but such child, at the Age aforesaid, shall be free, any Law, Usage or Custom to the contrary notwithstanding." This law applied to Indian, Mulatto and Negro Servants and Slaves. The act did not apply to persons born before that date. What a difference a day makes! The act was meant to bring a gradual end to slavery in Connecticut but did nothing for those born prior to March 1, 1784. They would serve in slavery until the end of their lives or until slavery was abolished. There was no provision in the act to prevent a master from leaving the state to sell his property. In fact the act might actually encourage him to do so as his possession became less valuable to him knowing that he had only twenty-five years worth of labor rather than a lifetime.

In 1788 the State passed a law restricting the export of slaves who would be free at the twenty fifth birthday from the State of Connecticut. Heavy fines were to be applied to those who aided or assisted in the export of those slaves

The 1797 Amendment to the Gradual Abolition Act⁷

In 1797 the State Legislature amended the 1784 law and stated that children born to slaves after August 1, 1797 were to be free at their twenty first birthday. The Act was not retroactive.

Restrictions Within The Slavery Laws⁸

⁶ Yale Law Journal, Vol. 111 pg .183, 2001 by David Menschel
www.yalelawjournal.org

⁷ Ibid: Timeline of Connecticut Slavery, see footnote 2

⁸ Ibid; Timeline of Connecticut Slavery, see footnote 2

There were many oddities to the slavery laws in Connecticut. For instance a child born to a female slave and a free man was a slave, yet a child born to a free black woman and a slave was a free person. There were also problems with manumitting slaves. A slave owner who freed a slave was responsible for the free person if he or she became indigent. In some ways this hindered the process of manumitting slaves. There was also "The Slave Code." These laws controlled the lives of slaves even in their free time. A law barred a "Negro, Molatto or Indian Servant or Slave" from being "abroad from Home" after nine o'clock at night without a "special Order from his Master. Violators of the code were to be publically whipped about the naked body not exceeding 10 lashes. In addition "Negro, Molatto or Indian Servant or Servants who were found outside of the bounds of the town or place to which they belong without a pass from their master or the local authority would be deemed Run-aways and may be treated as such. The "Pass Laws" as described above essentially deputized all free persons and empowered them to stop and interrogate any slave This "Slave Code" was disassembled in 1797 in a remarkable decision. The removal of the Slave Code indicated the State's attitude toward the institution of slavery.

II Slavery in Northford, 1750-1847, as Suggested by the Records of The Northford Congregational Church

The author has never seen anything specifically written concerning slavery in Northford but one can infer data from a study of the records of The Northford Congregational Church⁹. This was the only church in Northford prior to the establishment of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in 1763¹⁰. The list below shows deaths of blacks in Northford between 1750 and 1845, a period in which slavery existed in Connecticut.

Deaths of Blacks in Northford 1750-1847

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>
September 1, 1750	Mingo Negro child	1
Aug 29, 1751	Lett---Negro Child	9
September 4, 1751	Rose Negro Child	2
March 28, 1755	Dick Negro	100
July 5, 1755	Peggy Negro	0
July 18, 1756	Moll Negro	7

⁹ Northford Connecticut Congregational Church Records 1750 – 1926, Volume I, Connecticut State Library, 1927

¹⁰ A History of St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Church, Northford, 1763-1963 by Elizabeth Livingston, Totoket Historical Society. This document is available at both Town Libraries.

July 11, 1762	Sharp Negro	22
May 30, 1763	Shem Negro---Drowned	38
November 11, 1764	Pero Negro	6 months
August 31, 1766	Violet Negro	2
October 15, 1769	Crib Negro	15
August 2, 1770	Catherine Negro	8
January 25, 1771	Tom Negro	70
February 20, 1771	Sharper Negro	
April 22, 1772	Capt. Maltbie's Negro women's two children	2 days
June 11, 1772	Bethy Negro	13
1774	Jin Negro Woman	47
1777	Dick Negro	22
May 11, 1781	Droll Negro, servant to William Douglas Stabbed to the heart and murdered Pompey Continental Soldier formally servant to James Barker, esq.	
October 1782	Dick Negro	60
July 25, 1783	Semmon Cumber, Negro of Wallingford	31
March 19, 1786	Pompey Dora Negro	34
March 18, 1793	Cambridge Negro died of smallpox	26
October 12, 1793	Zilpah Negro	25
August 21, 1795	Tempy, my Negro servant (Rev. Matthew Noyes)	15
March 19, 1796	Tom Quutchy, negro servant of Wooster Harrison	90
March 7, 1805	Parthena Negro Servant of Capt. Talmadge Died with the King's Evil	20
July 7, 1809	Richard Warner (Negro) suddenly	18
March 3, 1821	Dinah Freeman Colored Woman	66
December 17, 1843	Fortune, a colored man, age unknown lived with Capt. Foote	
October 19, 1845	Jube, a colored man servant of?	80
<hr/>		
Total	31	

The records reveal the deaths of 31 black individuals. The author suggests that it would be hard to deny that many of these were or had been slaves. Exactly how many of these were slaves at the time of their death is unknown. Those who died as "servants" were undoubtedly slaves. Even the Reverend Matthew Noyes, second minister of the Northford Congregational Church, was known to keep slaves. The death of one of his "servants" is recorded above. The use of the word "servant" may simply reflect an aversion to use the word "slave."

Further evidence of slavery in Northford is gained by examining the baptismal records of The Northford Congregational Church as seen below.

Baptisms of Blacks in Northford 1750-1847

July 13, 1760	Cuff, Negro Man
December 6, 1761	Sharp Negro
September 13, 1767	widow Cooks Negro Servants Catherine Violet
February 9, 1772	Nero, Negro Man
<hr/>	
Total	5

There are a total of five baptisms of blacks between 1760 and 1772, two of which are identified as "Servants" or more precisely as slaves.

There is only one recorded marriage of a black in the church records and that is as follows:

Marriages of Blacks in Northford

February 23, 1774 Dick Negro and Mary Lattomore Indian

Total 1

The Dick Negro recorded above is almost certainly the "Dick" who reportedly led the women and children of Northford to the safety of Totoket Mountain when the British invaded New Haven in July of 1779.¹¹

III Slavery in North Branford as suggested by the Records of the North Branford Congregational Church, 1750-1848^{12 13}

Deaths:

Date	Name	Age
March 8, 1770	Amos Negro Boy	
July 1789	Cuff negro servant to Widow Page	
Sep 1790	Pomp Doff negro	54

¹¹ History of North Branford by A. Loretta Plumley, pg 10, Totoket Historical Society. This article is available in both Town Libraries and online.

¹² From the records of the North Branford Congregational Church as kept at the North Branford Town Hall.

¹³ North Branford Congregational Church Records 1769-1845 - Baptisms, Marriages, Deaths. Extracted from microfilm at Connecticut State Library by Jane Bouley, Branford Town Historian. Totoket Historical Society Accession # 2003-013-003

July 1793	Negro Pomp		73
Jan 1801	James Dumb	Negro	23
Nov 1801	Child of Gad Asher		
Sep 1803	Child Phylee	Negro	2
Feb 1, 1813	a grandchild of Gad Asher	(colored)	
Apr 3, 1816	Azik Otis	a man of color.	31
Feb 19, 1817	Phebe Dum	(colored)	68
March 20, 1817	Robert	(colored servant of Justus Rose)	80
April 12, 1817	Dick (“)		90
April 18, 1817	Peleg Gorak	black man	68
Dec 1821	child of James Russell	colored	2 wks
May 27, 1823	Wealthy Jackson	colored	
Dec 29, 1824	Infant child Baily	Black woman	
June 23, 1825	Zenesh?	a black man of Mrs. Merrick’s	68
March 3, 1826	Fidelia Kelly	colored	12
Sept 10, 1829	John M. son of John M & ___	Strong colored	3
Feb 21, 1831	Dinah	colored servant of Capt. Jonth – Rose	54
Jan 20, 1833	Catharine Hoadley	a coloured woman	93
Dec 6, 1833	Myra	colored woman died at Guilford	
Nov 28, 1835	Gad Asher	colored	80
1836	Lucy primus	coloured woman	
Mar 23, 1837	Harry Sheldon	colored man	40
Sep 28, 1837	Temperance Primus	(daughter of gad Asher)	50
<hr/>			
Total	26		

The author suggests that *most* of those listed above either were slaves at their death or were at one time slaves and eventually gained their freedom. Three of the above, Lucy and Temperance Primus and “Grandchild of Gad Asher” were born free.

IV The Story of Gad Asher as Told by His Grandson

Let us first examine the name itself. In many cases slaves took the name of their owner. This was not the case with Gad Asher. The name has a biblical connotation. Gad and Asher were two sons of Jacob and Zilpah, the maidservant of Leah, Jacob’s first wife. When Leah ceased to bear children, at least temporarily, she gave her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob to have children for her. According to an internet search¹⁴ “Gad” translates from the Hebrew as “fortune.”

¹⁴ Biblical History Blog, <http://bibletimeline.net/biblehistoryblog/bible-timeline-gad-and-asher/>

Asher is believed to mean "happiness." One might think this man's life would be a joy. This was not to be.

Gad's grandson, Jeremiah Asher, was the minister of the Shiloh Baptist Church in Philadelphia. In 1850, after travelling in England trying to raise money to complete his church he wrote a book detailing his travels and outlining the prejudice he experienced in The United States. He did not experience this unpleasant bigotry in England. The following is Jeremiah Asher's remembrance of his grandfather, Gad Asher¹⁵:

"I was born in the town or North Brandford, county of New Haven, State of Connecticut, on the 13th of October, 1812. My father's name is Ruel Asher, he was born at the same place, and is now about sixty-five years of age; his father's name was Gad, a native of Africa, stolen from the coast of Guinea when four years of age.

The following story of my grandfather's capture, I have often listened to with deep interest, as stated by himself. His father cultivated a small portion of land not far distant from his dwelling; the produce of it my grandfather believed to be rice, though on account of his youth could not be certain.

The ground being prepared, and the seed broadcast upon it--it was then the employment of the small children to watch it for a season, to prevent the birds, which are so numerous, from devouring the seed. This department of labour fell to his brother whom he supposed to be next older than himself and about twelve or fourteen years of age; he had been accustomed to take his younger brother into the field with him for company, while he was employed in watching, which was effected in the following manner: In the centre of the plantation a stage was erected, elevated about six or eight feet so as to possess a commanding view of the field, and upon this was brought a large quantity of stones which, when the birds alighted were slung at them to scare them away.

One day while engaged in this employment, two men were observed coming out of a thicket, and making towards the stage, the elder brother suspecting their object, immediately took his younger brother and descended the stage, running with all possible haste to make their escape from these men-stealers. They ran together for a

¹⁵ Ibid.; Rev. Jeremiah Asher, Incidents, p. 15 – 20.

while in the direction of home; but the boy, poor little fellow, soon tired, and began to lag, his brother then took him upon his back, and ran as fast as he could but seeing their pursuers would soon overtake them, he was at last, though not without the deepest reluctance, obliged to abandon his little charge in order to make his own escape, and bear the melancholy tidings to his heart-stricken mother, (who doubtless felt as mothers only can feel,) that her darling little boy was stolen away, and that they would probably see him no more in this world.

Here I feel tempted to linger for a moment, to gaze upon and attempt a description of this heart-rending, God-provoking, heaven-daring, hell-deserving crime. But alas! for me, I have neither power of imagination to conceive, or eloquence to utter the nature or amount of punishment due to such transgression. But the Lord will repay, vengeance is his, and he will one day most assuredly make inquisition for blood. Neither can I give any idea of the awful solemnity of that moment when the intelligence was received that the poor little boy was stolen. This I must leave for an abler pen than mine to delineate, and content myself with a simple narrative of the subsequent events in the history of the little captive.

Having been left by his elder brother, he was soon overtaken by the pursuers, who seized their victim and gagged him to prevent his giving an alarm. He was ordered to be quiet, for they were going to take him home; but he was conveyed to the sea, where a slaver was in waiting to receive stolen men, women, and children. They arrived there in the dusk of the evening, and saw a large number of others who had been captured in a similar manner, but none that he could recognize.

On account of his youth, and having no relative or companion on board, he was in great degree exempt from the horrors and hardships of the Middle Passage. He indeed became quite a favourite to both officers and sailors, who each in their turn endeavoured to console him, by telling him they were going to take him home. Of the particulars of the voyage he had little recollection, neither as to the time of sailing, or length of the passage, or the dangers of the sea, but remembered full well he never saw his dear parents or brother, more. Thus he was suddenly snatched away from all that could be dearest to one of his age, in life.

In due time the ship arrived with her cargo safe at Guildford, State of Connecticut. The news of her arrival having, been heralded in

the town, the farmers and others from many parts gathered to attend the sale of the newly-imported negroes. Among others, one *Titus Bishop* of Guildford, a ship-carpenter, attended, and being pleased with the apparent brightness and promising appearance of this youth, bought him for £40, current money with the merchant, took him on his back, carried him to his house, treated him with great kindness, and became remarkably fond of him. The term of service was about forty-three years, and doubtless as pleasant a one as the peculiar institution is capable of imparting. How he obtained the name, Gad Asher, he was quite at a loss to know.

Having served his master faithfully upwards of forty years, the American Revolution broke out. Hostilities commenced between Great Britain and the United States. This eventful period will never be forgotten by us whose fathers fought for liberty, not from the yoke of Britain, but from the yoke of American slavery. Freedom from it was promised in number of instances, both in the war of 1776 and also 1815. That brave company that fought and conquered under General Jackson at the desperate battle at New Orleans, in violation of his promise, were returned back to their former masters. These periods, I say, will never be forgotten by us, whose fathers fought, bled and died for liberty which neither they nor their children have yet received.

At the time referred to, perhaps every able-bodied white man between the ages of eighteen and forty was drafted to go to the war or furnish a substitute. Among the rest, Mr. Bishop was notified to leave the comforts of home for a field campaign. At this time of trouble, he had only to promise Gad his freedom, and he was all right again. This he delayed not to do, but sought an early opportunity to confirm the contract, that when the war should be ended he should be free. Elated with the thought of freedom, though it was from one of the best of masters, the hardships of a seven years' war was borne without fatigue. In view of a fact like this, who will contend the African prefers slavery to freedom, even under its most favourable aspect, or in its mildest form.

During the continuance of the war he fought in a number of battles, and among others, the memorable one of Bunker Hill, near Boston: here through the intense heat, and inhaling the dense smoke of gunpowder, and exposure to the dew of heaven by night, he took a severe cold, which settled in his eyes, and deprived him of his sight, which was never restored to him again. This was about the close of the war: peace was soon after declared. He now returned home, but

his master refused to grant him freedom without a compensation for the original forty pounds, the amount he first paid for him. This after a term of near forty years' service, seven of it spent in the defence of a country which denied the right of citizenship both to himself and all his posterity. Yet all things considered, as wicked and unrighteous as this demand was, it was deemed best on the whole to pay it, principally upon the consideration, that his large family of children would be free; but in fact, they were as free before as they could be afterwards, for my grandmother was free, so his master could have no claim to them whatever: for it is the universal practice among slave-dealers and breeders, for the children to follow the destiny of the mother, whether she be bond or free. He was ignorant of this, and therefore was induced to yield to this unrighteous demand of his master. What, I ask, is there that belongs to the dark catalogue of crime, that this iniquitous system has not been guilty of practising every species of fraud and injustice, as well as the abomination of cruelty, the legitimate result of this wicked institution.

As a compensation for his service from the commencement of the war, he was allowed by the U. S. Government, ninety-six dollars a-year, or about nineteen pounds as long as he lived. Through the aid of this small pittance, and practising the strictest economy. he succeeded in a few years in complying with the demand of his wealthy and professedly pious master. About this time it pleased the Lord who is rich in mercy, to make my grandfather a subject of his grace, for with God there is no respect of persons, he "has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth." See this poor man stolen from home, and so unjustly treated by him who ought ever to have regarded his welfare with the deepest interest, yet the Lord had respect unto him, he took him up, and praised be His holy name.

He soon removed from the neighbourhood of his master to the town of North Brandford, where he purchased a small plantation and settled down upon it for the remainder of his days. He united with the Independent Church in that place, and I believe was a consistent member of it for nearly half a century, as when he died, he was nearly or quite one hundred years of age. Here I shall take leave of the narrative of the little African captive."

Some of the events described above by Jeremiah Asher are subject to question.

1. Jeremiah states that Gad was stolen from the coast of Africa, specifically Guinea. How could a four or five year old child know the name of his country in the English language? It is quite possible that his owner would have known the origin of his slave from the slave seller. Perhaps Gad was later told by his master.

2. Jeremiah states "In due time the ship arrived with her cargo safe at Guildford, State of Connecticut. The news of her arrival having, been heralded in the town, the farmers and others from many parts gathered to attend the sale of the newly-imported negroes." The author personally finds it somewhat unlikely that a shipload of slaves would be destined for the little town of Guilford, Connecticut. It would be more believable if the destination of that ship was New London or New Haven or New York. Remember that the person relating the story was a child of no more than five years old who could not speak the language and knew nothing of the area. New London was the Connecticut town with the largest number of slaves and was more likely to be the ship's primary destination. "By 1774 New London County had become the greatest slaveholding section of New England, with almost twice as many slaves as the most populous slave county in Massachusetts. New London was both an industrial center and the site of large slave-worked farms; with 2,036 slaves, it accounted for almost one-third of all the blacks in Connecticut. New London town itself, with 522 blacks and a white population of 5,366, led the state in number of slaves and percentage of black inhabitants¹⁶." The Connecticut State Library has an online exhibit containing the ship's log of the slave ship "Africa" sailing from New London in 1757-1758.¹⁷

¹⁶ Slavery in Connecticut. <http://www.slavenorth.com/connecticut.htm>

¹⁷ <http://worldcat.org/arcviewer/1/CZL/2006/04/28/0000019284/viewer/file1.html>

3. Jeremiah states that Gad was purchased by Titus Bishop, a ship's carpenter of Guilford. Bishop was a very common name in Guilford in the 18th century as it is today. The author has searched the birth records of the town of Guilford in that time period and failed to find any record of the birth of Titus Bishop. Of course Titus Bishop may not have been born in Guilford or the record may simply not exist. However, there was indeed a Titus Bishop living in East Guilford in 1800. A copy of that 1800 Federal Census is shown below. Unfortunately the early census does not provide any information on the age of the head of family or of their occupation. An internet search of Ancestry.com's Family Trees reveals a Titus Bishop born December 9, 1773¹⁸. This cannot be Gad Asher's master as he would only have been 10 years old when Gad returned from the Revolutionary War. This Titus Bishop's father was named James Bishop so assuming that Jeremiah is correct and a Titus Bishop was indeed Gad's master, it was probably not this family. Jeremiah Asher wrote a second version of his memoirs in 1862 in which he relates that Gad was sold into slavery to a ship's carpenter named Linus Bishop for \$200.¹⁹ Both Linus and Titus Bishop are shown in the 1790 Federal Census for Guilford. The only Linus Bishop found in the early 1700 vital statistics for Guilford was born May 10, 1745, the son of Caleb Bishop and Abigail

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Oliver Mungar	2	2										
John Hillary												
John Hillary	2											
Asaph Bishop	1											
Saml. Goring												
Isaac Stone	2											
Saml. Hill										2		
Jona. Lee												
Jona. Lee Jr.	1								2			
Jeffry Smith	4	2										
William Duffell									2		2	
Titus Bishop	1								2			
Linus Bishop												
Paradise Bishop												
Jacob Bishop												
Nathan Duffell	2	2								2		
Benj. Wright	3								2			
Jacob Gampson	1											

Parmalee²⁰. This makes Linus Bishop roughly the same age as Gad Asher. Unfortunately no information on occupation was given until the 1850 census.

4. Gad Asher's age? Jeremiah states that when Gad returned from the Revolutionary War he had completed nearly forty years service. This was in 1783 according to the military records. This would imply (let us be conservative here

¹⁸ Ancestry.com <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/7047470/person/1348007778?ssrc=>
¹⁹ Private communication with Barbara Beeching, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Connecticut entitled Great Expectations: Family and Community in Nineteenth Century Black Hartford, 2010
²⁰ Town of Guilford, Connecticut, Vital Statistics, 1639-1850

and assume he had completed only 37 years as a slave) that he was sold into slavery in 1746. As he was no more than 5 years old at the time, his birth was approximately 1741. Gad placed his mark upon a document dated the 11th of December, 1830 in which it is stated he was “upwards of 70 years of age.” This would place his birth around 1760 or earlier. Jeremiah also states that when Gad died he was “he was nearly or quite one hundred years of age.” Gad died November 28, 1835. That would place his birth around 1735. We can confidently imply from the above information that we cannot determine Gad’s birth date except that it was somewhere between 1735 and 1765. Gad is reported to have been born in 1740 as related by Bates²¹. Gad Asher’s age at his death as recorded in the records of the North Branford Congregational Church was 80 years. As he died in 1835 that would place his birth in 1755.

His master was probably no less than 25 years of age when he purchased Gad so the master was probably born between 1710 and 1740.

5. Jeremiah states that Gad served seven years in the War of the Revolution. Gad enlisted May 20, 1777 “for the Duration of the War” and that is verified from the military records. We know that Gad was discharged from service in The 7th Company, 2nd Regiment, Connecticut Line in 1783, most probably April 10, 1783. His total term of Service was then 6 years, 1 month. Jeremiah further states that Gad served at the Battle of Bunker Hill. That battle took place on June 17, 1775 nearly two years before Gad enlisted.

V Gad Asher’s Military Service

Gad Asher enlisted in the Second Regiment Connecticut Line on May 20, 1777. He served until April 10, 1783 when he was transferred to the Invalid Corp and discharged. His discharge is certified by the following. On October, 6, 1823 Gad filed a petition for a copy of his Pension Certificate, a transcription of which is given below:²²

An Application for a Pension Certificate County of Middlesex Inc. Middletown

On this 6th day of October 1823; before me the subscriber, a Notary Public, duly appointed and sworn, residing in said Middletown, personally

²¹ Rolls and lists of CT. Men in the Rev. 1775-1783, Ed by Albert C. Bates, Hartford, CT. 1901-11909 (Vols. 8 and 12 of the Collections of the Ct. Hist. Soc.) (2v0: 8:268

²² Ancestry.com

<http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?h=1964&db=RevWarBountyLandGrants&indiv=try>

appeared Gad Asher of Branford in the County of New Haven and State of Connecticut who, on his oath declares that he is the same person who formally belonged to the company commanded by Captain Stephen Hall in the Regiment commanded by Colonel Herman Swift. In the Service of the United States: That his name was placed on the ----- Roll of the State of Connecticut, but he has never received a copy a formal certificate, and now wishes to obtain one.

Sworn and inscribed
before me on the day
And year aforesaid

his
Gad X Asher
Mark

My signature and Seal of Office
Jon'a Barnes Jr.
Notary Public

Reply:

Copy of a Certificate or memorandum conferr'd upon Gad Asher an Invalid Pensioner of the United States by his Excellency General George Washington; by means of which Mr. Asher has attained his semi annual stipend at the U. States Branch Bank in the City Middletown October 6th 1823

Copy

By his Excellency General Washington, Commander in Chief of the United States . Gad Asher, inhabitant of Connecticut and Soldier in the Regiment of Invalids, having been certified by a board of Officers appointed for the examination of the Invalids of the army as being unfit for any further duty, whether in the field or in garrison, being blind, at his own request is hereby discharged from the service of the United States and I do hereby certify that he is entitled to the provisions made by Congress in each copy of the resolve of the twenty third of April; 1782. Given under my hand at Headquarters, Newburgh, this 10th day of April 1783.

By his Excellency Commander George Washington
Jonathan Trumble -?- -?-

State of Connecticut, Comptrollers Office June 8th 1790

The foregoing is a true Copy of the record in the office.

Examined by W. Feingdburg, Comptroller

Gad's military service is summarized below²³. The muster rolls from which this data was taken never specify exactly where the Regiment was located, however an internet search can give us some information. The locations listed in the table are the result of that search.

Enlisted	Term	Discharged	Date of Muster	Location	Remarks
May 20, 1777	Duration of the War	April 10, 1783			
			August 1777		On Duty
			Summer 1778	White Plains	
			Early 1779	West Point	
			Summer 1780	Along	
			September 1780	West Point	On Duty
			October 1780	West Point	On Duty
			March & April		Servant to Brig. Major
			May 1781		On Duty
			June 1781	White Plains	On Duty
			March 1782		Sick Connecticut
			April 1782		Sick in Connecticut
			May 1782		Sick Connecticut
			June 1782		Sick in Connecticut
			July 1782		Sick in Connecticut
			August 1782		On Duty
			September 1782		Sick at the Hospital
			October 1782		Sick at the Hospital
			November 1782		Sick at Boston
			December 1782		²⁴
			February 1783		On Duty
			March 1783		On Duty
			April 1783		On Duty

Gad Asher's service record from the time he enlisted in the army in May of 1777 until March of 1781 appears relatively sparse. Only a couple of muster rolls and pay records were found in this research and are noted in the table above.

²³ All of the data noted in the table above was downloaded from Ancestry.com and Fold3.com, paid internet services, but ultimately originated in The National Archives.

²⁴ The listing appears to say "Do Dec 82 Gen. Washington" The Do (ditto) refers to the line above listing a furlough for a specified time for another soldier. Apparently Gad received a furlough at that time.

One can imply an interesting story from a document filed by Daniel Collins of Guilford, Connecticut on September 5th, 1832²⁵. Daniel was applying for a benefit issued by Congress for soldiers who fought in the Revolution. Daniel describes his role in the Continental Army specifically stating the following:

“While in the Army Arnold undertook to give up West Point to the British, but was defeated by the taking of Andre who was a British Spy on his return to New York, was brought back to the American Army. Arnold deserted but Andre was condemned to be executed, I went to see him hung but he was reprieved until the next day. I was then on guard and did not see him executed. At present I do not know of but two revolutionary Soldiers living that was with me in the Army. Elijah Stammand of Westbrook who was formally from Guilford was a tent mate with me at Totonay & Gad Asher a colored man of good character and reputation living in North Branford who was a waiter for Col. Swift at the same time that I was Capt. Stephen Hall’s waiter two or three months was in company with said Asher all the time that I was waiter.”

Gad Asher was definitely at West Point when Daniel Collins was there in October, 1780 as documented by the Muster Roll for Captain Chamberlain’s Company of the 7th Connecticut Regiment, Colonel Herman Swift commanding²⁶.

Both Gad Asher and Daniel Collins are listed as privates in that record. It is quite possible that Gad Asher witnessed the execution of Major Andre, the British spy hung on October 2, 1780. A copy of that muster roll is shown below. Gad served a substantial amount time at West Point. Gad would also have spent the winter of 1778-1779 at the Continental Army’s encampment at Valley Forge. He was at White Plains in July, 1781. In addition he was probably at Monmouth and at the Battle of Stony Point N. Y. Gad was paid \$2.00 per month for his service.

²⁵ The National Archives, Publication # M804 Revolutionary war Pension and Bounty-Land warrant Application Files, National Archives Catalog #300022 Record Group 15 (Downloaded from Fold3)

²⁶ The National Archives, Publication # M246, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives Catalog ID 602384 Record Group 93 (Downloaded from Fold3)

Register of Capt Chamberlains Drapery & Great Draft in the Service of the United States Government by the General Staff. Nov 1780

November 15th 1780 Brighton Station - Chamberlain
October 20th 1777 St. James (Chamberlain) (Exchange) Sept. 8 - 9

Month	Height	Age	Remarks	Height	Size	Remarks
	Nathan Green			Halifax Light		on July
	Trimmer			Sifer		
	James or Nathaniel Chamberlain			Ames Hall		on July 15 th 1780
	Phostis			Dural		
	Gad Asher		on July	Jeremiah Ten		on July
	Abel Black			John Francis		on 9
	John Baker		on July	James Field		on 9
	Carl Brown			James Hall		on 9
	John Chamberlain			Oliver Lewis		on 9
	Nicholas Hill		on July	John Sig		on July
	John Lewis			John Smith		on 9
	John Norton			Stephen Stone		on 9
	John Taylor			Edward Thomas		on 9
	John Thomas			Elizabeth Tracy		on 9
	Henry Brown			Samuel Tracy		on 9
	Ezra Knight			John Hannan		on July
	James Knight			James Hall		on July
	Samuel Collins		on July	John Beebe		on July
	Nathaniel Chamberlain			Samuel Peck		on July
				John Ballou		on July

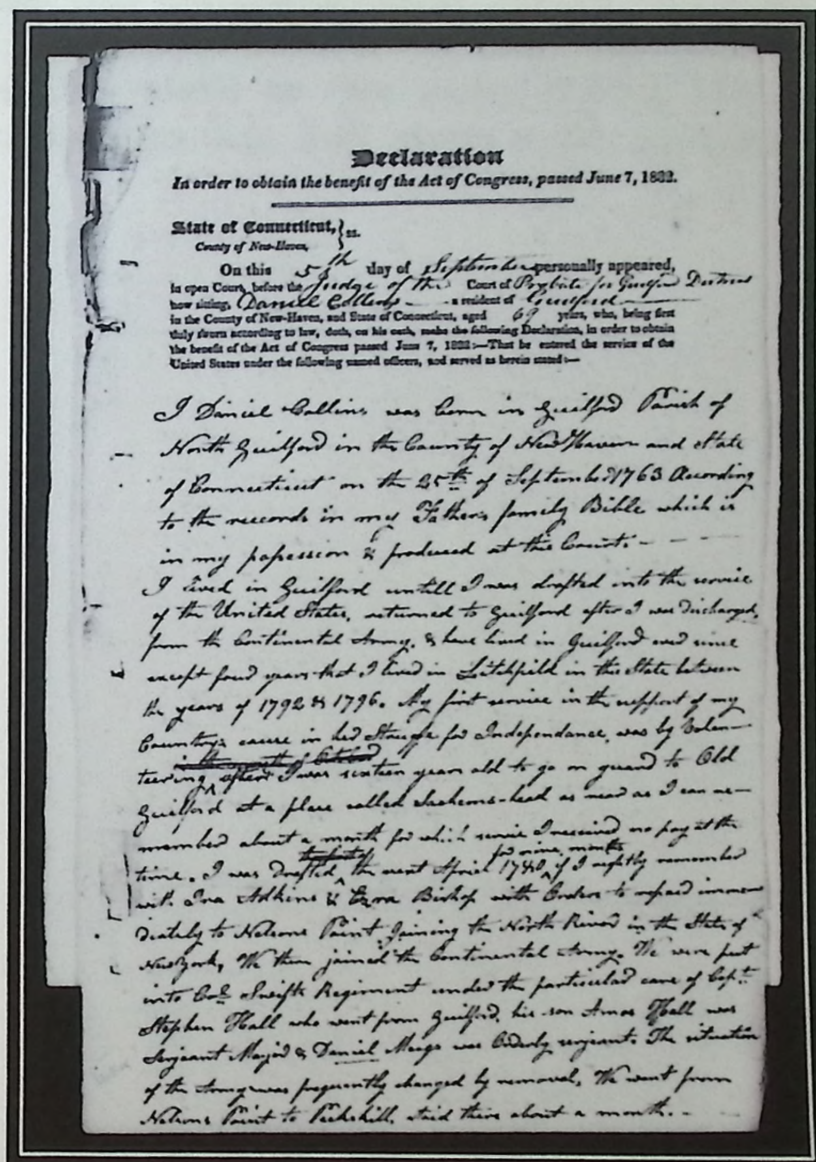
October 1780 from Master (Capt Chamberlain) Drapery as per list in the above list
The General Staff of the United States

It has been noted in several places^{27 28} that Gad Asher served as a servant to General Nathaniel Greene. This has not been verified but Gen. Greene was definitely at Tappan, the site of the execution of Major Andre. Indeed Gen. Greene was the presiding officer at The Board of Inquiry which condemned Major Andre to death. Whether Gad ever served as Gen. Greene's servant is still open to question but their paths did cross in October of 1780.

Jeremiah Asher, in his recollections of his grandfather, stated that "At the time referred to, perhaps every able-bodied white man between the ages of eighteen and forty was drafted to go to the war or furnish a substitute." One does

²⁷ Martha Russell's Notes Relating to The Early Settlers of North Branford, (their Homes, Families, etc.), 1880 as transcribed by Janet S. Gegan, Totoket Historical Society Accession #1979-004-001, 2012-053-001,2
²⁸ Data provided by Jane Bouley, Branford Town Historian

not normally associate a "draft" with the Revolutionary War. Those men who were active in the local Militia were required to serve when that militia was called into active service. If not, they were required to furnish a substitute. This is probably what happened in the case of Gad Asher and his master. That individuals were "drafted" is supported by the same document filed by Daniel Collins referred to above²⁹. Collins states "I lived in Guilford until I was drafted into the service of the United States, returned to Guilford after I was discharged & have lived in Guilford ever since _____." That document is three pages in length. Only the first page is shown below.



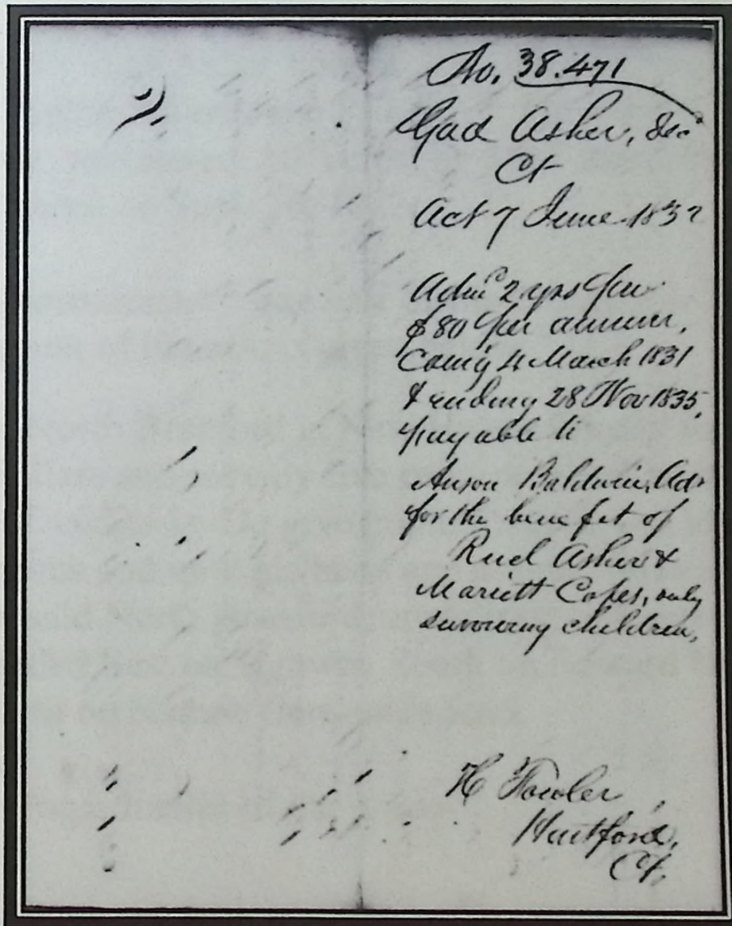
²⁹ The National Archives, Publication # M804 Revolutionary war Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives Catalog #300022 Record Group 15 (Downloaded from Fold3)

“In May 1777, Connecticut allowed the enlistment of slaves manumitted by their owners to serve as substitutes for them. Also in 1777, Massachusetts allowed free African-Americans again to be drafted into the Continental Army, and in April 1778, allowed even slaves to serve as substitutes.”³⁰ Note that Gad Asher enlisted on May 20, 1777. It is almost certain that Gad was allowed to serve for his master under this ruling. That means that Gad was a *FREE MAN* when he enlisted. If Gad had not made a previous agreement with his master concerning the payment of the £40 prior to his enlistment then obviously the master cheated him. I suspect that the master never told Gad that he was free on entering the service and held the threat of servitude over him on his return. Jeremiah states that Gad was fearful that his children would be born as slaves and therefore did as his master demanded. In truth, Gad married a free woman and therefore his children would be free under existing law. Apparently much important information was kept from slaves to the advantage of the free white population.

³⁰ African-Americans in the Continental Army and the State Militias During the American War of Independence, by Robert Selig, <http://americanrevolutioncenter.org/reflections/african-americans-continental-army-and-state-militias-during-american-war-independence>

Other Documents Related to Gad Asher's Service in the Revolution.

On June 7, 1832 Congress provided for an additional pension for soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War. In 1852 when Gad's only surviving children, Ruel Asher and Mariett Copes, applied for that pension (amounting to \$80 per year for two years) the claim was rejected stating that "Gad Asher of Connecticut was a pensioner by Special Act of Congress at the rate of \$96 dollars per annum, that he would not have been entitled to a pension under the Act of June 7, 1832, without relinquishing the one he was enjoying, which he never did." Further letters from the Asher's lawyer refuted that claim by the Interior Department showing at least four cases where an individual who was pensioned under the same circumstances as Gad Asher was awarded the pension under the act of June 7, 1832. Was this another example of racial prejudice employed against Gad even after his death? As it turns out Ruel Asher and Mariett Copes were able to collect the pension as shown by the document below.



No. 38.471
Gad Asher, Sen.
Ct
Act 7 June 1832
Act 2 yrs for
\$80 per annum,
Comm. 11 March 1831
Expiring 28 Nov 1835,
Payable to
Asson Baldwin, Ad.
for the benefit of
Ruel Asher &
Mariett Copes, only
surviving children,
H. Fowler
Hartford,
Ct.

On December 11, 1830 Gad Asher made his mark on a legal document filed by Dinah Freeman³¹ who was applying for a warrant for the quantity of land due her as the true and legal daughter and heir of Pomp Liberty, a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Gad declared that he had been long acquainted with said Dinah Freeman, daughter of Pomp Liberty and that Pomp Liberty performed the military service stated in the Declaration by Dinah Freeman and that to the best of his belief Pomp Liberty died on Long Island about or in the year 1798.

VI Where Did Gad Asher Live in North Branford?

Gad Asher is known to have lived in North Branford after the War. Exactly when he moved here is open to question. In the collections of The Totoket Historical are three maps, 1852, 1856 and 1868 which identify the owner of each individual house in Town. In neither the 1852 or the 1856 map is an Asher identified even though we are sure his descendants were living here. Fortunately the 1868 map clearly identifies the location of Gad's property.

On September 7, 1791 Gad Asher bought 2 ½ acres of land from Abigail palmer for 10£. This was registered on June 8, 1792.³² On may 3, 1815, Gad Asher and his son Ruel jointly purchased 10 acres of land from David Baldwin. That purchased was registered on Sept. 16, 1822.

In 1832 Gad sold approximately one half of his property to his Son-in-Law, Ham Primus. A transcription of the sale is given below:³³

“I, Gad Asher of North Branford in New Haven County for the consideration of ninety three dollars and seventy five cents received to my full satisfaction of Ham Primus of said town Do give grant, bargain, sell and confirm unto the said Ham Primus and unto his heirs and assigns forever one lot or piece of land situate in said North Branford, containing one acre and one half acre of land & is bounded East on highway South on Edward Mulford's land Westerly and North on Nathan Harrison's land.

August 22, 1832

Benjamin Page, Justice of the peace”

³¹ The National Archives, Publication # M804 Revolutionary war Pension and Bounty-Land warrant Application Files, National Archives Catalog #300022 Record Group 15 (Downloaded from Fold3)

³² Branford Town Land Records, Vol. 12, page 125

³³ North Branford Town Land Records, Vol 1, page 103

In 1835, shortly before his death Gad sold the remaining land and structures to his grandson, Jeremiah Asher. The pertinent details are given below:³⁴

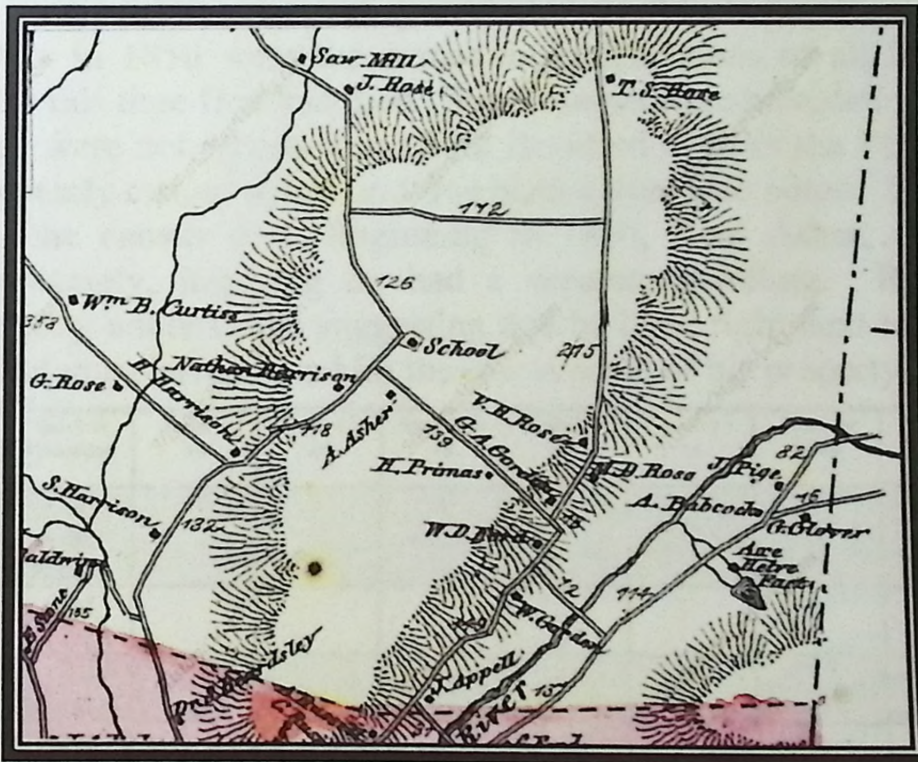
“I, Gad Asher of North Branford in New Haven County for the consideration of one hundred dollars received to my full satisfaction of Jeremiah Asher of Hartford in the County of Hartford Do give grant, bargain, sell and confirm unto the said Jeremiah Asher and unto his heirs and assigns forever one lot or piece of land situate in said North Branford, containing one acre and one half acre of land & is bounded East on highway South on Ham Primus’ land West and North on Nathan Harrison’s land, with a dwelling and barn standing thereon.

September 5, 1835

Benjamin Page (JP)

Ralph Linsley (Town Clerk)”

The map³⁵ below unmistakably identifies the locality of Gad Asher’s property. The School located on the map is the Beech Corner School. Although the structure of the school has been incorporated into a home it stands in the same spot as it was in the 1860s. It is obvious that the roads in the area have changed significantly probably due to the construction of the North Branford Dam and the formation of



³⁴ North Branford Town Land Records, Vol 1, page 240

³⁵ North Branford Town, New Haven County, Connecticut, 1868, Beers Ellis & Soule. The map shown above is a small portion of the map in the possession of The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

Lake Gaillard between 1925 and 1928. Much of the property in that area became either lake or watershed. Gad's property is located in the middle of the map shown above. It is identified by "A. Asher" and "H. Primus." The street to the right of the Asher property is what is now Beech Street. The current Beech Street is probably not in the same place as that on the map as it now goes directly past the school without a turn to the right. The road, Beech Street, at that time was known as Gad's Lane. When it became Beech Street is unknown. Even in the 1920 Federal Census there were no street names in this area. It is interesting that the earlier 1852 and 1856 maps do not reveal the Asher or Primus (Gad's son-in-law) property. Is this an example of racial prejudice?

VII Census Data³⁶

Gad Asher is recorded in five census records between 1790 and 1830. Along with his name, his color was always recorded. In the census before 1850 only the name of the head of the household was recorded. Additional members of the family were recorded in age groupings such as "Male, under 10, 11-25, 26-35 etc. The age groupings varied from year to year. Females were recorded in the same way. For blacks only the total number of family members were recorded. Beginning in the 1820 census they recorded the black family members in age groups. Only in 1850 were the names and occupations of all family members recorded. By this time Gad had died. Street names were recorded starting in 1880. Street names were not recorded in North Branford even in the Federal Census of 1920. In the early census slaves and free blacks were also noted. The Table below summarizes the census data. Beginning in 1810, Ruel Asher, Gad's son, was recorded separately, implying he had a separate dwelling. Ruel's data was recorded directly under Gad's suggesting that he lived right next to of some of his property. Gad must have given him the use of some of his property

	Head of Household	Males < 14	Males 14-26	Males 26-45	Males 45+	Females < 14	Females 14-26	Females 28-45	Females 45+	All other Free Persons
1790	Gad Asher negroe									5
1800	Gad Asher									5
1810	Gad Asher									4
1820	Gad Asher				1		1		1	
1830	Gad Asher								1	

³⁶ As recorded from Ancestry.com

A copy of the 1800 U. S. Federal Census page containing the data for Gad Asher is shown below. On that 1800 census page where Gad Asher is recorded, one slaves was also recorded in what is now North Branford. Undoubtedly there were more.

The image shows two pages of a handwritten 1800 U.S. Federal Census document. The top page lists names and their corresponding counts in a grid format. The names listed include Gad Asher, Moses Asher, and others. The bottom page continues the list with names like Moses Asher, Gad Asher, and others. The document is handwritten and shows signs of age.

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gad Asher	1									
Moses Asher		2								
...

VIII Gad Asher's Family

The author has attempted to assemble the descendants of Gad and Temperance Asher from a variety of sources.³⁷ This descendant report may well be incomplete especially in the second and third generation as census reports before 1850 conveyed only the name of the head of the household. Other members were identified simply by age grouping. Names were not given. Sixty family members are listed.

³⁷ Data received from Jane Bouley, Town Historian, Branford, CT. Notes from Janet Gregan, Past President, Totoket Historical Society. Vital Statistics from Branford, North Branford and Guilford, Census and Vital Statistics from Ancestry.com. Private Communications from Dr. Barbara Beeching

Descendants of Gad Asher

- 1 Gad Asher (1745 1835) b: Abt. 1745 in Guinea, Africa, d: 28 Nov 1835 in North Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA
- +Temperance (1834) b: Connecticut, d: 10 Dec 1834 in North Branford, CT
- 2 Ruel Asher (1784 1853) b: 1784 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society, d: 20 Jan 1853 in North Branford, CT
- +Jerusha Olford
- 3 Jeremiah Asher (1812 1865) b: 13 Oct 1812 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society, d: 1865
- +Abigail Stewart (1822) b: 1822 in Connecticut, m: 1833 in Glastonbury
- 4 Thomas Asher (1845) b: 1845
- +Sallie (1854) b: 1854 in Virginia
- 5 William T. Asher (1878) b: 1878 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- 4 John Asher (1856 -) b: 1856 in Pennsylvania, USA
- +Ella W (1859) b: 1859 in Virginia
- 5 John P. Asher (1880) b: 1880 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- 3 Olford Asher (1822 1895) b: Abt. 1822 in Branford, CT, 1st Society, d: 13 Aug 1895
- +Maria Russell (1822) b: 1822
- +Sylvia (1825) b: 1825
- 4 Eldridge E. Asher (1844) b: 1844
- +rachel (1848) b: 1848
- 5 Joseph E. Asher (1873) b: 1873 in Hartford, Conn
- 5 Levi W Asher (1875) b: 1875 in Hartford, Connecticut, USA
- 4 George Asher (1846) b: 1846
- 4 Josephine Asher (1849) b: 1849
- 4 Charles Asher (1852 1857) b: 1852 in North Branford, CT, d: 07 Nov 1857 in North Branford, CT
- 3 Leverett Asher
- 3 Edwin Asher (1819) b: 1819 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society
- +Mary Ann Salter (1827) b: 1827 in New Jersey
- 4 Mary M. Asher (1855) b: 1855 in Hartford, Connecticut, USA
- +Robert Taylor (1858) b: 1858
- 5 Florence A. B. Taylor (1878) b: 1878
- 3 Mariah Asher (1836) d: 07 May 1836
- 3 Charlotte Asher
- 2 Temperance Asher (1795 1837) b: 1795 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society, d: 28 Sep 1837 in North Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA
- +Ham Primus (1787) b: 07 Jun 1787 in Branford, CT, 1st Society, m: 10 Apr 1811 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, Second Society
- 3 Holdridge Primus (1815 1884) b: 28 Jan 1815 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society, d: 08 May 1884
- +Mehitabel (1818) b: 1818 in Connecticut
- 4 Rebecca Primus (1837) b: 1837 in Hartford, Connecticut, USA
- 4 Henrietta Primus (1839) b: 1839
- 4 Nelson Primus (1842) b: 1842
- 4 Isabel Primus (1845) b: 1845
- 4 Sophronia Primus (1867) b: 1867
- 4 Thronieve B. Primus (1868) b: 1868 in Hartford, Connecticut, USA
- 3 Clara Primus
- +Male Daniels
- 4 Boy Daniels
- 3 Male Primus
- 3 Male Primus
- 2 Child Asher (1798) d: Jan 1798 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society
- 2 Child Asher (1801) d: Nov 1801 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society
- 2 Mariet Asher (1804 1883) b: Sep 1804 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 2nd Society, d: 02 Feb 1883 in Cheshire, Connecticut
- +Kaleb Copes (1794 1870) b: 1794 in North Carolina, USA, m: 26 Jun 1823 in Branford, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, d: 12 Sep 1870 in Cheshire, Connecticut
- 3 Ellen Copes (1826) b: 1826
- 3 Gad Asher Copes (1831) b: 1831
- 3 Nelson Copes (1833 -) b: 1833
- 3 John Copes (1835) b: 1835
- 3 Brunette Copes (1837) b: 1837
- 3 Elijah Copes (1840) b: 1840
- 3 Nancy Copes (1843) b: 1843
- 3 Edwin Copes (1844) b: 1844
- 3 Napoleon B. Copes (1848) d: 1848
- 2 Brunetta Asher
- +Male Wilson

IX Other Notes

An interesting anecdote concerning Gad's military service is the following. It has been reported, almost certainly incorrectly, that Gad served at the Battle of Bunker Hill³⁸. It has further been reported that Gad Asher appears in the painting "The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775" by the artist John Trumbull³⁹. If you look closely in the far right of the painting below, a

³⁸ Ibid, Incidents in the life of..., Rev. Jeremiah Asher, London, 1850

³⁹ B. Beeching, Ph. D Thesis, University of Connecticut, Research notes from Janet S. Gregan located in the files of the Totoket Historical Society.

black man appears behind the colonial officer, Thomas Grosvenor. That black has been identified as a servant of Grosvenor.⁴⁰

There is a second black in the painting on the left side below the flags. That soldier has been attributed to Peter Salem, a freeman. Although an interesting story, it is exceedingly unlikely that Gad Asher's countenance is recorded anywhere. Note that the reference below is from Wikipedia, a notoriously unreliable website. New World Encyclopedia cites twenty six African Americans at the Battle of Bunker Hill⁴¹ but Gad Asher is conspicuously absent among them.



Gad Asher, or members of his family, has been mentioned in several local diaries and remembrances. An incomplete list is presented below:

40

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Death_of_General_Warren_at_the_Battle_of_Bunker's_Hill,_June_17,_1775
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Death_of_General_Warren_at_the_Battle_of_Bunker's_Hill,_June_17,_1775

⁴¹ http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Battle_of_Bunker_Hill#African-Americans

The Journal of Timothy Russell Palmer⁴²

Sat 12 April 1817 Pleasant -- we plow at long hill -- died an Asher father age 90 yr

Fri 27. June 1823. David Butler quite sick -- Singular case -- Cloudy and rainy -- misty &c. -- Last Evening Marietta Asher married -- I watch with Giles Baldwin this night -- foggy

Mon 21 Feb 1825 East Wind blow -- Stormy some I go to G. Asher get his wife to Mr Atwaters bad wether-- some snow - sleety -- Wether becomes more comfortable towards night -- Died at half past 3 oclock P. M. the Rev. Charles Atwater AE 34 years 6 months - - of Typhoid Fever!! -- after preaching to this people about 16 years -- cut down in the vigor of manhood in the prime of life in the midst of usefulness -- he was much belov'd by his people especially the Church -- We have witnessed his labours his unremitted exertions his anxiety his constant desires for the welfare of the Souls committed to his charge. The young members those who Join'd the church under his preaching feel much the Joss -- A more affecting Death never occurred among us -- but we

The first note by Timothy Russell Palmer referring to the death of "an Asher father" is perplexing as Gad died in 1835 at roughly 80 -100 years of age. No one in the Asher family could have been near 90 years of age in 1817 and Gad's father was not in the United States even if he was alive at that time. Perhaps it was his wife Temperance's father he was referring to although no reference to him has been found. We do not even know Temperance's maiden name, if indeed she had one. It is possible that there was another Asher family in Branford at that time. A search of the 1810 census for Branford failed to reveal another Asher.

Martha Russell's Notes⁴³

Gad's Lane

Below the School House a lane runs across to the opposite street coming out between Davis Ford's and George Gordon's. This is "Gad's Lane" named from Gad Asher who was a servant of General Greene in the War of the Revolution. His wife was Temperance. Gad won his freedom in the war but lost his sight. His chil. were Ruel, Temperance, Marietta & Brunella.

No. 10. School (171 Beech St.)

No. 11. Not on map - demolished before 1820 (site across from 171 Beech Street)

Unnumbered. A. Asher - (site - 108 Beech St.)

⁴² The Journal of Timothy Russell Palmer, 1817-1832 as transcribed by Janet Gregan, Totoket Historical Society Accession #2008-006-002 a,b,c,d

⁴³ Martha Russell's Notes Relating to The Early Settlers of North Branford, (their Homes, Families, etc.), 1880 as transcribed by Janet S. Gregan, Totoket Historical Society Accession #1979-004-001, 2012-053-001,2

Brunetta m. Wilson, Marietta m. lives in Cheshire. Ruel m. Jerusha Olford of Hartford -- had the house and home lot. Chil: Jermiah, Charlotte, Maria, Leverett, Edwin & Olford. Jeremiah was a minister, died in Philadelphia. Charlotte and Maria died unmarried. Leverett went to sea. Edwin lives in Hartford, a man of good character and property. Olford lives on the place which Edwin owns. Gad's dau. Tempe m. Ham Primus, a faithful, honest man. He bought a (off Ruel?) half the lot -- had a house on it. Tempe died here. They had four chil. only one dau. Clara who m. Daniels of Hartford and one son, Holdridge survived their father. Clara has since died. Ham m. 2nd wife, Lydia who died and he went to Hartford and died at the home of his son, Holdridge.

John Harrison's Notebook⁴⁴

Asher, Gad (27 Nov1835, colored) Served in the Revolution, wife was Temperance.

Asher, Mariah (7 May1836, colored) She was the daughter of Ruel & Jerusha (Olford).

Asher, Ruel (20 Jan1853) He was the son of Gad & Temperance, married Jerusha Olford, died age 70.

Asher, Temperance (10 Dec1834, colored) She was the wife of Gad Asher.

North Branford Congregational Church Records

Birth	Nov 7, 1857 parent Alfred Asher (Olford Asher)
Death	Jan 19 th , 1853 Ruel Asher, son of Gad & Temperance Asher Cause of death Palsy & Burns
Death	Jan 1798 child of Gad Asher
Death	Nov 1801 child of Gad Asher
Death	Feb 1, 1813 grandchild of Gad Asher
Marriage	June 26, 1823 _____ & Mariet Asher
Baptism	Jan 1804 Hariet (should be Mariet) dau Gad and ___ Asher
Baptism	August 12, 1832 Leverett & Olford Asher sons of Ruel & Jerusha Asher

⁴⁴ John Harrison's Notebook, Deaths in Branford and North Branford, as transcribed by Jane Peterson Bouley, 2003, from The Manuscripts and Archives Collection at the Connecticut State Library.

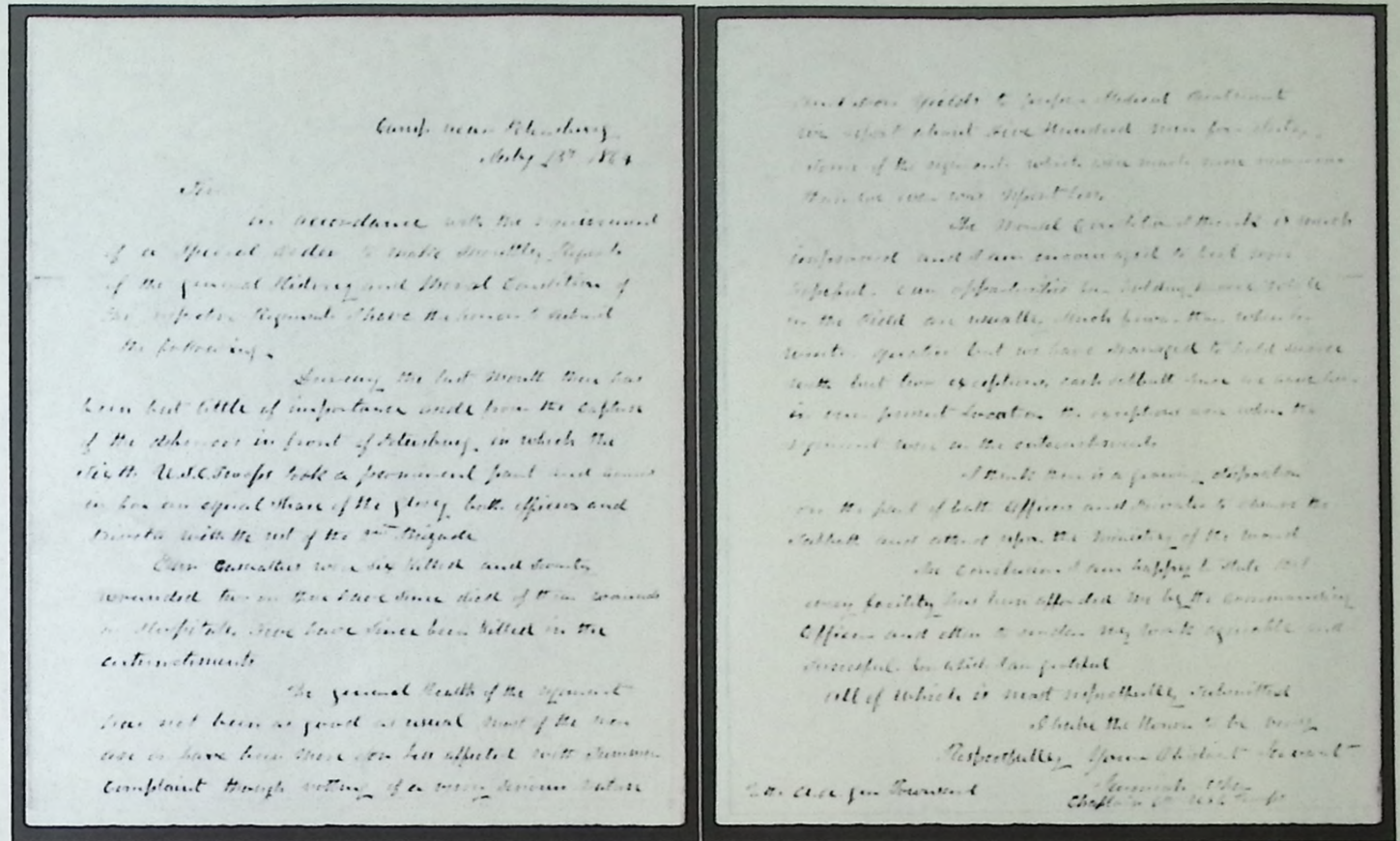
X Jeremiah Asher

As much of what we know about Gad Asher comes from his grandson, Jeremiah, it is perhaps only fitting to learn of his fate. Jeremiah served as a preacher in both Rhode Island and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Indeed he became pastor of The Shiloh Baptist church in Philadelphia. He was mustered into the Union Army on



December 24, 1863 to become chaplain of the 6th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment. Below is a copy of a July 13, 1864 letter written to his superior officers reporting

on the moral and physical condition of his troops. They were stationed in the trenches before Petersburg at that time.



While stationed in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1865 he contracted typhoid fever. He died several weeks later on July 27, 1865. His soldiers purchased a fine coffin and steel container and his body was shipped back to Philadelphia for burial.⁴⁵ The photo above was probably taken prior to Jeremiah's becoming chaplain to the colored troops. His grandfather would have been very proud.

⁴⁵ African American Faces of the Civil War: An Album by Ronald S. Coddington, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2012, pages 7-10.