Sabbatical Proposal:
The Ballard Mountain Reconstruction Era Monument
Patty Colman, History Professor

Proposal Date: November 1, 2024
Proposed Leave: Spring, 2026
Seniority of Service: August, 2005

Introduction

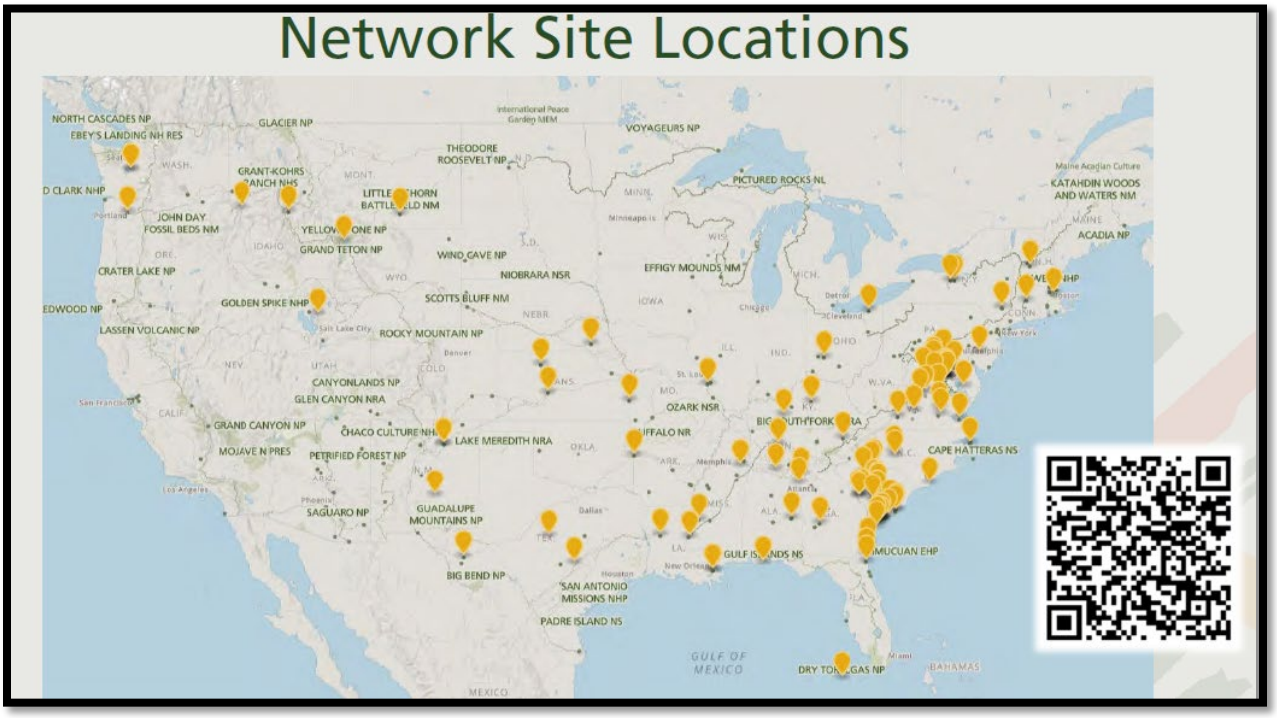
At the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, the United States faced a daunting task: reunifying the eleven southern states that seceded from the Union and integrating millions of formerly enslaved people into a free society. For many Americans today, especially students in California, Reconstruction is a chapter in a textbook that summarizes the challenges faced in a post-Civil War South but having little relevance in their own community. Recently however, scholars are uncovering and exploring how Reconstruction was not limited to the southern states, but extended much further across the country and into communities previously unknown. That is why Congress passed the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act which created the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network. This Network, managed by the National Park Service, provides opportunities for the public to learn about and engage with stories of Reconstruction across the United States, even in their own backyard. If I am granted a semester sabbatical, I will collaborate with the National Park Service to establish the *Ballard Mountain Reconstruction Era Monument.*

Project Background

My former sabbatical project focused on publishing an article about John Ballard, an enslaved man who came to Los Angeles in the 1850s and eventually homesteaded in the mountains near Agoura (see attached). For over one hundred years, a mountain peak near his homestead included the pejorative word for African Americans. With my help, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors successfully petitioned the USGS to officially rename it Ballard Mountain (https://www.kclu.org/local-news/2022-10-28/this-mountain-had-a-racist-name-the-renaming-process-revealed-the-hidden-history-of-a-black-pioneer).

As my research continued, it became clear that John Ballard was more than just a

former slave, and more than just a homesteader. He was an activist, who in collaboration with a small Black community in Los Angeles, fought for the civil rights of African Americans during Reconstruction. This activism should be commemorated locally and recognized nationally. I have already consulted with Reconstruction Era Network management and they agree: the *Ballard Mountain Reconstruction Era Monument* would be an invaluable addition to the network (see letter of support attached). This will be the first of its kind located in California and will increase the public's knowledge and appreciation for Reconstruction, its legacy, and its impact here in southern California.



Source: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/reconstruction/discover-the-network.htm

Project Objectives

During the Spring 2026 semester, I will:

1. Conduct further research on Reconstruction at the Huntington Library and Seaver Center for Western History Research.

2. Partner with the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network staff to create the *Ballard Mountain Reconstruction Era Monument.*

3. Collaborate with the National Park Service to develop interpretive materials for the public and visitors such as signage, a website, and driving tour.

4. Create educational resources/lesson plans for the VCCCD and local high schools related to Ballard Mountain and Reconstruction.

Project Timeline

January-February:

- Research Reconstruction, especially in southern California, at several regional archives and libraries
- Complete application for inclusion into the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network

February-April:

- In collaboration with National Park Service, promote the *Ballard Mountain Reconstruction Era Monument*
- In collaboration with the National Park Service, create texts, signs, brochures, audio and visual materials for the Monument
- Conduct outreach during Black History Month to publicize the Monument

April-May:

- Create educational resources for VCCCD instructors to use in their classrooms
- Create educational resources and lesson plans for local high school curriculum

Implementation and Dissemination

At the conclusion of my sabbatical in Spring 2026, California will have its first National Reconstruction Monument. I will have created materials that the public will interact with as they learn about John Ballard, his community, and Reconstruction. The National Park Service will provide the technical platforms and physical templates, but I will be responsible for writing the historical content for all accompanying material. The Monument will be included in the National Network, and accessible on their website. Visitors to Ballard Mountain will be able to hike to the peak, enjoy the beautiful Santa Monica Mountains, and learn about Reconstruction. This will encourage other historians to re-examine what we know about Reconstruction and contribute to the evolving narrative of United States history.

At the conclusion of my sabbatical, students taking classes at Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura Colleges will have the opportunity to learn about John Ballard's legacy, local history, and Reconstruction. I will create teaching resources and lead a Flex workshop for any VCCCD instructor who wants to learn about the Monument and how to integrate relevant resources into their curriculum. Additionally, I will disseminate materials to local high school instructors that teach history, government, ethnic studies, and civic engagement.

Value of Project on Instruction and Service to Students

Every semester, my students (and hundreds more in other classes) learn about Reconstruction in their textbooks; the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, the violence of the Klan, sharecropping, partisan politics, and the determination of the freed people to create a *more perfect union.* But these themes are largely presented as occurring in the deep South, to people and places far removed from student's lives. By bringing my research into the classroom, I can take history out of the textbook and put it right into their own backyard. As we know, there is a direct relationship between student success and curriculum that is relevant to the student's own life and

community. According to the National Endowment for the Humanities, teaching local history "can bring lessons alive for students and help close gaps that emerge when looking to answer the question of relevancy and application in student's lives." This sabbatical project will allow me to develop assignments for students to visit Ballard Mountain, connect it to course learning objectives and see the relevance of national movements in their own lives. It may even inspire students to become change makers in their own communities.

Value of Project to the College and District

As part of this sabbatical, I will strengthen the relationship between the National Park Service and Moorpark College. There are numerous opportunities for student internships and service learning projects in history, anthropology, and archaeology connected to Ballard Mountain. Beyond cultural resources, students majoring in biology, geology, environmental science, education, and even marketing could find opportunities within the park. Such collaboration fulfills one aspect of the Moorpark College mission statement to "collaborate with industry and educational partners." Community and industry partnerships such as this is one of the reasons why Moorpark College is again an Aspen Award finalist. Our college vision statement also values an innovative learning environment by promoting positive citizenship through "purposeful and proactive involvement in a local and global society." Sharing the history of Ballard Mountain with students, including the name change, will demonstrate civic engagement in ways they may not have considered. It will also serve as a model for how they can work to restore justice within their communities.

I will also create educational resources for any instructor in VCCCD to use. These resources will include maps, texts, images, and primary sources focused on the era of Reconstruction and local history. Every semester, there are at least 30 History courses and over 1,000 students across our district enrolled in classes that cover Reconstruction. But beyond History, materials would be relevant to multiple courses in several disciplines, such as Political Science, Sociology, Ethnic Studies and more. In addition, I will create lesson plans that are appropriate for high school curriculum. Building relationships with our colleagues within the district and with our K-12 partners will enhance our standing within the county and lead to stronger pathways between institutions.

Finally, this project is destined to garner national attention. Since 2020, Americans have been grappling, arguing, and sometimes physically fighting over monuments that are perceived as hateful. While hundreds of such monuments have come *down* across the country, this monument to hope, determination, and equality will go *up*. I have no doubt this will make national news and shed a positive light on Moorpark College.

Value to My Professional Competence

Anything that benefits the college and students benefits me as a faculty member. A sabbatical experience such as this will help me to be a better teacher, mentor and colleague because I will be able to bring new research, assignments and learning opportunities to Moorpark College. These new opportunities will improve student success in every course that I teach. The COR for History 130, 140, 137, and 145 all include Reconstruction in the course content and learning objectives. Additionally, after years of being in the classroom, it is incredibly valuable and vital for historians to practice their craft. Conducting original research and writing for publication

hones my skills as a historian and helps me guide students in their own projects. It will also be greatly beneficial for me to network with other historians, archivists and agencies during this project, furthering my historical knowledge and helping me stay current in the field.

Department Information

Over the past six years, the Social Science Department has had two sabbaticals; one within the History discipline and one in Political Science. Over the past twenty years, I have been fortunate enough to receive two sabbatical leaves.

My department chair and dean both strongly support my sabbatical proposal. In an email, Dean Josepha Baca wrote, "*Please let them know that I fully support you and eagerly look forward to seeing how you integrate your research as a valuable resource for both the department and the division*." Historian and department chair Hugo Hernandez similarly wrote, "*include me in as an enthusiastic supporter!"*

My proposal also includes robust enthusiastic constituency support from the National Park Service (please see attached letters).

Thank you for your consideration.

Patricia Colman

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Reconstruction Era National Historic Network
706 Craven St., Beaufort, SC 29902

October 22, 2024

Moorpark College Sabbatical Review Committee
Moorpark College
7075 Campus Rd
Moorpark, CA 93021

Re: Letter of Support for Patty Colman Sabbatical

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of Patty Colman's request for a semester long sabbatical from her teaching at Moorpark College. I was introduced to Patty several months ago through her collaborative work with Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SAMO) on researching the Ballard family – first John who was formerly enslaved in Kentucky and would purchase 160 acres, who then passed the land down to his daughter Alice – which defied conventions of the day. Throughout her research process, Patty was heavily involved with the Ballard descendants, showing commitment to not only tell the full story, but also a willingness to step outside of purely archival research and engage in oral traditions and family histories which may not be formally documented but are extremely important in studying the history of Reconstruction.

Patty's work on the Black histories of Reconstruction era California is vital to a greater understanding of this period in our history. Traditionally, the narrative on Reconstruction has been limited to the states in the South, erasing the stories of Black economic, political, and social agency on the West Coast. We have discussed extensively using her time on sabbatical to support efforts at SAMO to make the story of the Ballard family more accessible and widely known to the public.

Her efforts will also help support the mission of the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network, which was created in 2019 to help explore and amplify Reconstruction narratives from coast to coast. Through our collaboration, we intend to amplify the stories of John and Alice Ballard, Biddy Mason, Allen Allensworth, and countless other Black Californians whose stories deserve to be told. Far too often, research in the Reconstruction era can be difficult due to the erasure of records, biases imposed by the Lost Cause and Dunning ideologies, and the social/communal desire to forget difficult truths.

The Reconstruction Era is a period in history which has been badly told or, at best, overlooked in past tellings of the American story. Having a new generation of scholars and historians interested in fully exploring the truths of the era is encouraging and welcome. I look forward to collaborating in the future with Patty on stories vital to both the California story and our common national story.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathan Betcher
Integrated Resources Program Manager
Supervisory Historian
Reconstruction Era National Historical Park
The Reconstruction Era National Historic Network

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
1 Baxter Way, Suite 180
Thousand Oaks, California 91362

D20 (SAMO)

IN REPLY REFER TO:
Letter of Support for the Nomination of Ballard Mountain to the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network

October 29, 2024
[VIA EMAIL]

Subject: Letter of Support for the Nomination of Ballard Mountain to the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is intended to express support for the nomination of Ballard Mountain to the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network. This network, managed by the National Park Service's (NPS) Reconstruction Era National Historical Park, includes sites and programs that are affiliated with the Reconstruction Era.

The Reconstruction Era in the United States was the period from 1861 to 1900 that focused on the integration of newly freed people into the United States. The Reconstruction Era National Historic Network facilitates and reviews Reconstruction Era related research and collaboration with affiliated sites and programs through agreements and partnerships. This network is nationwide and works to provide opportunities for visitors to connect to the stories of Reconstruction.

Ballard Mountain is a 2,031-foot peak that is encompassed within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), located south of the city of Agoura Hills and north of Malibu. The property is important for its association with John Ballard, a free Black man from Kentucky, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1859. He subsequently became an important citizen in Los Angeles during the Reconstruction Era; he was active in civic affairs and was one of the founding members of the city's first African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1880, he purchased 160 acres of land in the Santa Monica Mountains and moved his family there where they raised some livestock and a few crops. Twenty years later, in 1900, he filed a patent for the land under the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862, becoming an early homesteader in the area. During his tenure upon his land, he distinguished himself as an extraordinary individual who worked hard and persevered, despite attempts by others to drive him off his land. Unfortunately, due to his family's presence upon the land, the mountain peak in proximity to his homestead came to be known by a racial slur by the time that early maps of the area were produced. In 2010, the mountain peak was renamed Ballard Mountain in honor of John Ballard. A 13-minute documentary film, released in February 2022, called *To Right a Wrong: The Story of Ballard Mountain* documents the renaming effort. It also chronicles the inspirational resiliency of the Ballard family who overcame many hardships.

The SMMNRA attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, and most are unaware of the efforts made by local men and women to secure equal rights for both themselves and their fellow citizens. The designation of Ballard Mountain as a Reconstruction Era National Historic Network site would provide a unique opportunity to not only educate visitors about local history and one Black man's lived experience, but also to better connect the Southern California region to a much larger national narrative centered on Reconstruction. This would be the first property in California nominated to the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network.

A future designation of Ballard Mountain as a Reconstruction Era National Historic Network site would advance the park's current efforts to better represent African American history within the park through interpretation, and it would likely increase the relevancy of the park to African American visitors. Moreover, the designation of the property as a Reconstruction Era National Historic Network site also would likely draw teachers, scholars, and community groups to the park to learn more about African American history.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact the park's Cultural Resources Program Manager, Gabrielle Harlan at (510) 299-2531 or by email at gabrielle_harlan@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

Jody Lyle
Superintendent
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

John Ballard and the African American Community in Los Angeles, 1850–1905

By Patty R. Colman

ABSTRACT: John Ballard, an African American pioneer from Kentucky, became a leader of Los Angeles's black community, 1850s–1870s. His story illustrates the early opportunities for black Angelenos in institution-formation, political activism, property ownership, and economic success. However, with the railroad booms of the 1870s and 1880s, Ballard and other prominent black citizens suffered a loss of social and economic status. Ballard ended up homesteading in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Keywords: African American Los Angeles, African American Community Formation, Black Homesteader, A.M.E. Church

Introduction

For hundreds of years, people have come to Los Angeles seeking a better life. For men and women across the country and across oceans, Los Angeles has long been perceived as a land of opportunity. Some come for the weather, the mountains, or the beaches. Some arrive in Los Angeles with hopes and dreams of fame or fortune. In the 1850s, some came for freedom.

As California transitioned from Mexican territory to American state, Los Angeles was itself in transition. Though California was a free state where slavery was technically prohibited, the status of many Angelenos was much more complicated and there was a wide

and varied spectrum of freedom. Over the next two decades, a small number of African Americans labored to solidify their free status and build a successful community for themselves and their children. When opportunities for African Americans constricted as the city's population grew and changed, they adapted, adjusted, or started all over. One African American pioneer, John Ballard, exemplifies these experiences. His story sheds light on a little-known chapter of black enterprise in Los Angeles history.

After fleeing Kentucky as a young man, Ballard settled in Los Angeles in the 1850s. He raised a family, owned property, co-founded a church, and became a pillar of the African American community. This early community has often been overlooked by historians, but this article will explore their accomplishments while highlighting this individual. John Ballard demonstrated the resourcefulness and activism that existed among the men and women of black Los Angeles during the 1850s–1870s. As this article will show, this little known community deserves to be recognized and studied further.

Many historians have written about the African American experience in the West, California, and Los Angeles. Historians prefer to focus on the black community in northern California because the nineteenth-century black population in the north was larger and seemingly more successful than in southern California. While it is true that L.A.'s black population was smaller and less affluent, this is not a reflection on the individuals who settled in southern California or any lack of effort on their part. This is actually a reflection of the regional differences that existed at the time. The state's first African American newspapers, churches, and benevolent societies were in northern California, but this is, arguably, a factor of the disparity in the economic, social, and political resources between San Francisco and Los Angeles as a whole in the mid-nineteenth century.

While a few historians have written exclusively about Los Angeles, most focus on the years after Reconstruction, the coming of the railroad, and the land boom of the 1880s when the population of Los Angeles County tripled. Many historians treat this as the beginning of a true African American presence in Los Angeles. On the other hand, the few historians who do focus on Los Angeles before 1880 tend to shine the spotlight on a few luminaries, such as

Biddy Mason and Robert Owens. While there is no doubt of their significance, more individuals and experiences need to be examined.[1]

As California transitioned from Mexican territory to American state, Los Angeles offered African Americans the potential to achieve financial and social success. At the time, the country was consumed with the national debate over slavery: its morality, constitutionality, and future. Politicians spent much of the decade crafting compromises for or against state's rights, slavery, or free soil. Abolitionists murdered southerners. Southerners murdered abolitionists. Political parties fractured, realigned, or collapsed altogether. In Illinois in 1858, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglass debated one of the most contentious issues of the day: the extension of slavery into new territory. During these debates, both men affirmed the superiority of their own race, flatly rejecting the equality of blacks and whites. By no means were African Americans in Los Angeles immune to these social and political realities, but in spite of them, they found ways to achieve a level of prosperity that was unattainable in many parts of the country and would arguably become unattainable again in Los Angeles by the turn of the century. One African American man may have exaggerated a bit in 1851 when he claimed that "California is the best country in the world to make money. It is also the best place for black folks on the globe."[2] For John Ballard and others, California did indeed offer a better life.

African Americans and California Statehood

The history of blacks in Spanish and Mexican California has been well documented. Mulatto soldiers came to California as part of the Portolá and De Anza expeditions and approximately half of the forty-six *pobladores* were of at least partial African descent. In 1793, the population of El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles counted

1. For one of the best works on the Los Angeles African American community, see Lonnie G. Bunch, *Black Angelenos: the Afro-American in Los Angeles 1850–1950* (California Afro-American Museum, 1988). Mr. Bunch is the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. For an excellent study of African Americans in Los Angeles into the turn of the 20th century, see Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

2. William Loren Katz, The *Black West: A Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in Westward Expansion of the United States* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 116.

fifty-nine Spaniards, fifty-seven mulattoes, seventeen mestizos, and fifteen Indios. Spain did have a rigid class system, but in the frontier lands of California, racial classifications and restrictions were blurred. Paul Robinson explains that in California, "Africans and Indians who became Christian were considered part of the 'gente de razon' or 'people of reason,' thus elevating their social standing."[3] Because of a social climate that allowed for greater social mobility, several mixed-race citizens rose to prominent positions, perhaps none more famously than the Pico family.[4] Blacks and mulattos were generally able to be absorbed into Californio society and "race, under Spain and Mexico, was never the insurmountable barrier it was in the United States."[5] This changed after the Mexican-American War and the acquisition of California in 1848, when American attitudes and values prevailed.

During the California constitutional convention of 1849, a major point of discussion centered on the question of slavery. While it was decided that California would become a free state, the "problem" of "negroes" and their status in the new state persisted for some lawmakers. For weeks, convention delegates such as Henry A. Teft and M. M. McCarver (the latter from Kentucky) argued that free blacks should not be allowed to enter the state.[6] Although this ultimately did not pass, other racial prohibitions demonstrated the prevailing attitudes of many Californians. According to the first state Constitution, suffrage was granted only to "white male citizens," and in 1850 the California legislature passed a law denying people of color the right to testify against whites in court.[7] This was not unusual for the time; blacks were not considered citizens of the United States and did not enjoy equal rights.

It was in this social climate that the first African Americans made California their home. Many (if not most) were brought to the state

3. Paul Robinson, "Race, Space, and the Evolution of Black Los Angeles" in *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, ed. Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramon (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 22.

4. Lawrence B. de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California* (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage 2001), 78–86.

5. De Graff, Mulroy and Taylor, *Seeking El Dorado*, 89.

6. Rudolph Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 128–129.

7. Or James A. Fisher "Struggle for Negro Testimony in California 1851–1863," *Southern California Quarterly* 51 (December 1969): 313.

against their will.[8] According to the Compromise of 1850, California entered the Union as a free state (but not without much debate in Congress), and the state's constitution opened with the declaration that "all men are by nature free and independent, and have certain inalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty." Article I, Section 18 declares that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punishment of a crime, shall ever be tolerated in this state."[9] However, slave owners already living in California at the time of ratification were permitted to retain their property. In addition, numerous slave owners actually entered the state with their slaves after ratification. Estimates about how many slaves lived in California during the 1850s vary from a few hundred to one thousand, but there is ample evidence to prove that slavery was an open secret. Advertisements for the sale of slaves appeared in California newspapers, and even the 1852 state census lists "slave" for the occupation of several black individuals.[10] The California legislature signaled its support of slave owners by passing the Fugitive Slave Law of California in 1852, prohibiting slaves from running away from their owners while in the state.[11]

While many came as slaves, other African Americans came to California of their own free will, no doubt enticed by the same dream of prosperity that attracted other immigrants. Quintard Taylor estimates that more than half of California's African Americans in the early 1850s came for the gold rush and ultimately settled in gold country. Yet a few trickled down south and into Los Angeles, which

8. As discussed earlier, there were people of African ancestry in California since the 18th century. However, I do not wish to describe them as African American, since their culture and society was not *American*. I consider those black men and women in California after 1850 to be the first African Americans because they lived under American laws, attitudes, and racial restrictions. Quintard Taylor in *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African-Americans in the American West 1528–1990* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998) argues that most African Americans were ex-slaves brought to California by officers during the Mexican American War.

9. *Constitution of the State of California, 1849*. Accessed February 10, 2012 at http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/1849/full-text.htm.

10. Since slavery was technically prohibited in California, there was not a separate slave schedule as in other states, nor was there a column on the pages to denote a slave. However, some enumerators chose to mark an individual as a slave. For example, see Sampson and Clem on page 2 of Santa Clara County 1852 census.

11. The law was only in effect until 1855. See Robinson, "Race, Space, and the Evolution of Black Los Angeles," 30. There are a few cases that involve the status of slaves in California. Probably the most famous and extensively covered case is that of Archie (Archy) Lee, whose case reached the state supreme court. *C.A. Stovall vs. Archie (Lee), a Slave* (1858).

in the 1850s had the "only significant black population in southern California."[12] At this time, the black population in Los Angeles was comprised of a mixture of people, free and slave, with a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

Black Los Angeles in the 1850s

Travelers to Los Angeles during the 1850s (and beyond) frequently commented on the city's lack of sophistication. With its propensity for violence and lynching and its disproportionately large number of gambling halls and saloons, it seemed to be a rough frontier town. The city of Los Angeles in 1850 had a total population of 1,610. In comparison, San Francisco stood at 34,870.[13] Anglo-American travelers described Los Angeles as "semi-gringo" and still a "Mexican town," no doubt due to its large Spanish-speaking and Indian population, and most commentary about the non-Anglo citizens of Los Angeles centered on these two groups. Perhaps because of their small number, black Angelenos did not receive as much attention in published accounts. In 1850, there were 464 African Americans in San Francisco, while the entire black population of Los Angeles County stood at about twelve.[14] Also contributing to their perceived "invisibility," as J. Max Bond theorized, is the fact that most of them, "if not actually indentured, were at least living in the homes of white people."[15] The most notable exception to this is Peter Biggs. After being freed by his owner in Missouri, he settled in Los Angeles sometime before 1850 and opened the city's first barbershop. He is the only African American not enumerated with a white family and not listed as a "laborer" in the census of that year. None of the others have last names, and nine out of the twelve were born in slave-owning states.[16]

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12. Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 90.

13. *Statistics of the United States, Seventh Census: 1850 Statistical View, Compendium*, Washington 1854. For more on the "character" of Los Angeles in the 1850s, see Leonard Pitt, *Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish Speaking Californians, 1846–1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) and William Deverall, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

14. The census identified only 12 as Negroes. Californios, whether or not they had African ancestors, were counted as white.

15. J. Max Bond, *The Negro In Los Angeles*, PhD diss., University of Southern California, June 1936, 10.

16. United States Census, Los Angeles County, 1850.

Historians such as Edward Castillo have written about the enslavement (or servitude) of California Indians. The 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians governed little and protected not all. Even in Los Angeles this was an unfortunate reality, and Horace Bell described the situation as a "slave mart." But little is known about the black slaves who were also here. Besides the documented twelve individuals, there were other African Americans in Los Angeles County who were not represented in the census. For example, an African American man named Henry was charged in 1850 with assaulting another man, "George, a negro." The court record describes the defendant as "Henry, the negro servant of Gen. Morehead."[17] Thompson and West's *History of Los Angeles County, California* recounts an incident from 1850 in which two slaves were beaten and shot by their owners for asserting their freedom. Arkansas native and slave owner James R. Holman filed a deed of manumission with the Los Angeles District Court in 1850, promising to free his slave Clampa after two years of "faithful service" and her sons once they reach the age of twenty-one.[18] These individuals were not reported in the census. Certainly, enumerators made mistakes, and census records are not perfect. However, there may be another explanation. In the 1920s, famed director Cecil B. DeMille was filming near the San Fernando Mission. As the story goes, he discovered an original copy of the 1850 census just as it was about to be incinerated in a pile of trash. Eventually the census was handed over to the Southwest Museum and in 1929 it was published. The book's forward recounts the above story and notes that there actually was a second census schedule for slaves and slave owners. But after the report was submitted to the Department of the Interior, this schedule was destroyed and not included in the final draft. It is possible that this schedule was thrown out because it was simply blank; since California was a free state there was no need for Schedule II. On the other hand, it could have reported the details of slaves and slave owners in Los Angeles.[19]

17. The criminal case can be found at the Seaver Center, Los Angeles County Natural History Museum, Collection 1164: *Alcalde / LA County Court Records, 1850–1852*, Box 1. "Gen Morehead" may be the J.C. Morehead who served in the state militia and participated in the 1850 attack on the Indians of Gila River.

18. Reproduction of Thompson and West's *History of Los Angeles County, California* (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1959), 90. The record of Clampa's manumission is also covered in Thompson and West, but the original can be found at the Seaver Center, in the *Minutes of Proceedings in the District Court, 1850–1851.*

19. See the dissertation by Albert Lucian Lewis, "Los Angeles in the Civil War Decades, 1850–1868,"

By 1852, the black population of Los Angeles County grew to approximately forty, due in large part to the Mormon settlement in San Bernardino. Leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah decided to establish a settlement in southern California. In 1851, a caravan arrived, and the leaders purchased thousands of acres from the Lugo family in what is now San Bernardino. Among this group were at least twenty slaves who came with their Mormon owners. Most of the settlers returned to Utah by the end of the decade, but several of their slaves remained. The most famous member of this group was Biddy Mason, a woman owned by Robert M. Smith but emancipated through a court case in Los Angeles. Before and after the trial, Mason received assistance from the Owens family and other free blacks. Upon her emancipation, Mason and her daughters chose to move to Los Angeles and join the burgeoning African American community in the city. She was invited to live in the home of Robert Owens, a prominent African American in Los Angeles. Her daughter Ellen went on to marry his son Charles.[20] The other San Bernardino slaves were eventually freed as well, and like Mason, some chose to move to Los Angeles, while some of the ex-slaves chose to stay and live in San Bernardino.[21]

The black population of Los Angeles in the 1850s was therefore a mixture of slave and free. Some were obviously still living in a form of bondage, some were born free, some had recently been manumitted, some had purchased their freedom, and perhaps others had run away from their owners. In the 1852 state census, most were classified as either laborers or servants. But, by the end of the decade, this would change drastically as more black settlers came to Los Angeles, intent on living and working independently.

University of Southern California, 1970 and M.H. & M.R. Newmark, *Census of the City and County of Los Angeles, California for the Year 1850* (Los Angeles: The Times-Mirror Press, 1929). The publication suggests that Schedule II was in fact blank and that is why it was thrown out by the Department of the Interior. Then again, why would the enumerator have bothered carrying around a second schedule—let alone submit it—in a "free" state?

20. Biddy Mason, her daughters, and several other slaves were freed by Judge Benjamin Hayes in 1856. There are many excellent works about Biddy Mason. For example, see Dolores Hayden "Biddy Mason's Los Angeles, 1856–1891," *California History* 68, no. 3 (Fall 1989).

21. For more on the Mormon settlement, see Edward Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996).

John Ballard: From Kentucky to Los Angeles

In 1936, U.S.C. doctoral candidate J. Max Bond completed a sociology dissertation entitled "The Negro in Los Angeles." To learn about Los Angeles in the "old days" Bond conducted interviews with descendants of the Owens and Mason families, some of the city's most prominent black families. But he also interviewed "William Ballard, one of the few remaining 'old timers' and a native of California." William Ballard was John Ballard's fourth child, born in 1862. In the 1933 interview, William stated, "In 1848, at the age of seventeen, my father came to Los Angeles."[22] Throughout his life here, John Ballard consistently listed Kentucky as his place of birth, in about the year 1831. White acquaintances who knew him later in life described him as an ex-slave. Rancher and neighbor J.H. Russell wrote, "He came to California very early in his life and had been [a] slave in his younger days. It never occurred to me until now to wonder just how he came to California. I never knew whether he came as a slave or after the slaves were freed."[23] Given the demographics of Kentucky during the antebellum period, it is statistically most likely that he was born into slavery. In 1830, about the time of Ballard's birth, there were 165,213 slaves in Kentucky. This represented 24 percent of the entire state population. While there was a free black population at the time, it was extremely small and represented only about .07 percent of the entire state population. By 1850, the number of slaves in Kentucky had risen to 210,981 with a free black population of about 1 percent of the entire state population.[24] Throughout the 1850s slavery became even more profitable, and as the nation rumbled closer toward civil war, Kentucky slave owners desperately clung to their property.

The movements of slaves and free African Americans were tightly controlled in Kentucky. Gangs known as "patrollers" rode through towns and back country roads looking for fugitives. Cities often imposed "colored curfews" to restrict their black inhabitants. In Louisville, for example, the curfew was 10:00 p.m. and was signaled by the ringing of the Presbyterian church bells each night. African Americans found by patrollers after curfew could receive up

22. Bond, *The Negro in Los Angeles*, 23.

23. J.H. Russell, *Heads and Tails…and Odds and Ends* (Los Angeles: Thomas Litho and Printing Company, 1963), 18.

24. Marion B. Lucas, A *History of Blacks in Kentucky, volume I* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1992), 108.

to thirty lashes or worse. Not only was a physical beating possible, but free people constantly lived under the threat of being captured and sold into slavery if they were not in possession of the correct papers.[25] Most dreaded of all was being captured, turned over to a slave dealer (the most notorious were located in Lexington) and then sold and sent into the Deep South. It was therefore imperative that African Americans carry their papers at all times, either identifying them as a free person or having their owner's permission to travel. Given this situation, how did a young African American man get out of Kentucky (and slavery) and to Los Angeles?

Generally, there were three ways a slave could achieve freedom in Kentucky during the 1840s or 1850s: through a will, an act of manumission by an owner, or running away. The 1792 Kentucky constitution stipulated that owners who manumitted their slaves had to guarantee (usually through a bond) that the slaves "would not become a charge to the county in which they resided." This was later expanded to include *any* county in Kentucky. After 1823 the slaves themselves had to appear in court so that a physical description could be recorded, and after 1852 manumissions depended on the slave leaving the state. The amended state constitution of 1850 also declared that no "negro" could immigrate into Kentucky.[26] One wonders why anyone would want to.

While the state provided the opportunity for emancipation, it appears that a relatively small number were actually freed in this way. In 1850 a total of 152 slaves were manumitted in all of Kentucky, less than 1 percent of the number of slaves held in bondage. The numbers rose only slightly throughout the rest of the decade. According to Kenneth M. Stampp, in 1859 "Kentucky, with a slave population of nearly a quarter million, freed only 176."[27] Clearly manumission was not a popular or frequent action for Kentucky slave owners.

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25. Clayton E. Jewett and John O. Allen, *Slavery in the South: A State-by-State History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 108. One poignant example of the importance of freed papers can be found in Jessamine County Order Book K, 24–25. In 1854 a free African American couple brought their toddler and infant daughters, Mary Jane and Sarah Elizabeth, into the court to receive certificates proving their free born status. No doubt this must have been extremely important to parents fearful for their children's future and safety.

26. Edward M. Post, "Kentucky Law Concerning Emancipation or Freedom of Slaves," *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (1985): 345.

27. Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956), 235. It also appears to the author, based on certainly incomplete research, that it was more likely that a slave would be freed if he or she was mulatto. Several freedom papers discovered in Kentucky

Some slaves chose not to hold out hope of being freed by their owner and made the decision to run away. Historian Lowell H. Harrison has calculated that "the slave most likely to escape was a man between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five" and that more "skilled workers escaped than unskilled."[28] These demographics fit Ballard, as he was no older than twenty-seven when he arrived in Los Angeles and was literate. Kentucky slave owners in 1850 reported (or probably underreported) ninety-six fugitives, a figure second only to Maryland. As Marion B. Lucas has argued, with 700 miles bordering free soil, the states of Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, running away seemed to be the best option for acquiring freedom" for Kentucky slaves.[29] But just because free territory was close did not make it easy, nor guarantee success, and the fact is that the vast majority of slaves never attempted an escape. The most precarious part of the journey was the outset, moving through Kentucky and crossing the Ohio River, and typically slaves were completely on their own during this stage of their journey, traveling only at night and going days without food. State laws placed harsh penalties on anyone who assisted or even persuaded a slave to flee.[30] If a slave made it through Kentucky, then the Ohio River posed another enormous obstacle. Not only were the logistics of crossing the river difficult, but patrollers constantly roamed its banks looking for fugitives. Countless men and women, after stepping foot on free soil for only a moment, were captured and sent back into slavery. Some tried to flee again, some were severely punished, and some never got another chance.

The Underground Railroad has been well documented, and thousands of slaves received assistance from its "conductors." But Marion B. Lucas argues that most runaway slaves had never heard of such a thing and received no formal assistance at all. The Kentucky Fugitive Slave Data Base also supports the theory that most runaways had no assistance. Instead, as J. Winston Coleman wrote, most slaves who fled from Kentucky simply knew of the

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archives describe the person as "copper" or "yellow." One emancipated boy was described as "a light mulatto straight hair blue eyes."

28. Lowell H. Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1978), 86.

29. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, 61.

30. Ibid., 66.

North Star and "that by following it [they] would reach the land of freedom."[31] This land of freedom more often than not was Ohio, Michigan, or Canada. Communities in cities such as Cincinnati and Detroit became havens for fugitives. Obviously, slave owners did everything they could to disrupt this. In 1821 Kentucky formally requested that Congress negotiate with Great Britain on the issue of fugitive slaves living freely in Canada. After being pressed by Kentucky lawmakers, neighboring Ohio passed a fugitive law in 1839. Even with such laws, more slaves escaped through Ohio than any other state.[32]

Documenting an individual slave's experience in the historical record is extremely difficult. No manumission record or will granting freedom has been found for John Ballard. It is possible that he was brought to California in bondage, although a connection to an owner in California has not been found. It is certainly a possibility that he ran away, although most slaves journeyed to northern states or Canada, not to the Far West. Without much money, if any at all, slaves needed to get to the closest possible free territory and usually could not set out for an expensive, long, dangerous, and very visible trek across the overland trails. Although we can never know for sure, it is at least possible that for John Ballard that North Star may have pointed him west.

The Building of a Black Community

Although William Ballard stated that his father arrived in Los Angeles in 1848, the first record of his presence in California appears in 1859 when he married a woman named Amanda. The record filed with the county clerk states "I, Jesse Hamilton a Methodist minister hereby certify that the ceremony of marriage was performed by me on the 6th day of November 1859 between John Ballard, a colored man aged 30 years born in Kentucky[,] and Amanda, a colored woman aged 19 years born in Texas."[33] Amanda's identity remains a mystery, although the fact that she came from Texas and does not

31. J. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 219. Also see Lucas and J. Blaine Hudson, *Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002).

32. Coleman, 219 and in notes on 223 and 237.

33. Los Angeles County Marriages, Volume I, 43.

have a surname suggests that she had been a slave.[34] The minister, Jesse Hamilton, was born in Tennessee in about 1828. He must have arrived in Los Angeles no earlier than 1859, since later that year, within four months, he performed four marriages, all of African American couples. Two couples, Henry Hall and Martha Owens, and Lewis (sometimes spelled Louis) Green and Maria Yancey, were married on the same day: September 22, 1859.[35] The Ballards followed in November, and William Leonard and Anna Howard (both from Baltimore) were married on December 12. Was this just a case of love being in the air? It's possible but more likely that the couples were already together but could not or would not make the marriage legal until an African American minister was in town to perform the ceremony. This is supported by the fact that the eldest Ballard child, Dora, was born in California in 1857 (two years before her parents' legal marriage ceremony took place.) It is also notable that there were two African American marriages recorded with the county earlier than 1859, but both of these were presided over by a justice of the peace.[36]

The Reverend Jesse Hamilton therefore made an important addition to Los Angeles and the black community. Although Protestant congregations in Los Angeles date from as early as 1850, African Americans may not have felt welcome.[37] Those who were not Catholic would have had few options if they wished to be married in a church. Hamilton's arrival signaled an important moment for the community; marriages were not only legal, but celebrated in the manner they wished. While they did not yet have a physical church, marriages were probably celebrated in the homes of friends and neighbors, promoting a sense of community and identity that was their own. For a growing a population, this was an important milestone.

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34. Finding a slave in the historical record is difficult; finding a female slave even harder. There were a surprising number of Texans who settled in Los Angeles County as this time, especially in El Monte.

35. Green's name appears in the historical record variously as Lewis and Louis.

36. Los Angeles County Marriages, Volume I. One of the first marriages recorded in the county is that of Sarah Thompson, a "woman of color," and Daniel Pewitt, a "man of color," in 1852. Their record is found in Volume I, 2.

37. Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 322.

Between 1850 and 1860, the number of blacks living in Los Angeles increased from twelve to sixty, and these men and women became established in town.[38] For example, John Ballard worked as a teamster while Amanda stayed at home, which was probably on First Street. They now had two children, Dora (3) and Julia (1) and a twenty-five-year-old Indian laborer named Juan José living with them. This may strike some readers as surprising, but many families in Los Angeles used Indians as household servants or laborers at this time, and the Ballards were not the only black family to do so. This fact may suggest a unique racial and cultural situation. As noted earlier, African Americans were not considered full citizens in California, yet in 1860 they worked for wages, owned businesses and property, and employed Indian workers in their homes. While African Americans by no means enjoyed elite social status, they seem to have held a higher social position than Indians.[39]

Just next door to the Ballard home was Oscar Smith, a thirty-five-year-old black laborer from the South. A few houses away lived four African American families, including the minister Jesse Hamilton and the well-known Robert Owens and his wife, Winnie. Owens was born a slave in Texas and, after purchasing freedom for himself and his family, settled in Los Angeles and made an excellent living as a cattle dealer and stable owner. He was generally understood to be the richest African American in Los Angeles. Next door to the Owens lived Louis Green, a barber, and his wife, Maria. (They had also been married by Hamilton in 1859.)

An examination of housing patterns supports Paul Robinson's assertion that at this time blacks were not yet living in black-only neighborhoods. While several families lived near each other, they also had white neighbors. Peter Biggs lived next door to one of the wealthiest white men in southern California: Rancho Los Cerritos owner John Temple. The Ballards' next-door neighbor was an Irishwoman, while the Pepper family lived next to wealthy white merchant Peter Mellus. William Ballard explained in his 1933 interview that "there were no special districts then, as there are now."[40] And contrary to popular belief, Los Angeles' "Negro Alley" was not

38. Census, 1860.

39. For more on the history of California Indians in the nineteenth century, see Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

40. Bond, *The Negro in Los Angeles*, 24.

a segregated neighborhood for African Americans. The racial segregation at this time applied to others groups, especially the Chinese, not to the black inhabitants of the city.

In contrast to the earlier state census of 1852, the 1860 federal census identified seven cooks, five barbers, and various porters, farmers, and laundrymen as African American. None of the women were listed as having occupations, although no doubt they worked extremely hard cooking, cleaning, tending to gardens, and producing household goods. Biddy Mason was not listed as having a profession, but historians know that she served as a valued midwife and nurse who provided services to black and non-black inhabitants of Los Angeles. Thus, it is quite possible that several of these women did indeed participate in a trade, but for various reasons (sexism, racism, ignorance) these were not noted in the census.[41]

An event from 1862 serves as an example of the community's evolution and demonstrates members' reliance on one another for assistance and support. Louis Green, the successful barber, accepted a six-year-old mulatto boy named Henry Smith as an apprentice. According to the legal record, Henry, with the consent of his mother, Hannah Smiley,

> has voluntarily and of his own free will and accord put and bound himself apprentice to Lewis G. Green of the same County and State to learn the art, trade and mystery of a Barber; and as an apprentice to serve from this date, for and during and until the said Henry Smith shall have attained the age of eighteen (18) years which will be on the 4th day of January AD 1874 during all which time the said apprentice shall serve his master faithfully, honestly, and industriously…[42]

In addition to teaching Henry the "mystery of a barber," Green also promised to send his apprentice to school for three months out of the year and provide him with food and clothing. Robert Owens added testimony at the end of the record stating (under oath) that young Henry was the son of Robert Smith, who "deserted his child and has never provided for him since the time of his birth." This is indeed the Mormon pioneer Robert Smith who settled in San Bernardino and who, at one time, owned Biddy Mason. As

41. United States Census, 1860. For more information about Biddy Mason and midwives in general, see Delores Hayden "Biddy Mason's Los Angeles 1856–1891," *California History* 68, no. 3 (Fall 1989).

42. The apprentice contract can be found at the Seaver Center, *Los Angeles County Miscellaneous Records, 1859–1870,* April 7, 1862.

discussed earlier in this article, she and twelve other slaves were freed in a Los Angeles court. Among these slaves were Hannah and her children, including an unnamed two-week-old infant boy who was born in California. Given his friendship with Biddy Mason and his son's marriage to her daughter, Robert Owens no doubt had intimate knowledge of the Robert Smith household and its secrets.[43]

During the 1860s, the African Americans of Los Angeles continued to make great strides. State and national laws prevented them from enjoying equality, but there was a small window of opportunity that many took advantage of. Ironically, this took place during the Civil War years. Even though most of the battles and fighting took place far from California, the Civil War was very much at the forefront of Los Angeles politics. California remained loyal to the Union, but this by no means reflected unanimity of sentiment among the state's inhabitants. Los Angeles was notoriously home to southern sympathizers and pro-secessionists. For years, agricultural barons in southern California looked longingly at slave states and envied their pool of labor, considering blacks to be better and more productive workers than Indians.[44] During the debate over statehood in 1850 some southerners attempted to establish a "colony" of slaves and slave owners in the state. This sentiment never fully evaporated and even led to a vote in 1859 that nearly resulted in the secession of southern California from the rest of the state. In the 1860 presidential election, Lincoln received fewer votes than his Democratic opponents in Los Angeles County. Several Angelenos volunteered and fought for the Confederacy, while others stayed home and participated in their own pro-Confederate organizations. The Bella Union Hotel hung a huge painting of General Beauregard.[45] In this climate, it could not have been easy for African Americans to assert themselves, but they continued to find success, and no one exemplifies this more than John Ballard.

According to 1863 county tax assessment records, Ballard paid $2.48 in taxes for horses kept on the Puente Ranch in El Monte. For an African American at this time, owning property was a

43. Ibid.

44. Helen B. Walter, "Confederates in Southern California," *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (March 1953): 44.

45. Pitt, *Decline of the Californios*, 233; Walter, "Confederates in Southern California," 41–55.

significant achievement, and the county official who recorded the information made a special notation, writing "Workman's John" and "F.M. of C." Beneath that is apparently the word "free" and then simply, "John Ballard." The initials stand for "free male of color," which was a typical way to describe a freed slave. In fact, all of the African Americans recorded in this tax assessment book have "F. M of C." next to their name. But for some reason, Ballard is the only one with the additional description and relation to a white man, La Puente Rancho owner William Workman.[46] What is also unclear is the relationship between the two men. William Ballard, in his1933 oral history, stated that his father briefly lived in El Monte "to raise hogs."[47]

In 1864 John Ballard found even more financial success, as he and another man are listed with "improvements located on 50 acres of land lying in El Monte," which consisted of horses, a corral, furniture, farm equipment, six oxen and a wagon. The tax paid on this property was $8.89.[48] On December 17, 1866, Ballard and Franklin (this time listed as "negroes" in the assessment book) paid $26.34 in taxes on even more property.[49] Throughout the 1860s Ballard paid more and more taxes on more and more property. He also continued to have financial dealings with some of the city's most prominent citizens. In 1868 he purchased property from O.W. Childs, a co-founder of the Farmers and Merchants Bank and the University of Southern California. A few years later he sold that property to Elizabeth Ellis, wife of county supervisor Asa Ellis.[50] Even though he was singled out as a "colored man" in the deeds, his race obviously did not prevent him from engaging in financial transactions with citizens from the upper class.

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46. The record for "Workman's John" can be found at the Seaver Center, *Subsequent Assessment Book Fiscal Year March 1, 1863, Los Angeles County*. The records for the other African American men are listed in the *Assessment Roll Fiscal Year March 1, 1863, Los Angeles County*.

47. Bond, *The Negro in Los Angeles*, 23.

48. It should be pointed out that El Monte was known as an especially strong pro-southern community, with many settlers coming from southern states, especially Texas. Several Confederate organizations, vigilante groups, and secessionist plots were said to have been organized in El Monte.

49. Tax records can be found at the Seaver Center, Assessment Book 1864, Los Angeles County and Original Assessment Roll March 1, 1866, Los Angeles County. This Franklin is probably the same man as in 1864. His identity is not known for sure, although there is an African American named Marshall Franklin living in Los Angeles in 1870 and Benjamin Franklin and family in El Monte in 1880.

50. Deed, Los Angeles County, February 12, 1868, and May 29, 1871.

The First A. M. E. Church of Los Angeles

Financial success in the 1860s helped John Ballard and others take an important step in community building. It was time for their own church. All historical examinations of African Americans in the West, California, and Los Angeles highlight Biddy Mason as the matriarch of the first black church in Los Angeles. As described earlier in this article, Mason was freed in a Los Angeles court room in 1856. She went on to serve as a midwife and philanthropist. Her care for the needy and success as an entrepreneur is still legendary in this city, and rightly so. But it is her role in establishing the First African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) that remains her most lasting legacy. She was one of a number of individuals who worked together to found the first black church in Los Angeles.

The genesis for the church may reach back all the way to 1854 when Robert Owens opened his home for religious activities. Biddy Mason no doubt joined these gatherings, as she was a houseguest, friend, and future in-law of the Owens family. The consensus among historians is that it was Mason who took the next step and formally founded the First A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles in 1872. But a deed filed with the county three years *earlier* suggests that there were others who also deserve credit. On March 13, 1869, John Ballard, Jeremiah M. Redding, Charles Owens, Louis Green, George Smith, John Hall, and Samuel Johns "which are the Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church" purchased "Lot One (1) in Block 'L' of the Mott Tract from Dr. Joseph Kurtz for $75."[51]

The seven men referred to as the trustees include some of the most prominent members of the black community. Like John Ballard, most of them, if not wealthy, were financially secure. Charles Owens, the son of Robert Owens (who died in 1865), was the wealthiest of the group. But others, such as John Hall, demonstrate the entrepreneurial skills and increasing prominence of the African American community. Born in Missouri about 1840, Hall came to Los Angeles sometime before 1860 and "went into the express wagon business…establishing an express line between Los Angeles and Santa Monica."[52] Not only did he own a business, he lived next door to

51. Deed, Los Angeles County, March 13, 1869.

52. Kenneth G. Goode, *California's Black Pioneers: A Brief Historical Survey* (Santa Barbara: McNally and Loftin, 1973), 97.

Dr. Joseph Kurtz, a leading physician and the man who sold the property for the church. Louis Green was a barber in town who had a shop in the famed Pico Building and in 1870 owned property worth $1,000. Most of church's trustees had lived in the city for at least a decade and had obviously become community leaders.

After they purchased the property from Dr. Kurtz, the trustees constructed the church. Thompson and West's *History of Los Angeles County, California* states that the African Methodist Episcopal church "was organized and a house erected on the corner of Fourth and Charity streets, in 1869, and dedicated by Bishop T. M. D. Ward."[53] Charity Street was later renamed Grand, and an examination of an 1884 city map places Lot 1 of Block L directly on the corner of Fourth and Grand.[54] Thompson and West list Winnie Owens (Robert Owens's widow and mother of Charles), Biddy Mason, and Alice Coleman as the first members of the church. With these prominent men and women in the congregation by 1870, the church had already become a focal point for the community, serving as a spiritual and cultural center for African American Los Angeles. As Delilah Beasley stated in *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, "All the movements for the uplift of the Negro race during pioneer days in California were strongly supported by all the ministers of the A.M.E. Church."[55] The church wasn't just a house of worship; it was a community center and symbol of success.

Activism and Celebration

In 1865, the Civil War finally ended and Congress ratified the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which ended slavery in the United States. Los Angeles African Americans must have been joyous, given that so many of them had at one time been slaves themselves. Shortly thereafter, the Fourteenth Amendment was proposed,

53. Thompson and West, *History of Los Angeles County, California*, 120; Delilah L. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1919), 163. According to Beasley, Bishop Ward was born in Pennsylvania in 1823. He was elected Bishop in 1868 and then came to California for four years. He was instrumental in the promotion of the A.M.E. church in this state, and participated in other civil rights activities, such as the Emancipation Proclamation celebration.

54. Thompson and West, *History of Los Angeles County, California*. 120. See *Map of the City of Los Angeles, California, 1884* by H.J. Stevenson, accessed February 10, 2012 at http://digital.lapl.org/ItemDetails.aspx?id=6423&pp=2. Ward was the pastor at the Bethel A.M.E. church in Sacramento.

55. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 158.

which, among other things, granted citizenship to all people born in the United States. Unlike the Thirteenth Amendment, which the California legislature endorsed, the Fourteenth did not fare so well in Sacramento. It died in committee and was not voted on. Enough other states did pass it, however, so that the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified to the Constitution on July 9, 1868.[56] African Americans were now citizens of the United States, but they still did not enjoy full civil rights. Republicans in Congress pushed for one more amendment that would guarantee and protect freedmen's right to vote.

The Fifteenth Amendment states that "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."[57] When the amendment was brought before the California Legislature, it faced fierce opposition. On January 28, 1870, California rejected the Fifteenth Amendment.[58] Again, however, enough states did support the measure so that the amendment was ratified to the Constitution on February 3, 1870. African American communities across the country, including Los Angeles, rejoiced and organized celebrations.[59]

On April 12, 1870, approximately fifty people gathered on the recently purchased A.M.E. property to celebrate ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. This date (and the early start time of 4:00 a.m.) was selected to commemorate the start of the Civil War and the firing on Fort Sumter back in 1861. In addition to the ceremony, the *Los Angeles Star* reported that "on Tuesday evening the colored people of this city gave a ball and supper, on which occasion they invited a large number of white citizens to join in their festivities, many of whom accepted the invitation, and mingled with them in the mazes of the giddy waltzes."[60] Although a list of attendees does not exist, newspaper accounts confirm a few who were there. Newspapers credited Winnie Owens with providing the food, but,

56. California did formally ratify the 14th Amendment in 1959.

57. United States Constitution, Amendment 15, Section 1.

58. California did not formally ratify the amendment until 1962. The author would like to thank Ralph E. Shaffer and Sheila M. Skjeie for sharing their work *California and the Coming of the Fifteenth Amendment*. Much of the information included here draws on their excellent book, which can be accessed online at http://opac.library.csupomona.edu/articles/1594992.10207/1.PD.

59. As it turned out, the 15th amendment did not protect suffrage rights as completely as its supporters had hoped. Full voting rights would not come until the 20th century.

60. *Los Angeles Star*, April 16, 1870.

given the large crowd, she likely had assistance. A well-known white politician singled out his "friend" Oscar Smith during his speech. But perhaps the most significant of the attendees was Rev. J.E.M. Gilliard, who not only spoke at the ratification ball but also gave a lecture just four days later at the courthouse. The *Star* reported that

> Prof. Gilliard delivered a lecture in the Court House, "on the future of the colored race," for the purpose of raising funds in aid of the building of a church for the colored people. The house was crowded, and from the frequent applause with which the lecturer was greeted, it was evident he gave great satisfaction. The portion of the lecture which we heard, was highly creditable to the speaker, and it was delivered in a most effective manner.[61]

Gilliard's participation is important for several reasons. Although not much is known about his early life, the *African American National Biography* describes him as a teacher, minister, and frequent contributor to the San Francisco *Elevator*, one of California's first African American newspapers. Although he lived in northern California, during the early 1870s Gilliard traveled extensively throughout the state delivering lectures on racial issues. He was apparently a gifted orator and gained an outstanding reputation among blacks and whites.[62] His participation in the celebration therefore suggests a level of organization and activism in Los Angeles that has never been acknowledged. Gilliard must have been invited to the festivities by leaders of the Los Angeles black community. His presence also suggests that African Americans in Los Angeles were in contact with communities in other parts of the state and had been for a long time.

In 1855 black leaders in northern California had organized a convention at the Colored Methodist church in Sacramento. Although there were many issues to discuss at the three-day convention, "its most important objective was the reform of the testimony laws" that prevented blacks from testifying in court against whites. J. D. Gilliard and T. M. D. Ward (who would dedicate the Los Angeles A.M.E. church in 1869) attended the convention, and

61. Ibid.

62. Gardner, Eric. "Gilliard, James E. M." *African American National Biography*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. *Oxford African American Studies Center*, accessed February 14, 2012 at http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e2731. Gilliard eventually left California for a position in Texas. He continued his work as a public speaker and activist. Unfortunately, he was assassinated in 1876.

it was Gilliard who introduced Resolution No. 15: "Resolved that this Convention appoints persons in each County, to circulate petitions, and procure signatures to the same, for memorializing the Legislature for the repeal of the law which excludes testimony of colored people in courts of justice, in an action or proceeding to which a white person is a party." The convention then appointed delegates to collect signatures "in the counties in which they reside." Thomas Rix was appointed for Los Angeles County.[63] The petitions were presented to the state legislature, which took no action on the matter.

A second Colored Convention was held the next year, December 9–12, 1856, and again the testimony laws were a focus. The *Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California* declared, "The object we seek, equal testimony in the courts of this state, is deserving of our most earnest effort." The delegates ordered another petition drive, and again Thomas J. Ricks (Rix) was appointed to facilitate the drive in Los Angeles County.[64]

Clearly, the Los Angeles black community had long participated in statewide civil rights activities. The petition drives, the dedication of the A.M.E. Church by Bishop Ward, the elaborate ratification celebration, and the presence of Reverend Gilliard bear the markers of organized efforts and a statewide network. Owens, Ballard, Green, Hamilton, and others must have been responsible for the commemoration of the Fifteenth Amendment. These same people were also involved in the next great civil rights event in Los Angeles history.

Fight for Suffrage

With the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, it appeared that black men would now be able to vote in California. After the celebrations ended, they must have been dismayed when it became clear that politicians at the state and local level had no intention of allowing that to happen. On April 16, 1870, the same day that Reverend Gilliard is reported to have delivered his address at the courthouse,

63. *Proceedings of the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California* (Sacramento: Democratic State Journal Press, 1855), 16.

64. *Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California* (San Francisco: J.H. Uddel and W. Randall Printers, 1856), 5.

Lewis Green attempted to register to vote in Los Angeles County. County Clerk Thomas D. Mott refused his request.[65]

As discussed in several parts of this article, Lewis Green was an integral member of the black community. He surely participated in the ratification celebration and attended Gilliard's lecture. The timing of Green's attempt to register cannot be a coincidence. Nor is it likely that he made the decision to register solely on his own. A more likely scenario was that it was planned, and Green was chosen and agreed to be the first to make the attempt. The Associated Press even reported that local blacks were preparing a "general move" for registration, suggesting collective action.[66] As noted in the earlier section, it's also possible that blacks in Los Angeles were working with outside organizations. A tantalizing clue to this connection may be Lewis Green himself, which may explain why he was selected. Beasley explained that it was sometimes difficult for news to travel up and down the state, so there developed a sort of "underground railroad" of communication: "The Negro members of the executive committee formed a secret code and transmitted their news by the way of the barber's chair…This method was most successful in transmitting news all over the State."[67] Lewis Green was a barber.

It is unknown if Green anticipated the County Clerk's refusal to add his name to the great register. But historians do have extensive documentation that shows state and local authorities were either confused or simply unwilling to comply with the Fifteenth Amendment. Some argued the same "states' rights" position that had been used during the secession debates: that a federal amendment does not overrule a state constitution. But as Ralph Shaffer and Sheila Skjeie explain, "Faced, on the one hand, with what seemed to be a national government mandate for black registration in the form of the Fifteenth Amendment, and on the other with a state attorney general and state constitution solidly supporting a 'whites only' voter policy, the clerks followed different paths."[68] In Los Angeles, Mott took the position that the amendment still needed state-level enabling legislation before it could go into effect. Upon being turned

65. *Los Angeles Bulletin*, April 16, 1870.

66. See Shaffer and Skjeie, *California and the Coming of the Fifteenth Amendment*.

67. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 188.

68. See Shaffer and Skjeie, *California and the Coming of the Fifteenth Amendment*.

away, Green took yet another courageous step (again, one that was probably decided by the group): he took the matter to court.

Green hired Robert M. Widney to represent him. Widney had only recently settled in Los Angeles and was a young attorney, but he later went on to become a major figure in Los Angeles, serving as a judge and cofounder of the University of Southern California, among other ventures. Widney and Green filed a writ of mandamus on April 23, 1870, to compel Mott to register him. *Louis G. Green vs. T.D. Mott, County Clerk* was decided on April 28 by Judge Ignacio Sepulveda. He questioned whether the amendment by itself was enough "to warrant the Clerk to register the names of colored men, which the State Constitution does not allow." He conceded that, while "the right to vote cannot be denied to colored men, the qualifications necessary for the Clerks to register the individuals of that class, are not in any manner prescribed."[69] Therefore, as the *Los Angeles Star* reported:

> The following decision was rendered in the case of L.G. Green, an American citizen of African descent, vs. T.D. Mott, County Clerk of Los Angeles, on a writ of mandamus, to show cause why he refused to register said L.G. Green on the great register of Los Angeles county. After hearing the arguments of counsels, the Court decided that the 2nd section of the Fifteenth Amendment requires special legislation to carry the first article into effect, and the writ of mandamus was therefore denied.[70]

Before Green and Widney could make their next legal move, Congress passed "An Act to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution" which imposed fines and other penalties on anyone who obstructed a person from voting. So, on June 21, 1870, County Clerk Mott registered Lewis Green, entering his name into the Los Angeles Great Register. Two other men registered the same day as Green, followed by several others over the next few weeks and months. This collective response suggests that Green did not act alone, but on behalf of the entire community. While it was his name on the court record, others must have provided support and solidarity throughout the entire process. On July 5, 1870, John Ballard,

69. *Los Angeles Star*, May 7, 1870. Judge Sepulveda's decision was published by the *Star*. The Huntington Library has the minutes of the case in *Minutes of County Court, County of Los Angeles*, #6, Vol. 6 but not the full decision.

70. *Los Angeles Star*, April 30, 1870.

William Brown, and Charles Owens registered to vote. In the Great Register, Ballard is listed as a 40-year-old farmer from Kentucky who was naturalized "from the 15th amendment to US Constitution."[71] Finally, these men were able to exercise the most fundamental privilege and right of a citizen of the United States of America.

This victory must have been extremely satisfying for the growing black community. In 1870, the black population now stood at just over 100 people. This growth reflects both new immigrants and new family members. The Ballard family, now living on the corner of Seventh and Hope Streets, included seven children, ranging in age from 16 to 1: Dora, Julia, John, Willie, Henry, Freddie, and Alice. With this large brood to take care of, it was a good thing that he was one of the wealthiest African Americans in Los Angeles.[72] As mentioned above, the family moved briefly to El Monte, but soon moved back to the city. In 1933 William Ballard explained that the family returned to Los Angeles because his father "wanted us to get an education." This suggests that there was some formal institution that was only available in the city. William described this experience: "I attended a Negro school taught by Ed Thompson, who had a Mexican wife and two children. The school was located on First Street between Los Angeles and Main Streets, in the front room of Mr. Thompson's house. There were sixteen boys in the school. The girls were taught in some other house."[73]

During the 1870s, the Los Angeles black community had much to celebrate and be proud of: they had established a church, had won the right to vote (at least the men), and were able to educate their children. Several of them owned property throughout the city. Louis Green lived on Flower between Seventh and Eighth Streets. George Smith lived on Fort Street, and Robert Owens owned a large property at 67 Alameda Street.[74] But it would be naive to believe that the success enjoyed by the African American community during the past few decades was universally accepted. One sign suggesting otherwise was a notice posted in the city on June 17, 1871, warning a certain citizen to leave the city within twenty-four hours. The notice

71. *Great Register of Los Angeles County 1866–1872.*

72. United States Census, 1870. Ballard is listed as owing $1,000 in real estate and an additional $1,000 in personal property.

73. Bond, *The Negro in Los Angeles*, 23.

74. *The First Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1872* (Los Angeles: W. Ritchie Press, 1863).

was accompanied "with the usual skull and cross-bones" of the Ku Klux Klan.[75]

The 1870s and 1880s introduced enormous changes in the city and in the circumstances of citizens like John Ballard. During the 1870s decade, personal tragedies and public challenges forced him to move on from his position as a community leader in Los Angeles and start a new life in the Santa Monica Mountains. In May 1871 Amanda Ballard, age 34, passed away due to complications related to childbirth. She was buried in the "old city cemetery."[76] Sadly, as there is no record of an additional Ballard child, it appears that the pregnancy resulted in two deaths. John Ballard was now a widow and single father of seven children. In the nineteenth century, childbirth was dangerous, and women constantly risked their lives to create another. It's quite possible that Biddy Mason treated Amanda Ballard and even was present for her death. In any event, we can only assume that John Ballard leaned on his friends and colleagues to help him and his children get through such a difficult time.

We cannot know how this personal tragedy and its aftermath affected him emotionally, but over the next few years other events complicated his life even more. In 1871 John Ballard purchased property from Asa Ellis, the County Supervisor, in downtown Los Angeles for "one thousand dollars gold coin." This was a significant amount of money at the time, and it is unclear if the property was for an investment or for his family's use. In the deed, the property is described as "commencing two hundred seventy four yards east of a large sycamore tree known as a line tree between Temple and Ellis." It continues with a lengthy description and estimates that the property consists of "twenty acres more or less."[77] Just two years later, in the depths of a nationwide depression, Ballard turned around and sold the exact same property to John G. Downey, the wealthy banker, co-founder of USC, and ex-governor of California. However, while the "twenty acres more or less" is the exact property he purchased from Ellis for $1,000, Ballard sold

75. Thompson and West, *History of Los Angeles County, California*, 101.

76. This cemetery is sometimes referred to as the city cemetery or Fort Moore Hill Cemetery. The cemetery was shut down in 1880. Many of the bodies were removed to other local cemeteries.

77. Deed, Los Angeles County, May 9th 1871.

the property to Downey for just $200, a considerable loss.[78] This transaction marks a change in circumstance for Ballard, a personal economic downturn.

Starting in 1863, Ballard had consistently paid taxes on land and other possessions in Los Angeles County. Throughout the 1860s the amount of his taxable property increased. Yet, starting about 1871, this trend reversed, and after 1875 there is no record of him in the assessment books. Although Ballard was still a resident (and voter) of Los Angeles, after 1875 he no longer owned property in the city; a measure of his reversal in fortune. But in the midst of this, Ballard did have at least one happy moment. In 1879, eight years after Amanda died, he married Francis Brigs, a thirty-five-year-old widow from Arkansas.[79]

These changes were significant, but it wasn't just Ballard who experienced change. Many of his friends from the "old days" either left the city or passed away. Jeremiah Redding died in 1878, and Oscar Smith, Ballard's onetime next-door neighbor, died in 1872. John Hall moved his family out of town; the minister Jesse Hamilton resettled in northern California; and Lewis Green moved to Santa Monica. In a telling shift, the once successful barber was now working as a janitor. And three of the Ballard children, Dora, William, and John, now worked for white families as gardeners and house servants. Unfortunately, this was not unusual and was part of a national trend. John Ballard, after more than two decades, moved his family far away from the city and into the Santa Monica Mountains.

Moving On

The 1870s was the beginning of rapid growth for southern California. Arguably the most significant event in this transition was the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1876, followed by the Santa Fe in the next decade. A mass of newcomers poured into the region, lured by the promise of excellent weather, abundant land, lush citrus groves, and a climate that was conducive to curing just about any

78. Deed, Los Angeles County, April 30, 1871. The circumstances surrounding the transaction are further complicated because it appears the property was not solely for Downey. He is listed in the deed as the guardian of William Cardwell.

79. Los Angeles County Marriages, Book 6, 123. In both the marriage records and the 1880 census, her name, Francis, is spelled with an i.

health problem. This was followed by the spectacular land boom of the 1880s. Over the next few years, plans were made for a deep-water harbor, imported water, streetcars, and all the infrastructure needed to created a true metropolis. Leonard Pitt explains that

> The boom of the eighties contributed vastly to the ongoing process of "Americanization ..." The population of Los Angeles jumped 500 percent, automatically transforming the electorate into an Anglo-American one. The mores changed equally radically. The type of consumer goods advertised for sale, the tastes in food and dress, the prevalence of English over Spanish in daily and official conversation, the Gilded Age recreations, and the style of commerce—all changed rapidly and irreversibly.[80]

It wasn't just food and fashion that were introduced. Many of the new immigrants brought with them their perceptions and attitudes towards race. Jim Crow traditions had become entrenched in other parts of the United States. As southerners, easterners, and mid-westerners traveled west, so too did racist attitudes. These migrants changed Los Angeles and it was no longer the city it had been in the 1850s, 1860s, and early 1870s. The promise that had brought John Ballard's generation of black Angelenos was no longer so certain. Perhaps this is why John Ballard and others found themselves adjusting to new realities or leaving the city they had called home.

Move to the Mountains

Triunfo Creek meanders peacefully through the Santa Monica Mountains in what is today Westlake Village and Agoura Hills, south of the 101 freeway. In February 1880 John Ballard purchased 160 acres of land near the creek for $50 dollars from Antonio Castro and moved his family out to the mountains. Ballard must have been looking for seclusion, as in 1880 this was isolated and far from any sizeable settlement. It took several days to journey from Los Angeles to Triunfo Canyon. For a family that was used to the hustle and bustle of the city, this must have been quite a change, but perhaps a change they hoped would be for the better.

Though beautiful and private, living in the Santa Monica Mountains at this time was not an easy task; in 1880 it was a frontier. The Ballards were probably among the first, if not *the* first, African

80. Pitt, *Decline of the Californios*, 274.

Americans to settle in the western Santa Monica Mountains. Based on the 1880 census, there were few people of color in all of the San Fernando Township. Out of the 1,215 people enumerated in the census, seven were black, all of them Ballards.[81]

Any pioneer family living in this environment had to be self-reliant, and as the Ballard children grew up and moved out, most of the labor fell to John and Francis. To supplement what they could provide for themselves, Ballard periodically journeyed into Ventura or Los Angeles to sell wood and charcoal; by all accounts, the family lived in very humble circumstances. Somehow, Ballard had lost the wealth he had worked so hard to earn. His former status as a community leader in Los Angeles seems to have been forgotten, as he was mentioned in several *Los Angeles Times* articles merely as "an old colored man." Another Ventura County resident had a more elaborate description:

> He was a big powerful man… A reach of arms about equal to his height, square shoulders, and a full, heavy, beard—probably his face had never been touched by a razor. And I am telling you, he was a black man! He had a very kind face and soft voice with a southern drawl. I saw him once with an ox and a mule hitched together pulling a wagon, that, a good part of which, was made at home. A sapling for a wagon tongue and a hitching gear of the same. The harness was patched up with ropes and wire. The wagon had a bow and cover. He was with his wife and had half a dozen children…they would peer out—darky style—and it was equal to a circus. People would cheer and jeer and joke but the old Negro would never crack a smile…[82]

The Ballards became well acquainted with the Russells, owners of the ranch that became the basis for Westlake Village. J.H. Russell wrote that Mrs. Ballard sometimes came to help his mother when the Russell children were sick. When the boys rode out toward the Ballard cabin, "she would always make biscuits and she had wild grapes preserved in honey. Perhaps because we were young and hungry, I have always thought I've never eaten anything so good."[83]

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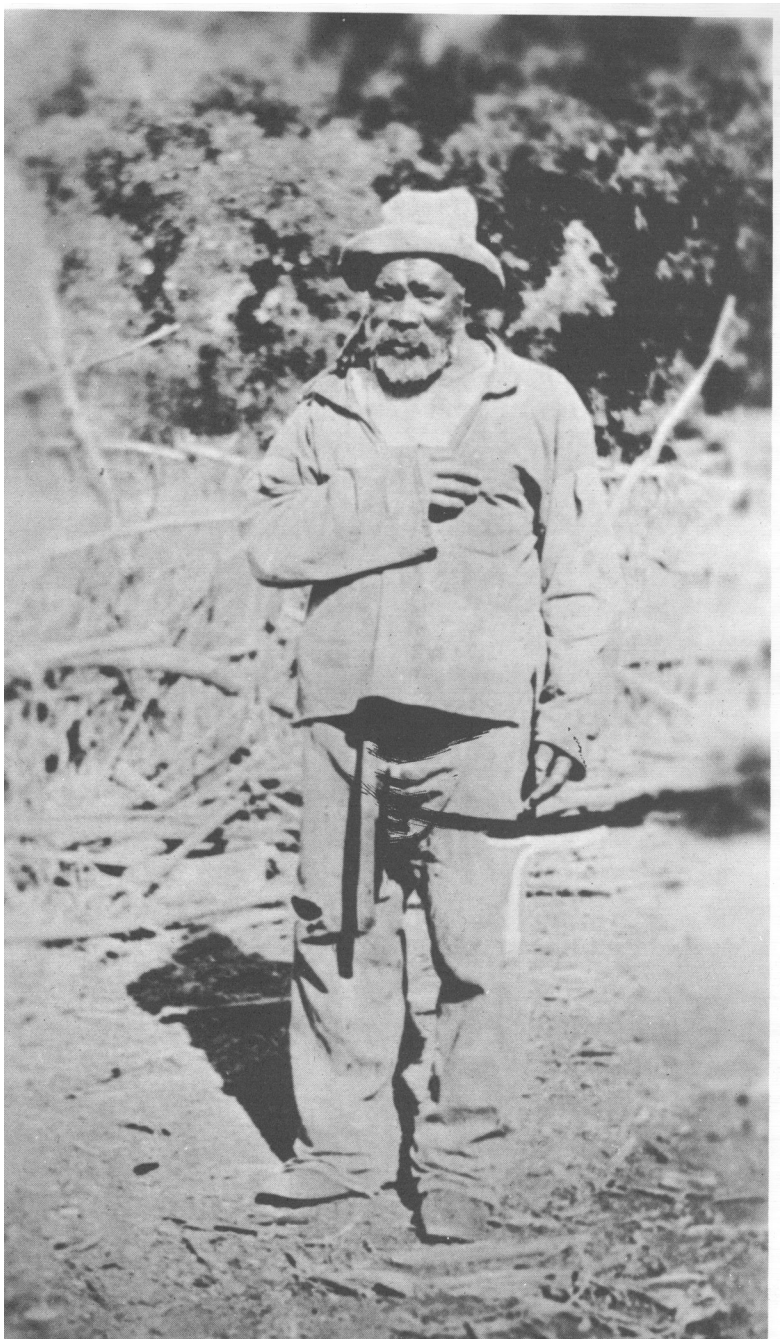
81. United States Census, 1880. The San Fernando Township covered a large territory in 1880, including much of the San Fernando and Conejo Valleys. I had a difficult time finding the Ballards in this census. When I searched by name, nothing came up. This is because their name appears to have been recorded as "Bullard" by the census taker.

82. Wendell P. Daily, *An Album of Memories* (Santa Barbara: The Schauer Printing Press, 1946), 162.

83. Russell, *Heads and Tails…and Odds and Ends*, 19.



John Ballard in the Santa Monica Mountains near the end of his life. Courtesy, Russell Family.

Russell also described John Ballard as a powerful man who liked to sing and hear his voice echo throughout the canyon.

By the 1890s all of the Ballard children had moved away, except for Alice (the youngest) and perhaps a few grandchildren who lived with them as well. Unfortunately, Ballard became a widow again in 1896. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "Mrs. John Ballard, wife of a colored man whose rickety wagon drawn by a quintette [*sic*] of old horses is a familiar object on the streets had died yesterday morning in her cabin, fifteen miles from Calabasas."[84] It was about this time that another neighbor recounted a particularly poignant story to Frederick H. Rindge, owner of the Rancho Malibu. In his 1898 reminiscence, Rindge recounted the story told to him by "an old mountaineer." Although the book does not identify him by name, it most certainly involved Ballard:

> He brought to mind how his old colored neighbor across the range had been maltreated by the settlers, on account of his color; how they set fire to his cabin, hoping thus to terrorize him and to drive him from the country; how some thought the real purpose was that some men with white faces and black hearts wanted to jump his claim after they had got rid of him. But this was not the material the good old gentleman was constructed of, and, as a shame to his tormentors, he put up a sign over the ruins of his cabin which read; "This was the work of the Devil."[85]

Further evidence of Ballard's fortitude was the fact that although Ballard lived a considerable distance from Los Angeles, he continued to vote, a testament to the gravity he attributed to this right. In the 1896 Great Register, he is identified as a sixty-seven-year-old farmer, five feet, seven and a half inches tall. His complexion is "dark," his eyes "black" and his hair "gray." He also had "one joint off third finger left hand."[86]

The Homestead

By 1900 enough people had moved into the San Fernando and Conejo valleys to require multiple post offices and separate townships for

84. *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1896.

85. Frederick Hastings Rindge, *Happy Days in Southern California* (Cambridge, MA and Los Angeles, CA: [1898]), 136–137.

86. *Los Angeles Count Great Register*, 1896.

Ballard Homestead Cabin, undated. *Courtesy, Russell Family.*

the census. In 1900 the Ballards were enumerated in the newly created Calabasas Township, along with 130 other families. Out of 488 people, seven are listed as something other than "white": one Chinese, two Indians, and the Ballards. In the column for race, the Ballards are noted with a simple "N." Along with John and his daughter Alice, two grandsons are included in the household, Lyman (7) and George (2).[87] It was in this year, 1900, that John and Alice Ballard each acquired a homestead patent.

Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law in 1862. It was designed to encourage western settlement by providing up to 160 acres of land for a very small fee. An applicant had to be a United States citizen, file the required paperwork, live on the land for at least five years, and make improvements, building a dwelling and raising crops. Once that was complete, an applicant appeared in the local Land Office to offer proof through sworn testimony and corroborating witnesses. John and Alice's four witnesses included his son and her brother Henry Ballard, José Rocha, Filipe [*sic*] Botillier, and Tadeo Botillier. John's property included 144 acres in what is now Seminole Hot Springs, while Alice acquired 160 acres of land

87. United States Census, 1900.

adjoining her father's to the southwest.[88] Ballard's homestead file includes the usual signed forms and notices, but it must have given him special satisfaction to swear that "I am by birth a citizen of the United States." Both Alice and John's testimony provide further insight into their experience in the mountains:

> HOMESTEAD PROOF: TESTIMONY OF CLAIMANT
>
> Ques. 1—What is your name, age, and post office address?
> *John Ballard, age 70 years. P.O. Box Newbury Park, Cal.*
>
> Ques. 2—Are you a native born citizen of the United States, and if so, in what State or Territory were you born?
> *I am. I was born in Kentucky.*
>
> Ques. 4—When was your house built on the land and when did you establish actual residence therein? (Describe said house and other improvements which you have placed on the land, giving total value thereof.)
> *In February, 1880. I established actual residence thereon in February, 1880. Lumber house 16x16 feet, kitchen 16x16 feet, value $100. Barn, value $150, chicken houses, $20, 2 corn cribs, $20, well, value $10. Fencing, $200, small orchard & vineyard, $50. Total value $550.*
>
> Ques. 5—Of whom does your family consist; and have you and your family resided continuously on the land since first establishing residence thereon? (If unmarried, state the fact.)
> *No wife, grown children. My children do not live with me. I have.*

88. This property is the same as—or at least very close to—the property Ballard purchased in 1880 from Antonio Castro. He may not have realized in 1880 that the property was public land, or that Castro did not in fact own title to the land. This may explain why he waited twenty years to file for the patent. This actually occurred fairly frequently as land records and claims were sometimes unclear and confusing. It is also possible that, after the burning of his cabin, Ballard may have felt a homestead was a necessary protection.

Ques. 6—For what period or periods have you been absent from the homestead since making the settlement, and for what purpose; and if temporarily absent, did your family reside upon and cultivate the land during such absence?
Absent on business 2 to 5 times a year for 4 or 5 days at a time. No other absence.

Ques. 7—How much of the land have you cultivated each season, and for how many seasons have you raised crops thereon?
About 15 acres. 20 seasons.

Homestead Proof: Testimony of Claimant

Ques. 1—What is your name, age, and post office address?
Alice Ballard, age 30 years. P.O. Box Newbury Park,Cal.

Ques. 2—Are you a native born citizen of the United States, and if so, in what State or Territory were you born?
I am. I was born in California.

Ques. 4—When was your house built on the land and when did you establish actual residence therein? (Describe said house and other improvements which you have placed on the land, giving total value thereof.)
About 12 years ago. I established actual residence about 12 years ago. Log house of 1 room, value $50, fencing, value $150. Land cleared, value $40, fruit trees and vines, value $50. Total $290.

Ques. 5—Of whom does your family consist; and have you and your family resided continuously on

the land since first establishing residence thereon? (Ifunmarried, state the fact.)
I am single. I have.[89]

Ques. 6—For what period or periods have you been absent from the homestead since making the settlement, and for what purpose; and if temporarily absent, did your family reside upon and cultivate the land during such absence?
Occasional absences for a day or two at a time, on business. Seldom absent at all.

Ques. 7—How much of the land have you cultivated each season, and for how many seasons have you raised crops thereon?
About 10 or 15 acres. 10 to 12 seasons.

Surprisingly, just one year after receiving her patent, Alice Ballard married and moved out of the mountains, taking John's two grandsons with her. In 1901, John Ballard was alone on his homestead. Conejo Valley resident J. H. Russell recalled that towards the end of his life Ballard was poor and did not have much to eat. On his last visit Ballard told him, "'When I die, I want to be buried right here on the little hill.'"[90] But that was not to be. After a lengthy stay in the Los Angeles county hospital, John Ballard passed away and was buried at Rosedale Cemetery on September 23, 1905. It was a long way from his hill, but perhaps equally fitting. From his burial site, there is an unobstructed panoramic view of downtown Los Angeles.

Conclusion

John Ballard's life in southern California illustrates the region's opportunities in the 1850s–1870s for African American settlers:

89. The 1900 census has two grandsons of John Ballard living in his household. Whether these were Alice's or one of her sibling's is unknown. To complicate matters, the 1910 census lists three children living with Alice and her husband: Fred, Theodore, and Mary. But Alice reported to the census-taker that she had five children, so two were not living in the household.

90. Russell, Heads and Tails…and Odds and Ends, 21.

freedom from slavery, community formation, economic opportunity, and the pursuit of political equality. In the economic climate and railroad boom of the 1870s, and amid the huge population influx of the 1880s, the African American minority found its circumstances constrained, its possibilities reduced. Some adjusted to lower socioeconomic positions; others, like the Ballards, moved on and started over somewhere else. Neither their achievements nor their perseverance should be forgotten.

Postscript

After 1905 the memory of the Ballard family and their presence in the mountains lived on. For decades, locals associated the highest peak in the area with Ballard, if in degrading terms. A *Los Angeles Times* article from 1909 described a deer hunt in the mountains. The

Plaque dedicated in 2010 near the site of the Ballard homestead marking the renaming of the hill to Ballard Mountain, to honor "a courageous African American community leader and pioneering homesteader," John Ballard. *Author's* photo

party "went up the Malibu road, five miles from Calabasas, and then started 'cross country up the hills. They passed over Nigger Ballard Hill."[91] The *Sunday Morning Outlook* in 1928 simply referred to it as "Nigger Hill." Even government maps listed the mountain as "Niggerhead" until it was changed to "Negrohead" in the 1960s. The mountain was obviously associated with Ballard, but over time his name and therefore his identity were forgotten.

In recent years, controversies have arisen all across the United States involving such place names. While every situation is different, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, led by Zev Yaroslavsky, and the United States Geographical Survey agreed that, in this case, the name needed to be changed. Exactly one hundred and thirty years after they settled on the land, the mountain was officially renamed Ballard Mountain.

As it turns out, this is not the only Ballard legacy left behind. Apparently, the penchant for activism is an inherited trait. John Ballard's grandson Claudius graduated from the University of California, Berkeley medical school in 1913. He practiced medicine in Los Angeles for four years before volunteering to serve in World War I. As a First Lieutenant in the Medical Reserve Corp, he won the Croix de Guerre award. In a letter written from France, he said, "I hope our efforts and sacrifices will mean something to our country and my race."[92] Dr. Ballard's son, Reginald, also inherited the family trait. During World War II, he trained with the famed Tuskegee Airmen, then later, as a Los Angeles firefighter, challenged the department's segregation policies. Today, his uniform hangs proudly in the African American Firefighters Museum in Los Angeles.

91. *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1909.

92. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 248.